

GLITCH TECHS ON THE KRAMPUS EXPRESS

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Cold Open

The moonlight shines off the metal on a railroad track on an empty street, surrounded by snow plains on one side. A small town, with its buildings and sidewalk covered in snow and Christmas decorations, lies a yard away on the other side. A Glitch Tech van drives down the road, followed by a dozen other Glitch Tech vans. Six vans drive over the track, pull over, and park facing the railroad. The other six vans pull over on the other side of the street, facing in the same direction. All twelve vans open a latch on their roofs and spring out heavy laser cannons, aiming forward down the railroad track.

Four Glitch Techs each exit a van, materialize assault laser rifles, and aim them in the same direction as the big lasers. A thirteenth company van drives up, pulls over, and parks on the railroad track, facing the same direction. The rims on its tires convert out, fold to the ground, and bolt to the street. Three more teenage tech employees exit the van. The first is HAWK, a Caucasian fourteen-year-old boy with a crimson red mohawk.

Second is DEVI, a fourteen-year-old girl with long, raven-black hair in a braided ponytail. The third teenager is PRIDE, a fourteen-year-old boy with short blonde hair sporting small spikes that resemble animal ears. The three uniquely haired glitch techs materialize the same weapons as the others and aim in the same direction.

HAWK

Armed, aiming, and ready, boss!

The last person to exit from the driver's side door is BRUCE, a tall, muscular, bald man in heavy silver Glitch Tech armor.

He turns to face the opposite direction of the Glitch Techs. The elder, bald, buff, and heavily armored Glitch Tech activates his visor. A targeting circle appears and zooms in on the train station down the railroad track. His visor zooms in on the side of the station, allowing him to see through its walls and into a small arcade inside. He squints, turns around, and walks in front of his van.

BRUCE

Alright, Techs, it'll be here any minute. When you hear it, charge weapons to full power, and then fire on sight!

He types in his gauntlet, materializes a futuristic heavy laser, and mounts it on his shoulder. All the Glitch Techs glare at the railroad track as they aim their weapons. After the silence, a train whistle blows, followed by small whirling engine noises from the guns. The train whistle blows again, but louder, and some of the Glitch Techs grit their teeth and sweat. Train wheels sound off and are followed by another whistle blow.

As the noises grow louder, a light shines brighter behind the hill. One of the Glitch Techs hyperventilates as the sounds become more audible and the light becomes more colorful. Finally, a train with its headlight on turns around the hill and drives toward the Glitch Techs.

BRUCE

Fire!

All the Glitch Techs scream battle cries and fire their weapons, each unleashing an energy beam. Traveling to the train, the beams connect and join into a massive beam twice the target's size. The beam makes contact and covers the train and the track inside its light. Seconds later, at the touchpoint of the beams, the train emerges from the light on the track. The train drew closer to the Bruce.

BRUCE

Oh, no, you don't!

He stops shooting, dematerializes his weapon, makes a see-through shield twice the size of his van, and spreads his legs. The train contacts his shield and pushes him up against his van. The clamps break off, pushing them to slide down the track without slowing down. The train squeezes the Bruce between his van and shield as he materializes a Viking helmet.

HAWK (COM-LINK)

Bruce!

BRUCE

I'm fine, HAWK, keep shooting!

The Glitch Techs rotate their weapons to keep their lasers on the passing train carts. The van's tires are cut and torn apart on the railroad track as the barrels touch and grind on the track and blow sparks. Using his gauntlet, Bruce opens two latches on the sides of the back of the van. Cables spring out of the latches and plant themselves on the ground. The cables tighten, and the van

begins to split in half from the back without the train losing speed.

His van tears in two; the pieces crash to the ground and dematerialize with the cables.

BRUCE

Seriously?

The train maintains its speed as its engine begins conducting green electricity, and he turns his head to see the upcoming train station.

BRUCE

Oh, forget it.

He dematerializes his shield and rolls off the engine to the side. He spins in his descent and makes a three-point landing as he watches the train. As the locomotive reaches and passes the station, the green stream of energy emanating from the engine touches the ground. The green electricity streams into the building. It swims on the floor around the occupying civilians, benches, and into the arcade room.

BRUCE

Cease fire, cease fire!

The Glitch Techs stop shooting their lasers and look toward the heavy-armored Glitch Techs' location.

BRUCE

We have local fish to fry now!

All the Glitch Techs look to the train station as the train continues down the track. The arcade inside the station glows green and shines outside the building. The green light shuts off, followed by an explosion that blows smoke out of the station. All of the civilians inside run out, screaming into the small town. Two civilians are captured by a giant Chomp Kitty pouncing on them.

CHOMP KITTY

Meow

The wall facing the Glitch Techs explodes as a Stegazaur from Smashosaurs steps out.

STEGAZAUR

Smash, smash, smash it up!

A Zoom Kazoom breaks through, lands on the roof smiling, and runs around the small hole it made.

ZOOM KAZOON

Zoom, Zoom, Kazoom!

The wall at the back of the station erupts as the long, wingless serpent dragon from Allora slithers out, wraps around the building, extends its central neck and head on top, and roars.

BRUCE

Move in, give me some cover fire,
and keep them pinned down at the
train station.

The Bruce materializes a halberd ax with a rocket engine.

BRUCE (CONT')

We need to bring the hammer down.

HAWK (COM LINK)

Isn't that an ax?

BRUCE

I said 'Shoot!'

The Glitch Techs scream battle cries as they shoot the Glitch monsters and march towards the train station. Bruce materializes rocket boots, ignites their engines, and dashes toward the train station. Stegazaur roars and charges back at Bruce. The Bruce adjusts his feet to make him jump and flip over Stegazaur when they are inches apart. As the dinosaur glitch turns to him in confusion and fury, it takes hits from the energy blasts from the marching Glitch Techs—the Bruce rocket dashes into the train station and toward the large Chomp Kitty.

Once in range, he delivers an upper swing of his ax and decapitates Chomp Kitty.

CHOMP KITTY'S HEAD

Meow

The iconic game character's body dematerializes and reverts to its glitch root form, and Bruce absorbs it into his gauntlet. He takes

his halberd ax in one hand, ignites the rocket engine, and throws it like a hatchet into Stegazaur's back. The screeching glitch falls on its stomach, and the Bruce rocket jumps. He pulls out his ax, raises it over his head, ignites the rocket engine again, and swings it back down, pixelating the dinosaur monster. As the Bruce absorbs the glitch in its root form, Zoom Kazoom watches him and stomps up and down in frustration.

The armored rabbit super speeds off the roof to the back of the station, runs around to the other side, and jumps over the ongoing speeding train.

ZOOM KAZOOM

Zoom, Zoom, Kazoom!

Hawk, Devi, and Pride witness the fastest Glitch escape, and they stop shooting and marching as the final train cart speeds past the Glitch Techs and the station.

HAWK

We can't let him have all the fun,
can we?

Devi and Pride smile at him.

HAWK

You guys keep Bruce covered!

The trio dematerializes their guns, runs, and leaps over the train track. In the air, each materializes a Glitch Tech/Hinobi brand motorcycle and drives into town.

HAWK

We're chasing the rabbit!

Bruce looks up at the serpent dragon, then turns to the speeding train as its last car passes the station. He growls, gritting his teeth and tightening his grip on the ax. The serpent dragon roars, and he looks back up at the mighty beast.

Hawk, Devi, and Pride speed their motorcycles on the street. At a crossroads, Devi turns left while Pride turns right. Hawk keeps a steady course and looks at the radar on his dashboard, scanning the area.

HAWK

Come on out, little rabbit...

A green dot appears at the bottom of the radar's screen as Zoom Kazoom runs up to his right side.

ZOOM KAZOOM

Zoom, Zoom, Kazoom!

The glitch accelerates and turns left.

HAWK

It's on!

He accelerates his motorcycle and drives off-screen. Pride continues driving down his street.

HAWK (COM LINK)

Pride, on your left!

Pride turns around and sees Zoom Kazoom gaining on him. He materializes a double-barreled shotgun, aims, and fires a ball of blue energy at the glitch. Zoom jumps, narrowly avoiding the first shot that damages the road. The armored rabbit lands, serpentine forward to prevent three more shots, and laughs at Pride. The road explodes behind the Glitch, sending it into a mid-air front flip. It recovers back into its high-speed run and turns its head to see Devi riding her motorcycle with a demon smile and an arm laser cannon next to it.

She fires her weapon again with three semi-automatic laser balls. Zoom Kazoom avoids the blasts again, accelerates past Pride, and makes a slight chuckle.

ZOOM KAZOOM

Zoom, Zoom...

Hawk drives up, brakes, and drift spins at the oncoming crossroad, swinging its back tire into the Glitch.

HAWK

Kazoom!

Zoom Kazoom panics and jumps over Hawk. While it is still in the air, Pride passes Hawk and fires his laser shotgun at it. Zoom Kazoom takes the blast and is blown into the air as its entire body disappears and reappears in quick blinks until it's fully visible again while falling.

HAWK

DEVI, now!

Devi drives up to the crossroad and breaks into a drift. She fires three more energy balls, and they all hit Zoom Kazoom, propelling him even higher into the air.

Zoom Kazoom's body glitches, and when he stabilizes, a kunai with blue neon insides tied to a white neon chain pierces his body. The Glitch looks down, and its eyes follow the glowing chain, and sees Hawk standing on the ground.

HAWK

Get over here!

Hawk pulls in the glitch. When Zoom Kazoom crashes into his gauntlet, he punches it into the ground. He fires his gauntlet's laser, and Zoom Kazoom dematerializes and turns into its root form. Hawk straightens up and absorbs the glitch with a smirk.

HAWK

Nice work, Techs! Let's get back to the station!

Back at the train station, the giant serpent dragon is tied to neon red cables that keep it in place and force its head to face the sky as it breathes fire.

BRUCE

Keep it still!

He materializes a jet pack with long, broad wings and multiple rocket engines. The rocket engines ignite, and he flies into the air, towards the dragon, and pulls back his ax. But the dragon finds the strength to pull its head forward. The Glitch Techs holding the dragon's head back are yanked, tripped, and fall to the ground. The Dragon unleashes its fire breath at Bruce.

He panics and forms a shield as he pushes through the flame. The dragon bites down on the shield and tries to crush it while breathing fire.

BRUCE

I'm not going to get in a decent finishing blow like this!

HAWK (COM LINK/OFF-SCREEN)

Got you covered, boss!

The uniquely haired trio jumps over the track on their motorcycles as their tires rotate into hover engines. They fly up to the dragon's neck in a triangle, shoot out neon red cables, and wrap them around the neck. The trio pulls on the wires, choking the dragon and stopping it from breathing fire. Smiling, Bruce plants his feet on his shield and jumps off it into a backflip as it dematerializes. He pulls back on his ax again and swings it through the neck for a complete decapitation.

The dragon's body dematerializes and reverts to its root form as Bruce falls and makes a three-point landing on the roof.

BRUCE

Bring it in, Techs!

All the Glitch Tech employees finish pulling in their cables and aim their gauntlets with their palms open. They combine their surrounding red tractor beams and absorb the glitch as it screams into their gauntlets.

COMPUTER VOICE(S)

Glitch contained (echo).

The Bruce jumps off the roof and lands next to the civilians he saved from Chomp Kitty. They look up at Bruce as they sit on the ground, holding each other and shaking with fear.

BRUCE

Hinobi Game Systems apologizes for any inconvenience this minor glitch may have caused and will now restore your system's memory.

He holds up his gauntlet at them with an open palm and flashes them with a blue light. The blue square quote bubbles with epilepsy pop above their heads as Bruce sighs with his hands on his hips. The trio descends, shuts off, and dematerializes their bikes to land around Bruce. Hawk walks up to Bruce from behind and pats him on the back as all the other Glitch Techs gather around the group.

BRUCE

Alright, that was a good play, but the game's not over yet! Hunt down the rest of the stooges, and

BRUCE (CONT.)

mindwipe them before the guys in
white throw them in panel vans!

The surrounding Glitch Techs arrive in town as ordered, and the
trio stays behind to comfort Bruce.

HAWK

Sorry, Bruce, I know you wanted that
big one. Or the train, anyway, there
were a lot of big ones. What do we
do now?

BRUCE

We hope for a Christmas miracle.

END COLD OPENING

ACT ONE

The small town of Bailey is quiet, peaceful, and covered in snow and Christmas decorations. On a street devoid of cars and snow, two groups of children face each other on opposing snow-covered sidewalks, engaged in a snowball fight, smiling and laughing. They cease throwing snowballs and being cheerful at the sound of heavy, stampeding footsteps. The children look down the road toward the source of the sound and witness a white and silver, house-sized robot wolf with a red nose, connected to a red, spiked spine on its back, and red claws on its silver paws, running around the corner. It storms down the road and passes the children.

A Hinobi Tech van turns the corner and drives down the same road, its roof flashing a blue siren. The vehicle speeds down the road, passing the children as its blue light flashes. The children are left in a trance with blue comic bubbles and ellipses above their heads. Their bubbles pop, and they exit their trance and resume their snowball fight with Christmas joy as if they did not see anything. The van continues speeding in pursuit of the giant robot wolf.

It closes in on the dangerous machine as a panel on its wall opens, extends a rocket launcher, turns to point at the mechanical beast, and fires a small, white, and blue missile. The fired ammunition flies up next to the robot wolf. Its exhaust flame extinguishes, then decelerates and descends to the street. It explodes on contact, leaving a crater as the shockwave pushes the robot wolf to the side. Then, it turns to run into the town park.

As the van drives past the pothole, its missile, made as a capsule pod, pops out underneath its undercarriage. It lands in the pothole, explodes into a blue light that fades into a reconstructed road, and the van turns into the park. Pixels emerge before the Glitch Tech van's grill, transforming into an attached snow pusher. Snow bursts from the ground as the Glitch Tech Van speeds on, chasing the giant metal wolf. A larger panel opens on the van's roof, extending a plane engine that ignites with exhaust flames, causing the van to accelerate.

With a new burst of speed, the van drives past the robot wolf, drifts, turns to face it, and comes to a stop. The engine folds back into the van's roof, a metal pipe extends in its place, pointing up to the sky, and fires a blue ball of light with a hexagon pattern. After reaching a sufficiently high point in the sky, the ball implodes and expands into a vast, bright, transparent dome over the robot wolf and van. The robot wolf continues running, leaps over the truck, rams into the energy dome's wall, and bounces back in a small shockwave triggered on impact. A light blue light covers the Glitch Tech van.

It disperses into tiny pixels that fade away, leaving MITCH, FIVE, and MIKO wearing winter-supported Glitch Tech armor to stand in the snow and face the dangerous mechanical monster.

MITCH

Time for a cage match, noobs!

Mitch aims his gauntlet at the robot wolf.

MIKO

Let's get ready to rumble!

Miko manifests boxing gloves with spikes on the knuckles over her hands.

FIVE

Yeah!

Five manifests a Warhammer and a target shield.

FIVE (CONT.)

Let's take this dog to the pound!

Mitch and Miko look at Five with expressions of confusion.

FIVE

I uh... I don't follow wrestling. Uh...
ding, ding?

Mitch, Miko, and Five re-energized their fighting spirits and fixed their postures, staring back at the savage animatronic.

MIKO

Ding, ding!

The mechanical wolf lets out a brief snarl, barks, and charges at the trio.

MITCH

Spread out!

Mitch ran toward the target beast, and Miko and Five ran around it on opposite sides. Mitch beams at the beast, making small sections of its body burst open and regenerate as it continues running toward him. Five throws his hammer, hits the wolf's side, and bounces back, twirling for Five to catch it. The wolf is forced to

jump to the side on impact but lands on its feet, skidding in the snow, turns, and charges at Five.

FIVE

Oh, nerds!

MIKO

I gotcha, buddy!

Miko points and aims one of her spiked boxing gloves, firing it as it's replaced with a replica on her hand. The projectile glove flies straight and implodes on contact with the wolf's posterior, forcing it to flip on its back as its body flashes red. The wolf rolls back on its feet and runs to Miko.

MIKO

Bring it, Balto!

Miko runs toward the charging metal beast, and her boxing gloves radiate a bright neon red light. As the wolf runs at her, its nose, spine, spikes, and claws glow neon red.

MITCH

Five, shield her!

FIVE

Entiendo!

Five throws his target shield to the side. It touches the snow and curves around the wolf. The mechanical monster pounces, lands on the snow, puffs its chest, faces Miko again, opens its mouth, and spews a stream of fire.

MIKO

Yeet!

Miko tilts back, stops running, and begins to turn around. The shield moves in on the space between Miko and the fire, closing in on her. Mitch types on his gauntlet's screen for a second, then aims and fires a red mushroom with a plus sign on its stem. The mushroom and shield make contact once they are in front of the shield, and the shield triples in size as the fire contacts the shield. Miko runs alongside the shield as it blocks the wolf's fire breath.

They pass the fire, and the flame spews behind them as the shield de-manifests into nothing, and Miko continues running. She begins typing on her gauntlet on the run.

MIKO

Come on out, ALLY!

A stream of energy shoots out of her gauntlet and becomes the giant bird running alongside Miko. Miko jumps on Ally's back, and they take flight.

MIKO

Now, my Chikichomp, let's fight fire
with fire as a Fierychomp!

FIVE

Wait, Miko!

Miko types on her gauntlet, manifests three power-up fruits from Bravestone 12, and tosses them in the air. Ally loops in the air and eats the fruits, skydiving swoops back up, her body transforms into its fire element form, and she caws.

MIKO

Blast away!

Miko and Ally nosedive toward the metal wolf, and the bird hacks up and shoots fireballs at it. The target monster jumps back as the fireballs impact the snow, creating steaming chimneys. While growling, the mechanical beast lights up its nose, spine, and claws again and shoots another stream of fire while howling. Miko and Ally fly around the stream of fire while shooting more balls of fire. While Miko and the NPC animals maneuver around and exchange fire attacks, Five and Mitch hide behind a snowbank naturally built on a park bench, sweating.

MITCH

Her hot head will take up all the
oxygen in this bubble! Is that what
you were going to tell her?

FIVE

No, I was going to recommend that
she give Ally lightning power-ups.

Five pulls up a screen projection displaying a robot silhouette attacked by lightning bolt shapes.

FIVE (CONT.)

They could have caused more damage,
as robot enemies are generally weak
against electric attacks.

MITCH

Well then, since Miko's brought the
heat...

Mitch stands up, types on his gauntlet, and manifests a light blue armored sleeve over his whole gauntlet arm, three times the size of his actual arm. The sleeve features clawed fingers and a conductor spike on the shoulder, sparkling with electricity all over the arm.

MITCH

We'll bring the thunder.

