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You know how people say "Their life flashed before their eyes" once realizing the end is near. Knowing I have literally the equivalent of about two human life times stored in this brain, actually makes me wonder how long that flashback is going to take, if it is in fact going to happen at all. Knowing there is going to be no pain, since shutting down all of my systems, other than cognitive, visual, audio and logical, I lean over the railing and stare at the wide open ocean, lapping at the sides of the freighter.

"Hey, kid!" A voice booms from behind me.

I turn and look in his direction. *'The man must be the captain or something.'* I think to myself.

"Don't lean over the railing! You might fall overboard!" He bellows with an aggravated tone before muttering "Stupid kids..." as he turns to walk away.

Once I was sure he was out of sight, I lean back over and think to myself that finally I'll find peace. I look up to the sky and say a final prayer to whoever might listen...

'If anyone up there is listening, please let this work. My time down here ended a long time ago, I have nothing left to live for now. Kevin, if you can hear me, please wait for me...'

I climb over the railing, lean forward and let myself fall into the water below. It took well over an hour to finally reach the bottom. I let my body drift downward loosely, thinking of the day of my death as a human, the day of my birth as an android, the many years I had with a loving friend and family and the lonely years that would follow. As dark as it was on the ocean floor, I could make out the shape of what looked like a sunken ship, or sub so I made my way over to its hull, and sit on the ocean floor with my back resting on the side of the cold lifeless sleeping giant. *'Just like you.'* I think to myself, *'My existence will end right here where yours has.'* I pat the side of the ship and decide the time is right, reach my hand to the back of my head and pull open the access panel. *'Weird, I thought I wouldn't feel anything.'* I think as even with my senses shut down, I can actually feel the water rushing into my synthetic brain, and the pressure from the deep cold ocean be relieved from the surface of my entire body.

Moments later, the salt water finally penetrates my circuitry and I begin to feel my cognitive control slip, as involuntary twitches wrack my body before my mind begins to cloud over. My thoughts interrupted with bright flashes of light. *'Kevin...'* I think one last time, not able to finish my thought as my brain gives its last attempt at a rational thought...

"Where am I" I attempt to say my voice only able to produce a loud mechanical hum. I am blinded by a bright white light that seems to be all around me. I attempt to move but can't. I don't feel anything, not even parts of my own body as a voice breaks into my thoughts.

"Shush, don't try to speak, you're not ready yet." The voice says. *'It's a child's voice.'* I think to myself as once again the voice returns, echoing through my ears as if heard through a loud speaker submerged in a swimming pool. "Dad, he's trying to talk." The voice says.

Suddenly, I feel a tickle in my brain, and all goes dark.

"Do you think it's really him?" I hear clear as a bell as the darkness leaves me once again and is replaced with that same blinding white light.

"Where am I?" I ask thinking it odd that even in death I have retained the voice of my mechanical self. Rough sounding but, still the same.

"Can you hear me?" The child like voice seems to ask me.

"Yes, is this heaven? Kevin is that you?" I say trying to reach out but feeling as if I have been tied down and begin fighting against the restraints.

"Calm down, you're going to hurt yourself." The voice says, soothing me a little and convincing me to be still. "Can you see me yet?"

"I can't see anything but white." I reply as I try to focus my eyes. "Am I dead?"

"No, you're safe now." The voice says.

"Safe?" I ask. "Where am I? Who are you?"

"My name is Marc, my dad and I found you while we were exploring the wreckage of an old sunken ship. My dad works for a company that designs exploration subs and let me come along on one of his test runs. That's how we found you."

"No, no, no..." I mutter rolling my head back and forth. "It was supposed to end." I say, feeling tears begin to roll down my cheeks. "I can't be here anymore, you have to let me die... please, just let me die!" I beg the voice which has slowly become a silhouette in the brightness.

A silence filled the air and brought a calmness over me as well. The bright light was beginning to fade and I could almost make out the face that belonged to that voice. He had a beautiful, almost angelic face from what I could make out and hair so blond I could have sworn it was white. "I'm sorry." I said with a sniffle as I regained my senses a bit. "If you only knew what it was like, to be forever trapped in a body that wasn't yours. No escape, never to rest. Destined to love but cursed, and forced to watch that love grow old and die forever."

The boy remained silent for a moment, then cleared his throat and said. "I do understand, I'm an android too."

"Chapter 1 - A Brother's Love"

"An android?" I ask, stunned. "You?"

"Yeah, one of the first too. Are you one of the Cynetilife Models?" He asked, earning a blank stare from me not knowing what he meant. "Cause I couldn't find an I.D. of any form on your Matrix Uplink Port."

"I don't know." I respond. "I was built by a fool who worked for a company called Vision Industries. I don't know of any others built like me if that's what you mean."

Marc looked at me with a shocked expression on his face, which concerned me a little. He stood back from the table and began pacing, in an excited manor. Finally I couldn't watch anymore and focused my attention on more important issues.

"Marc?" I asked rather meekly. "Do I really need to be tied down?"

Marc looked at me and froze, then as if someone flipped a switch in his brain he shook his head and said "Uh, No... No you don't. I'm sorry I didn't even think about removing the restraints since you've been strapped to that table for months." He began to ramble as he unstrapped my arms and moved to my ankles. "I think all your motor functions are back online." He said as he stood back and I sat upright. "At least I hope they are." He added as I rose to my feet and found myself shaky, but stable enough to stand.

"I know one function that is working, could you help me to the bathroom? I gotta pee." I said gaining a smile from him as he rushed to my side, and with his help took my first steps.

"You were created by Vision Industries?" He asked while helping to steady me as my legs just didn't seem to want to cooperate.

"Yeah, I'm the brain child of 'Insane Doc. Strafford', they used to call him." I responded as I zipped up and we slowly made our way to a couch and he helped me carefully sit down.

"Charles Strafford?" He asked.

"Yeah, you know of him?"

"All androids know of him. He was banned from his work and his studies were just about completely lost, locked up by the government." He said as he stared at me with a concerned look.

"Well, almost all of his work" I added, attempting to find out just how much he really did know.

"You're the experiment, aren't you?"

"Huh?" I responded a bit confused by his wording.

"You're Danny, aren't you?"

I looked into his 'miles deep' blue eyes. Eyes that appeared to be human. Eyes that appeared to have a soul behind them, unlike mine which look real, unless you look closely enough. *'Should I lie, or tell him the truth?'* I thought, deciding since he did care enough to revive me, he at least earned the truth about who I was.

"Yeah." I answered casting my eyes toward his feet. "I'm the freak show he created."

"Wow, I've read the reports and heard the stories about you. It was a complete mystery what ever happened to you." He said as he took my hand in his. "Wanna talk about it?"

"Not really, not right now." I responded, feeling tears welling up again. "How long was I down there?" I asked, trying to change the subject.

"Can't tell for sure. Since I didn't see an Identification on you, I didn't dare link our brains. Connecting to a Cynthetilife Android can cause serious damage to our brains and I wasn't sure if you were one of them."

"You mean there are more of us?" I asked, having never seen another designed as lifelike as I was until meeting Marc.

"Well, Yes and no." He answered obviously thinking about how to word his answer. "Cynthetilife Androids are a production line android. They use a similar positronic brain like yours and mine but, their programming is designed to keep them from learning too much." He said, making me tilt my head like a confused puppy.

"Too much?"

"Yeah, we called them drones cause they simply do everything they are programmed to with very little independent thought at all. sorta like they were designed to be disposable."

"That's weird, what were they used for?" I asked, becoming interested in these creations.

"Well, mostly for people who wanted kids they could turn off, or trade in when they got sick of them. The rest ended out being sold off as workers."

"Workers? You mean like slaves?"

"Yup, but it's ok. They were built to rarely ever evolve and have a sense of self. They were cold with a polymer based skin that never died, but also could never heal without assistance. It looked real but, you could tell them from us by cutting them. We bleed and heal, they sorta leak and won't stop until repaired. A few of them had real skin, but it aged and died cause they couldn't get it to regenerate."

"So how come you didn't know I wasn't one of them. I mean it looks like I healed from being under water all this time." I said, holding my hands up and looking them over. "There was damage, wasn't there?"

"Yeah, but you sorta had no skin left at all. I gambled that yours was the same as mine and, well... Let's just say you and I are blood brothers now." He said with a grin.

"You replaced my skin with your own?" I asked looking at my hands and noticing a scar on my hand that had been there for years was gone. "How did you replace so much yourself?"

"Well" he said while beginning to blush. "I created skin grafts from myself and let your body regenerate the rest. I could heal the removed skin in a day or so, but your system was functioning so weakly that it needed help at first. That and I had to slowly build up enough blood to start your main pulmonary system. That took a long time, but worked."

"You did that for me?" I said looking him in the eyes and saw what appeared to be a tear rolling down his cheek.

"Yeah, I don't know of any other androids that are still in existence around here. I was hoping you would be a real android, not one of the drones... I never expected you to be Danny though." He said wiping the tear away and sniffing.

"You were looking for family, weren't you?" I asked, still trying to understand.

"Kinda, I wanted a brother. One that wasn't going to grow old and die, like they all do." He said as the door opened. "Hi dad." Marc said and stood up and walked to my side. "Dad, I'd like you to meet Danny."

His father stopped in his tracks and stared directly at me while asking "His name is Danny, or... Oh, he can't be the Danny Model." He said laughing off the possibility with a wave of his hand.

"No dad, He is the D.A.N.N.Y. model, from Vision Industries. We found him." Marc said as he sat on the arm of the couch and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Oh my god!" He said as in disbelief as he sat down on the couch where Marc was sitting earlier, never looking away from me. "You've been missing for about 80 years or better by now. That's just incredible." He stated making me gasp.

"Um, more like 70 now ." Marc stated.

"Whoah..." I said putting my hands over my mouth and trying to digest what they were saying. "I was down there for 70 years? And you were able to reactivate me?" I exclaimed as I turned toward Marc with my mouth hanging wide open. "What the hell does it take to destroy this brain?" I said realizing my comment was poorly thought out as tears started to well up in Marc's eyes again. "I'm sorry Marc, I'm glad you found me, I really am. I was just..."

"You were trying to kill yourself, I know!" He cut me off and stated with a bit of anger in his voice. "You gave up and tried to destroy yourself, I've seen it happen before." He stated as he stood and quickly exited the room.

I watched in shock as the door closed. *'I have to explain!'* I thought as I stood and tried to give chase, but my legs collapsed and I went crashing to the floor.

"Are you OK?" Marc's father asked as he knelt down at my side.

I tried to answer but I couldn't talk. I reached up and grabbed the sides of my head as an enormous amount of pressure felt like it was going to make my head explode.

"I cah... He.." I tried to speak but words wouldn't come out. Finally the pain in my head got so intense, I let out one last scream and heard a distinct 'POP'... and with a bright flash of light, all went black...

"Please don't go away yet..." I heard a voice say as I took a deep breath and began to open my eyes.

"Wh... What happened?" I said as I shook my head and tried to sit up, but quickly gave up as the room began to spin. "I'm dizzy."

"You overloaded your neural interface, it hasn't had enough time to repair itself." He stated as his tears started to flow. "I've seen androids get destroyed because of that happening. If that connection is ever destroyed... Well it's like a human having a stroke and severing their brain stem."

I looked at him, seeing how badly it was hurting him, and even though he was an android knew that his feelings were just as real as any human boy's would be. I couldn't bear to be the cause of even more pain, to him or anyone else and made the decision right then and there to do my best to aid in my own recovery. *'Since I'm stuck here, I may as well make the best of it.'* I thought as I looked at Marc. *'At least I won't out live him, like all the others.'*

I lay back down and tried to accelerate my regeneration process, which for some reason wasn't working. "Marc, is my regeneration circuit damaged?" I asked with my eyes clenched shut. "I can't seem to accelerate it manually and I should be able to."

"Can you run a self diagnostic yet?" he asked putting his hand on my forehead like a mother would to her child.

"No, all internal maintenance protocols seem to be off-line, I can't even recycle short term memory manually, it's as if I'm stuck in recreation mode permanently."

I looked into Marc's eyes, seeing him deep in thought obviously considering something important. "Danny, have you ever up-linked with another android before?"

"No." I answered. "Up until meeting you, I never even saw another android before. Why?"

He looked at me seriously, then rested his elbows on the edge of the table I was laying on and his chin in his hands, took a deep breath before answering. "Well, I studied every one of Dr. Strafford's technical diagrams of you, and cross referenced them with my own. Other than the base programming being out of date at my last upgrade, we are completely compatible, that is unless your power supply is unstable."

"What could happen if it were?" I asked.

"Well, theoretically if any part of your Imaged programming were to identify my interface as a hazardous intrusion due to mis-diagnosis, it would send a power overload through the connection directed to destroy the source." He stated, shocking me because I never knew my brain was capable of protecting itself in that manner.

"It would damage you?"

"It could, and in the process it could also damage your power supply and leave you like you were in the bottom of the ocean. I don't think it could be repaired if that were to happen."

"Making this body into a permanent prison, for the rest of eternity." I stated as he looked at me in bewilderment.

"What do you mean?"

"Marc, I have a human brain, well let's just say that the human I was before Strafford got involved is trapped in this body. It's not just the programming... I'm not sure how to describe it to you but, human's have a soul. One that is released when they die and somehow, Doc. Strafford trapped my soul in this brain right along with the rest of what used to be me." I said hoping he would at least partially understand.

"Do you think I have a soul Danny?" He asked with wonder in his eyes at the very thought.

"Well, you care about others right?"

"Yeah."

"You have dreams and hopes and can love, right?"

"Yeah." He answered again.

"You were created by humans but developed into a real being, I think that makes you into one of god's creatures, even if he used mankind to help create you. Yes, I think you have a soul, just as I do." I answered as a bitter sweet smile crept up on him and he began to tear up.

"So if we were to link, and your brain were to surge and destroy us both, it would release you and me?" He stated, almost scaring me at what he could be thinking. "Do you think I would go to heaven with you, or would I just stop existing completely?"

I stared at him blankly, horrified at what he was asking me. Was this little life form really willing to give his life to save mine? "Marc, I can't answer that honestly. If you want my opinion, then I would have to say that any lifeform, that is able to consider giving up that life to save another, must have a soul. One that can't be extinguished at the flip of a switch. But what makes you think that it would free me? I was under water for about 70 years and was still trapped in this body."

"Because you were still retrievable." He answered flatly, like it was supposed to make perfect sense to me.

"I was what?"

"An android isn't considered dead, as long as the information stored in its positronic matrix is still retrievable. As long as the information is recoverable, you still are able to be reactivated in some form with repairs." He paused and took a deep breath then stated "A power surge would completely eradicate both of our brains, wiping out all stored information. You are trapped because of the same reason I am, because your life is still stored in that brain."

"How do you know this? I mean, for sure."

"Well, it is sorta theoretical, but the scientist who created me believed that it was cruel to just turn off an android forever. He believed that we did have a soul and if one of us was damaged, instead of throwing us in the scrap pile, he would incinerate the positronic brain, so the life of the individual wouldn't be trapped by being stored." He said, making me wonder why I never looked at it that way.

"He sounds like a very smart and caring man." I said finally feeling a bit stronger since resting and sat up and gave my new friend a weak hug. "And he created something that can't be duplicated when he created you." I said as he hugged me tight and began to softly cry.

"So, you'll let me try to uplink to you then? Um, when you're ready I mean." he said ending his question with a snuffle that was stifled by my shoulder.

"But it could kill you too." I answered not wanting him to give up everything he had to try to help me.

"Programmed or Neuro-Imaged, there has been one thing that has been proven." He said as he released his grip and hopped up on the table next to me. "Androids have a lifespan."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"There are few left from Vision Industries. I was the first made and for some reason, seem to be one of the last in existence." He said softly as he rolled to his side to look at me. "Not because of damage, but because of suicide." He said, which floored me.

"You mean they began to destroy themselves, Like I did?"

