Solution

These puzzles explore how ubiquitous computing is in our daily lives!

Artificial Intelligence

This puzzle references depictions of artificial intelligence in popular culture, and their different personalities, motivations, and allegiences. Each command is given to you by a well-known or significant fictional artificial intelligence … but, as clued by the error text at the beginning, not all of them have your best interests at heart!

Identify each of the robots, and then determine whether or not they were portrayed as helpful or hindering to the protagonists' cause in their source material.

In order:

Robot	Source material	?
Oracle	*The Matrix*	Y
HAL 9000	*2001: A Space Odyssey*	N
SHODAN	*System Shock*	N
Sharon "Athena" Agathon	*Battlestar Galactica*	Y
R.U.R.	*R.U.R.* fun fact: "Rossum's universal robots" - introduced the word "robot" to English SF	N
Machinenmensch (false Maria)	*Metropolis*	N
Cindi Mayweather	Works of Janelle Monáe	Y
KITT	*Knight Rider*	Y
Herbie	"Liar" from *I, Robot*	N
Tiktok	*Land of Oz* books	Y
Marvin	*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*	Y

Next, follow the instructions of the "benevolent" robots.

1. Oracle: Use starting string A
   a. VGYGUNUGLGVFBXGFQBAGGGLREEHFGXABHEABCRGGAAQUNUBVV
2. Athena: Remove repeated letters from end, then switch the first and second thirds
   a. QBAGGGLREEHFGXABVGYGUNUGLGVFBXGFHEABCRGGAAQUNUB

3. Cindi: Replace the last A by the last letter (B), then remove the last letter
   a. QBAGGGLREEHFGXABVGYGUNUGLGVFBXGFHEABCRGGABQUNU
4. KITT: Reverse the second half, then remove the middle six letters
   a. QBAGGGLREEHFGXABVGYGQBAGGRCBAEHFGXBFVGLG
5. Tiktok: Split in half, leave only the letters that are common between the two halves
   a. QBAGGEHFGXVGG
6. Marvin: Use ROT13
   a. DONTTRUSTKITT

The solution is DONTTRUSTKITT / DON'T TRUST KITT… next time, it might be better not to listen to KITT's directions!

Video Game

Place the walls on the grid, then take the letters along the path the character follows.

The result is SAMEWALLSWNEWGRID / SAME WALLS W NEW GRID … but what new grid?

Online Shopping

This puzzle features "portmanteau words" — words formed as a combination of two other words, eg. "brunch" = breakfast + lunch. The word choices are specifically focused around computing, the Internet, and the strange words we've created to discuss them.

The name of each handbag is a portmanteau word, portmanteau'd with another word.

Name	Portmanteau word	Three words
Astroturfitunity	Astroturf	Astrodome Turf Opportunity
Interpolodata	Interpol	International Police

		Data
Nutrispambot	Spambot	Nutrition Spam Robot
Lionetocracy	Netocracy	Lion Internet Aristocracy
Frankenlaboraword	Frankenword	Frankenstein Laboratory Word

Sorting the words like so gives three groups of five words each (first, middle, and final words). Now follow the steps clued by the two "normal bags." Taking the first letter of each word, we get three groups of five letters:
AINLF TPSIL ODRAW

Unscrambling, and adding the IN from the two "normal" bags, we get the answer: IN FINAL SPLIT A WORD.

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Messaging (+ meta)
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Solve the logic puzzle to match the friends to apps and find the correct order of transmission.

Note that:
● The most popular messaging app in China is WeChat
● Kik is anonymous but doesn't encrypt messages
● Telegram allows sending "self-destruct" messages

So the message was sent in the following order:
1. Brian - Kik
2. Celie - Telegram
3. Aluna - WeChat
4. Dev - WhatsApp

So the ciphers we use to decrypt the message are, in order:
1. Vigenere (PORTMANTEAUBAG)
2. Telegraph (ALLIWANTFORCHRISTMASISYOU)
3. Ubchi (ALUNAYENRULES)
4. Hill (SKYNETTWENTYTWENTY)

Decrypt with each cipher in turn to get the answer:
TINYURLDOTCOMSLASHYNINERMQKPN
Or:
https://tinyurl.com/y9rmqkpn

The short link will point to this photograph:

WELL DONE! NOW RUN ALL PROGRAMS
IN REVERSE ORDER. START HERE:

U1NAEWZ1_DEYOSMDR
RDXFUDW0DZ_BRLVYMT

LENGTH = 35 | ANSWER LENGTH = 7

which is a cute cat photo as promised, but, perhaps more importantly, contains hints as to the next steps.

Using the input provided, run each of the programs successively and in reverse of the order in which they're presented, using the "fix" made from solving each puzzle.

First, decipher the message as if it came from one of your friends, using the messaging app.
Input: U1NAEWZ1_DEYOSMDRRDXFUDW0DZ_BRLVYMT
Output: NOWEBTOONVALEYNUBPARTFASBPROFBFAY

Note how this text contains a portmanteau word, WEBTOON, a type of digital comic. As suggested by the answer to the third puzzle, split it into its component words, WEB + CARTOON.
Output: NOWEBCARTOONVALEYNUBPARTFASBPROFBFAY

The result is a string of length 36, which will fit in the 6-by-6 grid from the second puzzle. As hinted by the answer to the second puzzle, place this string into the grid, then superimpose the walls from the second puzzle onto it, and follow the same sequence of keypresses to reveal the answer.
Output: YRPBAPBAFBFBARYOO

Now use this as the starting string and follow the robots' directions from the first puzzle. As commanded by the answer to the first puzzle, skip KITT's instructions this time.
Output: **CONSOLE**, the final answer!

Credits
The character for the game is "Female Thief DS" on Charas by Sanadamaru.