FIVE

Oh, yeah...

Five stands up, types on his gauntlet, and manifests light blue daggers that he holds between his closed fingers.

FIVE

That's what I'm talking about!

Mitch and Five run around the snowbank towards the wolf machine as it continues fighting Miko and Ally.

MITCH

Aim for its light-up parts; I'll
deal the body blows!

FIVE

Got it!

Five throws his daggers at the mechanical wolf, impacts its red spiked spine, implodes, and sends a flowing stream of electricity to cover its body, causing it to shake and whimper in agony. Mitch makes an enormous leap as he pulls back his gauntlet arm, begins charging a stronger electric current around its metal, and throws a punch at the silver beast, knocking it back far away. The wolf lands on its paws while still agonizing from the electricity. Up in the sky, Miko sees the wolf being strongly affected by

electricity as it recovers, shakes its head, and turns to face Mitch and Five.

MIKO

Ooh... Now we're getting somewhere!

Miko types on her gauntlet and manifests a Mjölnir hammer in her hand as its head charges a stream of electricity. She then holds her gauntlet up to her face.

MIKO

Hey guys, get ready to use that combo again! Ally and I will give you some real cover fire!

FIVE/MITCH

Copy that!

MIKO

Let's burn snow, Ally!

Ally caws and swoops down as the wolf charges toward Mitch and Five. As Miko and Ally are near the ground, Ally tucks her head and neck as she clears her throat.

MIKO

That's right, Ally, don't hold anything back!

Ally stretches her neck back out as she caws and unleashes a streaming flow of fire in the space between the wolf and Mitch and Five, creating a wall of steam. The wolf pounces through the steam, partially wet with specks of water, and continues charging at Mitch and Five as they charge at it.

FIVE

Wind up for the pitch, Mitch!

MITCH

Heh, heh, I've always wanted to throw you to the wolves!

Mitch reaches out his massive gauntlet arm to Five. Five jumps in his open palm, Mitch throws him over the wolf, and Five throws his daggers at the wolf's claws and spine spikes. The wolf yelps in agony as electricity surges over its body. Mitch pulls back his

gauntlet arm under his ribcage while making a fist, leaps up to the wolf, and delivers an uppercut to its jaw.

MITCH (MID-PUNCH)

Boosh!

The robot wolf yelps again as it is sent flying backward. It lands on its feet, wobbling and groaning. Five and Mitch make three-point landings back on the snow. The wolf stops wobbling, shakes its head, and snarls at Five and Mitch as its red eyes glow brighter.

FIVE (LAUGHING)

I think we made it mad.

The wolf's claws and spine spikes glow, and their light shines brighter and brighter. It raises its head to point its snout to the sky, howls, and emanates a small ball of fire that grows twice the wolf's size.

FIVE/MITCH

Oh, Boosh/nerds!

The wolf pulls its head back down while barking and throwing the massive fireball at Five and Mitch. Ally swoops in from behind Five and Mitch with Miko still on her back, lands in front of them, and caws while spewing a massive stream of fire that contacts the fireball and slows it down at the halfway point in the space between them.

MIKO

My turn!

Miko materializes a small jet pack on her back, jumps forward over Ally, ignites its engine, flies over the fire struggle while raising her Mjölnir over her head, and deactivates the jet pack's thruster as she descends to the wolf's head.

MIKO

Hammer down!

Miko reaches the wolf's head, swings her hammer down on its head, and unleashes a pillar of lightning that covers Miko and the wolf while temporarily flash-blinding the area. When everyone's vision clears, the fire attacks are gone, and the wolf is down on its side, whimpering as its body glitches, flashing green. The massive transparent blue barrier over them fades away from top to bottom. Mitch, Five, and Miko dematerialize their lightning weapons as

Ally reverts to her regular form while walking up to the downed glitch monster, standing and looking down at it. Miko stands in front of the space between Mitch and Five, and Ally stands behind the space between them.

Miko, Mitch, and Five hold open their hands to the wolf and charge the beam emitters in their palms.

MIKO

Yippee-Ki-Yay, Metal Fenrir.

They activate the purple tractor beams in their gauntlets, which shine on the wolf. This turns the beast light green, splitting into three and streaming into their gauntlets. The purple tractor rays shut off as the monitors on their gauntlets display a smiling pink lock that closes.

GAUNTLET COMPUTER VOICES

Glitch contained.

MITCH

Boosh.

Later, Mitch drives the van with Miko in the passenger seat and Five sitting in the back.

MIKO

People are getting into the holiday spirit with these Christmas games.

FIVE

Yeah, just today, we've taken down Cockroach Centipede from Password of Chakra, Trained Kid from Martyr Line 4, Self-Respect from Knifer 2, a super juiced-up Downfall from Brutalman: Alastair Origins, and the upgraded wolf from Web-Thropod: Silas Saldivar.

MITCH

Just another traditional Christmas celebration for Glitch Techs. The best winter breaks I've ever had

MITCH (CONT.)

started when I got this gig. I mean, what could be better?

FIVE

So, you don't have any other plans for the 25th, Mitch?

MITCH

No, I do. I'm visiting my siblings at the old house. This is one of the rarest occasions when they put down the controllers and remove their VR headsets. And fingers are crossed for the folks coming in, too.

MIKO

Well, at least your siblings share similar interests, that way you can get them all the same thing. Meanwhile, I still need to get sparring karate gloves for my little sister, Lexi, maybe a ballet CD for my little brother, Geoffrey, and some superhero plushies for my littlest brother, Lee. As for my social media-obsessed big sister, Nica, and my parents, I'm better off wearing a blindfold and buying anything off Daintree Prime.

MITCH

Yeesh.

MIKO

Yeesh indeed. What about you, Five? Are you having a big fiesta de Navidad at the apartment?

FIVE

Ha, ha, sort of. We're setting up our food truck for the town's Christmas Eve Festival. After

FIVE (CONT.)

breakfast and presents, we visit my
dad upstate in the morning.

MIKO

That sounds perfect.

A grumbling noise emanates from Miko's stomach, then Five's stomach
copies the sound, and Mitch's stomach grumbles last.

MIKO

Is that food truck of yours open
right now?

FIVE

Of course! I got something new for
the festival that I'd love to feed
with some Guinea pigs.

MIKO

I volunteer!

MITCH

Is this dish on the house?

FIVE

Sure, we haven't decided on the
price tag yet, anyway. And, while
our customers wait for their food,
we're also offering complimentary
hot cocoa.

MIKO

Pedal to the metal, Mitchell!

Mitch slams his foot on the accelerator while turning the steering
wheel, smiling. The van speeds through town to the Taco Dragon
food truck.

Later, the Glitch Tech van is parked beside the food truck's
apartment building. Miko and Mitch stand outside the car, sipping
small paper cups of hot chocolate and wearing white winter Hinobi-
branded clothes, among other customers.

Inside the food truck, Five takes off an apron, changes into his Hinobi brand winter clothes, grabs three doggy bags, and hugs his PAPI and ABUELA as they cook.

FIVE

Gracias, you guys.

PAPI

Hey, no problem, Mijo, make sure they give us a good review.

ABUELA

And stay warm out there! I'm not spending Christmas with a snowman for a grandkid!

FIVE

Si, see you later!

Five sit in the passenger seat and hand Mitch a Styrofoam container, a fork in the driver's seat, and a matching set to Miko in the back.

FIVE

Okay, my amigos, get ready to level your taste buds on...

Five opens his container to reveal quesadillas with a side of fried rice, which momentarily shines, accompanied by angels singing in the background.

FIVE

Orange Chicken Quesadillas! I came up with it myself. Enjoy!

MIKO

Ooh!

MITCH

Yeah... expectations are lower than an Inspector Comics movie rating.

Mitch uses his fork to break off and scoop up a piece of the quesadilla, putting it in his mouth. In astonishment, his pupils are replaced with stars. Mitch blinks and restores his pupils.

MITCH

Expectations shattered.

MIKO

Oh, yeah, this is heavenly!

Mitch and Miko eat at a quick pace.

FIVE

Thanks, guys, I'm glad you like it!

The van's phone rings.

COMPUTER

Incoming call from...

PHIL'S VOICE

Your boss.

Mitch rolls his eyes, swallows his food, sets his fork in his container, and presses the answer button.

MITCH

Go for Team Mitch.

MIKO (MOUTH FULL OF FOOD)

I still never agreed to that name!

PHIL

Where are you guys? Did you finish up that beast glitch?

MITCH

With a perfect score, like always.

FIVE

We just stopped for a lunch break on the way, Phil.

PHIL

Then eat on the drive! Need I remind you that this is our busiest time of year, and that I need you to upload

PHIL (CONT.)

the glitches you've bagged before
corporate shoves lumps of coal in
all our stockings!

MITCH

On our way, boss.

Mitch hangs up the phone, closes and sets down his food container,
and starts the van's engine.

MITCH (CONT.)

And bah humbug to you, too.

Five and Miko laugh as Mitch drives off.

Later, in the Glitch Tech lobby, Mitch, Five, and Miko wear
ordinary Glitch Tech uniforms as they approach the kiosk in the
center of the room and insert their gauntlets into separate ports.
The glitch energy exits their gauntlets and flows into the machine,
and the main monitor displays 'Team Mitch' above other team names
on the leaderboard.

MITCH

(Sigh) Sweet success.

FIVE

I know we just got back, but should
we head back out on patrol? If this
is our busiest time of the year,
then maybe...

MIKO

We should keep this win streak
going, baby! Woo!

Miko's smartphone rings, and she takes it out of her pocket to see
her dad, HUGH, on the caller ID. She slides her finger across the
screen to answer it and holds it to her ear.

MIKO

You've hit up Miko, what do you got
for her?

HUGH

Hey Miko, you coming by the house for lunch, again?

MIKO

Nah, Dad, we stopped by Five's food truck for a tasty new dish not on the menu yet!

HUGH

Oh, that sounds like fun. And hey, don't forget your grandmother's coming tomorrow to stay with us until New Year's Eve, and she'll want all her grandkids to give her warm welcome hugs.

MIKO

I'll be there with Christmas bells on. I know that nothing's more important than illegally fast cars and family.

HUGH

What do fast cars have to do with... did you say illegally?

An alarm sounds off as B.I.T.T. flies in on-screen behind Miko while she covers the bottom of her phone with her free hand.

B.I.T.T.

Alert! Alert! This is a Code Green Alert! This is a Code Green Alert! Calling all available Glitch Techs! Calling all available Glitch Techs!

HUGH

Miko, what is that sound? Is everything okay?

MIKO

Sorry, I can't talk now, Dad. I've got to go. Love you, bye!

Miko hangs up, pockets her phone, and looks up at B.I.T.T.

FIVE

A Code Green? Oh, nerds!

MITCH

Hey, no worries, Five. At least Miko can help with this, and she has a solid alibi for its release.

MIKO

Not cool, Mitchel... not cool.

Phil runs up to the rail of the balcony above the trio.

PHIL

What are you all doing standing around here? Assemble and roll out. We're meeting up with the Dabney branch about this one! Portal over to these coordinates!

Everyone uses their gauntlets to manifest and dress in their winter gear. Mitch types on his gauntlet, then aims it in the open space before him and fires a small energy bullet that turns into a portal. Miko and Five jump into the portal first, and Mitch runs and jumps in after them.

ZARAH, HANEESH, BERGY, NIX, and other multiple Glitch Tech agents stand idle, waiting in the railroad's forest clearing as a portal opens. Miko, Five, and Mitch leap out of the portal, and it closes behind them.

ZARAH

Five! I mean, guys, you made it!

FIVE

H-hey, Zarah, hi guys.

BERGY

Do we not have names anymore?

Haneesh and Nix shrug their shoulders.

AUTOTUNED VOICE

Well, well, well, if it isn't the Glitter Kitty Swiper.

The Bailey Glitch Techs look to see NAMELESS, WES, RAY, and SIMI wearing winter gear with a different design from the ones the Bailey employees are wearing and striking a group anime pose at them on the other side of the railroad track.

MIKO

Sup players?

FIVE

I thought we were cool about the whole Pancake McGuffin snatching.

The five Dabney Glitch Techs break their pose and stand straight at Five.

NAMELESS

We are, but we're also on our toes around you.

FIVE

Right...

JOAN

Alright, Dabney and Bailey, listen up! We're dealing with an indestructible code green glitch.

MITCH

Oh, please, 'indestructible?'

PHIL

Here's what we've learned: a hacker broke in and downloaded a copy of one of Hinobi's Christmas projects, The Krampus Express, from our glitched game files.

JOAN

The glitch is the train itself. It's been chugging down the railroad and has already passed three towns.

MITCH

Three towns? And not one branch
broke it into code?

PHIL

Not without trying.

Phil projects three holographic monitors, displaying the opening scene, and two other Glitch Tech branches fighting the train, which fails to destroy it.

NIX

Those were high-level weapons.

HANEESH

And it just drove through them like
they were wind.

JOAN

Corporate HQ is still trying to find
a weakness in this armor, and until
then, we're doing our part to see it
go off the rails.

PHIL

It'll be here any minute, so,
gauntlets up, people, and arm your
best weapons! We're showing this
monorail monster that two branches
are better than one!

The two bosses manifest heavy, long-range weapons and aim at the
left side of the forest clearing.

FIVE

Wait! If weapons haven't worked on
it... Maybe we need to play defense?

BERGY

Ooh, ooh! I have just the thing for
racing glitches!

Bergy accesses his gauntlet and manifests a blue glowing stone
barricade for road construction on the train track.

FIVE

Yeah, that's what I'm talking about,
Bergy!

Five accessed his gauntlet and manifested a giant shield, which he projected to hover over the train tracks. All the other glitch techs muttered in agreement and manifested their strongest shields and barriers on the track.

MIKO

Aww... I wanted to try blasting it.

MITCH

Well, we might as well try something
different.

Mitch and Miko access their gauntlets and manifest their strongest shields and barriers on the train track.

JOAN

Wow, even your precious Mitch is
saying no to shooting.

PHIL

Eh... Let's give it a shot.

Phil and Joan manifested a shield and a barrier on the track, and everyone waited. The sound of train wheels chugging emanates from the forest.

MIKO

Here comes the choo-choo train!

The train blows its whistle, speeds out of the trees, and shatters through all the shields and barriers. All the Glitch Techs cover their faces as the broken pixels fly past them. They look back up at the speeding train.

WES

So, what's Plan B?

NAMELESS

Blast away!

All the Glitch Techs manifest their most potent shooting weapons and fire on the train.

JOAN (WHILE MANIFESTING HER WEAPON)

For the record, that was our
original Plan A!

PHIL

Our?

JOAN

Shut up and shoot, caveman!

After shooting for a brief time, Five lowers his weapon.

FIVE

I knew it, we're not even breaking
its windows! Let me see if I can
hack into its base code.

He dematerializes his weapon and begins rapidly typing on his
gauntlet screen.

MIKO

Hack in? That's it!

Miko dematerializes her weapon.

MIKO (CONT.)

Time for Plan C!

MITCH

What are you...

Miko manifests a grappling hook at the tip of her gauntlet.

MITCH (CONT.)

Oh, no. Miko, hold up!

Five breaks his concentration from his hacking process, and he
sees Miko aim her hook at the train waiting.

FIVE

Miko, he's right! Just give me a
minute to...

Miko sees the back of the train coming into the clearing.

MIKO

Too late!

Miko fires her grappling hook and latches onto the railings on the back of the train.

MITCH

Everyone, cease fire!

FIVE

Stop shooting!

Zarah sees Miko pulling on her line, gasps, and stops firing her weapon. As Miko is yanked off the grass, everyone else stops firing their guns. Miko flails over the railroad as the train pulls her away from her friends.

MITCH AND FIVE

Miko!

Mitch dematerializes his heavy blaster, and he and Five aim their gauntlets at Miko. They fire blue neon strings, wrapping them around her ankles. As Miko is pulled away by the train, Mitch and Five are yanked off the grass, flailing over the railroad, and all three are dragged along by the train and disappear into the forest.

JOAN

Philbert, did your Techs just...

PHIL

I'm afraid so... We really need to be more picky about who we let into Hinobi Smash...

Five and Mitch scream as Miko reels herself in toward the train. She reaches and grabs the railing with both hands as she dematerializes her hook.

MIKO

You guys coming?

MITCH

Of course we're coming!

FIVE

Just a sec!

Mitch and Five press a button on their gauntlets, reeling themselves into Miko's ankles. They reach their teammate, who pulls them in, planting her feet on the base of the railings. They grab the railing and release her ankles. All three climb over the railing together and land their feet on the train's back patio.

MITCH

Seriously, Miko?

MIKO

Oh, come on, it's a classic scenario! Since we couldn't break its shell from the outside, we gotta tear it apart from the inside. It is a train after all!

Mitch's gauntlet plays its ringtone.

GAUNTLET COMPUTER

Incoming call from...

PHIL'S VOICE

Your boss...

MITCH

And here we go...

Mitch presses the button to answer the call.

PHIL

Are you three insane!

MITCH

Well, Miko is! Everyone saw that this was her idea!

MIKO

It's lovely of you to share the credit, Mitchell!

FIVE

She might've had the right idea, Phil! Three different branches, now Five (he points to himself as Miko chuckles and Mitch rolls his eyes and scoffs), couldn't stop this crazy train with offense or defense! We needed to try a different tactic!

PHIL (PINCHES HIS BROW)

Fine, but just run reconnaissance, while I report you nutcases to corporate HQ! Don't blast anything; we still don't know anything about this glitch or how the game is played.

FIVE

What, how's that possible?

Bit conferences into the call from the Bailey Glitch Tech lobby and slides in on the screen.

BIT

Any game that immediately glitches is stored on the company's private server, and further information about it is kept from the public and all store branches to prevent any glitch from manifesting!

PHIL

So, from now on, don't do anything rash, you three! I'll see if I can get any info from corporate!

Phil hangs up, and the screen shuts off.

MITCH

Ugh... Fine then. We'll follow Miko's 'plan,' but in phases. Phase one: go

MITCH (CONT.)

inside and stand by until we hear from Phil.

MIKO

Let's do this!

Miko presses her fingers between the sliding doors and grunts while trying to pry them open.

FIVE

Uh... Miko!

Five buttons on a panel on the side of the door open it instantly.

MIKO

Thank you! Let's do this!

She leaps, rolls into the train cart, and aims her gauntlet into the aisle as Mitch and Five peek through the open door. The seats face the front, and some are filled with adolescent children who raise and turn their heads to look at the Glitch Techs.

MIKO

Kids?

MITCH

Just NPCs don't attack them unless
they initiate the attack.

Mitch and Five enter as the door closes, and Miko stands up.