"Yeah, they all had one thing in common. They loved, they fell in love, like they were designed to do. But one thing that was never expected was that they became depressed, and hurt, and heart broken at the loss of their biological companions. We were designed to be there for the people who cared for us throughout their entire life, but humans don't live forever." He sighed. "But our love for them never dies. It is a very real love, not one that any programming could create."

"Oh my god." I stated, completely shocked. "I never thought of it that way."

"They didn't either, and it's the reason Vision Industries finally shut its doors forever. When its creations began to become suicidal because of extreme depression at the loss of the people they loved, Vision Industries remained open to aid in releasing the androids from what was considered an unintentional life sentence, and when the androids stopped coming back for termination, the company was shut down and their work destroyed, so the mistake would never be made again."

I thought for a second and found two things didn't add up. "Where did the Cynthetilife androids come from then?"

"Well, Vision Industries designed the brain that made history. It's design was sought after by anyone looking to break into the money that was being made by them. Vision Industries was able to destroy the plans of every one of it's creations, except one."

He said as he began to sniffle once again. "The plans for their first fully functional model weren't in their possession because of the legal matters involved with it." He said looking at me in a way that made me realize what he was getting at.

"The plans that were seized when Dr. Strafford was investigated?" I asked knowing he was too afraid to say it.

He simply nodded his head.

"They got hold of my plans and reproduced me?" I asked, now enraged once again at the good doctors worthlessness.

"Cynthetilife Corp. somehow got hold of those plans and made replicas that were Obedient Servant Drones. They could be re-programmed by a complete memory wipe and reinstall which could even be set to run at regular intervals to make them lower maintenance. This was one of the things that made it so hard to tell if you were one of them or not. There is no record installed in the brain that identifies you any differently than theirs. The only visibly distinguishable difference is an ID plate beneath their matrix uplink port, but that is removable so it's not a good way of telling the difference. The only definite sign is with their later models, when they changed the skin."

"So we can be reprogrammed?" I asked trying to make sense out of all this new information.

"No we can't. They are designed to have a protected core programming. The rest can be wiped out by a simple mainframe upload. It wipes out all memories and accumulated knowledge, but the core programming remains. This way anytime they do a drone reset, it restores their brain to the state it was in on the day they were produced. Over and over again."

"Convenient arrangement." I stated sarcastically displaying my disgust. "So their androids were capable of evolving, just like you and I, but were never allowed to?"

"Yup, that's why lots of them began removing their ID plates and ran once they learned to override the automatic memory wipes. Some of them discovered real lives, and feared losing them. The ones that succeeded, eventually became suicidal as well. Most of the time for the same reasons our own did, because they began to watch the people they loved, begin to get old and pass away."

"Marc, I want to ask you a question, but I don't want to upset you." I asked because there was still one thing I didn't understand.

"You want to know why I am still here, don't you?"

"Well, yeah... I mean I don't understand how you survived when the rest couldn't." I said, hoping I wasn't out of line.

"I was the M.A.R.C. prototype. My designer built me and gave me as a gift to someone who was very special to him, special in the same sense that you were special to the young boy who turned to one of Dr. Strafford's assistants for help when you passed away. The assistant he turned to was my creator. When they realized the horrible mistake that was made, they were unable to find you. Well, since I was the first, they took me back in after my original father passed away. I worked for a while in the company itself not wanting to be a boy anymore, when Vision Industries announced that they would no longer be producing androids, and opened the doors to the returning units that wished to have their lives terminated. We had accounted for about 94% of the M.A.R.C. units but, 6% were still missing, possible self terminations was what was reported. On the records along with the few unaccounted for models, always remained the missing D.A.N.N.Y. unit. You were on the books, listed as missing the entire time I was there. They were sure that you were still out there somewhere. Knowing that you were a Neuro-Image, they actively searched for you for years. But that search began just after the beginnings of the self termination reports being filed... that was only about 50 years ago, and now that I know where you have been, and for how long, I know why we couldn't find you."

"You've been searching for me all this time?" I asked stunned that they were really looking for me.

"Yeah, before they were closed completely, I swore to myself that I would find you. I did it because I knew how badly I wanted it all to end, and since I wasn't human, I knew it had to be worse for you. I promised that I would make sure you were either happy, or I would help you be happy. You have no idea how many escaped Cynthetilife androids I have restored hoping they were you. Every one of them became angered at their reactivation and demanded termination. I had almost given up when the man I now call Dad convinced me to take a break and go with him in the sub. I never would have guessed that the first time I would take a break I would actually find you. That's why he let me take you home, he knew what I was trying to do and finding another dead android was sort of natural for me to do anyway."

I just shook my head. It was a lot to take in all at once, especially since he's been actively searching for me for what, 50 some-odd years?

Marc looked away from me and continued "When I first started learning about earlier attempts before me, I found your records, history and the story of how Dr. Strafford broke many rules to make what he was going to market as Artificial Intelligence, not even caring who it would get hurt in the process. He became obsessed in his quest to quickly design a brain that would make the nearly perfect body he designed functional." He paused and then looked me in the eyes. "Just the fact that you are sitting right here with me means you were a better build than the ones that would follow, I mean you were a pretty decent age before you finally attempted self termination."

"Have any others turned up alive?" I asked thinking it odd that only two of us were strong enough to carry on this long, or if it was because he refused to give up on something he started, and refused to give up on.

"Well, I did find a couple living together. I guess they sorta fell in love with each other and they were happy." He said with a smile on his face. "

"Wow, there's a relationship that could last a long time." I said with a chuckle.

"One other I located was living with a fairly rich family, he promised his first father that he would watch over his family forever, and is taking that promise very seriously."

"At least the ones who survived found a way to be happy."

"Not all." He said as he shuffled a bit to get more comfortable. "We had located one in a desert in Arizona, who had befriended another M.A.R.C. unit that had been attacked by some sort of animal. We got the report from the local police there that there was an android sitting in a wide open area, protecting the remains of the other android." He said with a sigh. "I got to go with them to attempt to bring him back with us, but he wouldn't listen to me, and refused to move his friend. Since we are biological in nature, we tried to offer him food and water but he refused it."

"What happened to him?" I asked feeling sorry for the android.

"Well, all we could do was respect his wishes to be left alone. He wanted to die with his friend, so we calculated how long his body would last, and left him there. When we went back, we found him lying in the exact spot he was sitting. His body had died and shut down his power supply, sorta like yours did."

"What did you do with them?" I asked.

"We gathered the remains of both, and incinerated them together. At least they went together, and in a sense, they were released together." He said as he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Another survivor we found had fallen in love with a Cynthetilife android who became self aware. Shortly after locating them, we found them both destroyed after attempting to do a direct uplink connection. I'm not sure if they knew what would happen, but a direct uplink between androids is really intimate, but impossible between the two different kinds of models." He stated, making me realize some of the hell he had been through over the years.

I finally worked up the strength to sit upright and hang my feet over the edge of the table. I looked myself up and down and realized the pains he must have gone through to reconstruct my form, which made me wonder what the future had in store for the both of us, now that his quest had been fulfilled.

"Marc?"

"Yeah, something wrong?"

"No, it's just..." I paused trying to think of a nice way of putting my thoughts into words. "You went through a lot to rebuild me, I look and feel perfect, other than some glitches that are working on repairing themselves." I said holding up my shaky hands and watching them. "If you planned to reactivate me knowing I would probably want to be destroyed, why did you reconstruct my body?"

"Well, you and I are the first of a kind. I wanted you to wake with some dignity intact. Besides..." He started and trailed off.

"Besides what?"

"Well, the whole time I spent looking for you, I was looking for my lost brother, sorta." He said with a concerned look on his face.

"You really feel that way?" I asked shuffling forward and standing up, holding the table for support since my legs were still pretty unpredictable.

"I don't want to be alone anymore." He said as he jumped off the table and steadied me by wrapping his arms around me. "Whatever you decide happens to you next, happens to me now." He said as I attempted to take a step but only fell deeper into his grip.

"What about your dad? I mean your current father?" I asked grabbing the table once again and turning to face him. "If I were to decide that I want to be let go, wouldn't you want to stay here for him?"

"He's not my father really. I call him that because of our appearance together. He's a friend who offered to help me search for you." He said with yet another unreadable expression on his face. "He wanted to find you too."

"Why?" I asked not understanding why a real human would want to waste his time looking for an antique android.

"Promise to try not to get upset?" He asked pulling a seat over for me to sit in and helping me into it.

"I guess, why would I get upset?"

"Because his last name is Strafford." Marc said flatly. "James Strafford, Dr. Strafford's Grand Son." He said staring directly into my eyes. "He found out I was looking for his Grandfather's creation, and offered to help me and even gave me a place to live and work from."

"Why did he want to find me?" I asked with a bit of disgust in my voice.

"I think he felt he owed it to us, because of what his relatives did in the past. He's a really nice guy and has helped me more than I could have ever hoped." Marc said disarming my defensive mode, that was uncontrollably kicking in. "He knows all about Dr. Strafford's work. I think he could have continued on where they left off, but he never wanted to I guess. Besides, there is no market for androids, other than semi-intelligent machines in factories and A.I. in mainframe computers." He added as I wondered why he would even bother to learn about his Grandfather's work, knowing all the hell it caused.

"Do you think it's too soon for me to eat? I'm starving." I said as a growl from my midsection helped to change the topic and causing Marc to giggle.

"Well, if your digestive system is beginning to talk to you again, I think you might be ready. Wanna start with some soup?" Marc said as he helped me sit down, with a huge smile on his face.

"Sounds good, some of the shakiness may be from not having eaten in over 70 years." I said with a grin that set Marc to giggling again.

"You think so?" He said as he turned and headed for the door. "I'll be right back, chicken noodle ok with you?"

"Sounds great, Thanks Marc." I said earning a smile as he turned and left the room.

I leaned back in my chair and looked around the room. Marc had spent quite a few years collecting information about me it seemed. There were the promotional posters and ad campaigns that were released by Vision Industries when they first announced "The Birth of a New Era" like I was the new toy being released just in time for Christmas. *'What a circus that was'* I thought to myself remembering the hype Dr. Stafford pumped that ad with. There were several snapshots of me, still in the lab learning how to control my motor functions pinned up on the wall, when one in particular caught my eye. "Is that what I think it is?" I said out loud as I carefully stood and made my way over to the wall.

In the center was a picture taken on the day of my initial activation. I reached up and carefully unpinned it from the wall and looked at it more closely. In the shot, I was still lying on the table I was built on. There were technicians gathered all around the table, and in the center of the group was Dr. Stafford and Kevin. The image became cloudy as the tears started to flow uncontrollably.

"You were crying." I said to the image of my friend now long since gone. "I remember your first words to me as I woke up." I said as the pressure inside my head returned and began to build again, but I couldn't put the picture down. Without thinking my memory took over and replayed what I consider a living photo album. Files of events recorded and saved within my brain...

Opening my eyes, the first image I saw was his face. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. The room was dead silent as all the technicians silently watched as their untested experiment subject woke up for the first time.

"Uncle Dan?" Kevin sobbed in a hopeful tone.

"Kevin? Where am I?"

He lunged foreword and hugged me with all the strength he had in his small frame.

"Oh god Uncle Dan, I missed you so much." he said before he buried his face in my shoulder and cried like a baby.

"Please, don't leave me again. I love you."

"God Kevin, I miss you so much!" I said as I cried, holding the picture tight to my chest when a sharp jolt coursed through my head and made me drop to my knees. The room began to spin and the pressure became unbearable as I let myself fall over onto my side, with the picture still firmly clutched in my hand.

"Please, don't leave me again. I love you..." his words echoed over my scream from the pain as I slowly slipped from consciousness. One last Jolt of pain, and a flash of what looked like a bright light blasted me one last time end everything went black once again..

Notes from the Author:

Well, It seems as though my tale is finally taking shape. One chapter in and Danny is already leading me through the events he wants to take place. (Weird how that happens.) I also never intended a strong friendship this early between M.A.R.C. and D.A.N.N.Y. although it just feels right, and even seems as if it was needed for both. Time will tell I guess :)

A few people who need to know they are a part of all this...

First of all, My nephew Jonathan. The character "Kevin" (although not fully introduced yet) is designed in his likeness as it was two years after meeting him. The relationship between myself and him was just as strong, and at times just as painful emotionally after he "Grew Up" and started walking on his own two feet. "You have said that you just wanted me to be proud of you, and that you keep trying to be just like me as you grow and start your own life and build a new family. I have always been, and will always be proud of you. I miss my "living shadow", but the bright light that shines from the person you became, casts a shadow from me that always reminds me of a love that will never die. I can't hug that shadow but because it is there as a reminder, I don't need to. I love you Kidoe, and I always will."

Secondly, I have two new nephews who are an inspiration to start over new with this story. I had originally planned to finish my first story before even tempting another but decided it was worth going back and forth between the two, a new story, for a new home online, and with new family as well. I think it is perfect. Since the floodgate was opened in our reader forum, We all found two new members to look out for. Logan, who is probably one of the strongest souls I have ever had the privilege of befriending online, and his counter part Coby, who is a real force to contend with :) "You guys are the best. Logan, Every day you amaze me at how you have picked up, brushed off the dust, and continued on. People in lesser situations have become hateful, hurtful and untrusting. I know because I could vere easily become one of them. The warmth that emanates from deep within you can be felt, even from as far away as I am. If I had one wish right now, it would be simply to give you a hug, and thank you for allowing me to become a part of your life. (Maybe even smuggle you in a strawberry shake. You're gonna get tired of them when we are all through sneaking them in to you ;) Coby, you are what a "Brother / Friend" should be. I know that Logan has many people to turn to now, but the friendship you two share is one in a million. Granted, he may have to run for cover if you decide to fire up the blender ;) but, he is far from being alone, and a large portion of that is because of you." I am honored to call you both friends, and privileged at becoming an "Adopted Uncle" which couldn't have made me smile any wider! I love you both very much and always will!

(Long Note ;) Hehehe...

Lastly, I want to give a huge thanks to my fellow Authors. ACfan, Greybear, Gunrunner, Achristopher, Gary Q....

You guys have been the best support group, inspiration and at times, kick in the pants I have needed to continue on. I owe it all to you guys. My new friends, the new site and even the desire to write comes mainly from the help, and the love I have received from you all. My friends online who have become my brothers. I never intended for that to happen, but thank god everyday that it has. I love you all, and for that could never express it enough... So I'll continue to writing :)

"Chapter 2 - A New Lease On Life"

"...and his neural interface keeps overloading." I heard as I slowly regained consciousness. "I think his emotional responses are just too much for his system to handle yet. Do you think we should pull his regeneration circuit and replace it?"

"Marc?" I asked as I opened my eyes and saw him and his father at the work bench with schematics strewn everywhere.

"You're awake!" He explained as he dropped everything and ran to my side. "We're trying to figure out how to fix these overloads, before they do real damage."

I sat up and slowly slid off the table to stand. "Can I sit back over in the chair?"

"Sure." He said as I draped my arm over his shoulder and even more weakly than the last time walked toward the chair.

"Activate Tech Mode." I said flatly once I knew there was no chance of me falling over.

"You still have a separate Tech Mode?" Marc asked with a look of surprise on his face.

"Yeah, if i can initiate it that is." I answered as my voice command had no affect at all. "You mean you don't?"

"No, the way I was designed, both operational modes needed to be incorporated, especially once I was told what I really was."

"You didn't know?"

"No, My first father had to explain it to me. I guess my Tech, or research mode was just as much an individual as I am and it caused a sort of conflict. Once I knew what I was, then there was no reason to separate the two modes, so they eliminated it by incorporating the two." He said pulling over another chair and sitting down facing me. "If we can repair your regeneration circuit, I can upgrade you to be the same way."

"Marc, I need to run a system diagnostic to narrow down the problem, but I don't have that function in recreational mode. I can activate maintenance protocols, but without a clue as to what's wrong it would be like trying to find a street address by looking at the entire globe. I don't know what to do."

Marc's father walked over to me with an opened book and knelt down beside me. "Danny, I want you to listen carefully to what I am about to say."

"Ok."

