

Excerpt from "The Con" - Dylan's story

*Just breathe...* Dylan blinked in another round of camera flashes as Troy stepped away. "Wow." She cleared her throat and raised the mic again. "So... apparently I can walk into an abandoned mental hospital full of paranormal activity, but talking to a crowd this big might be more than I can take."

A sympathetic laugh this time, and strangely, that made her feel better. "Okay, let's try that again. What I should've said first was: thank you. Thank you for being such amazing fans and for voting for me." She held her grin in place until the applause died down. "This has already been the most incredible experience I've ever had. Like Troy said, I've known him for years, but even if he weren't there, if *Operation: Haunting* didn't exist at all, I'd still want to do this. And I get to work with this amazing team." She swept her hand toward the tableful of people beside her. "I just can't frickin' wait!" Everyone laughed at that, and from the far end of the table, Rachel's overly-dramatic blown kisses sent Dylan into relieved laughter, too. She turned back to the audience. "I promise I'm not going to waste that opportunity. Thank you so much."

She handed the microphone to Troy before she sat down, and he spoke over the fading applause. "All right, folks, we've got the whole team here – new, old, and me, who counts as ancient – and I know you didn't come here to listen to speeches, so let's get the Q & A started. We've got microphones set up at both of the far aisles, so come on down." He switched off the microphone as the excited noise and movement began. Turning his back on the audience, he looked up and down the table of team members. "Okay, show time," he said quietly. "Tell the funny stories when you can. Try not to hog the mic. Give Jas time to interpret for us. No spoilers, but Rache and Paolo are going to preview next season like we talked about. Remember there are kids here, so watch your language and behave yourselves." He looked right at Paolo as he said it, but then nodded at the other end of the table. "Ben, Jas, how's the tablet working?"

Ben murmured "Should be fine" as Jasmine scribbled "test" with her stylus, and they all half-turned to see the word appear on the big screen behind them.

"Good." Troy took the last chair, to Dylan's left. "Wheels up, people."