FIVE

He's right, before any enemies show
up...

Five begins typing on his gauntlet again.

FIVE (CONT.)

Let me see if I can access the base
program of this glitch and learn
more about it...

Five is interrupted as they see a ball of red light flash above an empty seat and disappear, leaving behind a new child, LUPITA (the girl with the puffy pigtails in Five's posse) to fall into the seat.

LUPITA

Huh, where am I?

FIVE

Lupita?

Lupita looks confused, stands on her seat, turns, looks over the headboard, smiles, and sees Five.

LUPITA

Five!

MITCH

Who's she?

MIKO

Lupita's one of the kids Five hangs out with at his favorite childhood game store.

FIVE

Well, what's she doing here?

MIKO

How is she here?

Five begins running to Lupita's seat.

FIVE

Lupita, what are you...

The car's front door opens, and three dark elves with grey skin, pointy ears, white hair, and dark green conductor uniforms run in with swords sheathed on their belts. The lead dark elf conductor draws his sword, charges, and swings it down at Five.

FIVE

Whoa!

Five raises his gauntlet and instantly manifests a shield to block the blade. He is pushed back with his feet dragging down the aisle.

FIVE

Lupita... and any kid that can respond... Sit back down and cover your heads!

All the children obey his instructions as the lead dark elf attempts another attack. Five blocks him again, and the sword and shields press against each other. The other two sword-wielding dark elves draw their blades and jump over their lead attacker to swing their weapons at Five. Mitch and Miko fire their standard gauntlet beams and knock them back. As they fall and recover on their feet, their entire bodies disappear and reappear in blinks until they are fully visible again.

Five manifests a longsword in his spare hand, pushes off the dark elf's sword, swings his new weapon, and cuts across his opponent. The leading sword dark elf's entire body disappears and reappears in blinks. Before he finishes recovering, Five charges at him and cuts him with two more slashes. The leading sword dark elf bursts into red and green flames, rising and disappearing instantly.

FIVE

Three hits, that's all we need!

MIKO

My favorite countdown!

The remaining two sword-wielding dark elves attack Five, and he blocks them with his shield. As they repeatedly hammer down on his shield with their swords, Mitch's gauntlet rings.

GAUNTLET COMPUTER

Incoming call from...

B.I.T.T.'S VOICE

B.I.T.T.!

MITCH

Impeccable timing!

Mitch presses the button to answer the call, and B.I.T.T. appears on the gauntlet's screen.

B.I.T.T.

Greetings to you, TechTag:
MitchFTW! We have received intel
from the Hinobi...

MITCH

Hold that thought, B.I.T.T.! Miko,
cut down the sworders!

MIKO

On it! Five, make some room!

Miko dissipates her shield and manifests her twin golden heavy swords in her hands. Five backs away as Miko runs past him. She employs a swift and precise spinning technique to slash the two sword-wielding dark elves three times. Five and Miko turn around and retreat as the defeated enemies burst into green and red flames, rallying to Mitch.

FIVE

What about Lupita and all the other kids?

MITCH

Calm down, Five. They only seem to be targeting us, so they should be safe. B.I.T.T., what do you have?

B.I.T.T.

The Krampus Express serves as both the title of the game and the final boss, as well as the central theme. In the game's story, Krampus, based on European folklore, constructs a train engine designed to abduct children from ages five to twelve and disrupt Christmas by preventing Santa from delivering presents.

FIVE

Holy smokes! So, we just watched Lupita get kidnapped, and these are all kids from the other towns?

MIKO

Does that mean my little brother and sister are on this train too?

FIVE

Along with my other little amigos?

B.I.T.T.

That sounds to be correct!

MIKO

Mike and Ridley must be on this train, too!

FIVE

Why didn't we get any reports about the kidnappings before? We could've figured out how to beat this glitch, save the kids already onboard, and prevent any more kidnappings.

Phil conferences in and slides in on the gauntlet's screen.

PHIL

Why would anyone report kidnappings to us, Five? We're not the FBI!

MITCH

So, if we beat the game and the glitch, then the kids will be teleported back home?

B.I.T.T.

N-N-Negative, each train cart represents a level, with a boss battle at the end of every fifth cart. After defeating the boss, the five train carts will decouple from the train. However, you, Glitch Techs, will have a brief window to jump over to the next train cart. Meanwhile, as you journey through the train, detaching its carts, the children can be rescued by following Glitch Techs outside the train.

MIKO

So, we have to take care of the bad guys while you send search and rescue teams for the kids?

B.I.T.T.

That is correct.

PHIL

But there's one more thing we probably should've mentioned back at the clearing.

He displays the train station from the cold opening over himself and B.I.T.T. They watch the train pass the station, and the glitches emerge from the building.

PHIL (CONT.)

The glitch has already reached its viral state, so if it passes by any video games...

FIVE

Then, more games will sprout glitch monsters, and they'll go on rampages in their town.

PHIL

Exactly! We'll extract the kids from the carts that you separate and do anything else from our end, but you three need to shut that train down before it causes more damage and kidnaps more kids.

MIKO

We're on it, boss! Five's friends, my little brother and sister, are on this crazy train, and we won't stop until they're sipping hot cocoa with us at the fireplace!

PHIL

Good to hear. Now, get to work!

Phil and B.I.T.T. hang up, and the gauntlet screen reverts to its home screen.

MITCH

You heard him, blueberries, let's get to the next stage, newbies!

Five and Miko smile and run up with Mitch to the front of the car.

FIVE

Uh... just a second, Mitch.

Five sits next to Lupita and wraps his arm around her.

FIVE

Hey, Lu, are you okay?

LUPITA

Five, what's going on? I was in the car with my parents. I'm scared.

FIVE

Hey, this is a scary situation. It's okay to be scared. Remember what I told you when you're scared and low on HP?

LUPITA

Take a breath, think about what you can do, and do your best.

FIVE

That's right. You've got this, Lu. We're going to figure this out together, okay? All we have to do is take it one step at a time.

Lupita nods, her breathing steadying as she repeats the mantra in her mind. The tension in her shoulders begins to ease, and she looks at Five with a hint of determination in her eyes.

LUPITA

Okay, Five. What's the plan?

FIVE

You sit tight with the other kids in this cart. Help will come and take you all home to your families. My friends have some work to do now.

Five looks at Mitch and Miko, and they nod at each other. Mitch opens the door, and the three exit the cart and into the vestibule to stand momentarily.

MIKO

That was incredibly, super sweet,
and adorable!

Miko's smartphone rings. She takes it out of her pocket to see her
mom, MAYUMI, on the caller ID.

MIKO

Oh boy, I think I know what this is
about.

MITCH

Answer like you usually would and
try to act surprised.

Miko nods, takes a deep breath, answers the call, and holds the
phone to her ear.

MIKO

Hey, Mom, what's up!

MAYUMI

Miko! Oh, thank goodness! Are you
safe, honey? Where are you?

MIKO

Yeah, Mom, I'm fine, I'm still
working with my friends. Is
something wrong on your end?

MAYUMI

Miko, LEXI, and LEE are missing!

MIKO

What, are you serious? What happened
to them?

MAYUMI

I... I don't know. We were decorating
the Christmas tree... these lights
swallowed them... and they were just
gone!

MIKO

Uh... a strange light?

MAYUMI

That *is* what happened! Your father, Nika, and Geoffrey, they all saw everything, too!

MIKO (MUTTERS)

Wow, shoes on the other foot.

MAYUMI

What was that?

MIKO

Uh... Did you call the police?

MAYUMI

Your father is on the phone with them right now, and Nika is

MAYUMI (CONT.)

calling her friends to see if any other kids are gone. Miko, I know you're working, but we need you here, now!

MIKO

Uh...

Miko looks at Mitch and Five, focuses more on Five, then turns and looks at Lupita through the door window. She takes a deep breath and talks on the phone again.

MIKO

Mom, I think what we need to do is chill and strategize. My friends and I are, uh... Driving around town! We can look for Lexi and Lee if they're still around.

MAYUMI

Okay... okay... That's smart. Thank you, honey. Call us if you find them, and we'll call you back.

MIKO

Cool, okay, gotta go now, Mom. I promise to call you later.

MAYUMI

I love you, sweetie.

MIKO

I love you too, Mom. Bye!

Miko hangs up and pockets her phone.

MIKO

That was not fun. I could hear the Empty Nest Syndrome in her voice.

FIVE

You did great, Meeks. And don't worry, we'll find Lexi and Lee.

MITCH

Well, since I don't have any personal kids at stake, are we ready to go?

Miko uses her gauntlet to materialize a pair of white, blue, and black chakrams in her hands, grinning and striking a pose. Five materializes a rifle and a more advanced tower shield, colored white and blue, in his other hand, and grins, striking a pose.

MIKO

Waiting on you now, Mitchell.

He smiles, using his gauntlet to materialize two laser pistols, one white and blue and one black and red, on his belt, and a longsword with a ghost face on the hilt strapped to his back. They open the door to the next car and walk inside.

MITCH

Game on!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

In the sky, a fleet of Hinobi-brand Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters flies over the railroad track in a massive grass field. One of the leading helicopters carries Zarah, Haneesh, Bergy, Nix, B.I.T.T., and Phil, with Phil in the pilot's seat. Phil's employees sit in their seats with worried expressions as his gauntlet plays its ringtone.

GAUNTLET COMPUTER

Incoming call from...

JOAN'S VOICE

Joan Fishback.

Phil answers the call, and the gauntlet projects a holo-screen displaying Joan sitting in the seat of another rescue chopper.

PHIL

Yeah, you got Phil.

JOAN

Have you heard anything from your favorite tech trio yet, Philbert?

PHIL

No, not since we last called them, and explained that this glitch train is going town to town, kidnapping kids, and unleashing glitches from every game it passes by. They'll call once they decouple the first five cars. We'll rescue the kids on board, then rinse and repeat until they beat the glitch.

JOAN

And you're sure they can handle it by themselves? It's a lot of train to cover.

PHIL

Have some faith, Joan. They'll be just fine.

Phil presses a button on his touchscreen, and the hollo-screen is sucked back into his gauntlet.

PHIL

I hope...

JOAN'S VOICE

I'm still on the line!

Phil touches the touchscreen on his gauntlet to end the call.

On the Krampus Express train, Mitch, Five, and Miko battle dark elf conductors in the third car. Mitch clashes his broadsword against a dark elf conductor's sword. As the blades press against each other, Mitch pulls out one of his laser pistols, presses it against his opponent's stomach, fires three times, and the dark elf conductor bursts into red and green flames. With his sword free, Mitch swings down and lowers himself as he cuts and wounds another dark elf conductor. Miko jumps up from behind Mitch and throws her two chakrams at the dark elf conductor, damaging it twice, causing it to explode into red and green flames. One of the dark elf conductors raises its weapon in the air, preparing to slash down on Miko. Five quickly aims his rifle and fires at Miko's attacker before he can swing, damaging it once.

Miko jumps into a back flip as she holds her hands and retracts her chakrams. As her weapons rise from the floor and fly to her, they strike the dark elf conductor from behind individually, and the minion bursts into red and green flames. Mitch stands up, sheaths his sword, pulls out his second laser pistol, and fires rapidly at the remaining sword-wielding dark elf conductors. Mitch shoots the sword-wielding dark elf conductors, bursting two into flames and only damaging the last one once before pulling the triggers on his empty guns. The last remaining enemy charges at Mitch, screaming.

MITCH

You want to finish this one, Miko?

MIKO

So nice of you to finally offer,
Mitch Williams!

Miko throws her chakrams one at a time. The projectile weapons damage the minion twice, and it bursts into flames. Miko holds out her hands as her chakrams return to her. She grabs them, straightens her posture, growling, and looks around the car.

MIKO

Lexi, Lee, are you in here, my chibi sibs?

The children raised their heads in their seats as Five entered the aisle.

MITCH

Miko, they weren't in the last two cars when you asked in them. I doubt the third time's going to be the charm.

FIVE

Mitch, don't be a jerk! She's worried about her family!

MITCH

I know that, and I get it! You know I'd be worried about my brothers and sister. If they were ten years younger than me, they'd be on this train too. But we all saw it at the clearing. This is a long train. We have no idea how many cars this caboose is pulling down the track, and they could be in any of them.

FIVE

Let's narrow it down, then.

Five dematerializes his shield and gun, and types on his gauntlet to make a call. After the dial tone rings, B.I.T.T. answers and appears on his gauntlet's screen.

B.I.T.T.

Greetings to you, TechTag; Hi_5!
Have you decoupled your first complete stage of the train?

FIVE

Not yet, BITT. We just finished the third car. Could you tell us how many cars are on this train?

B.I.T.T.

Of course, one moment, please, as I
gather your intel!

B.I.T.T.'s screen face turns from a smiling face into a loading
pinwheel screen.

B.I.T.T.

Browsing for intel...

Five and Miko glance at each other in anticipation while Mitch
rolls his eyes and taps his foot.

B.I.T.T.

According to the Hinobi database and
the incomplete strategy guide
created by the creator of The
Krampus Express, there are a total
of twenty cars.

MITCH

See, we'll find them in no time. So,
we need to...

FIVE

Wait, that's all the cars? I thought
this thing was programmed to kidnap
every kid in the world.

B.I.T.T.

That is correct. According to the
incomplete strategy guide, the
game's hero discovers that once the
train reaches its max capacity, it
teleports to Krampus's lair, drops
off the children, then teleports
back to where it left off and
continues its kidnapping tour.

FIVE

What? But Krampus is just folklore.
It doesn't have a lair to teleport
to.

MIKO

So, where's it going to take them?

FIVE

Well, if it does teleport regardless, it could be the most random location. It could go back to the coordinates it spawned from its game (begins freaking out), the darkest part of a wild jungle, a mountain's cliff, the bottom of the sea, the top of an active volcano, or the moon!

Miko begins panicking as Five types on his gauntlet, and a rocket launcher manifests, which he holds up with both hands on his shoulder.

MIKO

We've got to stop this evil child-napping Christmas-stealing train!

Five and Miko run down the aisle, automatically hanging up on B.I.T.T., bumping Mitch, and making him fall on his butt.

MITCH

That's funny, I think I had the exact same idea earlier!

Mitch stands up and runs after them as Miko opens the door, and she and Five run in. The door begins closing as Mitch leaps and manages to enter the vestibule. He then runs up behind Five and Miko in the next car as the door closes behind him. Mitch stops behind his teammates and gasps, looking past Five and Miko. They stand in a dining car with tables and chairs, rather than passenger seats.

Two dark elf conductors sit at each table, each holding a fork and a knife. They drool, their tongues sticking out, and smile. On each table is a child tied up and gagged with an apple in their mouth on a silver serving tray.

FIVE

Oh, this is not up to code.

MITCH

What happened to dropping them off
at their lair?

FIVE

Well, maybe this is some kind of...

Five stops talking when he notices something horrifying at the end
of the dining car.

FIVE (CONT.)

Miko, look!

They all look down the dining car to see Miko's little brother,
Lee, on a silver serving tray, tied up and gagged with an apple in
his mouth, and crying.

MIKO

(Gasp) My little bro, Lee!

She sprints down the dining car, scowling.

MIKO

He's not on the menu!

FIVE

Miko, wait! There might still be...

The door at the front of the dining car opens, and a squad of dark
elf waiters wearing vests, ties, and aprons storms in and
intercepts Miko.

MITCH AND FIVE

Minions.

Miko gives out a battle cry as she leaps at the squad and delivers
swift and accurate slashes at the first squad member.

MITCH

Ugh... let her go nuts, we'll save the
other kids.

FIVE

Right!

Mitch starts shooting the sitting conductors with his pistols as Five dematerializes his rocket launcher and starts shooting other sitting conductors with his standard gauntlet beam. Each conductor receives three energy blasts and bursts into flames of red and green. As Miko destroys a dark elf server, she gasps when she notices one of the conductors at her brother's table lowering his fork down on his posterior.

MIKO

I said...

She crosses her arms, holding her chakrams next to her head.

MIKO (CONT.)

He's not...

The blade on her left chakram catches on blue fire.

MIKO (CONT.)

On...

The blade on her right chakram catches on blue fire.

MIKO (CONT.)

The menu!

Miko swings and throws her blazing chakrams. The weapons continue spinning and burning as they ricochet off the walls of the dining car, damaging the enemies and bursting them into flames of red and green. After destroying the last enemies, the chakrams retract into Miko's hands. She dematerializes them and runs to Lee's table with Mitch and Five behind her.

MIKO

Lee! Are you okay, little brother?

Miko takes the apple out of his mouth and tosses it over her shoulder as the ropes around Lee dematerialize. He screams and continues crying.

LEE

I (sniff) want (sniff) mommy!

Miko picks him up and sits him down.

MIKO

Yeah, yeah, I thought you might, buddy. But she's not here right now; she's at home waiting for us. Let's give her a call. Give us a sec, fellas?

FIVE

Sure, Meeks. (Looks at Mitch) Let's go apple picking.

Mitch nods, and he and Five take the apples from the kids' mouths, releasing them from their binds. Miko takes out his smartphone and calls her mom, and the dial tone plays.

MIKO (TO LEE)

Don't tell her where we are.

LEE

But I don't know where...

MIKO

Right, then don't tell her you were about to be eaten.

The dial tone ends, and their mother answers.

MAYUMI

Miko, did you find them?

MIKO

I found Lee. Say hi to mommy, Lee!

LEE

Mommy, I'm scared, and I don't know where we are!

MAYUMI

Lee, honey, it's going to be okay. Your big sister and her friends will find Lexi and bring you home. Can you be a big boy and help them find her?

LEE

I (sniff), I don't know.

MIKO

Lee, just stay close to me, okay? I promise to keep you safe. Then, once we find Lexi, we'll be home in no time.

LEE

But I wanna go home now!

MIKO

I do, too, little man. But Lexi's not there. You want all your sisters to be with you. I'd love for the whole family to be together on Christmas, don't you?

LEE

Yes...

MIKO

Then stick with your big sis, little bro. Hinobi Tech Support is on the case! We'll find Lexi and be home just in time to decorate the tree and the gingerbread house, Mom!

MAYUMI

Thank you, Miko. I love you, kids.

MIKO

We love you too, Mom! Right, Lee?

LEE

I love you, mommy!

MAYUMI

I love you, too, sweet Lee. Call me when you find Lexi and come straight home, Miko!

MIKO

Roger, over and out!

Miko hangs up and pockets her smartphone. She looks over at her friends as Five removes the binds from one last kid, who is surrounded by the other children he and Mitch have set free. Mitch returns to the door at the back of the car. He presses the button next to the door frame, and the door opens.

MITCH

Good, we can backtrack.