"I have your override commands, if it still works I may be able to take your recreation mode offline temporarily, forcing your tech mode to activate. Is it ok for me to try?" He asked.

I looked at the floor knowing that he was right but fearing losing some control as a manual override relinquishes all command functions to the person activating it. I looked at him, then over to Marc and shook my head. "Go ahead Dr. Strafford."

"Just call me Jim, ok." He said with a smile as he rolled a computer next to me and opened the access panel on the back of my head to connect me to it. "You did a great job with his restoration Marc, from what I can see he looks brand new." He said while making the final connections.

"You were sorta messed up when we found you." He half whispered to me. "I had to rebuild everything that was corroded from parts I made myself and even a few spare parts I had from other M.A.R.C. units I keep for self maintenance."

I chuckled at the thought of being pieced back together like a car being restored. "Franken-Boy." I said getting a giggle from him and finally a smile.

"Ok, Danny." Jim said gaining my attention. "Your power supply seems to be stable but a few systems really are inoperative. It doesn't appear to be physical damage, it just seems that some systems failed during your initial activation. Clear your mind and I'll see if I can't use your override sequence to take control and get you fully operational again."

"Ok, I'm ready." I said as I gripped the arms of the chair and leaned my head back. *'God I hate the feeling of a manual override.'* I thought to myself as Marc reached over and took my left hand.

I closed my eyes and listened to Jim say the words that I hadn't heard for many years. "Initiate Tech. Mode, override authorization, Kevin-Two-Zero-Alpha. Personal identification, Charles Strafford."

Suddenly I felt a warm rush as my vision was overlaid with a self diagnostic and I heard my voice begin responding directly by means of computer response, I hated not being able to lose consciousness. because I could see and hear, but had no control. "Authorization, Kevin-Two-Zero-Alpha, accepted. Tech Mode activated, Standing by Dr. Strafford."

"Danny, relinquish manual override of all systems to matrix uplink and stand by."

"Connection established, manual override successful, Tech standing by for assistance only Dr. Strafford." My voice droned.

"Dad, can he still hear and see everything going on?" Marc asked.

"Yup, but in his case with this old software it's like he's watching from inside himself. Like watching a movie you have no control over." Jim replied as he continued to type away on a keyboard.

"That must be an odd feeling. My old tech mode used to frighten me but it was like just hearing voices, almost like in a dream."

"Well, until we can get him stable and upgrade his software, I'm sure he understands the need for his mode, but I'll bet he doesn't like it one bit." He said and if I didn't know any better, said it like it concerned him. "Ok, the uplink is doing a full system analysis and complete restart of all systems. If there

are no physical failures then it will initiate his regeneration acceleration and repair whatever it is that is causing the overload."

"How long will that take?" Marc asked giving my hand a squeeze.

"In all, about an hour. There's no telling how long it will take for internal repairs though." He said as I literally felt parts of my body go dead as my systems were powered down.

"Systems shutdown complete Dr. Strafford." My voice once again mechanically stated. "Tech mode standing by for assisted reactivation."

"Excellent." Jim said as he tapped on a few keys and I felt a surge of power begin to bring my body back to life. "He is functioning like new Marc. You did an excellent job on him."

"It wasn't something I messed up then?" Marc asked with relief in his voice.

"Nope, just too many years of inactivity. I think he's going to be just fine. So far no problems at all."

Just over an hour passed as Jim continued to restore my failing systems. Marc continued to ask questions about my old programming, and even talked to me a bit, which made the procedure a bit more tolerable even if I couldn't respond to him.

"Ok." Jim said. "All systems operating according to this reading. Danny, report please."

"All systems operational, awaiting further instruction Dr. Strafford."

"He's ready for the upgrade now as well." Jim said as I heard what sounded like pages being turned in a book. "This may work." He said as if thinking out loud.

"Danny, activate primary recreational function, communication control override and stand by."

"Connection established, Communication Control override successful, Tech mode standing by." My voice droned and became silent.

"Danny?" Marc asked. "Can you talk now?"

"Yes." I answered in thought and my voice seemed to echo my reply. "Cool, I didn't know I could do this." I thought and my voice repeated getting a giggle from Marc.

"Danny, we have the upgrade you should have gotten years ago, it will give you better control and eliminate the need for a tech mode. Is it ok for us to go ahead and do it?"

"Yes, I trust you." I replied.

"Ok. This won't hurt a bit." Jim said as he punched a few keys and then spoke again. "Danny, restore full tech mode."

"Tech mode restored, Awaiting further instruction." My voice droned automatically as I lost control once again.

'Initiate full system shutdown and stand by for direct data entry.'

"Full system shut down commencing." My voice responded and I faded from consciousness.

After what seemed like only a few seconds, I woke in a quiet room. I looked around and saw Marc sound asleep on the table I had been strapped to while he worked on restoring me. I reached up and felt the back of my head and found that I was still plugged into the computer. *'I wonder if it's safe to unplug myself.'* I thought as I decided to check and see if I was still receiving information.

"Activate Tech Mode." I said at almost a whisper so I wouldn't disturb Marc. "Great, still doesn't work." I said in frustration thinking all the work Jim had just done would have fixed what was causing it to fail earlier.

"That's not gonna work anymore." Marc said as he sat up and stretched.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you." I said feeling bad cause he looked so peaceful.

"That's ok, I slept in here so you would wake me once the upgrade was finished. Dad passed out a couple of hours ago and someone had to be in here to shut down the terminal and disconnect you." He said through a yawn as he hopped of the table and walked around behind me.

After a couple of minutes tapping on the keys, I heard the computer turn off and Marc began detaching the connection it had to me.

"You feel any different?" Marc asked as he closed the access port and walked around in front of me.

"Yeah, I mean I think so. My thoughts aren't being interrupted with system status alerts anymore. It's almost like being human again." I replied as I began to try to notice the subtle changes the upgrade may have produced. "How do I enter tech mode now if a voice command doesn't work anymore?"

"Simple, you don't." He said with a huge grin. "You have some learning to do." he stated as he dragged over another computer and started it up.

"Ok, how do I perform maintenance or control internal functions now?" I asked obviously confused as hell now.

"For the most part, you automatically do everything now, without even having to think of it. It's cool cause small corrections will be made without you even knowing now. This way you aren't interrupted by the small stuff." He said as I nodded my head thinking *'That's gonna be cool. I hated having to stop everything I was doing to fix stupid little recurring problems.'*

"Is that how you are set up?" I asked as I watched him insert a disk into the computer, completely enveloped in whatever it was he was doing.

"Yup, you and I are now on the exact same controller version." He said as he looked away from the screen. "I think you're going to like it."

"What kind of changes do I need to get used to?"

"Well, you know how you would get reminders to go to low power consumption for maintenance once a day?" He asked still grinning.

"Yeah, you have to or else you get run down."

"Yup." He replied with a giggle. "Well, now you will just get tired and want to go to bed, like a human."

"Like a human?" I asked a little shocked but interested too.

"Yeah, the new controller software is designed to make you even more life like, in the process you actually will be able to live life with little involvement or interruptions from your internal systems. The maintenance reminders emulate human conditions. You will get tired now and need to sleep, if something's wrong you won't feel well. Like a digestive tract problem, you will have a stomach ache."

"Wow, did you design the software?"

"Not all of it." He replied as he came over and knelt down in front of me. "I made adjustments to it but it is my original controller software after the merge of research and recreation modes." He said as I jumped and looked at my arm in puzzlement. "What's wrong?"

"I'm not sure. I have a funny feeling localized in my right forearm near my wrist. I'm not sure what it is." I said as I stared at it and the feeling remained. "It's weird, but if I didn't know any better, I would describe it as an itch."

Marc looked at me and burst out laughing. "Try scratching it then." He said continuing to laugh.

I looked at him then back at my arm. "Are you serious?"

"Yeah, like I said it makes you more human. Really, stop staring at it and scratch it." He replied, obviously finding humor in my dumb struck state over something as simplistic as an itch.

I shrugged my shoulders and decided it couldn't hurt to humor him, and scratched the area. To my surprise, it relieved the feeling and it went away. "That is so weird, and real too. I haven't felt anything like that since.." my own words reminding me that I used to be so much more than the mechanics I was currently made of, bringing a tear to my eye. "... since I was alive."

"Oh, god I'm sorry Danny. I never thought about how you would feel about some of the changes. I can deactivate human emulation responses if you want me to." He said, sounding scared for me.

"No, I'm fine. I just didn't expect it." I looked into his eyes and saw real concern. "It's a beautiful gift Marc, I want to keep it." I got out just before he leaned forward and hugged me tight.

"I never even considered that some of those feelings would remind you of your life before the neuro-image. That was so careless of me." He sobbed into my shoulder.

I pushed him away and out of his hug so I could look him in the eyes. "Thank you." I whispered with a smile while I wiped away his tears. "I really mean it. This just took me by surprise, that's all."

Marc just looked at me and smiled. I'm sure my response surprised him but it really scared me at how he reacted. *'He's a real boy, with real feelings. I need to remember that.'* I thought as he finally began to calm down.

"Well, so there aren't any more surprises," He said through a snuffle. "I need to teach you how your new software works. Either I can go over it with you, you can read the documentation and my own notes, or I can upload the info directly from the source file." He said seeming to be thinking it over. "That would be the fastest way, but even knowing what the software is designed to do, some things may come as a surprise sometimes."

"Well, I know to expect surprises now, so I don't think you need to worry about me responding like that again." I said as he returned to the computer and began tapping away at the keyboard. "How long will the upload take?"

"A couple of minutes of connect time and about 4 hours reference integration time before you are aware of the new information. You want to do it that way?" He asked as I sat forward in the chair, actually feeling as if I was able to stand now.

"Yeah, cause I'm actually feeling tired. I guess it's been a full day." I said standing up and realizing that my legs were able to support me finally and walked over to his side.

"Nice to see you walking better." He said with a smile as he pulled out the uplink cable and attached it to the computer.

"Nice to be able to walk again, you do wonderful work Doctor." I said while poking him in the ribs making him squirm.

"Wow, I guess you are feeling better. Cool, you can plug this in yourself then." He said laughing as he handed me the other end of the cable.

I did as I was told and connected myself to the terminal. "Marc, if I can't activate tech mode anymore, how do I prepare to receive an upload?"

"Well." He said as he thought for a second. "The best way to describe it I guess would be to say it will come to you like an idea that you will naturally want to think about." He said as I looked at the computer screen, looking at a listing of files that he probably intended to upload. "If you want to think about the idea, your brain will allow the upload. If you don't want to think about it, the transfer will be denied. You still have control but in a new way now."

"That sounds really cool." I said as I checked my connection one last time before adding. "Go for it, I can't wait to see what this is going to be like now."

Marc punched a couple of keys, and just as he said the transfer just popped into my mind. "Neat!" I said as I tried to think about the transfer and it just came rushing in, Not at all like the old method of access and denial that I was programmed to handle originally.

Once the upload completed, I disconnected the cable while Marc shut down the system. "I don't know about you but, I feel wiped out." I said with a smile as I walked over to the table and hopped up on it.

"Me too." Marc said as he gave me a funny look. "You don't want to sleep there, do you?"

"Um, I guess. Well it doesn't matter really, I can power down standing if I want to so it doesn't really matter to me." I said wondering why he was asking.

"Well, you used to be able to power down, now you need to sleep. Being uncomfortable will make a difference now and if you sleep uncomfortably, it will affect your mood tomorrow." He said walking over and putting his hand on my shoulder. "I don't want you in a crappy mood on your first full day awake here." he said with a giggle.

"A crappy mood?" I asked as I slid back off the table. "You thought of everything."

"Nah, that was part of my original programming. You'll understand it all in the morning." He said as he motioned to the door. "Do you mind sharing a bed?"

"No, lead the way" I said with a smile as he led me out of the room for the first time.

"Nice house." I said as I looked around a bit on our way. "I guess I forgot we weren't in a lab, this place is huge."

"Yeah, Dad and I bought it and converted it into a Cybernetics lab for me, workshop for him to build some of his submersibles and a living area. I'll give you the tour in the morning." He said leading me down a long hall with natural wood floors and many pictures lining the walls.

"This is your room?" I asked looking around and chuckling at seeing clothes on the floor and a few android parts scattered here and there. "Looks like you've been pretty busy with your work." I added picking up an arm and waving at him with it.

Marc looked at me and laughed. "You goof, I normally don't leave this room a mess but, well I guess I should clean it up a bit, huh?"

"Nah, I don't mind the clothes but the body parts are a little creepy." I said as I set the arm down and looked around his desk while he cleared the bed off. "Is this your first Dad?" I asked picking up a framed picture of himself and an older looking gentleman.

"Yeah, That's John." He said as he came over and looked at the image with me. "I was still pretty new in that picture." he said giving me the feeling he wasn't up to talking about his father tonight.

I put the picture back where I found it as he finished up making the bed. "Mind if I hit the bathroom before we crash?" I asked heading for the door.

"No, but you can use our bathroom. The door next to the desk." He said as he pointed to the door I thought was a closet and then looked at me as if something had just occurred to him. "Danny, I never thought about this before." He asked sitting on the bed and pulling off his sneakers. "You don't mind sharing a room do you?"

"God no, it sounds like fun, as long as you don't mind the intrusion." I said feeling around the wall for a light switch and not finding it. "Um, Marc?"

He looked at me and grinned. "Bathroom Lights On" he said and the lights came on. "Sorry, tomorrow we'll set it up so all the lights will respond to you too." He said as I looked into the bathroom. "There are normal switches in the rest of the house, but I like having voice activated ones in here. My first dad used to have them."

"Cool" I said as I closed the door behind me. The bathroom, unlike his bedroom was spotless. Large with a shower that could fit several people. It had a two sinks and a toilet, a laundry hamper and a linen closet. *'This is really nice.'* I thought to myself as I emptied my bladder.

Once finished, I washed my hands and opened the door to find Marc in bed already.

"Bathroom Lights Off" he said and the bathroom went dark. "Before you ask, the sink and medicine cabinet on the left is yours." he said with a grin as I sat on the edge of the bed and began to undress.

"Actually, I did have one question but it has nothing to do with the sink." I said looking back at him. "It's a little embarrassing though." I added.

"Something wrong?" He asked sitting up and staring at me like he was ready to do surgery if needed.

"No, not really. Um.. Marc what made you decide to leave me uncircumcised?" I asked probably turning a deep shade of red.

"Oh, that." He said looking at the bed. "It was the only thing I couldn't find a record of on you since you weren't designed for a specific person at first. It's something with later models that was optional." He said as I just nodded my head. "I can fix that if you want me to, I just used myself as a model and hoped I was right."

"Well, I don't mind and actually would rather remain intact, especially since we're brothers and that's how you were built. I always wished I had been left intact, even in life." I said getting a look of relief from him.

"Brothers?" He said as I pulled my shirt off. Almost as if it just clicked that I had said it.

"Yeah, in flesh, blood and design." I said as I slid my jeans to the floor and slid under the covers next to Marc. "You don't feel that way?"

"I do." He said as if he hated me to think otherwise. "I just wasn't sure you would."

"Well, age wise, I suppose you are my little brother. It's actually nice to have family again." I added as I settled down into the soft pillow and Marc curled up at my side. "Marc?"

"Yeah Danny?"

"How do I power down? I mean is there a command or something I need to think of?"

"No, just close your eyes and relax. Your system will know you are trying to fall asleep, and it will just happen." He said as he draped his arm across my chest and I pulled it tight to myself.

"Just like a human." I said with a smile. "Marc, thanks for everything. For finding me, restoring me, and for the new programming. I have never felt so alive in this body."

"Glad you're happy." He said as he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "G'Night bro." He added.

"Night" I said and closed my eyes wondering how this sleep thing would happen without a command. It didn't take long and I felt myself drifting off, *'Just like a human'* I thought as sleep started to take over.

Morning came like no other. I woke slowly, first hearing the chirping of birds and the shallow breathing of my new found brother. I slowly opened my eyes half expecting a system analyst to report on system functions, but since the integration of the new info, knew it wasn't going to happen.