He peeks his head through to the past car.

MITCH (CONT.)

And all is calm, all is right, the way we left it.

Mitch pulls himself back into the dining car.

MITCH (CONT.)

Okay, everyone, please take your seats in the next car and wait for a rescue to arrive.

The kids whimper and mumble as they follow his instructions and leave the dining car.

FIVE

Take a seat and stay out of the aisle; no scary elves will come for you there.

The last child exited to the next car, and the door closed. Mitch and Five begin walking to the front of the car when they notice Miko is holding Lee in her arms.

MITCH

Uh... Miko, are you thinking of taking him with us?

MIKO

Well, I can't leave him alone. Just let him join the party until we find Lexi; then she can watch him until rescue picks them up.

Mitch grumbles and folds his arms. Five runs to the car's front door and looks through the window.

FIVE

It looks like the boss level is set up like the first three with all the chairs, so...

MITCH

Fine, but make sure he stays seated and doesn't make any disturbances while we grind.

MIKO

Deal, baby seal!

MITCH

Then it's time for a boss fight!

Five presses the button to open the door, types on his gauntlet to materialize another rocket launcher on his shoulders, and holds it with both hands. He takes point as they walk through the vestibule and into the next ordinary car. As they walk down the aisle, Miko sets Lee down in the first seat.

MIKO

Just sit tight, Lee. Your big sis has to beat a boss like a boss!

She types on her gauntlet and materializes twin Tommy guns in her hands. Mitch pulls out his laser pistols, which hum with a ringing noise as they finish recharging.

MITCH

Come on out, first boss!

The front doors of the car hiss open with a metallic groan as Mitch, Five, and Miko come to a stop. A towering figure steps through the open door. KRAMPUS, the dreaded Christmas demon, is clad in a tattered conductor's uniform, with a peaked cap between its long horns. Its glowing red eyes chillingly stare at Mitch, Five, and Miko, and one of its clawed hands grips a spanking paddle that crackles faintly with dark energy.

MIKO

I'm guessing that's Krampus.

Krampus's crooked smile reveals jagged teeth, and its deep, rumbling voice fills the air as it uses its free clawed hand to point at Mitch, Five, and Miko. A long red health bar appears above its horns.

KRAMPUS

Naughty...

FIVE

Well, here's your lump of coal!

Five fires his rocket launcher, and the missile flies down the aisle. With both hands, Krampus holds out his paddle and blocks the rocket, which explodes on impact, covering the target in smoke. The smoke clears, and Krampus is revealed to be undamaged, with no shrinkage in its health bar, and it smiles and cackles.

FIVE

Oh, nerds...

Krampus roars and runs down the aisle. Mitch runs past Five and fires his laser pistols rapidly at Krampus. As the holiday demon charges, it takes the neon blue bullets and mildly damages its body, causing minor exteriorization in its health bar. Krampus stops in front of Mitch, and he slams his paddle down on him.

MITCH

Fine, let's try up close!

Mitch jumps back, holsters his pistols, lands, draws his sword, bounces back at Krampus, slashes down on Krampus's chest, and looks up at the monster with a confident grin.

Krampus snarls in pain as its body stops flashing red and its health bar diminishes only a pinch more.

MITCH

What?

Miko fires her Tommy guns and damages him slightly further with each bullet. Krampus takes a long leap backward to the front of the car. Mitch sheaths his sword, draws, and fires his laser pistols at the boss. Krampus raises his paddle to the ceiling, then swats it against the floor, sending a shockwave of dark energy that shakes the ground and knocks down Mitch and Five, as Miko leaps into her brother's seat and covers him while Mitch's pistols and Five's rocket launcher dematerialize.

MIKO

Are you okay, Lee?

He nods his head, whimpering.

MITCH

Argh... You two give me some cover
fire, I'll deal the melee strikes!

FIVE

Got it!

Five types of his gauntlet materialize a white Gatling gun with light blue barrels in his hands. Miko unwraps from her brother and steps back out into the aisle.

MIKO

Let's shoot 'em up!

As Mitch charges toward Krampus, sword in hand, Five and Miko open fire with their newly long-range weapons. The air crackles with energy as the Gatling gun and the Tommy guns spit bursts of blue light. Krampus roars, blocking the incoming fire with its paddle, which glows with a sinister aura, absorbing some damage as its health bar lowers.

Mitch uses the distraction to close the gap. He leaps into the air, his sword glowing faintly with a blue hue, and lands a fierce slash across Krampus's chest. The demon snarls in fury, swinging its paddle wildly at Mitch, narrowly missing him. As Five and Miko continue firing, Five's gauntlet rings as it receives a call.

GAUNTLET'S COMPUTER

Incoming call from...

ZARAH'S VOICE

Zarah.

Five blushes at the sound of her voice and name, and the sight of her picture on his screen.

FIVE

Oh, boy. Miko, can you go double
time for a quick minute?

MIKO

I gotcha, buddy!

Five dematerializes his Gatling gun, sits, presses the screen on his gauntlet to answer the call, and shows Zarah sitting in the back of the helicopter.

FIVE (BLUSHING)

Hey, Zarah, what's up?

ZARAH

Five, you guys might have a problem.
Are you already fighting the first boss?

FIVE

Yeah, why?

ZARAH

Because you need to be careful when
you beat it.

FIVE

What? Hang on, let me conference
everyone in.

Five presses a button on his gauntlet's screen, and Mitch and Miko can now hear them through their headsets.

FIVE

Guys, something's up with this boss.
Zarah, go ahead.

ZARAH

It's not the boss, it's the track.
Haneesh hacked into the monorail
system and found out you're heading
for a sharp turn.

Mitch jumps back to avoid a strike from Krampus's paddle.

MITCH

That's all you're calling about?

Mitch swings his sword at Krampus, but the beast leaps back, avoiding the slash.

MITCH (CONT.)

We have something that's actually urgent here!

FIVE

Wait a minute. If this train's going at its max speed with all these cars still attached, then...

Five mumbles as he does math in his head and darts his eyes back and forth, and Zarah blushes and smiles, watching him.

FIVE (CONT.)

Oh, nerds! The cars could fall off the track and crash! Thanks, Zarah. Have Haneesh send me the map data. (gets ready to hang up but pauses) Please.

Five hangs up.

In the helicopter, Zarah continues smiling as her gauntlet's screen goes blank.

ZARAH

(sigh) He is so sweet.

She looks at Haneesh sitting next to her with a bossy face and tone in her voice.

ZARAH

You heard him, send him the map!

Haneesh begins rapidly typing on his gauntlet.

In the Krampus Express' fifth car, Five soon receives the map of the train track, and it immediately displays on his gauntlet.

FIVE

Okay, I got the map, time for a tactical update! If we beat this boss level and decouple the cars now, they'll tip over on the turn and crash, taking all the kids

FIVE (CONT.)

with them inside! We need to damage it as much as possible for now and wait to finish it until we complete the turn.

MIKO

Sounds like a challenge, Mitch?

MITCH

Hardly! You keep shooting, Miko! Five, watch the map, and ready your support items!

FIVE AND MIKO

On it!

Five types on his gauntlet as Miko continues shooting. Krampus mindlessly runs toward Mitch as it receives multiple minor damages from Miko. It reaches Mitch and attempts to swat him with its paddle, but he parries with his sword. Mitch slashes Krampus down over its chest before it leaps back to the front of the car. Miko's bullets continue making contact and causing damage as its health bar shrinks and changes from red to green.

Mitch and Miko startle at the change in the health bar.

MITCH

Miko!

MIKO

Holding fire!

She stops shooting her Tommy guns and holds them up.

MIKO

Five, where are we on that turn?

FIVE

It's coming up, but I've got an idea to buy some time. Stand by!

Krampus raises its paddle, and Mitch and Miko jump as it slams it to shake the floor. They land back on their feet.

MITCH AND MIKO

Five!

FIVE

I got what we need, hang on!

Five steps out into the aisle as Krampus runs down, as the map displays the train nearing the sharp turn.

FIVE

Now!

Five aims his gauntlet and unleashes a purple energy stream at Krampus. Upon contact, it dissipates and freezes Krampus, accompanied by a pause icon over its head, with a red five-layered over it.

FIVE

Get ready to finish it in five...!

Five types on his gauntlet and materializes a lightning bolt in his hand and prepares to throw it like a spear—the red five changes into a red four.

FIVE

Four...

The train reaches the turn on the track and changes its direction of flow—the red four changes into a red three.

FIVE

Three...

Miko dematerializes her Tommy guns, types on her gauntlet, and manifests a new gold chest plate with a pentagon in the center radiating light—the red three changes into a red two.

FIVE

Two...

Mitch readies his broadsword as its blade glows red—the red two changes into a red one.

FIVE

One...

The back of the train completes the turn.

The pause icon dissipates from Krampus as it continues charging.

FIVE

Now!

Five throws his lightning bolt at Krampus, which electrocutes and stuns it on contact. Miko crosses her arms over her chest, then thrusts her chest out at a wide and long laser beam shoots from the pentagon. The beam pushes back Krampus as its health bar continues diminishing until Miko's chest piece runs out of power and stops firing. Mitch charges at Krampus, leaps, and delivers a slash of his broadsword down on its body as its health bar depletes. Krampus roars in pain as its health bar empties and dissipates.

The beast growls and groans as it drops its paddle. Its weapon bursts into green and red flames as it waddles backward to the front of the car. Krampus glares at its enemies as the windows on both sides of the train car open. Flurries of snow blow in from the windows, surround, and cover Krampus. The snow disperses, revealing that Krampus had disappeared.

Mitch's sword and Miko's Tommy guns dematerialize.

MIKO

Huh, that didn't look like your usual boss death cutscene.

FIVE

I guess that he's the boss at every stage.

The train car shakes to the sound of whirling gears screeching.

MITCH

The cars are decoupling; we've got to move!

MIKO

Come on, little brother!

Miko picks Lee up from his seat and carries him as she runs with Mitch and Five to the front of the car. Mitch presses the button to open the door to the car's patio, and they gasp at how far away the next patio on the rest of the speeding train is ahead of their severed, decelerating cars.

FIVE

Oh, man, B.I.T.T. wasn't kidding about having a brief window.

MITCH

Well, we're not camping here!

Mitch aims his gauntlet at the back of the fleeing train car's patio, manifesting a four-clawed hook on his knuckles. Five and Miko aim their gauntlets at the next patio, manifesting their four-clawed hooks on their knuckles, and all three fire their grappling hooks on light blue energy tethers. Five and Miko squeal and clench their teeth in anticipation as the three hooks reach the high point and descend. The hooks reach and latch onto the bars on the patio.

MIKO

Hang on tight, Lee!

Miko tightens her arm around Lee as he buries himself in her shoulder. The light blue energy tethers tighten, and all three are pulled off the patio. As all three pull in towards the patio, Mitch uses his free hand to hold down his hair to protect it from the extra acceleration.

FIVE

Oh, nerds, this is cold!

Mitch, Five, and Miko with her brother, Lee, reach the patio and grab its safety rail. Mitch and Five use their free hands to grab, hold, and pull themselves over the bar, and their hooks dematerialize. The boys gather around Miko and help pull her up onto the patio as her hook dematerializes. Lee takes his face out of Miko's shoulder, and the whole party looks back at the first five cars on the track as they shrink in perspective.

FIVE AND MIKO

Phew...

Mitch holds his gauntlet up to his face and makes a call.

MITCH

Phil, come in, do you copy?

Phil answers his call and is displayed on the gauntlet screen.

PHIL

I read you, Mitch. Tell me you've got good news.

MITCH

Plenty of it. We beat the first boss level and decoupled the first string of cars.

Miko presses herself and Lee against Mitch's face.

MIKO

And we found the first of my little siblings, little Lee!

Mitch pushes them back.

MITCH

The rest of the kids in the cars are sitting idle, waiting for your rescue teams to pick them up.

PHIL

Copy that, keep up the good work!

The call ends, and Mitch's gauntlet screen goes blank. Lee tugs at Mitch's sleeve, eyes wide with a burrowed and sad expression.

LEE

Do you think we'll find Lexi inside, Mr. Funny Hair?

MITCH (AGGRAVATED)

Funny hair?

Miko clears her throat, and Mitch sees her scowling at him.

MITCH (SIGHS)

She might be in this car; she might not. But we'll find her, little buddy. (looks at Five) We'll find all of them. (looks back at Lee) Stick close, and we'll make sure everyone gets home safe for Christmas.

MIKO

Onward, brave heroes!

They open the door and leap into the train car. Miko sits her brother down in the first seat, and she aims her bare gauntlet at the car's front door, along with Mitch and Five, as the door closes behind them.

FIVE

Okay, from what we've seen so far, the enemies always walk out that door once we walk halfway down the aisle. Thankfully, they don't seem to attack the hostages or anyone while they're in the seats. But they might have new combat patterns for these new stages.

Mitch walks ahead of them.

MITCH

Don't sweat it, newb. No surprise is going to get the best of Mitch Willi...

A luggage cabinet above the seats bursts open, and a small naked creature with claws and long pointy ears springs out and latches onto Mitch's face.

MITCH

AAAAAH!

He grabs the small creature and tries to pry it off.

FIVE (SCREAMS)

What the heck is that?

MITCH (SQUEAL)

Get it off! Get it off!

Five and Miko run up to Mitch, and they both grab hold of the small creature and try to yank it off of him.

MIKO

Maximum effort!

Miko and Five finally fling the small creature off Mitch's face as the three fall on their backs as the beast flies and crashes face-first into the train car's back door. It slowly slid down to the floor as Mitch, Five, and Miko sat up to look at it. The tiny monster stood up, turned around, and cackled. Mitch growled, standing up. The miniature beast springs up to the luggage cabinets. Mitch aims and fires his tech gauntlet's beam at the space between the creature and the cabinet, lands a direct hit on the monster, and instantly destroys it as it bursts into green and red flames.

Five and Miko stand up.

FIVE

Well, that was... different.

MITCH (PANICS)

How's my face?

Mitch turns Five and Miko around to look at him.

MITCH (CONT. PANICKING)

How's my face?

Five and Miko glance at each other, make solemn faces, and look back at Mitch.

FIVE

It's not good, Mitch.

Mitch pulls himself back, gasping, and covers his face.

FIVE (SMIKRS)

Your complexion looks exactly the same as ever.

MIKO (GRINS)

And it didn't even shave what you try to pass as a mustache.

Five and Miko laugh as Mitch scowls at them as the train car's front door opens. He turns around as Five and Miko look past him. Three dark elf conductors with swords walk in and are followed by two new minions. Two more dark elf conductors with bows and arrows take opposite sides of the door and ready their first arrows. Mitch turns around as he, Five, and Miko type on their gauntlets.

MITCH

Good timing...

Mitch materializes a small white Gatling gun with blue nozzles over his bare hand. Five materializes a silver, red, and blue backpack with arm bars, and a cannon nozzle bent over his head. Miko materializes a red helmet with a rhino horn on her head.

MITCH

I was getting furious!

Meanwhile, as the string of five separated train cars decelerates to a complete stop, the fleet of Glitch Tech rescue choppers continues flying three thousand feet above the track. In the leading helicopter, Phil spots the train cars.

PHIL

Okay, there are the first idle cars!
Back five, descend, and take the
kids home; then return to the fleet
as soon as possible.

The five helicopters in the back of the fleet descend and surround the train cars. Bergy and every other Glitch Tech exit their helicopters, leave their doors open, and run up to them, opening the doors on both the front and rear train cars. The Glitch Techs organize the kids to exit the train cars and gather them into groups with other children from their hometowns. They sit the groups in different helicopters.

Before Bergy walks back inside his rescue chopper, he stops at a realization and turns to look back at the barren and idle line of train cars.

BERGY

That's weird. You think that
would've de-pixelated after not
being a part of the game anymore.

Bergy shrugged and boarded his helicopter. All the helicopters close their doors, ascend, and separate to take the children to their various homes. As the helicopters fly away, the string of five idle train cars remains still on the track, glitching to the colors green and red for a quick second.

Back on the Krampus Express, Mitch, Five, and Miko make it to the vestibule between the third and dining car. Lee sits in the front seat as Mitch and five stand on the sides of the door. Five prepares to press the button as Miko stands, grinning at the door.

FIVE

Ready, Miko?

Miko types on her gauntlet, her soles on her shoes pixelate and transform with a yellow gem on the heels, a clunky blue transparent bracelet materializes on her bare wrist, and she becomes momentarily surrounded by twinkling blue lights. After the lights stop, Miko curls up in a ball, rolls in place as beams of blue light gently shoot down on her, and her body becomes covered in a transparent blue light from head to toe. She stops rolling in place, stands, and makes a pose.

MIKO

Ready...

Five presses the button, and the door slides open. Miko slowly runs into the second dining car. She sees the tables occupied with dark elf conductors in chairs, and children tied up and apple-gagged on the tables.

MIKO (CONT.)

Go!

She curls up into a ball and becomes a speeding stream of blue light that flies to one dark elf conductor after another and instantly destroys them on contact, bursting them into red and green flames, and emptying the seats. Once all the dark elf conductors are gone, Miko stops, uncurls, and stands in the middle of the dining car to look around.

MIKO

Lexi, are you in here?

As Miko searches in vain, the dining car's front door opens behind her, and the dark elf waiting staff, along with dark elves dressed as cooks, enter. Five and Mitch enter the dining car, aiming their gauntlets at the front door.

FIVE

Miko!

MITCH

Move!

Miko runs to the side as Mitch and Five fire their gauntlet beams as quickly as they can. They damage and destroy each dark elf one by one as they enter. Once the red and green flames at the front

door die out, Miko looks around the dining car again for her little sister.

MIKO

Ugh... She's not here either.

Miko begins taking apples out of the children's mouths one by one as Five walks into the dining car and takes the same task.

MITCH

Come on, take a seat hear in the
back car!

All the children follow Mitch's instructions and take a seat in the third train car. Once the last child from the dining car enters the third train car, Mitch holds his hand out to Lee. Lee hops out of his seat and to the floor and takes Mitch's hand. Mitch walks Lee over to Miko, who picks him up in her arms.

LEE

No Lexi?

MIKO

No Lexi. But it's not the end, bud.
We'll find her eventually. Let's go
show a boss who's boss!

FIVE

Uh... before we do, let me take a look
at the track map to check for any
turns up ahead.

Mitch, Miko, and Lee wait and watch Five in silence as he scrolls the train track map on a holographic map projected from his gauntlet. A grumbling noise turns them away from Five to a frowning Lee and his stomach.

MIKO

Uh, oh, running on empty, fella?

Miko takes out a granola/candy bar from her pocket and gives it to a happy Lee. Mitch widens his eyes to an epiphany, types on his gauntlet to display its battery life with seventy-nine percent power.