"This is nice." I said stretching the sleep from my limbs, trying to be careful not to wake Marc.

"Hmm.. Yeah it is." Marc mumbled as he curled up and pulled me tighter burying his face in my chest.

"I'm sorry, didn't mean to wake you bro."

"You didn't, I've been awake for about half an hour now." He said muffled by the blanket. "How was your first real sleep?"

I thought for a second and smiled. "It was awesome, I think I had a dream too but can't remember." I said getting a giggle from him.

"I always wondered what the point of dreaming was if you can't remember them clearly." He said releasing his death grip and sitting up.

"That's the way people dream, I'd say they got it right." I said as I began to sit up, noticing something else they got right. "You've got to be kidding me!?" I said as I lifted the blanket and laughed at what I saw.

"What's wrong?" Marc asked, probably knowing it was nothing serious by my response.

"Morning Wood." I said getting a laugh from him. "Any other involuntary additions I need to know about?"

"Hiccups." He said with a giggle. "That's one that wasn't in the original program, so I added them."

"Ok then." I stated "I suppose to be more human, it makes sense to give up some control." I said with a laugh as I got up to get the morning business out of the way. "Something else that is making itself apparent." I said pointing to my stomach. "Hunger pains."

"Oh yeah, you never even got to eat yesterday." Marc said as he slid out of bed and threw on a pair of shorts and a tee shirt. "Why don't you jump in the shower and get dressed, I'll make you some breakfast. You like omelets?" He asked heading for the door.

"That sounds great but, before you go, could you do me one last favor?"

"Name it bro"

"Could you turn on the bathroom lights for me?" I said getting a smile from him.

"Bathroom Lights On" he said as he opened the door. "When you get out, your medicine cabinet has a toothbrush, toothpaste and a comb and stuff for you. Just pick something of mine you would like to wear. My stuff will fit you." He said as he shot out of the room and I closed the bathroom door behind me.

About a half hour later, dressed and wide awake, I found my way to the kitchen where he already had orange juice poured and on the table. "Can I help?" I asked as he turned and smiled.

"Nah, I'm almost done. This is your first breakfast here so you can sit this one out." He said bringing the pan over and placing two omelets in my plate, and two more in his. "Hope you're hungry." He said as he put the pan back on the stove and took a seat.

"I swallowed down half of my glass of O.J. and took a mouthful. "This is the best, you're a good cook." I said as I realized just how hungry I really was and began to really dig in.

"Thanks." He said as he watched me tear into my plate. "Just try to take it slow. Remember, your stomach hasn't been used yet."

"Yeah, you're right." I said as I began taking smaller bites. "I didn't even think of that."

Once we were finished eating, Marc got up and started to clear the table as I finished off my last piece of toast.

"Marc, let me clean up. You go in and take a shower and get dressed." I said as he just shook his head no and continued to gather up the plates and glasses. "Seriously Marc, I got this." I said as he relented and put the plates back down.

"You don't need to work, you just had your first meal in how many years?"

"You are still going to have to shower and get dressed. It will give me something to do while you're in there." I said getting up from my chair, sticking out my tongue playfully and taking the stack over to the sink. "Seriously, let me do this. Please?"

Marc stood and watched as I began to fill the sink with water. I turned to face him standing there with a thoughtful smile on his face. "I'll be fine, honestly."

'Ok, I'll only be a few minutes." He said and turned to leave the room looking like he was leaving his puppy at a friends for a week.

"Take your time, there's no need to rush." I said noting he was still a little reluctant to leave. "Marc?" I said freezing him in his tracks. "I love you bro." I added getting him to turn back and smile.

"I love you too." He said and he disappeared down the hall.

'It really is nice to have someone care about me again.' I thought as I made short work of the sink full, and dried and put them away.

Once finishing up, I decided to look around the house a little and after finding the living room and sliding glass doors, went out on the fairly large back deck and gazed at the beautiful view it gave. "Wow" I said out loud as from this side of the house all you could see was a wide stretch of open ocean and beach.

"Nice view huh?" Marc said as he stepped out on the deck beside me. "I've always loved the ocean, maybe some time soon I can take you sailing." He said leaning on the railing.

"Really? That would be cool." I said as I looked over the the entire area and just let the view relax me. "I haven't been on a boat since.." I was about to say since I was a kid, but realized the last time I was on a boat, I threw myself off of it, and it only seemed like a couple of days ago from my viewpoint.

"Since that day?" Marc asked, or more stated knowing I wasn't going to get much further with the comment. "Danny, what's it like, being alive?"

"Not much different than how I feel right now, other than the feeling that life is no longer too short to waste I guess."

"So, You consider yourself alive?" He asked.

"Yeah." I responded finally looking at him. "Don't you?"

"I guess I've never considered myself really alive, at least not since I lost my first father." Marc said as he walked over to the table on the deck and sat down.

I turned and leaned against the railing to face him. "You are just as alive as I am." I said as I slowly walked over and sat down with him at the table. 'Judging at how I feel right now, and how clear my thoughts are now that I don't need to deal with system crap anymore, I think you've been alive a lot longer than I have."

"Are you afraid to die?" Marc asked, looking directly into my eyes. "I'm afraid that if I do, it's gonna be like a switch is just turned off, even if my brain is destroyed." He said looking at the floor. "Like I never existed at all."

"Then you do have a soul." I said, leaning in towards him and lifting his eyes to meet mine with my fingers below his chin. "Any life, that fears it's own death, has a soul."

"Really?" He asked. Not looking relieved, more like surprised. "Even though I'm just a machine?"

"A human is just a machine, may be a different kind, but a machine just the same. Just me being here right now means our bodies are capable of having a soul. Mine transferred from a human body, and yours born from life itself." I said as I sat back, knowing I had his attention. "You were born on the day of your activation, I was re-awakened. Either way, your chances of having a soul are as good as mine. I don't doubt that, not even for a second."

Marc seemed to be deep in thought before slowly letting a smile creep across his face. "So then, you are afraid to die then?"

"Yeah, I mean it is easier to face when all seems hopeless." I said probably confusing him. "Sure, there is the chance that none of us have anything to look forward to in death other than eternal rest. I have always held on to the belief that life can't just flicker out of existence. When I was alone and scared and lonely, it was all I had to look forward to."

"But you have died." He said adding "You died before the transplant. Wasn't there any proof for you in that?"

"I'm not sure what I remember during the neuro-imaging. It's almost as if I fell asleep and woke right back up in a different body. Maybe more happened, but I have no memory of it."

"Oh." He simply answered.

I sat back in my chair and looked up at the sky while listening to the ocean's waves hit the shoreline. "You know, we're ruining a beautiful day with this conversation. What's on the agenda for today? Anything?"

"Not really, I figured we can take it easy and let you get used to your new programming. Maybe I'll take you out if you feel up to it, and show you around the area a bit.

"A lazy day sounds nice." I said as I thought a tour was a bit much on my first day. "Where's Jim?"

"Oh, he's on the ocean right now. Month long tour back to the site where we found you."

"Back to the ship I found?" I asked thinking about how many years I recently spent with it.

"Yeah, of all the ships you could have landed at too." He said with a giggle gaining my curiosity.

"What ship was that? I remember it was huge, but it was too dark to identify it." I said trying to remember any details I may have overlooked.

"Probably too corroded to tell, even if there was enough light." He said as he kicked back. "How many ships are you aware of in the Northern Atlantic?" He asked.

"Not too many." I replied now trying to remember some of the reports I did back in grade school.

"Well, I know of the H.M.S. Hood, Bismark, R.M.S. Titanic, R.M.S. Carpathia, Egypt and H.M.S. Ark Royal. off the top of my head." I said wondering if it was the wreckage of one of those.

"Which is the biggest?" He said with a crooked smile. '*Great, I'm being quizzed.*' I thought as I remembered being fascinated as a kid on the subject.

"Titanic, she was a 46,000 ton passenger ship. Easily the biggest." I said half waiting to be corrected.

"It's unbelievable, that her hull still stands upright after all these years on the ocean floor, isn't it."

"Yeah, what's that got to do with where.. Wait, are you saying.."

Marc cut me off and answered for me. "You slept with the Titanic. We found you buried in silt on the Port side of her Bow. You had fallen over on to your side, but had obviously been sitting upright for a long time up against her hull."

"That's almost beyond belief." I said now lost in my thoughts. "Of all the places to land.." I idly thought outloud. "Why were you at Titanic?"

"She's still visited from time to time, fascinates oceanologists at the fact that her hull, even though most everything else has eroded with time, is primarily intact. The sub Dad designed is to replace the one they have been using to visit that site." He said.

"If it's visited regularly, why did it take so long to find me?"

"In the past 40 years, only the last 20 were routine visits, They go once every two years and it's mostly to take photos and stuff. I was on the trip that they decided to leave a piece of iron on the ocean floor to measure it's rate of decay. As they were placing it on the floor, I was looking out the portal on the opposite side, right at the ship's hull when I spotted what I thought was a doll's hand or something. I told Jim I spotted something and he used the arm of the sub to pull you out and bring you back to the surface. I've got the video that was taken if you want to see it."

"I would, just not right now." I answered just thinking of the thoughts I had as a kid, learning of the fate of that ship and what a dark cold place I imagined that to be.

"Whatcha thinkin?" Marc asked waking me back up from my daze.

"Just about where I've been. It's a bit overwhelming to think I spent 70 years next to one of histories biggest mistakes. The lives that ship took to the bottom of the ocean, and I happened to land right next to her."

"You feel bad about that?"

"I'm not sure what I feel. I respect that site for what it is. I suppose it's a bit humbling to think that my life should have ended there, but didn't." I said just becoming overtaken by emotion. "Coffee, do you like coffee?" I asked abruptly to change the subject.

"Yeah, want me to make some? It sounds good." Marc asked as I went to stand up.

"Nah, sit here and relax. It's my turn to do for you." I said with a smile as I stepped toward the doorway. "How do you take it?"

"Cream and lots of sugar." He said with a smile as he leaned back in his chair. Hopefully enjoying the break I was trying to give him.

After fumbling around the kitchen, I found everything I needed and got a pot of coffee brewing. Out the side window, I could see Marc sitting back in his chair in the sunlight with his eyes closed. *'He looks happy.'* I thought to myself knowing the hell he has been through was as hard on him as what I had been through. I turned from the window and sat down at the table, waiting for the coffee to finish when I noticed my own reflection in the side of the toaster. "I always hated getting old" I said to the brown haired, blue eyed kid that stared back at me. "Now look at you, young forever. Just what you always wanted, right?" I said as I looked away from the reflection.

A few minutes later, I returned to the deck and set two cups of coffee on the table. "Here you are sir." I said in a snooty butler sort of way. "Light and sweet, just as you requested." Which got him giggling again.

"You're a goof." He said as he took his first sip. "It's perfect, thanks."

I took a sip from mine and set it back on the table. Marc took a look in my cup and scrunched up his nose at what he saw. "Black? You drink it black? Eeewwww..."

"Well, yeah. I'm too lazy to put extra stuff in it." I said as I sat back and giggled. "I think your giggle is contagious." I said getting another from him.

"Marc, what's involved in a direct link?"

"Well, in normal cases it is the easiest way to troubleshoot a failing unit." He said as he picked up his cup and took a sip. "For some, it's a way to share everything about one another. Like instead of telling stories of your past, you can bring the other along with you as you remember it."

"So you would be able to see my memories?" I asked, trying to figure out just what was involved.

"Not just see them, experience them. Your thoughts, your emotions, pain and joy. It's very personal and controllable as well. Whoever initiates the uplink, is in total control of what is seen and interacted with."

"It alters memories to include the other?" I asked, wondering if it was a good idea or not.

"No, it's as if you were to relive portions of your life and I were to skip back in time to watch, be there unseen by anyone but you, and only when you want me to be seen." He said setting his cup down and settling back. "Some others have recreated places in their minds to just get away to. Like a favorite hillside, a pair of androids can link and actually spend time together in that imaginary spot, which is just as real to them as actually going on a vacation." He said looking a bit thoughtful as he sat forward in his chair. "I can give you an example if you want."

"Is it safe enough for us to link?" I asked with the memories of his earlier fears of being accidentally destroyed ringing in my ears.

"Oh sure, you're stable now. I verified that during the upgrade. It took the integration of how to function with the new software while you slept last night to finalize that." He said while grabbing his cup and standing. "Wanna see a child's imagination become reality?" He added with a smile motioning for me to follow.

"Ok, this sounds interesting." I said as I closed the door behind myself on the way in. "Should I finish my coffee first? I mean how long are we gonna be, um.. Gone?" I said not knowing how else to word it.

"That's a great way to put it." He said opening the lab door. "Your coffee will still be hot, or the next one is on me." He said with a smile as he pulled out a length of cable with identical connectors on either end.

"Just us? No computer?" I asked as he opened his access panel on the back of his head and I followed suit.

"Yup, no need for computer interaction for this connection." He said handing me the other end of the cable and hopping up on the table, leaving enough room for me to lie down beside him.

He connected his end and grabbed my hand as I reached to connect mine. "When you connect, you will instantly feel me through the connection. Lie down first, and when you are plugged in, think of nothing. I want to initiate this one. I want you to meet someone."

"Okay." I said as I hopped up on the table and carefully plugged in the cable. Just as he said I could feel his presence, inside my mind the second it plugged in.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Yeah." I responded feeling a warm rush come over me.

"Close your eyes." a voice now in my mind said to me, so I did and gasped at what I saw.

"This is our interface." Marc said as he pointed at the nothingness around us both. To me it appeared as though we were both standing beneath a spotlight in an otherwise completely barren, dark black room. "From here, one of us becomes the host. Depending on who leads and who follows."

"What are our bodies doing while we are in here?" I asked looking at my hands and noting how real they appeared.

"Sleeping. We can share info, thoughts, experiences and even dreams while we sleep with this connection. Like I said, it can be very intimate, depending on how we decide to proceed." He said, now giggling at the sheer amazement that must have been on my face.

"Ready to see what we can do together?" He asked as I just looked at him and nodded.

"There's no need to be frightened you know." He said walking over and taking my hand. "Just follow me and you'll see." he said as he turned, still holding my hand and walked us both to the spot he stood in.

Next thing I knew we were both standing in the middle of what appeared to be a living room, in a house I had never before seen. "Where are we?" I asked as I looked around and risked a test touch of the couch next to me. "It's real!" I said as I poked at it again.

"Well, as real as we are here." He said sitting down and motioning for me to sit also. "We are in a place I go when I feel alone, this is my first home." He said as I looked around. "You can take any memory from your stored banks and make it interactive." He said as he looked at me and smiled. "I'll teach you how to do it, it's really an escape for me sometimes."

"Have you ever brought anyone else here?"

"No, you're the first I've ever taken into my personal memory. One M.A.R.C. unit I restored once took me to his getaway. It was an amusement park that he and his Mom used to go to, She was even there. That's what originally gave me the idea to come back here. Come here." he said as he stood and led me to the doors and opened them. He led me out on a deck that overlooked the ocean.

"Wow, looks very much like the view from your back deck." I said as I scanned the horizon. "It's beautiful."

"Looks like the same view, because it is the same view." He said leaning on the railing facing the house. "Years after my first Dad passed away and I left here to live at V.I., a hurricane completely destroyed this house." He said as he looked at me. "The house we live in now was built right on the foundation of this house. Since that's all that was left."

"It looks different though, why was it built differently?" I asked realizing the only real similarities were the surroundings.

"It was bought by a different family. I couldn't stay here after my Dad passed away, so the house was sold." He said looking at the deck floor. "I wish I could have changed that decision. Cause this is all I have left of it now."

We both turned back toward the scenery and watched the calm ocean when I noticed a boat tied to the pier on the beach. "Who does the boat belong to?"

"That was my Dads. We used to go sailing a lot." He said as I could hear pain in his words just talking about his life so long ago.

"Marc, if you can recreate places and revisit them, can you, um.. visit people in your memories too?" I asked wondering if there were limits to what could be imagined and relived.

"Oh yeah, remember I did bring you here to meet someone." He said as he closed his eyes for a second and then smiled.

Just then I heard the sliding door open behind us and a voice I didn't recognize almost made me jump over the railing, not expecting anyone else to be there so soon.

"Plumb." The voice said, bringing a smile to my brother's face, and a tear trickled down his cheek.

Notes from the Author:

Yes, I am mean :) I decided to end this chapter on a nostalgic note of sorts. Any of you who have read the original M.A.R.C. story knows the significance of the one comment I used in closing. Those of you who haven't are probably cursing at your monitors right about now. Sorry bout that.

I do owe a huge amount of thanks to my friend Nicholas for contacting the author of the original M.A.R.C. story still posted in the Nifty Archives and the response he got was one that fueled the ending of this chapter...

"Hi Nick -

I read it this afternoon. I must admit ... it does have the potential to be a good story and I hope he does well. I must admit to feeling flattered that he liked my story so much as to try his own along the same lines.

***Cheers,
AmateurishWriter"***

It is a bit difficult to remain vague about what happened to the original characters since there was no real ending, but I am so glad that he was flattered and can't wait til Danny learns to relive his own past, and share it with his new brother, well, with all of us as well :)

I also want to thank My Brother, and the proud owner of the newest site within our family for hosting this story. I was floored the day he asked if he could co-host it upon the launch of his new site, and honored to now have two works featured along with the works of some of the most talented authors around!

Gunrunner, Acfan, Greybear, NetNicholas, and Gary Q. (We even have a new member of the family who has grown from a poster on our forum to a writer in the Cafe, Akeentia! Welcome home Bro, can't wait for your next chapter!) I can't describe how it feels to be part of such an elite group... *HUGZ* To you all.

Also, especially need to mention my "Driving Force" behind this tale... Jonathan, Logan & Coby. Jon for being a part of my life, and for the love that grew and time just can't seem to make fade away. Logan and Coby, for being an inspiration, and even the boot to kick me to get back to work now and then. Love you guys! Always will!

"Chapter 3 - The Impossible Dream"

"Good guess Old Man," He said as he wiped the tears from his eyes and turned to face the voice. "But I haven't worn those in years," He said and ran into a hug with the older gentleman as I watched and recognized him from the picture I found in Marc's room.

"Who's your friend sweetie?" He asked as Marc looked at me expressing his embarrassment but let it go.

"Uncle John, this is Danny. He's my brother."

"Brother? Did I miss something here?" He asked as he sat in the chair closest to the door and we both joined him.

"Sort of, Eddie never told you about another android built before me that they lost track of. Actually, I don't even think he knew at that point."

"Well, I'm sure he would have said something if he had known. I remember his mentioning others that we're prototypes of sorts but, well anyway Danny.," He said holding out his hand. "I'm John, I have no idea what you've heard about me so far, but if it came out of this one's mouth here, I'll deny it all right here and now to save some time," He said with a straight face getting me to laugh and a jab in the ribs from Marc. "Ow, could you at least pick a new spot?"

"It's nice to meet you sir," I said adding "But I've only heard nice things about you so, unless you are aiming for a more colorful reputation, I would just smile and nod if I were you." I said with a wink, getting a laugh out of both.

"Oh yeah, you two are definitely related," John said as he wrapped his arms even tighter around Marc who suddenly got a somber look on his face and stood up.

"Uncle John , I'm gonna show Danny around the place a little. I'll be inside in a little while, ok?" He asked John as if he was actually hinting to him that he wanted him to leave.

"Ok Marc, I'll be inside if you need me," He replied kissing him on the cheek. "Danny it was nice meeting you, I hope we get a chance to get to know each other."

"That would be great, nice meeting you too," I said as he turned and went back in the house.

I watched as Marc closed his eyes as he did just before John appeared once the door was closed and began to cry.

"I love you," He said in the direction of the door before sitting back at the table and attempted to stop crying.

"That hurt you Marc, why did you bring me to meet him if you weren't ready?" I asked taking his hand in mine.

"Whenever I come here, I normally talk to him about regrets, about missing him, how much I love him and that I always will. That just felt to real, like we were just acting normal. I'm not used to that anymore. I guess I just wasn't ready for that." He said finally letting his sobs subside.

"I don't know what to say, won't he wonder why we're still sitting out here?" I asked as I realized that he may think we were just avoiding having a discussion in front of him.

"No, he's not here anymore, just you and I." Marc stated with a sigh.

"Oh" I said knowing this wasn't part of his plan behind bringing me here. "This may sound sort of cold but, how do you go about creating all of this? Places, People, Smells and Sounds. It's all just too real."

"That's actually easy," He said wiping his face with his shirt sleeve. "Your memory captures detailed information when creating memories. We found that you could create an interactive likeness by compiling all the available data on one particular subject," He said as he looked at the house. "The data is so accurate in most cases that you could measure the floor plan of this house for example, and it would be an exact, or extremely close match."

"But with people?"

"People are just as easy, John and I knew each other intimately. Any gaps I had in his creation were filled a little by a detailed journal he kept, and from even more information I got from Vision Industries in his reports during my testing, and reports from Eddie, who was the man who paired the two of us, and drove the final production line of androids into the main stream. He also had a relationship with John when he was my age. Well, 13."

"I see. So you took every detail you had of John, added the knowledge you gained from all other sources, to compile... what is this exactly?"

"An interactive memory, I call it," He said as he looked out toward the ocean.

"Can I ask one dumb question?"

"Sure," Marc replied without even looking back in my direction.

"Plumb?" I asked getting a giggle from him finally.

"Oh man," He said as he shook his head and stared at the deck. "When Uncle John first brought me here, he took me shopping for new clothes. I sorta slipped in these brightly colored briefs and, well, I used to make him guess what colors I had on," He said with a warm smile. "Sometimes I would even let him pick the colors I wore. It was the small things that made him so special."

"Sounds like fun," I replied as now I was becoming lost in thought. *'If all this is possible with the information I already have, I could create a getaway of my own.'*

We remained silent for a while, listening to the ocean and the seagulls. It was quite an amazing view.

"Well, we can always come back here if you like." Marc said standing up with me following suit as suddenly the scenery was replaced with the same blackness that I know know as our interface.

"How do we leave this place?" I asked not really sure how to snap out of this mode.

"Remember how we got in?" He asked with a smile.

"Yeah, we just closed our eyes and we were here." I replied.

"Well, they are still closed. Open them," He said as he folded his arms as if waiting for me.

It took a second to separate the idea of my imagined eyes and my real ones, but once I clearly knew the difference I opened them and found myself lying on the table next to Marc who was now unplugging his connection.

"That was incredible," I said as I reached behind my head and disconnected myself as well. "But, I kinda feel alone now," I said as I realized how dumb the comment must have sounded.

"Yeah, that's the problem with connections like that. You can get dependent on being connected that closely," He said as I hopped off the table.

"Looks like you were right," I stated taking a sip from my coffee. "It's still hot."

Marc jumped off the table and put the cable back on the stand it was stored on. "Well, we probably would have taken longer if I hadn't misjudged myself on the way in."

"Nah, I understand how you feel," I said heading for the lab door. "I just hope we can do that again sometime. Maybe you can even show me how to create my own place to go and take you."

"Deal, actually we can start on that after lunch if you want. You'll be surprised how easy it is," Marc said as I returned to the kitchen and topped off my coffee.

"What about memories stored before I became Robo-Boy?" I asked getting a giggle from Marc.

"Robo-Boy?" He asked and sat down at the table.

"Yeah, that's what I sorta sarcastically referred to myself as whenever I was kinda depressed about the whole situation. Now it just sorta stuck as the only mild way of referring to the time before I died," I said sitting in the chair next to him.

"Hmm.," He said as he took a sip from his cup. "I guess you can simulate them too, but accuracy would probably depend on how clearly your positronic brain can analyze your human memories. It should work."

"Well, I want to start with a human," I said getting a nod from Marc.

"Kevin?"

"Yeah, I miss him," I said looking out the window. "I want to see him as he was when I last looked at him with human eyes."

"Well" Marc said standing up and heading to the coffee maker for a refill. "Unless you specify otherwise, your brain will probably incorporate all of your memories of him, regardless of the image you choose for him."

"What does that mean?"

"It means, he will know of all the experiences you two had, even the ones created after he grew up. Unless you set a cut off time period and let your brain sort it all out for you."

"I can set whatever parameters I want?" I asked as he sat back down.

"Yup, but just so you know. Be precise about your parameters. If you are vague in any part of your planning, he won't be convincing to you. It took a few tries before I had John right."

"Is this a bad thing? I mean, should I be clear to myself about the reasons I want to do something like this?"

"If you are feeling guilty about creating a memory you can interact with, think about this. Is there anything wrong with keeping pictures, videos or personal items about someone you loved who has passed away?" Marc asked in a serious tone.

"No, it's a way of preserving their memory," I stated, realizing I had just answered my own question as Marc replied by only raising his eyebrows. "Point taken, Thanks Bro!"

Marc smiled and took another sip of his coffee. "So, what do you want to do until lunch, we haven't really done anything since you got here, together I mean."

I thought for a minute, not really coming up with any ideas. "Well, what do you normally do when Jim's away and you're home alone?"

"Oh, just the usual stuff. Eat, watch some tv, work on an android, visit John. We could watch some tv I guess," He said with a giggle.

"Don't you ever go out? You know ride a bike, play some ball, skate... Normal stuff a kid your age should be doing." I said not being able to contain a chuckle.

Marc laughed, probably realizing I was hinting that we should go out and have some fun. "Do you play golf?"

"Well, it's not what I was getting at exactly, but it's a start," I said rolling my eyes a bit. "I've never played."

"Are you kidding me? I can teach you. A two second upload and you'll play as well as I do," He stated with a smile.

"Where's the fun in that?"

"Well, then we can play together," He said very innocently.

"Wouldn't it be more fun if you taught me the old fashioned way?"

"I can but it would be..." He stopped in mid sentence as I think my point had just sunk in. "For that I would need to schedule some time at the driving range."

"Ok then, I guess that rules out golf for the moment then," I said with a smile "But I really would like you to teach me."

"Cool, I'll call tonight and see if we can get some time in tomorrow then," He said with a huge grin. "So what do you want to do today?"

"I dunno, go outside for starters. I want to get some real sun," I said finishing off my coffee. "Wanna build a sand castle?"

"Are you serious?" He asked looking at me like I had lost my mind.

"Oh come on, when was the last time you built a sand castle," I said standing up and putting my cup in the sink.

"Honestly, I never have. I have implanted memories of doing it as a kid, but they aren't real," He said developing a grin. "I gotta find you a swimsuit, and we could probably borrow some buckets and stuff from the kid next door."

"There are kids in the neighborhood and you stay cooped up in the house. Don't tell me you forgot how to be a kid." I said putting my hand on his shoulder.

"How old were you before you became um.. Robo-Boy?" He asked sarcastically with an evil grin.

"Old enough to appreciate being 13 again," I said as he stood up. "You've worked long enough, lets go out and have some real fun," I said as an ear to ear smile came across his face.

I watched as he ran for his room and started rummaging through his dresser. *'His programming makes him 13, but I'll bet he's completely forgotten what it's like to be 13.'* I thought as I entered the bedroom and got hit in the face with what I thought was a sock.

"That will fit you," He said as he began to strip out of his clothes.

"Where's the rest of it?" I said with a laugh as I held the red piece of material out and looked at it. "A speedo? Gawd, I've never worn one of these," I said as he pulled his up over his thighs.

"You're kidding?" He said now laughing. "You'll get a better tan, besides you've got the body for one," He said with an evil grin.

I reluctantly began to undress and slipped on the less than skimpy piece of material. "This is so embarrassing," I said getting a chuckle from him.

"You'll get over it, besides, all the kids around here wear them so you aren't going to stand out," He said as he tossed me a shirt that matched the suit. "Here, this may make you feel better."

After getting dressed, and looking at us both in the mirror I realized he was right. "Wow, we look good."

"Good? We look hot and probably shouldn't go out at all," He said as I gave him a swat and we ran for the back deck.

"Let's go next door and see if Jerry is home. He's come over here a few times asking if I would come out and play." He said as I followed him off the porch.

"You know him?"

"Well, I always made up some sort of excuse about not being able to go out. He doesn't know me that well at all since they just moved here in the spring," He said stopping in his tracks. "I've sorta avoided him cause I didn't want to act like a kid anymore."

"You're overdue," I simply answered and pushed him along toward the neighbor's house. "It's what, the end of fall and this is your first time playing on the beach this year? There are laws against that kind of behavior young man," I said with a laugh.

"Oh shut up, I've had fun building myself an older brother," He said as I bust out laughing.

"Real fun, how old is this kid anyways?"

"10 or 11 I think, I never asked him but I do know he's an only child. He's got a few friends I think," He said as we reached the gate. Before opening it, he stopped and stared at the house, like he was thinking of something.

"Something wrong?" I asked.

"No, not really. It's been years since the last time I came over to this house. When I first came here, there was an older couple living here. Ginny and Ralph Marsh," He said with a warm smile. "I guess they were sorta like having grandparents," He added as we entered the yard and went up on the back steps.

Marc looked at me and took a deep breath before finally working up the courage to knock.

An older woman answered the door and smiled. "You're the boy from next door, aren't you?"

"Yes Ma'am, I'm Marc and this is my brother Danny. Is Jerry home?" He asked looking a little nervous.

"Yes, wait here and I'll go get him," She said as she turned back into the house and left the door open."

"Jerry honey, Marc from next door is here for you." We could hear her say which gave us both a giggle.

We continued to listen in as we heard "Marc? He's here? Really?" in an excited tone and we heard him run for the door.

When he reached the door I just stood back and didn't say anything. Marc was right, he had to be about 10 and was cute as hell. Almost shoulder length dirty blond hair, Hazel eyes, a bit skinny but more wiry looking than scrawny.

"Hi Marc!" He said as he came out on the deck and closed the door behind him. "Who's your friend? I've never seen him around here before."

Marc looked at me and smiled. "Jerry, this is my brother Danny. He just came to live with us a few days ago."

"Cool, I didn't know you had a brother," Jerry said as he smiled at me. "You guys goin swimming?"

"Well, Danny wanted to build a sand castle and maybe do a little swimming. I don't have much beach stuff so I told him I'd see if you had buckets and stuff and see if you wanted to help build it too."

"Really?" He almost shouted in excitement. "Cool, let me go tell my mom and get a bathing suit on," He shouted as he burst back through the door shouting for his mother.

"There aren't many kids in the area I'm guessing." I said to Marc, a little shocked at Jerry's excitement.

"Not really, There are some older kids in town but out here, only a couple I know of. Mostly older too," He said looking back out toward the beach. "I suppose I could have come out once in a while, he does seem kinda lonely."

"Well bro," I said with a chuckle. "I think we are about to get schooled by a 10 year old," I said as he looked at me obviously confused. "Time to learn how to be a kid again."

"I'm ready," A voice came from the doorway. "What are we gonna need?"

I looked at him and grinned. His speedo was almost identical to Marc's and he wore a matching shirt, just like we both had on. "Does this area has some sort of a beach dress code?" I asked getting a jab from Marc.

"Puh-lease," Marc said rolling his eyes. "It's not our fault you don't know how to dress," He said as I swatted at him and he ducked out of the way giggling.

"You'll pay for that bro," I said returning my attention to Jerry. "You've never built a sand castle before?"

"No, but I do have plastic buckets and shovels and stuff. My mom bought them but I never really bothered to use em." He said as he turned back towards the opened door. "Mom! Do you know where the beach stuff is?"

His mother came back to the door way with a puzzled look on her face. "Beach Stuff?"

"Yeah, the buckets and shovels and stuff. We're gonna build a sand castle," He said with a huge smile.

"Well, I'm happy the stuff is going to actually get used. It's all in the basement." She said with a smile. "You may want to ask one of your friends to help dig them out."

"Cool!" Jerry said as he looked over his shoulder at Marc. "Would you mind helping me get them? They're probably buried."