MITCH

Huh... We might need to start pacing our high-level weapons after this boss fight. Can't bag a glitch with dead gauntlets.

MIKO

Good idea. Boss fights are marathons, not minion sprints.

FIVE

Oh, nerds. Speaking of which, I've got a route, and there's a town up ahead! If the train makes it there, the glitch will go viral and unleash more glitch monsters!

MIKO

Uh... any chance we have time to beat the game before it arrives?

FIVE

Uh... No.

MITCH

What about us?

FIVE

You're seriously thinking of yourself right now?

MITCH

I mean, if the train starts with four lines of cars at the start of its game, will it restore the cars we took out? And what if we reset and are sent back to level one?

FIVE

Oh, right, uh... yeah, that might be possible, and bad. We can't let that happen, so... let me hack further into the train tracks system.

FIVE (CONT.)

Maybe there's a railroad switch that can turn the train onto another line.

MITCH

Well, then you'll have to sit out of the boss fight until you do. Let's move.

Mitch, Five, and Miko hold Lee over to the dining car's front door, Mitch opens it, and they walk through the vestibule. Mitch presses the button to open the door to the fifth train car. They slowly walk in as Mitch takes point, Miko sits Lee down in a seat, and Five sits next to him as he continues hacking.

MITCH

Let's wait to pick our weapons until Krampus makes his appearance again. He'll probably have something worse than a paddle.

Miko salutes him as they aim their gauntlets at the train car's front door to a black void. They slowly walk forward and stop as the door opens. Mitch and Miko glare sternly in anticipation of Krampus's appearance. A beastly growl breaks the tense silence as a green reindeer with candy cane-colored antlers and a golden bell for a nose, stampedes down the aisle.

MIKO

What in the island of misfit toys is that?

MITCH

Just blast it already!

Mitch and Miko fire their gauntlet beams, but the purple lasers bounce off the beast. Mitch and Miko are shocked at the beasts' invincibility and stop shooting.

MIKO

Plan B?

MITCH

Take a seat!

Mitch and Miko take seats on opposite sides of the train, and the mutant reindeer speed past them. As it runs, Mitch and Miko poke their heads into the aisle and turn to watch the creature. It reaches and slams its antlers and head into the door and collapses on impact. Christmas tree ornaments appear and fly in circles over its head as it bursts into red and green flames that immediately disperse.

MIKO

Um... okay...

Mitch and Miko step back into the aisle in confusion.

MIKO

What the heck was with Rudolf?

Mitch shrugs as another beastly growl regains their focus as they turn around and watch Krampus step out into the train car with a double-sided battle axe with red blade edges and a candy cane handle. A long red health bar materializes over his horns again as he roars.

MITCH

Well, I would say that's worse than a paddle.

MIKO

I'm not sure if I should fight, run, or sing carols.

Krampus roars as he throws his axe down the aisle at them. Mitch and Miko duck as the axe twirls over their heads and break through the train car's back door. Krampus holds his hand out, Mitch and Miko stay down as they watch the axe fly back to him, and he grabs it. Mitch and Miko type on their gauntlets as they stand back up. Mitch manifests a solid black target shield with a large purple panther on it over his gauntlet and a spear with a black staff and purple blade in his hand, as Miko manifests a dual set of short swords in her hands.

Krampus lets out a longer roar as he sprints down the aisle, wildly swinging his axe side to side. Mitch jumps ahead of Miko as he raises his shield. His shield takes multiple hits from the repetitive slashing axe as he is pushed back. Miko walks backward as Mitch is pushed in her direction.

MITCH

Urgh... I hate playing defense! Miko,
once we have his pattern...

MIKO

Read ya loud and clear, Williams!

Krampus stops swinging his axe and jumps back to the front of the train car in a single bound. He swings his axe from multiple angles, and each swing unleashes red and green energy crescents at Mitch and Miko.

MITCH

Oh, come on!

Mitch raises his shield again, and each energy crescent disperses to nothingness as they contact it.

MIKO

Uh, Five, we could use some long-
range here!

FIVE

Not yet, I'm almost through the last
firewall!

Krampus stops swinging and firing energy crescents. He raises and twirls his axe over his head, swings it down, and as he breaks into the floor, he fires a red energy crescent that reaches from the floor to the ceiling at Mitch and Miko.

MITCH

Oh, boosh, this is gonna hurt.

Mitch keeps his shield raised as the giant energy crescent touches his shield and pushes him back. His Feet drag down the floor as Miko gets behind him, pressing against his back, trying to keep him from being pushed back further. But her feet are dragged across the floor like Mitch's until they reach the back of the train car and their backs against the broken door. After another second, the strongest energy crescent fades away, and they push off the door and slouch tiredly.

MITCH

That better be the whole pattern.

Krampus roars as he throws his axe down the aisle at them. Mitch and Miko straighten up, move to opposite sides of the door as the axe breaks and sticks into the door again, deepening the hole it already made.

MIKO

That looks like a repeat to me!

MITCH

Great!

Mitch sets his left foot forward, then raises and throws his spear down the aisle, impacting and sticking into Krampus's solar plexus. He roars in agony as his health bar diminishes, then holds his hand out. The axe flinches in the hole, then flies out of the door. Mitch ducks as it twirls back to Krampus, then straightens up, holds his hand out as his spear launches out of Krampus, stopping his health bar from shortening, and flies straight down the aisle. The retracting weapons fly past each other and return to the hands of their masters. Krampus makes his standard pose as the force from the return of Mitch's spear pulls back his arm as he raises his shield.

MITCH

You're not the only one who knows
that gimmick!

Krampus lets out a longer roar as he sprints down the aisle, wildly swinging his axe side to side.

MIKO

Charge!

Mitch and Miko run down the aisle to the rampaging boss. With Mitch in the lead, he stops first, raises his shield to take the repetitive axe attacks, and is pushed back. Miko jumps into an acrobatic spin over Mitch. She reaches Krampus and delivers coordinated cuts from her longsword on his face as she finishes her jump over Krampus. Miko makes a three-point landing, turns around, and delivers multiple rapid slashes on Krampus's back.

As the red health bar lowers past its halfway point, Krampus stops swinging his axe and jumps back over Miko to the front of the train car in a single bound. He swings his axe from multiple angles, and each swing unleashes red and green energy crescents at Mitch and Miko. Mitch raises his shield again, and each energy crescent disperses to nothingness as they contact it.

MITCH

Miko, let's take a seat!

MIKO

Copy, Cap!

Krampus stops swinging and firing energy crescents. He raises and twirls his axe over his head, and as he swings it down, Mitch and Miko step out of the aisle and sit in the train's seats. As he breaks through the floor with his axe, the blades fire a red energy crescent that reaches from the floor to the ceiling down the aisle. The most powerful energy crescent reaches the damaged door and disperses after completely splitting the door in two. Krampus groans and slouches, exhausted in pain.

As Five continues typing on his gauntlet, oblivious to the action, while Lee watches, holding onto the head of the seat in front of them, a chime sounds off on his gauntlet, making him stop typing and smile.

FIVE

Yes!

He stands up from his seat.

FIVE (CONT.)

Guys, I finished getting through the system! And I've found a rail switch up ahead so we can move around the next town!

MITCH

Do we have to pause for the turn?

FIVE

Uh... (does math in his head) Nope! We've got plenty of space for these cars to decouple safely!

MIKO

Then make the switch and get ready to grab Lee, Fiver.

Mitch and Miko strike action-ready poses facing Krampus.

MIKO (CONT.)

We're going to cut ourselves a piece
of Krampus cake!

Krampus recovers, straightening up and roaring louder and more ferociously than before. The volume of the roar shakes the train car, startling the Glitch Techs and kidnapped passengers.

MIKO

Uh... (smiles nervously) Maybe?

Krampus roars as he throws his axe down the aisle at them. Mitch and Miko duck as the axe twirls over their heads and break through the train car's back door. Krampus holds his hand out. Mitch and Miko stay down as they wait for the axe to fly over them. But the axe reaches the door face front and gets stuck as the handle sticks out of the hole, fidgeting. Krampus makes a nervous face as Mitch and Miko straighten up to look at the struggling weapon, making sinisterly confident faces and looking back at Krampus.

MITCH

Definitely...

Mitch and Miko charge down the aisle. They reach Krampus and deliver accurate techniques appropriate to their weapons as Krampus's health bar continues depleting and turns from red to green. Mitch makes a battle cry as he thrusts his spear into Krampus's chest. The beast roars in agony as Miko crosses her arms over her chest, pounces, and slashes across Krampus's neck with both short swords. The health bar empties and fades away as Mitch pulls out his spear.

The beast growls and groans as it drops its axe. Its weapon bursts into green and red flames. Krampus glares at its enemies as the windows on both sides of the train car open. Mitch and Miko step back as flurries of snow blow in from the windows, surround, and cover Krampus. The snow disperses, revealing that Krampus had disappeared.

Miko's short swords and Mitch's spear and shield dematerialize.

MITCH

Let's be quick on this one!

Mitch hits the button for the front door, and it slides open to the train car's patio, connected to the next train car's patio.

MIKO

Come on, partner!

FIVE

Just a sec...

Five presses the screen on his gauntlet one last time as it displays the rail switch on the train track, as it alters to another track.

FIVE

Got it!

The train car shakes to the sound of whirling gears screeching.

FIVE

Oh, nerds! Date prisa amiguito!

Five grabs Lee and runs out of his seat and down the aisle.

MIKO

Hurry, Five!

MITCH

We have to go now!

Mitch runs through the door and parkours over the guardrails to land on the next train car as they decouple.

MITCH

Hurry!

Five meets up with Miko, who smiles at him, then at Lee in his arms, as the gap widens between the train cars. They step out onto the patio, climb on the guard rail, and jump forward. But the rest of the train accelerated ahead, and Five and Miko realized they were not going to land on the patio. Mitch realized their situation, slapped the screen on his gauntlet, and his hands were covered by white boxing gloves three times the size of his normal hands. Five and Miko reach out their hand as Mitch reaches out to them.

Mitch easily grabs their hands, grunts, pulling them over the rail, and they step onto the patio. The massive boxing gloves dematerialize from Mitch's hands, and he begins panting to catch his breath.

MITCH

So, when I say lines like 'be quick,' 'we have to go now,' or 'hurry,' it's probably best to hit the nitrous!

Five, Miko, and Lee ignored his ranting as they groped him in a group bear hug.

MIKO

You didn't leave us to die!

FIVE (CRIES)

I knew you cared!

MITCH

Ugh... can't you blueberries go a minute without your hugs?

Mitch pushes them off of him and types on his gauntlet to call Phil. After a dial tone finishes ringing, Phil answers and appears on Mitch's gauntlet screen.

PHIL

More good news, I hope, Mitch?

MITCH

We beat the second level, another five train cars are separated and slowing down for a rescue team, and we're about to start level three. Is that good enough?

Five leans in over Mitch's gauntlet.

FIVE

What about the last cars? Did the rescue team manage to take the kids home?

Mitch pushes Five back.

PHIL

Alright, hang on, let me conference Bergy in.

Phil presses a series of buttons on his gauntlet, and Bergy, in his helicopter, slides in on the screen.

PHIL

Bergy, you got those kids home safe and sound?

BERGY

Well, we're still flying en route to Bailey. I don't know about the others, but they managed to board their choppers and take off without a hitch, too. But while I've got you guys, I'd like to run something by you. After we got the kids out of the cars and into our choppers, they kinda just stayed on the track.

FIVE

They didn't derezz? But they're not a part of the game anymore.

BERGY

That's what I thought!

PHIL

Okay, okay, we'll get satellite imagery to monitor the abandoned train cars, but you three need to focus on decoupling the rest.

MITCH

That's what I've been saying!

MIKO

Well, sorry, but I can't stop splitting my focus from the mission to my little sibs. Is there anything in the gear storage that can help me carry him, so I don't have to keep setting him down and picking him up over and over again?

PHIL

B.I.T.T.?

B.I.T.T.

Sending exclusive Hinobi childcare
merchandise to ME_KO!

Miko's gauntlet sounds off a brief ring. She holds it up, presses the email icon displayed on the screen, and a white baby carrier with a blue Hinobi H on its face materializes on her shoulders and chest.

MIKO

Ooh!

Five walks up to Miko, lifts Lee, and gently sets him in the carrier facing forward.

MIKO

Now, that's more like it! Thanks,
Phil, I owe you a Philly!

PHIL (SERIOUS)

I'm gonna hold you to that!

Mitch presses his gauntlet's screen and hangs up. He turns around and presses the button next to the door, and it slides open, and they run inside.

MITCH

Okay, back to the old level grind!

They stop running as they aim their gauntlets at the front door and wait in anticipation. A luggage cabinet opens over one of the seats next to Mitch. Another small creature springs out at him. Mitch uses his non-gauntlet hand to quickly grab it in mid-air, slams it to the floor, and holds it down.

MITCH

Not this time, you glitch!

A blazing gem sword springs out from the tip of Mitch's gauntlet, and he pierces it through the monster's face as it bursts into red and green flames in his hand. Mitch stands up with a wicked grin.

FIVE

Feel better?

MITCH

I always do after taking revenge.

The train car's front door opens, and the three watch three dark elf swordsmen conductors and two dark elf conductor archers step through and take their positions. Heavier footsteps sound off in the darkness of the doorway. Two more dark elf conductors step into the train car in muscular, bodybuilding forms, each carrying a mace and a tall metal shield. The group braces for the confrontation, each adjusting their gauntlets and exchanging a determined glance.

Mitch steps forward cautiously, his gaze locked on the towering figures before them.

MITCH

You two take out the archers, I'll
hold them all off for now!

Five and Miko step out of the aisle on opposite sides, stand in front of the seat cushions, and aim their gauntlets at the archers. The dark elf conductors with close-range weapons charge down the aisle as Mitch holds up his gauntlet with the screen facing them. A tower shield emerges from the gauntlet in front of Mitch and lengthens from the floor to the ceiling. The dark elves in the aisle reach the shield and repetitively slam their weapons as the archers fire their arrows against it.

MITCH

Any time now!

FIVE AND MIKO

We got it!

As all the dark elves were oblivious to Five and Miko, the two fired their gauntlet beams at their archer three times. After taking three hits, the two archers burst into red and green flames. Mitch implodes his shield and uses the shockwave from its destruction to backflip down the aisle. He makes a three-point landing, aims, and fires his gauntlet beam at the dark elves with close combat weapons. After nine precise shots, the dark elves with swords burst into red and green flames.

The newer and heavier dark elf conductors run through the dying flames. Mitch continues firing his gauntlet beams, only to have them bounce off their shields.

MITCH

You two still feel like pitching in here?

Five and Miko step back into the aisle, turn, aim their gauntlets at their respective heavy dark elf, and fire at them three times in the back. After they take three hits, they burst into red and green flames.

MIKO

Lexi, are you in here?

All the kidnapped children stay silent in their seats as the flames die out. Miko and Lee whimper.

FIVE

We're halfway through the game, you guys. She's in one of these cars; we just have to keep going.

MITCH

So, let's speed run this shoot 'em up, shall we?

MIKO

Let's do it to it!

Meanwhile, the second line of severed train cars decelerates to a halt. The fleet of Hinobi rescue choppers near their location from the air. As with the first train cars, five of the back helicopters descend, surround the train cars and track, and land. The Glitch Techs, Nameless among them, exit their helicopters and run to the train cars. Nameless reaches the back door, opens it, and steps inside.

NAMELESS

This is your stop, kids! Get out of your seats and step out! You'll be grouped with other kids from your hometown and escorted to a chopper that'll fly you home! Let's go!

The children reluctantly do as Nameless instructed, despite how scary his filtered voice and mask are to them. Nameless walks through all the cars to help the children in the cars leave as the outside Techs rally them to their designated helicopters. Once the Glitch Techs finish collecting the children onto the aircrafts, Nameless steps out of the last train car into the tall snow. He stops to look at the string of empty cars for a moment in curiosity.

NAMELESS

Hmmm...

Nameless walks around the patio and kneels to look at the track and the train car's wheels. He sees green streams of energy flowing from the track into the wheels, then stands back up and walks back to the front car's patio to look down at the train track to see a third rail. He presses on the side of his helmet's ear.

NAMELESS

Messaging all Glitch Techs, it looks like the train and its cars all have energy tethers to the track and are drawing power from its third rail! Make sure the Tech Trio on the Express know! I have a feeling there's more to beating this game.

Nameless turns and runs to his helicopter. Once he boards his chopper, all five take off and fly away separately.

Back on the Krampus Express in the fifth car in the third chain, Mitch, Five, and Miko are fighting Krampus, now armed with a whip with a swirling red and white candy cane pattern. Five is taking point, wielding a white and blue rifle, firing multiple blue energy bullets that deliver continuous damage to Krampus. Mitch is wielding a neon red transparent scythe. Miko is being orbited by a ring of half a dozen daggers of pure white light. As Krampus keeps receiving damage from Five, it readies its whip over its head.

MITCH

Move, noob!

Mitch brushes past Five as it swings its arm forward, and the whip begins its crack. Mitch stops to raise and hold his scythe up as the whip wraps around the pole.

MITCH

Miko, it's all yours.

MIKO

How kind of you!

As Krampus struggles to pull back its whip, Miko spreads out her arms, and her daggers accelerate their orbiting speed, dazzling Lee. Miko waves her arms forward into a thundering clap as the radiant daggers fly into Krampus's chest, and its health bar empties. It roars as the whip bursts into red and green flames. It stumbles backward as the train car windows open, flurries of snow swarm around it, and erupt to reveal that Krampus had disappeared. Mitch, Five, and Miko dematerialize their weapons and run down the aisle.

The train car shakes to the sound of whirling gears screeching. Mitch reaches the front of the car first and presses the button that opens the door as the train cars decouple. Miko runs out the door first and parkours over the patio rails and lands on the next patio. Five follows her movements and lands next to her as the gap is made between train cars. Mitch repeats their actions and lands between them as the train accelerates from its third string of severed cars.

FIVE

Well, at least that part's gotten easier. Time to call Phil again!

MITCH

Yeah, I got it.

Mitch types on his gauntlet until the screen displays a message saying, "Calling Phil..." Phil answers, and he and his background take over the screen.

PHIL

You three bet another boss?

MITCH

With a perfect finish as usual.
Three down, one to...

PHIL

Yeah, that's great. Did you get Nameless's message?

MITCH

No?

PHIL

He found this glitch's energy tether. It's drawing power from the track's electric third rail.

MIKO

Wait, but the track on the Bailey and Dabney border doesn't have a third rail.