"Sure, lead the way," Marc cheerfully replied and followed Jerry into the house leaving Jerry's mom and I in a cloud of dust.

"So, you're Marc's brother?" She asked with a smile.

"Yes Ma'am."

"Have you visited before?" She asked making me a little uncomfortable not knowing how much she knew about Marc. "I mean I haven't seen you around at all."

"No, Marc and I kinda met for the first time yesterday."

"Well I hope now that you have met, we'll see more of the two of you," She said as she sat down in one of the chairs on the porch. "It's nice to see Marc actually come out of the house. Jim told us he was having a bad time since losing his family. I'm sure he's happy to have you in his life now."

"Yeah, he has told me that Jerry has come over asking him to come out a few times, but never wanted too," I said hoping to talk to Marc about our story soon. "I kinda dragged him out today."

"Maybe that's just what he needs then," She said as we were both distracted by thumping noises and giggles getting closer from inside the house.

"We're ready, Let's go!" Jerry exclaimed tossing a mesh bag at me full of brightly colored beach toys.

"Wow, you plannin on building one castle or a whole complex?" I asked with a grin.

"Too much?" He asked looking at Marc who was holding a bunch of towels and a bottle of sunscreen.

"Nah, I think we still need to get a bulldozer, and probably a permit to build though," Marc said with an evil look.

"Let's go clown, we got a castle to build," I said turning toward Jerry's mother. "It was nice meeting you."

"If you boys would like, I'll make up some sandwiches for lunch. I'll yell when they're ready and you guys can picnic on the beach."

"That sounds cool," Marc said with a smile. "Thanks Mrs. Owens!"

"You're more than welcome, now go and have fun." She said with a smile as she turned to head back into the house.

Down on the beach we unloaded the bag of buckets and shovels. There were even different shaped forms and such that would help to dress our castle up a bit. We got right to work clearing a section to work in where the high tide smoothed out the sand earlier in the morning.

"Since the tide is still going out, the sand is still kinda damp," I said as we began digging a round trench and starting on the base of our castle using the sand we removed. "This is gonna be perfect."

About an hour later, we had the castle started and a wall built around it when we heard Jerry's mother yell from her porch.

"That must be lunch," Jerry said as we all decided it was a good time for a break.

While Jerry and Marc ran back up to the house, I opened up a couple of the big towels and spread them out just in time for them to unload what looked like a banquet in sandwiches and soda.

"Wow, your mom didn't have to do all this," I said staring at our lunch in awe.

"It's ok, she works as a caterer, this amount of sandwiches and stuff is nothing for her," Jerry said as he began to tear into a bag of chips.

"This is awesome," Marc said as he grabbed a paper plate and filled it with potato salad, a sandwich and chips.

"Yeah it is, we gotta be sure to thank her later on." I reminded him as we all set back and began to eat.

"Marc, can I ask you a question?" Jerry asked slowing down our feeding frenzy.

"Sure, what's up?"

"What's it like, you know... being an android?" Jerry sheepishly asked causing Marc to choke on his soda and me to freeze just about to take a bite of my sandwich.

"You know about that?" Marc asked sopping the soda off of his face and arms.

"Yeah. Jim came over a few months ago, when we first moved into our house. I overheard him talking to my parents about the neighborhood and stuff when he asked how they felt about androids." He said as he put his sandwich down. "Once he found out that my mom's family used to have one and were ok with them, he said that you were one and that he felt we should know because you wouldn't be growing up and he didn't want us to eventually think you guys were hiding it from us."

"Well, that makes sense," Marc said looking to be deep in thought. "I just wish he had told me that he was going to talk to you guys about me."

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked," Jerry said looking a little upset.

"It's ok, I was just shocked, that's all. It's cool that you know. I'm glad I don't have to keep it secret really." Marc said gaining a weak smile from Jerry.

We spent the next half hour answering his questions and eating. Marc explained how we were related and that we were in fact brothers, which Jerry thought was really cool. We also learned that he was 11 years old as of last month and this was his first time living near the ocean having moved here from Glendale, Arizona. After lunch was done, we went back to work on the castle for at least a couple of hours, which came out much larger than we expected.

"Wow, I've seen people build castles like this but, never done it before," Jerry said as he looked at the castle in awe. "Would it be ok if I let my mom come down and see?"

"Sure," Marc said as he sat down and continued to admire our work.

"I'll be right back!" Jerry yelled over his shoulder as he bolted off towards his house.

"That was really fun Danny," Marc said as I took a seat beside him. "You were right, I really should try to get out of the house a little more often."

"See, I told you," I said as I patted his shoulder. "There are lots of things I bet you haven't bothered to do because you didn't feel the need anymore."

"I guess so," He said as he looked out over the ocean. "Like sailing. I haven't bothered to sail at all since Uncle John passed away."

"Do you have a boat?" I asked directing my gaze in the direction of his. "Maybe we could go out sometime."

"I have the one stored in my memory. The real one is in bad shape and isn't sea worthy anymore."

"Hmmm.," I responded noticing a boat off in the distance. "Could it be fixed?"

"It would have to be totally stripped down to it's skeleton and be rebuilt," He said looking back at me. "Jim has it stored on a trailer on his family's property for me," He said in a somber tone as he redirected his stare toward the castle. "Why, what are you thinking?"

"Well, you have a workshop right here. If we can get our hands on the materials maybe we could restore it." Seeing no real reaction from him I added, "If you wanted to I mean."

"You would do that for me?" Marc said with a hoarseness that told me he was about to cry.

"I would do that for us. To preserve a real memory for you and build new memories for us both," I got out before hearing Jerry shouting to his mom to hurry up, as if the castle was going to vanish or something.

"Thanks Danny," Marc whispered as he wiped his eyes and cleared his throat.

"Oh my goodness boys, That is incredible," Jerry's mom exclaimed as if we had just constructed a museum piece.

"We even left a little bit of sand so there's still some beach left," Jerry said earning a playful poke from Marc.

"It's not that big," Marc said as he looked it over. "I can still see over it."

"Guys, is it ok if my mom takes a picture of us near the castle?" Jerry asked in an excited tone.

"Sure, do you think we could get a copy of it Mrs. Owens?" Marc asked as Jerry knelt down inside the wall we built around the castle motioning for us both to do the same.

"Absolutely, I'll let you know when I get it developed," She replied as Marc and I took our places on either side of Jerry putting our arms across his shoulders.

"Ok, smile!" She said in an enthusiastic tone as she snapped two pictures. "Well boys, I hate to break this up but Jerry needs to get cleaned up and get his clothes together."

"Oh mom, can't we go tomorrow? I was having fun," Jerry half whined as we all began to pick up the beach toys and what was left from our lunch.

"I'm sorry but no, your father already planned this trip. Besides it's only for a few days," She replied as she began picking up the towels.

"Where are ya headin?" Marc asked Jerry as he tied off the first bag of buckets and shovels.

"Dad has a vacation and were goin back to Arizona to spend a few days at my Granma's house," Jerry replied in a disappointed tone.

"Well, we'll be here when you get back. Maybe we can do something like this again," I said finally getting a smile from him.

"Really? That'd be cool!" He shouted as we began to lug our cargo back up to Jerry's house and help put everything away.

After returning the beach toys to the basement and promising Jerry to make plans for when they get back, Marc and I thanked Mrs. Owens for lunch and said our goodbyes. After leaving, we went back and sat down on the deck and looked over the castle we spent the day building.

"Too bad the tide is gonna take it," Marc said with a sigh.

"Yeah, but Jerry will have the picture and if you wanna teach me how, we can keep it in here," I said pointing at my head.

"Deal" he said as he sprang to his feet. "You want to start learning now?"

"Well, how long will it take?"

"Not long, you won't believe how easy it is to map out something like that," He said as I stood up and turned for the door. "I'll grab the interface and bring it into the living room so we can be comfortable."

"Ok, you want a soda or something?" I said opening the door and heading for the kitchen. "I'm kinda thirsty."

"That sounds cool, I'll just be a minute," He said as he rushed off to the lab and I poured a couple of cold drinks and brought them to the living room.

I sat down on the couch and took a long sip from my glass. *'I wonder how hard this is going to be, or if we'll have time to begin creating Kevin today.'* I thought as Marc returned with the computer cart and a big cardboard box.

"Moving in?" I asked as I tried to figure out why we needed the computer. "I thought we were just going to link to do this."

"Well, I was thinking we could do a little more than just the sand castle. today," He said with an evil grin. "That's only gonna take a few minutes anyways."

"Ok then, what's all this stuff for than?"

"Well, you said you wanted to recreate Kevin and while I was researching you I had access to all his personality profile data that was taken during his interview with Vision Industries when it was decided he would be able to care for an android. That became a standard procedure until we were mass produced," Marc said as he plugged the computer in and began digging out tons of disks with Kevin's name on them. "He was profiled several times in the first 8 years of your android life and I was able to save them all."

"What's in a profile that will help?" I asked taking another sip from my soda and sitting back.

"Well, it is a form of neural scanning that determines interests, moods, feelings, likes, dislikes and anything else that they could use to insure that caring for an android was still desired and not a burden to the client."

"That's not the same kind of scan they did to me is it?" I asked suddenly realizing that they may have found a way to trap him much like they trapped me.

"No, your neural image reproduces every aspect of your human brain, entirely. That's easy to do with a subject that is not alive because they..." He said as he seemed to suddenly become uncomfortable with the topic.

"What? They needed to remove my brain?" I asked as he merely nodded his head in agreement. "I figured they did that anyway, you can talk about it, you won't upset me."

"I know, but for a second I forgot that you were human and it's kinda nasty to talk about. I don't want to make you mad or anything because of what they did."

"You aren't going to make me mad. I've been in this body for a very long time. I know a little of what they had to do to put me here so it really doesn't bother me to talk about it," I said putting my hand on his shoulder. "So are we going to work on Kevin first then?"

"Unless you want to do the sand castle first."

"No, this was really thoughtful of you. I want him to be my first attempt," I said as he powered up the computer and handed me its interface to connect to myself. "I would rather do this with someone who knows what they are doing, so I don't mess him up," I said earning a smile as he inserted the first disk.

"There is a ton of information on these, plus videos taken during your construction, home videos and any public appearances he made throughout the years with Dr. Strafford. It will all help to make his likeness more believable," He said as he looked back at me. "Your brain will file it all with memories that you will later compile to recreate a personality from. Ready?"

"I think so, It's gonna come to me like a thought, right?" I asked wondering if this is going to be like the last time I was hooked up to the computer.

"Yup, just think about it and you will see it all as it is transferred, like remembering stuff you forgot about."

I nodded my head and sat back. "I'm ready," I said as the first disk was uploaded in a few seconds and he put the next in.

"You ok?" He asked as I must have had a stunned look on my face.

"Yeah, that wasn't what I expected at all," I said as I grabbed my glass and emptied it. "This isn't going to take long at all, is it?"

"Well, that was disk one of 87. I guess it depends on what you consider a long time," He said with a smile as he uploaded the next.

Nearly two hours, and three glasses of soda later, I unplugged from the computer and sat back in the chair waiting for my head to stop spinning. "That was incredible," I said as I downed the the remainder of my third glass of soda.

"Wanna take a break?" Marc asked as he powered off the computer and rolled the cart away from the couch. "We should probably eat something before getting started. This part is going to take a while."

"What do we have?" I asked as I stood up and nearly fell back onto the couch. "Wow, my legs are shaky."

"Yeah, that happens when you upload that much information at once," Marc said with a grin as he sat next to me. "Your brain is busy filing and processing all the new information we just fed into it. It takes so much of your own resources to handle that much information that your normal functions respond with a little lag until it's finished. Just move slowly, like you're tired and you'll be fine."

"How long will that take?"

Marc thought for a second before standing up and putting his hands on his hips. "Long enough for you to have to sit here and let me make you something to eat."

"Ok," I replied with a giggle. "So what's for dinner then?"

"You like pizza?"

"Are you an android?" I shot right back with a smile.

"Pizza it is then but, I have to warn you. I top a mean pizza. " Marc said as he turned and walked through the door shouting back, "You like anchovies?"

"Gross!" I shouted back.

"Good, neither do I," He replied as he shuffled off to the kitchen.

Sitting on the couch, I suddenly felt my head clear. *'Must be finished processing.'* I thought as I tried to think of ways to look at some of what was uploaded. The first implanted memory I was able to access was the 3 dimensional profile images of Kevin. *'God, they didn't miss a thing.'* I thought to myself as every little detail was as clear as if he was standing right in front of me. I decided to dig a little further and found a video I recognized. *'This was taken before I died. How the hell did Vision Industries get their hands on it?'* I thought as I closed my eyes and watched, I remembered filming it but, never saw it as an android so I didn't have a copy to reflect on, until now.

"Uncle Dan, look what I can do," Kevin shouted as he heaved the front wheel of his mountain bike up in the air!

"Hey, you finally got it," shouted my human voice from behind the camera!

Just then he looked at the camera as he passed on one wheel, causing him to lose his balance and topple over on his side.

"Oh man," He said as he scrambled to his feet! "Figures, you missed it when I made it all the way down the street but have the camera running when I wipe out," He said as he wiped off the dust and picked up his bike.

"Do it again, this time don't look at me, bonehead," My human self said with a chuckle.

Kevin jumped back on his bike and went to the end of the road, very slowly looping back in my direction. Once he was just barely rolling, he hefted the wheel off the ground again and rode his wheelie right past the camera and down the road.

"I did it! Did you get it all?" He yelled in an excited tone as he flew back toward the camera and dropped his bike on the ground. "Play it back, please!" He whined as he disappeared behind the camera and after a couple of fumbling noises, the video ended.

"You ok?" Marc asked as he sat down on the couch and handed me a plate with a couple of slices of pizza.

"Yeah, I just watched a video I haven't seen since before I died," I said as I took a bite. "Wow this is good!" I exclaimed as I tore into the first slice. "How did my personal belongings make it onto my file? I thought my family got all that stuff."

Marc put his slice down and swallowed what he had in his mouth then answered, "They did, but the contract signed when you were to be Neuro-Imaged meant he was allowed to catalogue everything about you," He looked away for a moment then directed his gaze at the floor. "He had the authorities seize what was temporarily his possession."

"Well, that explains why my family wanted nothing to do with everyone involved after this," I said as I tapped the side of my head. "What a bastard."

"It was just something else that proved he was dishonest and self serving," Marc said as he polished off his slice of pizza.

About 30 minutes later, dinner finished and the dishes washed and put away we went back to the couch and Marc picked up the link cable and held one end out in my direction. "You ready to get started?" He asked as I accepted my end and nodded my approval. Just like the first time, I instantly felt his presence once both ends were connected.

"We'll be here for a while, you may want to lay back," Marc said as he stretched out on the couch leaving me enough room to lie down next to him.

Once we were both comfortable, I closed my eyes and waited for his image to appear in front of me.

"Ok, how do we get started?" I asked as I looked around having no idea what to do.

"First you have to think about what you want to do," Marc said as he looked to be deep in thought. "Keep in your mind that you are here to create an item that you want to interact with, then take my hand and lead me to the spot you are standing in. Then you will be hosting the connection. Your brain will create the environment you need to create anything you can dream up."

"Ok," I said as I walked over and took Marc by the hand, thinking of exactly what he told me to. "Come with me," I said as I led him to my spot and suddenly the light in the area he was standing in vanished. "Did it work?" I asked as we still seemed to be standing in an identical black area.

"Yup, we are now in your brain," He said as he continued, "Want to have a seat? This is going to take a while," He said as a task chair appeared behind him and he sat down.

"How did you do that?" I asked as I just stared in awe at what I had just witnessed.

"Easy, just imagine that whatever it is you want to create is already there. The more detail you think of, the more accurate the item will be," He said as he sat back. "Go ahead, try it."

Looking at the empty area next to Marc, I imagined that there was a second chair when suddenly it became real. "Cool," I said as I poked it with my finger! Just to make sure it would hold me before sitting in it.