FIVE

It must've been running on reserve power from the last connection. Or it could've also recharged from passing some overhead lines.

PHIL

Well, as far as we can tell, that's how the train cars are still standing, even though you separated them from the rest of the train.

FIVE

Well, we can't just destroy the track, the train will crash with all the kids it's kidnapped in it. And even if we found a power generator for the track to shut down or destroy, the Glitch will still have too much power to destroy it right away. We'll still have to stick to the strategy.

MIKO

Beat the game, beat the Glitch!

MITCH

Thanks for the update, boss.

Mitch presses the screen on his gauntlet to end the call.

LEE

Can we go in now? I'm cold.

MIKO

Right away, my shivering sibling!

Miko presses the button on the door frame, which opens the door, and runs in first.

Meanwhile, the mother, Mayumi, is pacing back and forth at the Kubota house. The father, Hugh, sits on the couch, pulling his hair back with both hands. The older son, Geoffrey, is sitting next to Hugh, nervously eating a bucket of kettle corn. The eldest daughter, Nika, is standing behind the couch listening to her smartphone with a solemn face as she hangs up.

NIKA

Ugh... I still can't get through to Miko or Lexi.

Nika clenches her phone, pacing behind the couch as the tension in the room thickens.

GEOFFREY

This is insane! How do all the kids in town just disappear like that? It was like something out of Star Journey!

Hugh stands up from the recliner in frustration.

HUGH

Grr... Miko should be here! I know she said she's looking for the kids, but she should be leaving this to the authorities and be with her family! Why can't she ever just...

Mayumi walks up to Hugh and rests her hand on his chest.

MAYUMI

Hugh, stop! Normally, I would question Miko's priorities side by side with you. But this isn't one of her video game antics.

Nika makes a nervous face and begins typing a text on her phone.

MAYUMI (CONT.)

She and her friends are out there looking for her brother and sister, and every kid in town! She's never been able to stand still, no matter the circumstances. But this time she's doing something to try to help. We just... we just have to hope they'll come back to us.

Mayumi hugs Hugh and buries her face in his chest. Hugh pouts as he hugs her back. As they hug, Nika finishes typing her text.

NIKA (TEXT MESSAGE)

Miko, please tell me this is a glitch sitch and you got it handled!
We're freaking out at home here!

Nika tries sending Miko the text, only for the phone to fail to deliver it.

Back on the Krampus Express, Mitch, Five, and Miko are in the last dining car, freeing the children from their apple gags and binds, and escorting them to the previous train car.

LEE

Lexi's not here...

MIKO

No, not here either, little brother.
But the last car is right behind that door. She's definitely in there. One more boss and...

Five's gauntlet plays its ringtones.

COMPUTER VOICE

Incoming call from...

PHIL (VOICE)

Your boss...

Five presses the green phone option and answers the call.

FIVE

Hey, Phil, we're just about to...

PHIL

Five, have you been switching the train tracks from your gauntlet?

FIVE

Well, yeah. I didn't want any more kids being kidnapped, so...

PHIL

Yeah, that's great and all, but you probably should've been pickier about your route!

FIVE

Why? I checked in the last dining car; there isn't a town for miles.

PHIL

Yeah, no *small towns*. However, if you take a new look at the track's map, you're heading for the city!

MITCH, FIVE, AND MIKO

The city!?

FIVE

Oh, nerds! What have I done? They have a hundred times more game consoles and arcades than in Bailey or any other small town!

MIKO

And this glitch goes viral and spreads, and unleashes more glitch monsters from any game it passes. Which means...

They imagine the city instantly going into chaos as glitch monsters break out of its tall buildings that burst into flames. Five and Miko scream in a panic. But Mitch takes a quick breath as he changes from a worried face to a stern and focused face.

MITCH

We're not gonna let that happen. Are we newbies?

Five and Miko shake their heads and straighten up to make serious postures.

MIKO

No way! We're gonna save my... Our sister beat Krampus, bag the glitch, and save Christmas!

FIVE

What she said!

MITCH

Well, don't just stand there, newbies. Gear up!

Five and Miko exchange determined nods, and all three walk over to the door, press the button, open it, and walk into the final train car. As they walk in, Miko grins, taking point with Lee.

MIKO

Have no fear, Lexi! Your...

Miko is shocked and disappointed to see that none of the children standing up from their seats to look at them is Lexi.

MIKO

Not here...

Lee begins to whimper and tear up.

FIVE

What? But that doesn't make any sense! We haven't seen her in any of the other cars. She should...

The train car's front door opens, and another mutant reindeer stampedes out and down the aisle. Miko, Five, and Mitch step to the side and take seats as it charges past them, hits its head on the back door, collapses, and bursts into red and green flames like the last two times.

MITCH

You were saying?

FIVE

If she's not in any of the cars,
then where...

LEXI (OFF-SCREEN)

Let me go!

They hear Krampus's signature growl as he walks into the car with chain ends dangling from his wrists, wrapped around his forearms and upper body. And bound by the chains on his chest was Lexi, squirming to break free. She stops struggling when she sees Miko with her friends by her side and Lee in her arms.

LEXI

Miko!

MIKO AND LEE (PANICKING)

Lexi!

FIVE/MITCH

Oh, nerds/boosh!

Mitch, Five, and Miko, with Lee still in the baby carrier on her chest, stare across the car at Krampus, armed with wrist-bound chains, with Lexi chained to his chest.

Krampus's growl deepens as he tightens his grip on the chains, his eyes glinting with menacing glee. Miko takes a step forward, absolutely furious.

MIKO

Let her go!

Krampus roars, shaking the train car. After the shaking stops, Krampus's health bar materializes and fills up over his head.

LEXI

Miko, help!

MIKO

I gotcha, sis!

Miko slaps her gauntlet and materializes a katana that she holds with both hands. Mitch and Five look at each other, nodding. They type on their gauntlets, Mitch manifests a chained flail in one hand, and Five manifests a purple short double-trident-bladed lance in his hands.

Miko lets out a battle cry as she sprints down the car. Krampus stomps toward them, then stops to crack one of its chain whips at Miko. She deflects the chain with her sword and continues sprinting. Miko reaches Krampus and begins swinging and hacking at its legs repeatedly and chipping away at its health bar.

MIKO

Don't worry, Lex, your big sis and
her best boys will have you off this
creep in no time!

Krampus raises its arms and sends a double hammer fist down on Miko. She jumps back as Mitch runs past her, grumbles as he reaches Krampus's fists on the ground, leaps, and swings his flail up and into its face. The health bar takes a larger diminishing as Krampus straightens up, raising its fists over its head again. Mitch takes a long jump backward.

MITCH

Keep going for the head!

Krampus swings its arms back down, this time cracking both whips. Five takes a high jump toward the chain whips.

FIVE

Comprendido!

Five twirls his lance, deflecting the chains as he descends, pulls back his weapon, and thrusts it into Krampus's forehead. Five swings and hangs on his lance with both hands next to the captured Lexi.

FIVE (NERVOUS)

Hi, Lexi!

LEXI (SCARED)

Hey, Five...

Five pulls out his lance and backs away as Krampus straightens up. He swings his arms, extending, flailing, and cracking his chain whips down the aisle. Mitch, Five, and Miko back away to the edge

of the extended length of the chains as they continue flailing in front of them.

MIKO

Ugh... we don't have time for this! We need to get my sister now!

FIVE

And we still aren't halfway through its health. We need to beat it before we reach the city!

As they talked, Mitch squinted his eyes, studying the rapid movement of the chains.

MITCH

I'm on it!

Mitch runs up to the chains swinging his flail. His weapon's chain wraps around Krampus's chains and tightens to stop them. Mitch pulls on his flail, and he grunts while using a free hand to type on his gauntlet. A pair of oversized metal boots materializes over Mitch's shoes. The boots latch open from the sides and clamp down on the floor.

He reinforces his grip on his flail as he grabs it with his second hand. Krampus struggles to pull and recoil its chains.

MITCH

Hurry up, noobs!

FIVE

Aye, aye, cap!

MIKO

Off with its head!

Five and Miko run past Mitch, jump high, land, and run on the chain whips and Krampus's arms. They stop and stand on his shoulders. Five twists and collapses his short double-trident-bladed lance into two short tridents. Five repeatedly stabs Krampus's head with his tridents as Miko delivers multiple rapid slashes to it. The health bar depletes quickly as they continue attacking until it is empty.

FIVE AND MIKO

That's it!

Five and Miko stop attacking, jump off Krampus's shoulders and land on his sides, and Mitch dematerializes his flail and boot clamps as the chain whips flop to the floor. The beast growls and groans as its weapon bursts into green and red flames, as Lexi falls to the floor and lands sitting down.

MIKO AND LEE

Lexi!

LEXI

Miko, Lee!

Miko dematerializes her katana and wraps her arms around Lexi, allowing the siblings to hug each other. As they hug, Krampus continues to groan as it waddles backward to the front of the train car.

FIVE

Hold on, what?

Krampus glares at its enemies as the windows on both sides of the train car open. Flurries of snow blow in from the windows, surround, and cover Krampus. The snow disperses, revealing that Krampus had disappeared. Lexi stands up and runs to Miko.

LEXI

Miko!

MIKO

Lexi!

Miko lowers on one knee with her arms spread out as Lexi runs up to her and they hug, with Lee between them also hugging Lexi.

MIKO

We finally found you!

Lexi breaks the hug.

LEXI

Lee, you're here too, little brother?

MIKO

Yeah, you two and every other kid in four towns! But don't worry, we're getting you two home soon.

FIVE

But not just yet. That wasn't any different from the last four times we beat him.

MITCH

And this is the last car on the train. Which means the final boss battle is in the engine room.

FIVE

It's actually called the cab, or the crew compartment.

MITCH

Whatever, we need to...

The train car shakes to the sounds of screeching and gyros rolling and clicking.

MITCH

Move, move, move!

Mitch runs to the front of the car with urgency.

FIVE

¡Esto es ridículo!

Five runs to the front of the car, panicking.

MIKO

Uh... be right with you, boys!

Miko types on her gauntlet, and the baby carrier dematerializes from her body as she grabs hold of Lee and stands him next to Lexi. Lee turns to face Miko.

MIKO

Okay, Lee, Lexi, I need you two to stay here for a while.

LEE

You're leaving?

LEXI

Not forever (reassuring him), right (concerned towards Miko)?

MIKO

Of course not! I got more friends from work on their way now to pick you up! I just need you two to stay seated and safe until they get here. Lee, you listen to Lexi, Lexi keep him company, alright?

LEE

Okay...

LEXI

You got it, sis!

MITCH AND FIVE (OFF-SCREEN)

Miko!

MIKO

Okay, I love you, buh-bye!

Miko runs around Lexi and Lee to the front of the car. Miko reaches the front with the door already open and sees Mitch and Five straining their arms as they both hold onto the railing with one hand and have grappling hooks extended from their gauntlets, grappled to the locomotive.

MITCH

Any time now!

Miko aims her gauntlet at the locomotive and fires a grappling hook. The hook anchors to the locomotive's railing around the coal bunker. Miko jumps over the train car's railing as her gauntlet pulls her over to the locomotive. Mitch and Five let go of the

train car's railing, and their gauntlets pull them over to the locomotive following Miko. Miko quickly reaches and grabs the coal bunker's railing.

As her grappling hook dematerializes and Mitch and Five reach and hold onto the railing with Miko between them, she takes one last look at Lexi and Lee in the train car as the distance grows and shrinks them in perspective. Miko makes a solemn and worried face as she watches. Five attempts to comfort Miko by resting his free hand on her shoulder on his side, but Mitch rests his free hand on her shoulder on his side first. Mitch raises his voice to be heard over the sound of the engine.

MITCH

I know how you feel, Miko! But it's almost over! They'll be taken home safe with the rescue teams. One more boss battle, and we can end this holiday horror!

Miko smiles at Mitch with some relief, as Five smiles at him with an ounce of pride.

MIKO

Thanks, Mitch, sorry I left you guys hanging btdubs!

MITCH

Just remember that for who gets the finishing blow! With that out of the way, and I can't believe

MITCH (CONT.)

I'm saying something this cheesy, let's go save Christmas!

The trio climbs over the railing, runs over the mound of coal to the edge of the bunker, and jumps into the crew compartment, surrounded by all walls. They land crouching, and when they straighten up, they look in shock when they see that the inside of the cab is long and wide enough for a hotel room. Near the front of the cab, the firebox (the furnace they put the charcoal in) is on the wall to their left. They see a monstrous silhouette in the conductor's chair operating the controls.

MIKO

This looks a lot bigger than the cabs from everybody's favorite stop-motion animated train series.

FIVE

I don't think it was technically stop-motion, and not all games shoot for accuracy.

They walk further inside. The monstrous silhouette snarls, spins its chair, and stands up, and picks up a tall item that was leaning against the wall. It walks forward into the light towards the Glitch Techs to reveal itself as Krampus, now in a torn train engineer's costume, with dark green overalls, a red buttoned shirt underneath, and a train engineer's hat between his horns. He snarled at the Glitch Techs as he held his long item in both hands to reveal it to be a long, sheathed sword.

KRAMPUS (HISSES)

Naughty...

He slowly takes the blade out of its scabbard to show that it is an executioner's longsword with a red core surrounded by a green edge with a reindeer's skull embedded in the hilt and tosses aside the scabbard, holding the heavy weapon with one hand. Its full health bar appears above its head.

KRAMPUS (ROARS)

Naughty!

MITCH

Finally, something sporting.

All three Glitch Techs type on their gauntlets and materialize their own sword. Mitch re-materializes his longsword with a ghost face on the hilt, Five materializes an odachi, and Miko re-materializes her twin golden heavy swords.

Krampus's eyes flare with an unnatural red glow as he charges and drags the sword along the floor, sparks flying. The room trembles with the force of his steps, echoing against the metallic walls.

MITCH

Here comes the pattern, avoid and block only!

The Glitch Techs tense, readying their stances, determination etched on their faces as they anticipate the clash. Krampus sends a wide arc swing as the three targets leap backward to avoid damage. Krampus raises its sword overhead as it grasps its second hand around the hilt and swings it down to hammer the metal floor. The executioner's sword shakes the room and bounces the Glitch Techs off the surface. Krampus jumps high towards its enemies as it releases one hand from its sword and spins repeatedly, holding the weapon out.

Mitch, Five, and Miko hold their swords defensively as they deflect Krampus's multiple cuts, as sparks fly off the blades. Krampus stops spinning as all four combatants descend. It raises its sword over its head again and swings it down on Miko. She keeps in her defensive stance as Krampus swings down on her. Miko is knocked down and lands on her back with her arms and legs spread out and her eyes squinted shut.

MIKO

Ow!

Mitch and Five land safely on their feet.

FIVE

Miko!

MITCH

You good?

MIKO

I'm alright, lads!

Miko opens her eyes. Krampus, still above her, mid-air, adjusts its grip to hold the sword pointing down, and descends quicker into a hurtle.

MIKO

Oh, nerds!

Miko quickly pulls her arms and legs together and rolls to Five's side as Krampus lands and impales the floor, narrowly missing her. Miko and Krampus stand up, and it jumps backward to its original position.

FIVE

That seems like a pattern to me!

MIKO

Let's wreck this fool!

Krampus charges and drags the sword along the floor, sparks flying. Miko sprints at the boss, holding back her twin swords like wings. Krampus stops as it begins swinging its wide attack. Miko jumps and somersaults over the sword and slashes down over Krampus' chest with one sword. She makes a three-point landing and slashes across its stomach with the other sword, running past it.

The health bar diminishes by a small amount. Krampus raises its sword overhead as it grasps its second hand around the hilt and swings it down to hammer the metal floor.

FIVE

Here comes the boom!

Mitch jumps up while Five jumps forward as Krampus' sword hits and shakes the surface. While Krampus's sword is still down, Five lands and jumps toward Krampus again. Once Five is close enough, he begins a slow descent and delivers rapid multiple slashes from every angle on Krampus. The boss pulls its sword up with one hand as Five finishes landing with a crouch while the health bar diminishes again. Krampus's programming makes it ignore Five and look over at Mitch.

The senior Glitch Tech stands calmly with his longsword lowered with both hands.

MITCH

Try me, glitch.

Krampus jumps high towards its enemies as it releases one hand from its sword and spins repeatedly, holding the weapon out. Mitch jumps up toward the spinning attacker, clenching his sword with both hands as he watches Krampus's propelling weapon in anticipation. He grins as he finds his moment and swings his sword. The blades clash, Mitch bounces back, and sticks his feet on the wall with one hand on his sword. Mitch keeps grinning as Krampus stops spinning, jumps off the wall, thrusts his sword with both hands, and impales it in the chest.

Krampus raises its sword above its head as it wraps its second hand on it. Mitch plants his feet on Krampus' stomach, pulls it out, and jumps off it, performing a backflip as Krampus swings its sword down and misses him. As Mitch lands, Krampus, still above him, mid-air, adjusts its grip to hold the sword pointing down, and descends quickly into a hurtle. Mitch takes his gauntlet hand off his sword, aims his palm at the floor, fires, opens a portal,

and descends into it. The portal closes as Krampus lands and impales the floor. Another opens on the floor behind Krampus.

Mitch springs out of the portal as it immediately closes, holds his sword with both hands, and thrusts it into Krampus's back. Mitch plants his feet back on the floor and pulls out his sword as Krampus' health bar diminishes again to being half empty. Krampus stands up with one hand on its sword and jumps backward to its original position as Five and Miko run up and regroup with Mitch. They turn and face Krampus, with Mitch in the middle now, and bare their swords for combat.

Krampus hyperventilates through its mouth until it blows steam out of its nose.

MIKO

Oohooohoo... he's steamed!

The firebox on Krampus's right side opens automatically. Krampus holds his sword with both hands, turns right, and thrusts it into the firebox.

MITCH, FIVE, AND MIKO

Huh?

It pulls out its sword with the blade edge on fire and swings it in a brief dance for a demonstration.

MIKO (SCARED)

That's not steam!

Krampus pulls back its sword like a baseball bat as the fire on the blade doubles in size. Mitch, Five, and Miko widen their eyes, recognize, and anticipate the next attack.

FIVE

Oh, nerds!

MITCH

Shields!

Krampus swings its sword sideways, and it sends an arc of fire at the Glitch Techs. Mitch, Five, and Miko crouch on one knee while punching the floor, as tall, blue, transparent shields project in front of them. The fire arc contacts and dissipates on the shields.

MITCH

Hold your positions and ready your
ice power-ups!