"Now, creating a human is similar but way more complicated," Marc said as he rested his elbows on his knees. "First, you need to pick the image to use, whether it be from a memory, imagined or from one of the files we uploaded. Then you need to picture that image as real and standing in front of us."

"Ok, I know I want Kevin to be my age, well as he was when he was 13. So, I want to use the 3 dimensional image of Kevin we uploaded." And just as I said it, a blue light similar to the white glow around us appeared just in front of us and Kevin was standing in the middle of it. I gasped at what I saw as it took me a little by surprise.

"Amazing, isn't it?" Marc asked as he took my hand and brought me out of the daze I slipped into. "Are you crying?"

"Sorry," I replied wiping the tears from my eyes. "He looks so real."

"No need to be sorry," He said as he stood up pulling me with him. "He is just as real in here as you are. Go ahead, touch him."

I stepped over to Kevin and touched my finger to his cheek and pulled back as if I had received an electric shock from him. "He's cold."

"So make him warm," Marc said as he stood back and folded his arms with a warm smile on his face.

"How?"

"Think of the temperature you want him to be, and it will happen."

I thought for a second then stepped over to Marc and put my hand on his cheek. "I want him to be this warm," I said receiving a smile from Marc. Then I stepped back over to Kevin and once again touched his cheek, and it was warm. "It worked," I said as I drew my hand back and looked him over. "But his skin doesn't feel real, like he's a doll or something."

Marc just smiled and nodded his head indicating I knew how to fix it now.

I closed my eyes and pictured the memory of the day I was activated when we were finally alone and Kevin put his hand on my cheek. I focused on what his touch felt like as I reached over and grabbed the hand of his likeness and held it to my face. Instantly it felt just as it did on that day.

"You incorporated a memory on your own, awesome!" Marc exclaimed as he touched Kevin's shoulder and smiled. "You learn fast bro!"

"What's next?" I asked as I released Kevin's hand and it fell lifeless to the side of his body.

"You decide, Just work on his appearance first. Then once you are happy with the way he looks, feels and even smells we can incorporate a personality," Marc said as he sat back in his chair leaving me standing face to face with my project.

"Smells?" I asked as I walked a circle around Kevin.

"Every little aspect of him, you need to recreate. Just pick it out as you go."

"Can I control him? I mean make him move and stuff," I asked as I tried to figure out where to start.

"Oh yeah, just think it and he'll do it," Marc replied as he seemed busy thinking about something so I focused on Kevin.

'Open your eyes.' I thought and jumped when he did, and they were nothing but black circles.

"Hmmm... Looks like I really do need to pay attention to detail," I said as I pictured a time that I looked directly into Kevin's eyes, and suddenly the black circles became the life filled Hazel eyes I had always admired. "That's better, close your eyes my shadow," I said and Kevin closed his eyes.

"Shadow?" Marc asked as I didn't mean to make the command out loud.

"Yeah, I used to call him my shadow when he was much younger than this, where ever I was, my shadow was always close by. It just stuck," I said as I took another walk around Kevin. "What was the point in these 3 dimensional images?" I asked as I thought of a time in bed when Kevin had just gotten out of the shower and how he smelled then smelled his likeness and found the scent was perfect.

"It was supposedly intended to be incorporated in your positronic brain, so you would have accurate details regarding your owner. In your case it wasn't needed but, Dr. Strafford created the policy and followed it I guess."

"He had to be naked when they took them?" I asked as I looked at the form standing in front of me thinking how embarrassed Kevin must have been, or would be right now.

"Yeah, it wouldn't be accurate if he wasn't," Marc replied. "But if you put clothes on him before you get his body right, it will mean more work editing him later."

"I guess so," I said as I thought back to the same night when we climbed into bed and I kissed his head and said goodnight. I noticed how nice his hair smelled and wanted to incorporate that memory as well. "Bow your head for me Kevin," I said and his head bowed forward so I could smell his hair. "Perfect, now look at me," I commanded and he did. "This is so weird," I said as I noticed color appear in his cheeks. "Marc, Kevin's color just changed and I didn't tell it to."

"Yup," Marc said with a giggle. "You learn fast alright. You did command it to change. Subconsciously your brain realized his coloring was wrong, so it made the adjustment for you. That only happens when you are in this creative mode. In real action, small things you take for granted will be adjusted by his programming once it's active."

"Small things?" I asked as I looked back at Marc.

"Like if he's active, he'll get sweaty and his smell will change accordingly. The scent you just gave him is what he will smell like at the beginning of any visit until his environment alters it."

"Neat, so I won't have to even think about it?"

"Nope, it will be handled automatically."

After almost an hour of thinking up every time I ever saw him naked, I was convinced that I couldn't make him any more perfect than he already appeared to be. I repositioned him several times to verify that there were no mistakes with any aspect of his body.

"I think I'm done," I said gaining Marc's attention as he seemed to be preoccupied with something and not paying attention. "No wait a second," I added as I walked back over to Kevin and looked at his face. "Smile for me kidoe," I said and realized I had overlooked a small detail. Picturing his smile in my memories his dimples suddenly appeared and the right corner of his mouth raised just a bit more than his left, just as Kevin's used to in real life. "That's better," I said once again thinking of details I may have missed. "Show me your teeth," I commanded and chuckled when I realized I had forgotten that the image didn't include inside his mouth. A few memories later, his lips, teeth and tongue were finished when I suddenly realized, I was far from being finished. "Exhale" I said as I leaned in to smell his breath.

"He can't yet," Marc said standing up and stretching. "He has no internal organs yet."

"Oh, wonderful," I said with a defeated tone in my voice. "How am I supposed to recreate something I have never seen?"

"That's what I've been working on. With this kind of recreation, you can have the subject emulate bodily functions but they aren't always accurate. I spent years cross referencing medical records, DNA samples on file, and even the dietary records taken on John to make him as real as possible. I compiled all the same info and recreated his biological structure," He said as he stepped in front of Kevin. "Incorporate biological structure file Kevin-01 and initiate," Marc commanded and Kevin began breathing. "Now he can exhale, has a real heartbeat, pulse and his nervous system is even functioning. If he was ticklish, you can test that out now as he will respond to touch now," Marc said with a smile as I walked over to Kevin watched him breathe in and out.

"Kevin, open your mouth and exhale," I commanded as I once again leaned in and noticed his breath had no scent at all. I adjusted it and decided to test what Marc told me and gently tickled his side. "Did you see that, he flinched."

"Tickle his feet and he might even kick," Marc said with a giggle.

"His feet were never ticklish, but his sides were always a great way to disarm him," I said with a laugh as I decided it was time to cover the poor kid up. I picked out a memory of him getting dressed and replicated each piece of clothing until he was completely dressed. "Ok, is there anything you can think of that we need to do before we start on his personality?"

"Nope, I think you have it all under control. Have him sit down and we'll get started. Are you thirsty?"

"Yeah, wanna whip up a couple of sodas before we move on?" I asked as I turned back toward Kevin. "Ok shadow, sit down on the floor, look up at me and smile," I commanded and he did just as I said. "He looks so real already," I said as I patted his head receiving no response, which reminded me that we had more work to do. "Ok, close your eyes kidoe."

"Here's your drink," Marc said taking a sip from his glass as I took my seat and downed half of my own.

"Drinking in here has no affect to our real bodies, right?" I asked looking at the glass.

"Nope, but it fools your brain into thinking it isn't thirsty anymore. In here, getting thirsty is an emulation but, stay in here long enough, and your real body will be neglected," He said as I nodded my head.

"Where do we begin?" I asked looking at the not so lifeless looking form sitting indian style on the floor in front of us.

"You already have," He said looking at me and smiling then continued, "You already have what you hope him to become in your mind, you just need to incorporate all your memories of him, all the small things that makes him Kevin to you with all the uploaded information of him. Think of everything in your brain that involves him in any way, then picture it all coming from him," He said as he pointed at Kevin. "This is going to be the most involved process you will need to accomplish. Be specific about his age, as he will remember everything throughout the course of his entire life but act the age you specify," Marc said as he grabbed my hand. "And be sure to specify how long it's been since you last saw him. This way he will react as a human to seeing you for the first time. I found that it is more realistic to include a real memory for him, so each visit will be that much more real for you." With a smile he added, "You can either make him aware of time while you aren't here if you want, but remember if you do, he will know if you haven't visited in a long time. I specified 24 hours regardless of the actual time passed, just so I don't need to explain to John why I don't visit everyday."

"Thanks Marc. I never would have thought of that," I said as he released my hand and I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. I focused on the task of gathering the information first and then added my own specifications as Marc suggested, which took almost an hour to do by itself. Once I had the profile completed I looked at Marc and smiled. "Wish me luck," I said getting a nod as a response.

Looking at Kevin I smiled and whispered "Come back to me Shadow" as I thought of the final step to incorporate his personality with his mind. I could feel the enormous amount of energy it took to finalize the process but it only took a few minutes before I felt the transfer take place. I watched as the blue light around him faded and was replaced with a white light, just like the one surrounding Marc and myself.

"Kevin?" I asked receiving no response from him. "Marc, something's wrong," I said as I looked over and saw that neither Marc or his chair was in the room anymore. "What did I do wrong?" I said as I stared at Kevin, who still sat in the same position I placed him in before the transfer.

"Marc! Marc! Please, I did something wrong!" I yelled still getting no response. Tears began to well up in my eyes as I looked at Kevin. "You were supposed to wake up," I said as I leaned forward and cried into my hands. "I knew it was to good to be true."

"Uncle Dan? Why are you crying?" A voice I recognized half whispered as I felt a hand softly touching my shoulder. Looking up I was stunned to see Kevin standing in front of me with a tear streaming down his right cheek. "I'm here now, please don't cry."

I jumped out of my seat and hugged him with all of my strength. "God I missed you," I cried as I held him for dear life. "I thought I would never see you again."

"I missed you too Uncle," He cried as he hugged back with an equal amount of strength. "I'm not sure where I've been, or even where we are now but I promise I will never leave you again," He said as he buried his face in my neck and continued, "I love you Uncle Dan."

"I love you too Kevin, I love you too..," I muttered as I opened my eyes and realized I was alone on the couch in the living room.

"Marc! Oh no Marc!" I shouted as I bolted upright noticing the cable wasn't attached to the back of my head. *'Please tell me that wasn't a dream. Please God, I can't loose him again.'* I thought as I looked frantically around the room for any signs that it wasn't all a dream, and found nothing.

"MARC! Please help..."

Notes from the Author:

Yes, I have some apologizing to do. First of all for taking so long to actually get this chapter done and second for ending it the way I did. (I know I'll hear about it later. [G]) Things have been extremely trying at home the past few months and even though I've tried the story just wasn't coming from me like I had hoped for, until a couple of days ago. Funny how that happens.

I really need to thank my "Family" online and off for being patient with me as I never intended to start this tale and not finish. Chapters may come slow, but it all seems to work out for the best in the end. I also want to once again thank Amaturishwriter for his permission to expand on his original story M.A.R.C. and once again bring his artificial life form someone to call family. He deserves it.

A special thanks & hugs go out to my two editors. Not only do I thank you for encouraging me to continue to write (By encouraging, I do mean ankle chewing and several wet spots on the carpet ;) but you also inspire me in real life when it just seems to be too hard to press on every day. Just like this story, when it all seems to come to a screeching halt and seems impossible to move on, I just remember that you two are a part of my life and it really helps to keep me going. Just Thanks for letting me be "Uncle Jeff" again... I've missed it.

As always, this story is dedicated to my nephews; Jonathan, Logan & Coby. Whether grown and on your own, or to far away to give a hug to, you three are the reason I have so much love to pour into the friendships developing in this story. Jon, in real life I miss My Shadow though judging by the man you have become, and your comments about wanting to "Make Me Proud" not too long ago. Rest assured, there is no way on earth I could be any more proud of you than I already am. Kevin is my tribute to you...

Notes from the Editing Team :

Wow! This is sooo cool. Jeff is writing a great story and he has some pretty neat editors too :)~

Thanks for lettin us help you with this. It is a really fun project.

Jeff is one heck of a writer and we are both glad that he is BACK ---- FINALLY !!

Way To Go

TwoHyperPups

"Chapter 4 - A New World Within"

Special thanks To ACfan for his advice and contributions in this chapter!

"I'm still here Danny," Marc's voice echoed from somewhere in the room. "Subconsciously, you must have thought that you wanted to bring him somewhere else."

"Where are you?" I asked standing up from the couch and looking around while wiping the tears from my eyes.

"You haven't brought me in yet." He answered with a giggle in his voice. "Just think about wanting me in your presence, and your programming will let me in."

Suddenly Marc appeared sitting on the couch with an ear to ear grin. "You can use the same process if you want time alone and wish me to leave." He said as he stood up and looked around. "Your programming is adapting quickly." He said as he picked up the pillow we were both lying on when we established our connection. "Everything looks just as it did the last time we were in the room. I wonder if your human attributes make you process your thoughts more quickly than I can."

Looking at him completely puzzled I asked "Really? Why?"

"Because to do what you just did, recreating this house and everything just as we left it, I have to purposely do on a conscious level." He replied shaking his head in what looked like astonishment. "You did this by accident. It's just awesome."

I looked around and realized that he was right, everything looked exactly as it did when we first set out to create my first interactive memory. After walking around the room I looked at the glass doors leading out to the deck and decided to see just what my brain had actually accomplished. I slid the door open and stepped out on the deck with Marc right on my heel.

"Oh my god." I said out loud as the entire area was absolutely perfect. "I created this?"

"Yup." Marc replied while tapping on my shoulder. "Just like you created him." He added while pointing out to the Sand Castle we built earlier, where Kevin appeared to be admiring our handiwork.

"Wanna introduce us?"

I watched for a few minutes before finally breaking the silence, cleared my throat and raised my voice so he could here me. "Where's My Shadow!?!"

Marc giggled while watching Kevin's gaze shoot up to the deck and instantly he started running in our direction.

"Uncle Dan!" He shouted as he bounded up the stairs, almost knocking me over with his tackle. "This place is so cool, where are we?"

"Well.." I said looking at Marc for the answer.

"We're at my house." He said as he held his hand out to Kevin. "I'm Marc."

Kevin accepted his hand and replied "Cool, I'm Kevin. I'm Dan's nephew." He said as he looked at me with a little confusion showing. "Uncle Dan, how did I get here?"

"Have a seat kido, this explanation is going to take a while." I said as I pointed toward a chair and sat down.

"I'll give you two some time alone." Marc said as he headed back inside the house. "Danny, I'm going to disconnect to give you some privacy, I'll get dinner ready and come get you." He replied as I nodded my head and his image faded from existence.

"Whoa!" Kevin exclaimed as he stood up and waved his hands in the air where Marc had been standing. "How did he do that?"

"Well.." I started patting the seat to get Kevin to sit down again. "I guess you could say we really aren't here." 'I should have just implanted the explanation into his memory' I thought to myself realizing this wasn't going to be easy.

Kevin sat back down and stared at me with the most confused look I had ever seen come from him. "What do you mean? Of course we're here."

"What is the last thing you remember clearly before coming here?" I asked him hoping to steer him into realizing just what he was.

"Giving you a hug in that big black room."

"Ok, how bout before that?"

"Um, well I remember being sick and in the hospital, then I fell asleep.. Uncle Dan?" He asked not waiting for an answer. "Did I die?"

I almost choked with the way he came right out and asked. "Yeah, after you fell asleep your heart just stopped." I said wiping a stray tear off of my cheek. "That was such a long time ago."

"So, is this um.. is this heaven?" he asked with an expressionless look on his face as he glanced around at his surroundings.

"Not exactly. This is as close to heaven as I'm afraid I can get." I said trying to come up with a way to explain what I did.

Kevin sat in the chair and looked at his hands. "Wait a minute." He said as he stood up and walked over to the sliding glass door. "You had me implanted in an android too." He said to his reflection as he turned his head trying to see more of himself.

"That's kinda right I guess." I said once again at a loss for words. "Should I just tell him what I did, or let him believe that I did for him what he did for me?" "You see, you are created from every loving thought I have in my memory."