Krampus keeps holding its sword with both hands, pointing it to the ceiling. The boss swings the sword down, stops at its chest level, pointing at its enemies, and shoots a long and wide beam of fire. The continuous fire attack contacts their shields, making Mitch, Five, and Miko sweat as they try pushing back while their swords de-pixelate as they type on their gauntlets. The pillar of fire stops sprouting from the sword, and Krampus relaxes its arms, holding the weapon in one hand as its blade stays on fire.

MITCH

Now!

The shields shrink and disappear, and the Glitch Techs stand up. Mitch materializes a glowing, blue rune-inscribed two-handed longsword and a heavy suit of armor with matching dark metal. Five materializes a large tube strapped to his back, angled to the left, while the underside connects to a pistol in his hand. And Miko materializes a black and silver breastplate with a large plackart (belly), a jetpack made of two red canisters strapped to her back, black shoulder pads, black armguards shaped like wings with blade edges, shoes in the form of white webbed feet, and a thin black helmet with a long and yellow penguin beak mouthguard.

Krampus charges and drags the sword along the floor, leaving a trail of fire. The room trembles with the force of his steps, echoing against the metallic walls.

MITCH

Five, barrier!

FIVE

Freeze frame!

Five aims his gun at the floor and shoots a flurry of snow, drags the weapon across the air, creating a trail of ice that sprouts into an ice wall. Krampus reaches the ice wall and sends a wide arc swing, chipping off shards of ice. Krampus raises its sword overhead as it grasps its second hand around the hilt and swings it down to hammer the metal floor. Mitch, Five, and Miko jump before the executioner's sword shakes the room, spreads a wave of fire, and cracks and begins melting the ice barrier. The fire on the floor dies out, and the ice barrier stops melting.

Krampus jumps high towards its enemies as it releases one hand from its sword and spins repeatedly, holding the weapon out and becoming a tornado made of fire, chipping and melting the ice barrier. Krampus stops spinning and begins descending. It raises its sword over its head again and swings it down and chips at the ice barrier. Krampus, still mid-air, adjusts its grip to hold the sword pointing down, and descends quickly into a hurtle. Krampus lands and impales the floor so hard that it shakes the room while a circle of fire briefly ignites around Krampus and immediately blows out, and cracks the ice barrier so much that it crumbles and collapses into nothing, leaving Mitch, Five, and Miko open for another attack. Krampus pulls its sword out and jumps back to its original position.

FIVE

That's the new pattern!

MIKO

Time for his bitter chill pills!

Krampus swings its sword sideways, and it sends an arc of fire at the Glitch Techs. Mitch and Five jump over the crescent heatwave as Miko dives headfirst under it. Miko ignites her jetpack and slides on her armored belly, sparks flying under it, toward Krampus as it continues to hold its sword with both hands, pointing it at the ceiling. The boss swings the blade down, stops at its chest level, pointing forward, and shoots a long and wide beam of fire. Miko continues sliding on her belly underneath the long fire attack as she spreads her arms out.

She slides under Krampus between its legs while slicing the calves. Miko's momentum slows down on the floor behind Krampus, stands up, turns around, jumps, and sends a flurry of slashes from her wings on Krampus's back. The extensive fire attack stops flowing from the sword, and Krampus takes one hand off of it as Miko lands back on the floor. Krampus charges and drags the sword along the floor, leaving a trail of fire. The room trembles with the force of his steps, echoing against the metallic walls.

Krampus reaches Mitch and Five and swings its sword at them sideways. Mitch and Five jump back, avoiding the attack, but still feeling the heat from the sword's flame as they land back on their feet.

MITCH

See if you can extinguish that fire sword!

FIVE

I'm on it!

Five aims his pistol and fires a snow flurry at the sword. The small icy storm streams over a part of the fiery executioner's sword as steam rises from it.

FIVE

I think it's working!

Krampus raises its sword overhead as Five follows it with his gun. The boss grasps its second hand around the hilt and swings it down to hammer the metal floor.

FIVE

Uh, oh...

MITCH

Move!

Mitch turns, jumps up, and skewers his sword into a wall and holds onto it above the floor as Five stops shooting, jumps ahead, and passes Krampus before the executioner's sword shakes the room, spreading a wave of fire that presses against the wall. Five lands on his feet and turns to look past Krampus and see Mitch hanging onto his sword and dangling above the floor on fire beneath him.

FIVE

Mitch!

MITCH

I'm fine, just go back to putting him out!

FIVE

Right!

Five aims his pistol and fires a snow flurry on Krampus's back. As its health bar lowers and changes color, the fire on the floor dies out. Krampus jumps high towards the wall as it releases one hand from its sword and spins repeatedly, holding the weapon out and becoming a tornado made of fire. Mitch presses his legs against the wall as he pulls out his sword into a backflip before landing and turning to face the boss.

Krampus stops spinning and begins descending. It raises its sword over its head again and swings it down. Krampus, still mid-air, adjusts its grip to hold the sword pointing down, and descends quickly into a hurtle with an upside-down fire dome.

MITCH

Line up with Miko!

FIVE

Copy that!

Five turns around and runs to the front of the locomotive. Krampus lands and impales the floor, shaking the room and making its brief circle of fire. It pulls out its sword and jumps back to its original position. As it descends, Five and Miko stand next to each other, watching it from behind.

FIVE

Here comes Krampus!

MIKO

Let's snow him down!

Five aims his pistol while Miko's metal beak latches open and lights up inside. Krampus lands in front of them, and they both fire small blizzards from their weapons on its backside. While they attack and Krampus's health bar diminishes, it swings its sword sideways, and it sends an arc of fire at Mitch. Mitch raises his longsword overhead as it lights up blue and emits a snow cloud. He roars as he swings down on the arc and cuts a gap in the attack as its severed halves pass him.

MITCH

Keep firing!

MIKO

Keeping!

Krampus keeps holding its sword with both hands, pointing it to the ceiling. The boss swings the sword down, stops at its chest level, pointing at Mitch, and shoots a long and wide beam of fire. Mitch weaves to the side and charges forward as he holds his sword between him and the fire attack, as the sword glows blue while emitting a snow cloud again. Mitch growls and roars while running at Krampus as it finishes producing the pillar of fire, and he swings his sword across its stomach. He then jumps, raises his

sword, and in his descent, swings it down through its body as its health bar finishes emptying.

Krampus stops attacking and clenches and roars from the pain.

MITCH

Boosh.

Krampus continues to roar as its body turns to charcoal. Cracks begin to split in its chest, and they spread all over its body.

FIVE

Here comes its root form!

MIKO

Finally, time to bag this glitch!

All three Glitch Techs dematerialize their armor and weapons as they aim their gauntlet palms at Krampus. The cracked statue of Krampus crumbles and falls to pieces on the floor as they have their gauntlets follow the pile. They keep their gauntlets trained on the pile of coal for a moment of silence until they start feeling awkward and confused.

MIKO

Umm... where's the root form?

A hissing noise startles the trio. Mitch closes his palm into a fist to aim his gauntlet beam as they look to see a door opening from the side wall. Mitch raises his eyebrow as he turns his head over to Five and Miko. They shrug their shoulders. Mitch refocuses on the door and carefully walks over to the open door as Five and Miko follow. Mitch points his gauntlet out of the locomotive through the door for a moment before he jumps out and walks ahead.

Five and Miko jump out through the door and stand looking side to side. Miko turns and knocks on the locomotive's wall next to the door frame.

MIKO

Okay, did we beat the game or not?

FIVE

Well, it felt like we did for a second. Let me check on something.

Five presses his gauntlet's screen and makes a call as Mitch turns around and walks up to them. The dial tone plays until Phil's face comes on screen

PHIL

Five, you bag the glitch?

FIVE

Uh... not quite. We beat the final boss, but its root form hasn't come out yet.

Miko leans over and hovers her face over Five's gauntlet.

MIKO

Did a rescue team pick up my little siblings yet?

A beeping noise came from the gauntlet.

PHIL

Speak of the devil, I'm getting another call from them.

Phil presses a button accepting the call as the screen splits, and Nix appears next to Phil.

NIX

Guys, we've got a problem! We reached the last of the train cars, but they started moving down the tracks again the minute we landed!

FIVE, PHIL, FIVE, AND MIKO

What!?

NIX

We tried chasing them, but they were too fast! We're just following the track now! Wait...

In Nix's cockpit, he watches his radar screen and sees a dot appear from the bottom, and it quickly moves up. Nix looks out the window and sees another set of the previous train cars coming down the track and speeding ahead of them.

NIX

Guys, another one of the train car
sets just passed us!

Mitch, Five, and Miko make surprised faces as they all look at
Five's gauntlet screen.

MIKO

What the Ares? Is the glitch
resetting itself?

MITCH

That's impossible, glitches can't
reconstruct themselves after we
beat their game.

FIVE

Wait a minute, what if we didn't
just beat the game...

MIKO

Huh?

FIVE

Well, we didn't just fight minions
and bosses. We did other stuff, like
collecting the apples to get those
kids off the tables. Then we kept
destroying those little monsters
that kept grabbing Mitch's face.

Miko chuckles, and Mitch glares at her.

FIVE

Then we kept avoiding damage from
that rampaging reindeer.

MITCH

What are you getting at?

During their conversation, the pile of Krampus charcoal rattles.
Its pieces slowly, then quickly roll up to the locomotive's furnace
and levitate into it.

FIVE

What if those weren't just obstacles
and tasks? What if those were also
requirements to unlock...

The door closes, and they turn to observe the locomotive as it blows its whistle and erupts fire from its chimney. Its chimney begins glowing red as it continues spewing fire, and two more red glowing chimneys spring out behind it.

PHIL

Guys, what's happening?

Mitch, Five, and Miko turn towards the sound of speeding train wheels and see the last line of train cars coming down the track. They slam into the back of the locomotive and reconnect as the Glitch Techs see the children inside.

MIKO

Lexi, Lee!

The other train car lines that were emptied appear and aggressively reconnect with the train one at a time. Suddenly, an earthquake begins, the Glitch Techs lose their balance and fall on their butts, and cracks erupt and spread from both sides of the train track. The ground under the front and back of the train starts to rise as it breaks the track and continues to rise. The snow under the train increases, forming a monstrous outline with long arms and small legs, all with sharp claws.

PHIL

Hello! An update would be nice!

Mitch, Five, and Miko crawled backward as a giant arm with sharp claws made of an upper layer of snow and a bottom layer of dirt broke off the ground. It slammed its palm onto the surface of the snow as the entire arm molded into a more organic shape. The arm on the other side of the train repeated the steps. Both arms pressed down as the ground beneath the train rose even higher and molded into a lizard-like monstrous body with the train cars acting as an exterior spine that led to its tail.

FIVE

We accidentally unlocked a hidden
final boss battle!

The metal on the face of the locomotive crumbled and shifted into a metal Krampus face, complete with large horns protruding from

the forehead. Mitch, Five, and Miko make terrified and shocked faces as they look up at the 1,800-foot-tall kaiju.

MITCH, FIVE, AND MIKO

Oh, boosh/nerds!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

The giant monster Krampus unleashes a deafening roar as the Glitch Techs on the ground cover their ears. After the beast finishes its roar, the trio stands up.

FIVE

Phil, please tell me you're close enough to give us back up!

Phil sees the monster far away through his windshield.

PHIL

Just close enough to see and have heart palpitations! You three do what you can, and we'll help out when we get there!

The call ends on Five's gauntlet.

MITCH

You heard 'em! Let's...

The giant mutated Krampus takes one step forward down the train track, shaking the ground, completely oblivious to the Glitch Techs. It slowly takes three more steps before making a steady walking pace away from the trio.

MITCH

Am I... am I being ignored?

MIKO

For real?

FIVE

It must still be following its base programming; it still thinks it's a train taking kids from their neighborhoods. But the next town down this track is the city! One step too close, it'll go viral, and then it's glitch-pandemonium!

MITCH

Then let's take it down before...

MIKO

Forget the glitch, Mitch! My little brother and sister are still on that crazy train!

Miko types on her gauntlet, points it up to the sky, and shoots out a beam that materializes Ally. The big red bird backflips in a swoop as Miko jumps, lands on her back, and they fly away up to the monster.

MITCH AND FIVE

Miko!

MITCH

Argh! Does she always have to go all Leeroy Jenkins on us?

Five types on his gauntlet.

FIVE

Like you've never tried taking on a dungeon of dragons by yourself?

Five aims his gauntlet forward and shoots out a beam that materializes into Alpha.

FIVE

Ready to climb another kaiju, Alpha?

The homunculus mecha makes an autotuned growl, kneels, and latches its two handlebars out of its back. Five climbs onto Alpha and grabs one of the handlebars with one hand, then turns and holds his free hand out to Mitch on the snow.

FIVE

You coming?

Mitch shrugs, reaches, and takes Five's hand, and they pull him up on Alpha's back. Mitch grabs the other handlebar with one hand. Alpha roars as it stampedes down alongside the train track. Mitch presses a finger against his headset.

MITCH

Miko, I know you can hear me!

Miko and Ally fly closer to the kaiju's train spine.

MIKO

I'm in the middle of something
here, Williams!

FIVE

Miko, we're all in the middle of
this! But we have to prioritize!

MITCH

Just take a moment to scan the
beast for weak spots!

MIKO

Ugh... yeah, okay.

Miko swipes her two fingers across her visor as it changes color, pictures a silhouette around the monster, and a target circle appears and moves up and down in the monster's silhouette. The target circle stops at the three red glowing chimneys on top of its head, splits into three, and each circle covers each chimney.

MIKO

It's the chimneys! The chimneys are
the weak spots! Can I save Lee and
Lexi now?

FIVE

You can save them and all the kids
in the car while you're at it!

MITCH

And we'll make our way to the top!
Co-op with us again when you've got
'em all!

MIKO

You caps got it!

Miko and Ally fly up to the leading train car. Ally lands and perches on the side of the car under the window. Miko climbs around Ally's neck, kicks and shatters the window open, and climbs inside. The children watch her jump in and land in the tilted empty seat.

LEXI AND LEE

Miko!

MIKO

Hey, sibs! Huh?

Miko notices the window digitally fixing itself behind her. She turns around, opens it ordinarily, and waits as it does not close on its own.

MIKO

Okay, I'm getting you, kids, off
this train!

The sound of whimpering and crying turns Miko's attention toward the rest of the children sitting in the train.

MIKO

Uh... yeah, all you kids...

Alpha reaches the monster's tail and the first train car. He pounces, grabs the tops of the car, crunching its metal, and climbs on the roof. Mitch and Five's gauntlets ring, and they press their screens to answer the calls.

MIKO

Uh... hey guys, I might need some help
bringing these kiddies back down to
ground level.

FIVE

Hang on, I might have an idea!
Mitch, hold on tight, Alpha's gonna
need a boost!

Five types on his gauntlet. After he finishes typing, rocket engines and wing attachments materialize around and connect to Alpha's shoulders, calves, and his lower back. Five smirks as he grabs his handlebar with both hands. Mitch makes a nervous look and sound as he grabs his handlebar with both hands. Alpha's rocket engines light up from inside their exhaust ports and ignite, and they fly up over the train cars as Mitch screams while taking one hand off of his handlebar to press down on his hair. His handlebar latches off Alpha as the string connecting them uncoils.

Mitch screams even louder as he dangles by his handle. The rockets shut down, Alpha reaches the top of the front-most car, grabs and

crunches the roof, and the rocket engines and wings dematerialize. Five turns to look down at Mitch.

FIVE

Are you okay, Mitch?

Mitch keeps a scared face as he gives Five a thumbs up while dangling from the cord.

FIVE

Okay, Alpha, let it rip!

Alpha pulls on the train car's roof and tears it open. The mecha walks backward as it continues peeling the roof off. Alpha reaches the bottom of the following connected train car, completely revealing the interior of the first car, showing the surprised faces of Miko and all the children.

MIKO

Dang!

Mitch sees a grey hand holding a sword sprouting out of the snow on the monster's back.

MITCH

Uh, oh...

All the different dark elf conductors rise out of the snow like zombies as an army from both sides of the back.

FIVE

These guys are back?

MITCH

Relax, newbie! You two focus on getting these kids to safety, I'll handle Krampus's helpers!

Mitch types on his gauntlet until a jetpack with a wide wingspan materializes on his back. He lets go of the handlebar as the rocket engines on the jetpack ignite, and he flies up the train. Mitch shifts his weight over and flies past the train cars as he aims his gauntlet forward at the dark elf conductor and begins firing his standard gauntlet beams. Five watches Mitch in action as the handlebar recoils back to Alpha.

FIVE

Nice!

The handlebar smacks Five in the face as it finishes recoiling back into Alpha.

FIVE

Ow! Alpha, it's time to lift, bro!

Five grabs the other handlebar as Alpha growls and lifts the roof over his and Five's heads and climbs up until it is tilted perfectly flat.

MIKO

This is our stop! Everyone on the roof! Ally, get ready to lift, girl!

Ally caws as she flies off the wall. The children climb down the seats and step onto the roof as Ally flies and hovers over them. Miko types on her gauntlet as harness straps materialize on Ally and wrap around the corners of the roof. Lexi, Lee, and Miko step onto the roof last.

MIKO

Hang tight, everyone!

Miko types on her gauntlet again and materializes on Ally's back a heavy copter rotor pack that's already spinning at max speed.

MIKO

Now, Five!

FIVE

Now, Alpha!

Alpha roars as he tears the bottom of the roof off the train car and lets go of it. Ally flies the torn roof of the children away from the giant Krampus and gently sets them down on the surface. Miko kneels to Lexi and Lee.

MIKO

Okay, you two will officially be safe. Just stay here and wait for pick up, okay?

LEE

But it's so cold!

LEXI

We'll be fine, Miko.

Miko stands back up and runs to one of the harnesses as they unwrap around the roof. She presses her finger against her headset, grabs one of the straps, and dangles from it as Ally flies back to the giant Krampus.

MIKO

Phil, change of plans! Forget backing us up! Pick up the kids as we set them down.

PHIL

Copy that!

A montage displays Mitch flying and shooting at the dark elf conductors, Alpha and Five peeling and tearing off the roofs of the train cars, children stepping onto the flipped, torn roofs with Miko and Ally bringing the loaded roof down to the ground, the Glitch Tech carriers descending and landing in front of the released, loaded roofs. The montage repeats the steps three more times and ends with Ally landing the last loaded roof. Miko presses her gauntlet's screen, and the harness and helicopter pack dematerialize from Ally. She descends and hover flaps next to Miko, who jumps on her back, and they fly back to Krampus. Mitch continues shooting while Five and Alpha lean over the train, looking down on him.

FIVE

Hey, Mitch, ready to take this to the top?

MITCH

I was waiting on you, newbs!

Mitch's jet pack increases its fire output and accelerates him up the giant Krampus.

MITCH

Now, how should I finish this in style? Maybe a classic melee strike?

Mitch quickly types on and begins scrolling through his weapons on his gauntlet.

MITCH (CONT.)

Hmmm... I think I've had my fill of swords today. Ooh, maybe a super combo punch.

Five calls Mitch while Alpha climbs the inside of a train car.

FIVE

Uh... Mitch, I'm thinking we should take the chimneys out long-range. This glitch's game might have some more surprises.

MITCH

Nothing I can't handle! Now...

Mitch slaps the screen on his gauntlet. His jet pack dematerializes as he descends toward the back of the line of chimneys.

MITCH (CONT.)

Let's...

Pixels form and cover his arms and feet, and materialize over them, silver bionic arms with athletic builds, and silver bare feet over his shoes.

MITCH (CONT.)

Get...

Mitch makes a three-point landing in front of the first chimney and stands in a combat-ready pose.

MITCH (CONT.)

Furious!

Mitch shouts out a fierce battle cry as he makes a single leap toward the chimney, and he prepares a punch. He reaches the chimney and delivers his punch, sending a blue shockwave on contact. The X on the chimney loses one of its points in a series of blinks.

MITCH

So, you want some more? Hiya!

Mitch delivers another jab on the chimney that sends a blue shockwave on contact, and the X loses its second point.

MITCH (CONT.)

Grah!

Mitch swings a roundhouse punch at the chimney that sends a blue shockwave on contact, and the X loses its third point.

MITCH (CONT.)

Take this!

Mitch delivers a third jab on the chimney that sends a blue shockwave on contact, and the X loses its fourth and final point. The chimney's red radiance brightens as its cylinder swells and expands where Mitch punched it. He makes a confused face at the sudden change.

MITCH

Huh?

The chimney continues swelling until its metal begins cracking, until it explodes a massive shockwave that blows Mitch away over the back of the monster. Mitch screams in terror for a moment as his arm and feet armor dematerialize. He types on his gauntlet and materializes rocket boots on his shoes. Mitch makes a nervous and embarrassed face as he presses the side of his visor.

MITCH

Uh... Five... about those surprises...

FIVE

Yeah, I saw how it took your fists
of fury. And I know just what to do!

Alpha climbs to the top of the wall of the front of the middle train car and stops as Five types on his gauntlets screen. Pixels form and arrange over Five's shoulder. They materialize a missile launcher with four missiles sticking out of its flat face, and he holds it with both hands.

FIVE

I've got you in my sights!

We see through Five's visor as four target signs cover the second chimney. Five pulls the trigger on the missile launcher, and all four missiles quickly launch one after another and fly at the

chimney. The missiles make fiery explosions on contact with the chimney, one by one, and a bigger red shockwave from their target extinguishes and blows away the flames.

FIVE

And if I may be so bold, boosh.

MITCH

Oh, you'll pay for that later. Just finish it off!

FIVE

No prob, just gimme a sec to reload.

MIKO (OFF-SCREEN)

Not so fast, Fiver!

Mitch and Five look to see Miko fly in on Ally. She stands up on her back and types on her gauntlet.

MIKO (CONT.)

This one's mine!

FIVE

Wait, Miko...

MIKO

Five...!

Miko begins scrolling through her gauntlet's screen.

MIKO (CONT.)

This huge glitch kidnapped my little brother and sister, held them hostage, tried to eat them, and didn't even offer them hot cocoa!

She presses a selection on her screen, and a stream of pink energy flows from her gauntlet, forming demonic black armor with rocket engines on the tail, red folded back spikes, and gargoyle wings over Ally.

MIKO (CONT.)

I'm bringing down this Godzilla!

She presses a selection on her screen, and a stream of pink energy flows from her gauntlet, forming a menacing scythe with a black shaft and red blade in her hands as she makes her angriest face. Mitch and Five look at her with terrified eyes.

FIVE

Uh... yeah, okay, go for it.

MITCH

All yours.

Ally's rocket engines ignite, and they accelerate toward the giant Krampus. Ally makes a wide turn, and they fly toward the top of the monster's head as Miko bares her scythe.

MIKO

In the spirit of Christmas...

As they fly past the last chimney, Miko swings her scythe through it, and its X loses its first point. Ally makes a U-turn, and they fly back toward the top of the monster's head.

MIKO (CONT.)

Die...

As they fly past the last chimney, Miko swings her scythe through it, and its X loses its second point. Ally makes another U-turn, and they fly back toward the top of the monster's head.

MIKO

Die...

As they fly past the last chimney, Miko swings her scythe through it, and its X loses its third point. Ally makes another U-turn, and they fly back toward the top of the monster's head.

MIKO

Die!

As they fly past the last chimney, Miko swings her scythe through it, and its X loses its last point. The chimney's cylinder swells from the point where Miko last cut through it. It expands until it explodes into its biggest red shockwave.

MIKO

Oh, yeah!

Miko's scythe and Ally's armor derezz as they idle in the air.

FIVE

Nice! Now it'll finally derezz!

The giant Krampus monster growls in pain and anger. The bottom of the monster's neck glows neon red as its glowing color sprouts veins that spread to the back of the neck into the center of the blown-up chimneys.

MITCH

Hey, Five, how's that foot tasting?

Two spikes bulge out of the back of the neck. They grow to reveal themselves to be horns as the head of Krampus continues to grow. Mitch, Five, and Miko make grossed-out faces.

MITCH

Oh, gross!

MIKO

Nasty!

FIVE

What was this game rated?

Krampus's upper body finishes sprouting; its lower body is a thick red vine rooted in the neck. It lets out a mighty roar a health bar appears above it. The monster's body continues walking down the train track toward the city.

FIVE

Oh, come on!

As if it heard him, Krampus looks down the spine, his glowing red eyes fixed, and takes a deep breath, his mouth open as a light emanates from his esophagus.

FIVE

Oh, come on!

The smaller rotted Krampus roars, unleashing a long, streaming breath of fire down the spine. Five squeals, and Alpha pushes off the wall to hide them inside the train car as the fire attack streams above them.

FIVE

Uh... any ideas, guys?

MITCH

Just one, group up, and hit it 'till
it dies!

FIVE

Come on, Mitch, you can't be
serious! We need a real plan!

MITCH

That's the best plan we can do now!
We're running out of time, and
getting too close to the city!
Combined and relentless gauntlet
blasts are our quickest way to end
this nightmare before Christmas!

MIKO

It's as good a plan as any!

MITCH

Meet up with us when you can, Five!
Miko, we're going in!

Mitch and Ally fly headfirst toward the Krampus sprout. Ally and Miko near the Krampus sprout first, and Miko types on her gauntlet as she absorbs Ally back into her gauntlet, landing in front of the Krampus sprout.

MIKO

You take five, Ally! And you take
this, Krampus!

Miko aims her gauntlet and fires its long, endless beam at the Krampus sprout. The smaller Krampus roars as the giant Krampus continues walking down the train track. Mitch flies up near Miko's right, deactivates, and de-pixelates his rocket boots, lands next to her, aims his gauntlet, and fires its long, endless beam at the Krampus sprout. The smaller Krampus growls as the beams continuously impact its chest.

KRAMPUS

Naughty!

Krampus pulls back its arms and swings them up, and a line of ice pillars rises and flows toward Mitch and Miko while blocking their gauntlet beams.

MITCH

To the sides!

Mitch and Miko stop shooting their gauntlets and leap to their opposite sides as they avoid the ice spikes.

MITCH

Don't let up!

Mitch aims and fires his endless gauntlet beam again, and Miko does the same. Their beams impact continuously on Krampus's chest again. Alpha continues climbing up the train cars with Five riding on his back.

FIVE

How's it going up there, guys?

MITCH AND MIKO

Uh...

Mitch and Miko continue shooting their beams as they watch Krampus's health bar diminish at a steady but slow rate.

MIKO

So far so good!

MITCH

Making headwind!

FIVE

I'm almost there! Let me know when
you've got the attack pattern!

Krampus spreads its arms out to its sides as its forearms mutate and transform into candy cane sticks. It swings its right arm as it extends long enough to reach the Glitch Techs. Miko sees the weapon drawing near her.

MIKO

Duck!

Miko stops shooting as she crouches and avoids the candy cane-supported claw. Mitch sees the attack coming, stops shooting his beam, and crouches as the claw swings over him. But before Mitch can stand back up, he sees the other extended arm swinging at him.

MITCH

Jump!

Mitch jumps as the candy cane-supported claw sweeps under him. Miko sees the claw coming at her and jumps to avoid it. Krampus finishes swinging its arm and retracts its hands. It then pushes the air in front of it and extends its candy cane forearms again. The arms finish reaching the space and retract again as Mitch and Miko fire their endless gauntlet beams again.

MIKO

Okay, so it breathes fire, waves ice pillars, and swings long candy cane claws at us. What else can it do?

Krampus raises both of its arms to the sky again, and a dozen of all the different dark elf conductors rise out of the snow.

MITCH

You had to ask!

MIKO

Well, it's not like I asked him,
'you and what army'!

Mitch and Miko stop shooting their continuous beams. Miko begins typing on her gauntlet's screen.

MITCH

No, forget switching weapons, and
stick to the gauntlet blasts!

MIKO

Right, these minions aren't that
hard to wipe anyway!

Mitch and Miko aim and shoot multiple beams at the dark elf conductors. The archer dark elves fire arrows that Mitch and Miko avoid by simply ducking without having to stop firing. While Mitch and Miko manage to burst some of the dark elves into red and green flames, most of them continue to advance toward them.

MIKO

Uh... Five, what's your ETA?

FIVE

Right now!

Five rides Alpha as they leap over the last train car, and Mitch and Miko. Alpha lands on two dark elf conductors, and they burst into red and green flames underneath its feet. Five jumps off of Alpha's back and lands in front of Mitch and Miko.

FIVE

Alpha, rampage!

Alpha roars ferociously, beating its own chest, and charges and attacks the dark elf conductors. Mitch, Five, and Miko continue shooting their basic gauntlet beams at the dark elf conductors while Alpha smashes them with its iron fists. Five fires, one last beam that bursts a dark elf into red and green flames.

FIVE

Oh, yeah! I think we got over half of them!

Miko stops shooting when she sees Krampus cupping the air as a spark of red electricity ignites between its hands.

MIKO

Uh... guys, what's Krampus doing now?

Krampus raises its hands above its head, and the spark of electricity grows into a red ball of energy that continues to increase in size. The ball of energy stops growing as Krampus tilts its arms back.

MITCH

Get down!

FIVE

Alpha, return!

As Mitch and Miko dive and lie on their stomachs on the giant's back, Five keeps standing as Alpha becomes pure energy and streams through the air toward Five. Krampus throws the massive ball of energy as Alpha finishes flowing into Five's gauntlet.

FIVE

Oh, nerds!

MITCH AND MIKO

Five!

Five squeals as he quickly lies on his stomach at the last minute as the ball of energy flies over him and grazes the top of his hair. As the ball flies, all of the remaining dark elf conductors burst into red and green flames. The giant continues walking as the ball of energy flies down the back, misses the tip of the tail, and explodes on the train track, leaving behind a large crater. Mitch, Five, and Miko stand back up as the top of Five's hair blows a hairline of smoke.

FIVE

Holy smokes... Wait!

The rooted Krampus slouches as it groans and breathes heavily.

FIVE

That last attack winded him! We've got the pattern!

MITCH

Then gauntlet blast it, now!

Mitch and Miko aim and shoot their continuous gauntlet beams at the final boss as Five jumps back between them and fires a continuous beam from his gauntlet. The three separate lasers impact Krampus's chest at small distances from each other. Krampus's health bar diminishes slowly to the halfway point.

FIVE

I don't think this is enough!

MIKO

So, let's try crossing the streams!

MITCH

Rally up then!

Mitch and Miko quickly side-step over to Five's sides as their beams connect to his and they merge into a wider laser beam. The single beam presses harder on Krampus as the health bar diminishes

slightly faster. Krampus finishes recovering, straightens up, tilts its body back, and takes in a deep breath. The final boss leans forward and unleashes its mighty fire breath, pressing against their gauntlet beam.

MIKO

Here it comes!

They stop shooting and avoid the attack as Mitch leaps to the left, and Five and Miko leap to the right. The fire finishes making a line between them. Krampus pulls back its arms and swings them up. A line of ice pillars rises and flows toward the space.

FIVE

I knew just using the emitters
wasn't enough! We need a new plan!

The ice spikes begin melting and shrinking.

MITCH

No, it can still work! We just need
to make a phase two! On my mark,
overclock your tech!

MIKO

Oh, yeah! I forgot we could do that!

FIVE

But that... well, that might work. But
do our gauntlets have enough power
for an attack like that?

MITCH

Only one way to find out! Now, save
your energy, dodge the attacks, and
wait for my signal!

MIKO

Follow our lead, Five!

Krampus spreads its arms out to its sides as its forearms mutate and transform into candy cane sticks. It swings its right arm, extending it long enough to reach the Glitch Techs. Miko sees the weapon drawing near her and Five.

MIKO

Now, duck!

Mitch sees the attack coming and crouches as the claw swings over him. Before Mitch can stand back up, he sees the other extended arm swinging at him.

MITCH

Jump!

Mitch jumps as the candy cane-supported claw sweeps under him. Five and Miko see the claw coming at them and jump to avoid it. Krampus finishes swinging its arm and retracts its hands. It then pushes the air in front of it and extends its candy cane forearms again. The arms finish reaching the space and retract again. Krampus raises both of its arms to the sky again, and a dozen of all the different dark elf conductors rise out of the snow.

MITCH

Open fire!

All three Glitch Techs fire single beams at the dark elf conductors and burst them into red and green flames one by one. Once half of the dark elves are wiped out, Krampus cups the air as a spark of red electricity ignites between its hands.

MIKO

Here comes the big one!

FIVE

Get down!

Mitch, Five, and Miko quickly lie on their stomachs as Krampus raises its hands above its head, and the spark of electricity grows into a red ball of energy that continues to increase in size.

MITCH

Now, power up!

Mitch, Five, and Miko type on their gauntlets as the ball of energy stops growing, and Krampus tilts its arms back. Krampus throws the massive ball of energy. It flies over the Glitch Techs, bursts the remaining dark elves into red and green flames, flies down the giant monster's back, and impacts the train track, detonating it and leaving another gigantic crater.

FIVE

I am so glad this glitch doesn't
have a real targeting system.

The rooted Krampus slouches as it groans and breathes heavily.

MITCH

Rally!

At hyper speed, the Glitch Techs run up in alignment with the final boss, with Five on the spine in the middle. But Mitch quickly sees the trio's alignment, quickly runs around Five, and nudges him to the side so he can be in the middle. Five makes a mildly annoyed face at Mitch and his ego.

MITCH

Ready!

Five regains his focus as he, Mitch, and Miko touch the 100% icon on a meter displayed on their gauntlets, drag it across their screens as it counts up to 200% and turn the meter red. They then reinforce their feet in the snow on the monster's back.

MITCH

Thirty seconds! Aim!

They point their gauntlets at Krampus.

MITCH

Fire!

All three fire a long laser beam from their gauntlets that instantly combines into a single laser as wide as their alignment. The beam envelops the tired-out Krampus and its health bar. As their combined attack flows over the final boss, its health bar diminishes slightly faster than the last combined attack.

FIVE

Is it working? I can't see the
health bar!

MIKO

Just keep shooting, Five!

As the giant beam covers Krampus and drains its health, it feels no pain from it as it recovers from its energy ball attack and straightens its posture. Krampus tilts its body back as it takes

in a deep breath. The final boss leans forward as it begins breathing fire. But the beam blows the fire back in the firebreather's face. Krampus widens its eyes as multiple transparent red neon signs that read ERROR and WARNING appear around its head.

The health bar continues to diminish and completely empties out. Krampus lets out a roar in agony.

MITCH

Cease fire!

Mitch, Five, and Miko stop shooting their giant laser beam. As they lower their gauntlets, the power output meter on their screens automatically lowers from 200% to 100%. The Krampus they were firing at wiggles as its body glows red and begins a swelling mutation. The red glowing roots from its stem shine brighter around the giant Krampus's neck. The small Krampus and the giant Krampus's neck erupt into the biggest neon red shockwave, and the Glitch Techs are blown down the giant monster's back, screaming, as its head pops off.

The monster's head plummets and crashes on top on the train track. The glitch Techs continue screaming as they fall, roll, and bounce down the giant's back. They reach the bottom, and Five and Miko separate from Mitch at the tail, and they land in the snow on the ground. All three groan as they stand up.

FIVE

Please, please, tell me we beat it.

A howling wind calls them to look up at the giant monster's decapitated body as it leans forward and collapses on its stomach. Its severed body and head flash green and warp into low-resolution pixels and explode into tiny green pixels that instantly disappear as a giant neon green pixel skull rises and hovers in the air.

MIKO

I'd say that's a yes!

MITCH

Reel it in!

Mitch, Five, and Miko hold their gauntlets up at the glitch's root form with open hands. Purple lights shine up from their emitters at the root form. The giant green skull begins being pulled into

the purple light and tries to pull back and fly away. Their gauntlet arms shake, and they brace them with their free hands.

MIKO

Gah! Are Code Greens normally this hard to absorb?

FIVE

Don't know, there were a lot more Glitch Techs last time!

MITCH

Just keep at it! We almost...

The skull continues to resist, but the bottom of its teeth stretches down into the purple light. Its teeth continue extending with the rest of its body as it splits into three green energy streams that flow into the palm of their gauntlets. The purple lights shut off, and the screen on their gauntlets displays the smiling lock emoji that locks up. In the skull's place where it originally hovered, a pixelated message displayed saying, 100,000,000,000 Shared XP.

COMPUTER

Glitch contained.

Mitch, Five, and Miko slouch and breathe heavily. Miko falls on her knees and raises her fists to the sky.

MIKO (WHEEZING)

Victory!

Miko finishes flopping her body into the snow on her side.

FIVE (GROANS)

Yay...

He falls over on his back.

MITCH (GROANS)

Boosh...

Mitch falls over on his stomach. The three Glitch Techs breathe heavily and groan in the snow.

FIVE

You think Phil will let us take the
rest of winter break off?

MITCH

Doubt it. Fingers crossed on just
getting tomorrow off.

MIKO

I'll take it. Still need to finish...
my... Christmas shopping.

Five begins laughing hysterically. Miko begins laughing with
him, and Mitch laughs with them until they stop.

MITCH

Hey, blueberries... Merry Christmas.

FIVE

Merry Christmas, Mitch.

MIKO

And to all Glitch Techs, a good
night, everybody!

The Glitch Tech rescue choppers fly in and descend to them.

THE END