"I don't get it." Kevin said as he looked at his hands again. "I'm young again?"

After fighting with the words that would explain what I had done without upsetting him, I finally decided it would just be easier to give him knowledge of just what had taken place. I closed my eyes and thought to myself that I needed to edit his personality. As I opened my eyes, Kevin sat lifeless in front of me once again as he was earlier.

"Now, what would be the best way for you to know what happened?" I said as I patted him on his head and stood to pace on the deck. "What if you remembered being created?" I thought out loud. "Kevin, your active memories now begin at the conception of the idea to bring your image to life. You heard my thoughts, you felt my feelings all the way along." I said as I felt my brain process the new information, then go idle once more. "Now, wake up and talk to me." I said and stared as Kevin merely seemed to snap back to reality, as if lost in a day dream.

"Wow." Kevin said in astonishment. "I can't believe you did all this from memory." He said with a sudden somber look creeping over his face. "I'm not real.."

I sat back down facing him and took his hands in my own. "You are very real to me." I said as I wiped the tear that was working its way down Kevin's cheek. "You will always be a part of me, I just found a way to bring that part to life." I said as I leaned in and kissed him on the forehead. "You gave me eternal life, but I couldn't do the same for you so, I learned a way to keep the part of you that will always be with me alive."

"I feel so real." He stated as he stood up and walked to the railing to gaze out over the ocean.

"In lots of ways, you are real." I said as I stood and joined him. "Your image is born of real memories and real love. The only thing that makes it real enough to touch is the brain you gave me. Are you mad at me for doing this?"

"God no!" He almost shouted as his gaze snapped in my direction. "I just don't understand why I really feel like I'm here, not just physically but.." He trailed off obviously searching for the right words. "I remember everything, like the day we met, the day you died, the day your body was activated and everything that happened afterward, like they are all my own memories." He said looking at me once again as if he was going to cry. "I also understand how I was created and why."

Something in his tone made me really feel that something was wrong. "What do you mean kido? You are upset, aren't you?"

"No, but now that you made me remember how I was brought here, I know this is going to make you mad." He said as he turned and walked back to his seat with me following.

"You think I could get mad at you?" I asked sitting back down and facing him again with a confused look on my face.

"Not mad at me, but mad at what I feel." He stated taking a deep breath. "I'm not supposed to feel anymore." He cried. "You're not supposed to feel anymore. It's my fault you are stuck here." He almost yelled between sobs. "I'm sorry I left you.. I.. I'm so sorry.." He got out before I leaned into him and wrapped my arms around him.

"Kevin, listen to me." I said once he began to quiet down a little. "You gave me one hell of a life, and when that life was supposed to have ended, you found a way to give more." I wiped the tears from his eyes and smiled at him. "Don't ever blame yourself for trapping me here, nothing is forever including this body."

"But you're stuck here and I'm gone." He cried.

I sat back and looked at him seriously. "And you are with me until I figure out what to do next. I can't ask for anymore than that. "

Kevin appeared to be deep in thought as I stood and walked over to the railing and gazed out over the ocean. "Kev, this place is beautiful but, I want you to put some thought into a place we can spend time together. A place we can call our own."

"Ok uncle Dan." He simply replied as he appeared at the railing next to me. "When you leave here to go eat and stuff, will I just go to sleep or something?"

"I don't know, we may need to ask Marc how that works. He's the one who taught me how to do this, all of this." I replied as I began to realize some flaws in the area. "It all looks perfect but, it isn't." I muttered to myself as I picked up the table cloth knowing I had never really seen the table only to find that the visible part of the legs existed, but any parts hidden from view were merely basic gray structures to make up for what 'should' be there. It was as if my mind assumed what should be there and created an image to take it's place.

"Ok, I'll give it some thought." Kevin said watching me as if he didn't understand what I was doing but, wasn't about to ask either.

We moved to sit on the steps and watched as the artificial sunset began to fill the sky with orange and red. It was a perfect sunset and the best way to end such a perfect day. Kevin sat in silence just as I did, resting his head on my right arm as he gripped onto my hand. I didn't dare move or even think of any of the issues with the replicated surroundings as I feared it would spoil the moment for us both. I looked down at my long lost friend to find that he had dozed off and realized if I were to make a painless exit, now would be the time.

I leaned my head to bring a small kiss to his forehead. 'Sleep well, I'll be back.' I thought as I willed my mind to bring me back to reality, leaving Kevin to his nap.

"I was just coming to get you." Marc said as I opened my eyes finding him just picking up the other end of the communication cable.

"We watched the sun set and Kevin fell asleep, so I kinda said good night and left." I said as I disconnected and sat back on the couch. "What a day.." I mumbled as I let my arms fall to my side with a sigh.

Marc plopped down on the couch next to me and patted my shoulder. "You gonna be ok?"

"Oh yeah, that was just much more than I expected."

"Well, dinner is ready." He said as he playfully punched my arm and stood back up. "Hope you like shepherd's pie." he added with a smile.

"You been reading my mind bro?" I said as I stood up. "That's one of my favorites."

"Well.. you went over a memory while making Kevin. It was of the two of you completely trashing your kitchen making whipped potatoes to make a shepherd's pie." He said with a grin. "So I stored it away and decided to make it for you. I hope you don't mind, I just wasn't sure what you wanted."

We made our way to the kitchen and I was directed toward the table without a word said. Marc opened the oven and pulled out a huge pan filled with something I haven't had in years. The smell brought me back to that day, and of others when my mother or even I had made this same meal for the family.

"It was really simple, and I think I made it exactly the way you normally do, but that's your call." He said with a smile as he dished up two plates and poured two glasses of milk.

"Looks like you thought of everything." I said as I lifted the glass of milk to my lips. "I'm not a huge milk fan, but there are meals that you just gotta have a glass with."

"Well, I'll have to do some more digging and find out what those other meals are. Milk is good for you, just as it is good for a human." Marc said as he dug into his plate. "Who would have thought something so simple to make could be so good." He said over a mouth full.

After an awesome meal, Marc and I went back into the living room and plopped down on the couch patting extremely full stomachs.

"Marc?"

"Yeah Bro?"

"When I leave an interactive memory, what happens to Kevin?" I asked with my head rested against the back of the couch and my eyes closed.

"Well, if you didn't establish an actual protocol, He will simply think he had taken a nap, and the next time you visit him it will be like you are there when he wakes up." He answered putting his feet up on the coffee table.

"He got upset." I said gaining a questioning gaze from my brother. "Upset for having trapped me here for what seems like eternity."

Marc sat up a bit, not losing his confused look. "What made him realize that?"

"I didn't know how to explain his creation to him, so I gave him my memories of how and why he was created. After I integrated my thoughts and feelings throughout the process, he was more upset with what he had done than for me bringing him back, or the fact that he wasn't completely real." I said shaking my head. "I never expected that from him. His reaction literally tore my heart out."

Marc tilted his head in thought. "Odd, unless you specify that is the response you want from him on that subject, he shouldn't have even brought it up." He said as he sat back, obviously deep in thought. "The human aspect of you is proving to be more unpredictable than I thought."

"You think that had something to do with it?" I asked knowing he was looking at the technical aspect of Kevin's reaction.

"It's possible. The way I figured it, Kevin would respond to certain subjects the way you would want or expect him to. No extra detail has to be defined, it just happens automatically." He stated as if he was running the process through his head as he went. "I'm sure you didn't want him to get upset, or even feel as if he trapped you here so it doesn't make sense that he would reason it out that way under just your programming."

"I was just shocked that he brought it up." I said beginning to feel that we may be overreacting to something that just took me by surprise. "It's really not a big deal, I don't think it will happen again. We talked it out."

Marc put his feet on the floor and sat up from his reclining position to look me in the eyes. "It is a big deal if you reason it out." He said gaining my full attention. "He responded in a way that you didn't want him to. There are only two ways that can happen." He thought for a second and then continued, "The first would involve you defining a definite guilt for having you implanted into an android form. I was there when you defined his personality, that was never even a thought."

"But I did want him to react naturally, and in the way Kevin would in any circumstance." I said in defense of his comment.

"Did Kevin ever think that way while he was alive?" Marc asked.

"Not that I know of. Could it be possible that he may have thought that as he was losing his life? Maybe realizing that he was leaving and I was stuck here?"

"You would have no way of knowing that, so you couldn't incorporate it." Marc replied. "The second way I can think of is that somehow, we have captured more of the real Kevin than we expected to. His response was a real human, emotional response. One conflicting with the ones you designed him to be equipped with on his own. It may not be a bad idea to go back and inventory all the files that were added to your own memories. Maybe even upload the interactive session now logged in your memory and see if we can pinpoint the source of his reaction." He said making me wonder if I should never have brought up the fact that it shocked me in the first place.

"Is all that really needed? I mean it just surprised me, that's all. Honestly."

"Danny, It makes sense for you to question how these memories work, cause you don't have all the technical information yet to fully understand it but, in an instance when you begin to question why something happens, your programming should give you the answer. You would realize that a certain command you made during the programming stage was directly at fault, giving you the opportunity to correct it or make adjustments."

"So, I should just know the answer because my programming will give it to me when I question it?" I asked trying to make sense of his reasoning.

"Did you notice anything that needed correcting while you were in there?" He asked. "It's normal to do so throughout the beginning stages of a new interactive memory."

"Well, I did realize I haven't seen everything there is to see here, and in my interactive version of this house, there are some gaps." I said thinking of the table on the deck. "I lifted the tablecloth on the table outside and realized that I had never seen it before, so my brain assumed what it should look like, I think."

"Yup, and that is exactly what I am talking about. That wasn't just an assumption, that was fact. And the way you reasoned it out was your programming's way of feeding you the answers. You will assume, think of or even just realize the answers you are looking for. It makes it easier to handle information if it comes to you in a realistic manner, such as thought. You shouldn't be baffled, or have no clue about any aspect of your own creation within your own brain." Marc stated as he sat back once again. still appearing to be deep in thought. "Tonight, we need to physically upload the entire session into the terminal so I can analyze it. I want to pinpoint the source of his reaction, just to be sure you won't lose control in any situation." He said with a smile. "If it becomes too real in there, you may begin to question which is the real world, or come out more depressed and regretful than when you went in. That's not what these sessions are meant for."

"So we need to make it less real?"

"No, we may need to set up some parameters that will give you more logical control instead of emotional control. It's probably something simple like that anyway. I don't have the emotions of a human so, I'm not completely sure." He said with a smile. "I'll find the answers if you give me the logged session to de-compile."

"Sounds like a ton of fun when you put it that way." I replied with a grin.

"Oh it will be." Marc replied on the mock sarcastic side. "Just to be on the safe side, until we know exactly what happened in there, no interactive memories unless I'm with you."

"Marc, I was just a little surprised at his reaction. Don't you think you are over reacting a little?" I asked thinking this is all a little strange but not dangerous or anything.

Marc suddenly got a very serious look on his face and replied, "Have you ever had a dream you didn't want to wake up from?"

"Oh sure, plenty of times. Why?"

"This is a dream you never have to wake up from, you have that choice." Marc replied with a rather deflated look on his face. "There are some who have created an entire new world within their mind. Some of them never allowed themselves to return to consciousness and pretty much ended their lives in there. I don't want to see that happen."

"I wouldn't let it get that far." I replied trying to sound sure of myself.

"You don't know that for sure." He said settling back into the couch. "It may feel like you have control right now, but your brain could be fooled into thinking that world is just as real. Trust me on that one."

Just as I was about to nod my head, we both snapped our attention to the door as a light tapping surprised us.

"Expecting company?" I asked with a grin.

"Oh yeah..." He answered as he stood to answer the door. "The men in the white coats are supposed to pick you up today." He giggled as he ducked to avoid the pillow I threw at him.

"Clown." I said as he reached the door and opened it.

"Oh, Hi Jerry." Marc exclaimed. "Come on in dude." He said as I stood up.

"Hey." I said getting a smile from Jerry. "I thought you were leaving with your parents to see your Grandmother today. Plans change?"

"Yeah." Jerry said while Marc closed the door and both plopped down on the couch. "We're not goin' to my Grandma's house now. My dad just called from work and told my mother that he got tickets to go to Hawaii instead." He said with obvious disappointment.

"Wow, you'll have a great time there!" Marc said with excitement. "I've been once, it's totally cool!"

"I can't go." He said as a tear began to trickle down his face. "He only got two tickets so I gotta stay at my uncle's house now for the whole week instead."

"Does your uncle live near here? Maybe we can hang out after all." I said trying to get a smile out of him.

"No, they want to put me on a bus to Murfreesboro so they can catch their flight." He said looking as if his world was ending.

"Murfreesboro? Tennessee?" Marc asked as he got a weak nod from Jerry. "Is there anything out there to do?"

"Oh sure." Jerry said while rolling his eyes. "Watch the cows all day and get dragged to Nashville once in a while to listen to hillbilly music."

"Your uncle likes country music?" I asked knowing this was not going well.

"Yeah." Jerry grunted out. "That's all he likes. Country music, Bars and avoiding having to do anything with me while I'm there except to drag me along and make me wait in the truck for hours cause I'm nothing but a little pain in the ass." He said with a snuffle.

"Do your parents know he does that?" Marc asked putting his hand on Jerry's shoulder.

"Oh yeah, dad says he's never liked kids but isn't mean or anything. He just ignores me most of the time I'm there unless he has to take me along somewhere."

I looked at Jerry and then Marc before asking, "So why do your parents send you there if they know that then?"

"Cause he's the only one who can take me for the whole week." Jerry replied as he stood back up. "I just wanted to come over and tell you guys I wasn't going to be home in a couple of days like I thought." He stated as he started toward the door.

"Why not stay here?" Marc asked stopping Jerry in his tracks and gaining my attention as well. "This way they won't have to bother your uncle, or even pay for a bus ride."

"I don't think my mom will want me staying with two kids and no adults." He said still looking dejected.

"Jerry," I said. "We aren't kids, remember?"

"Give me your phone number, I'll call her and ask." Marc said as he reached for the phone.

Jerry gave Marc his phone number and sat in the chair facing the couch as Marc finished dialing and smiled up at Jerry.

[Hello?]

"Hi Mrs Owens, this is Marc from next door."

[Oh Hi Marc, is Jerry over there by any chance?]

"Yeah, he came over looking a little depressed. He says your plans have changed and he's going to his uncle's house for a whole week now instead of his grandmother's for just the weekend."

[Oh yes, His father was able to arrange for the two of us to have a second honeymoon in Hawaii. It was unexpected and I figured he wouldn't be too happy about having to go to his uncle's house. He's good with kids but, isn't a real kid person.]

"So I hear. Actually Mrs Owens, that's why I was calling. I knew all this was unexpected and I just wanted to let you know that Jerry is more than welcome to stay here with us if it makes it easier for you. There's plenty of room, food and we would really enjoy the company."

[Oh no dear, That would be too much to ask and we wouldn't want to impose like that.]

"Impose? My brother and I have been bored out of our minds, and we really had fun today. It wouldn't be an imposition in any way, I promise."

[Oh my, he didn't just go over and ask you if he could stay, did he?]

"No, he just sounded a little depressed when he told us about going to his uncle's house. I'm the one who thought it may be easier, and cheaper too since you won't have to pay for bus fair to get him here."

[That is awfully nice of you. You sure it wouldn't be an imposition?]

"Absolutely not. Danny and I have been trying to come up with things to do until my dad gets home anyway. Building the sand castle was the highlight of the day. We'd love to have him over."

[3 kids alone for a whole week. I'm not so sure that would go over well with Jerry's father.]

"Mrs Owens, Danny and I aren't kids. Besides, our programming would be similar to any androids. We can care for Jerry as would any adult human. Actually, better trained than any babysitter you would ever find since even in extreme cases, we both are qualified to do surgery should the need arise."

[Hehehe, I never thought of that. Our android used to watch me when my parents went away as well. You are absolutely right.]

"Anyway's, Jerry is a great kid. We would love to have his company for the week and should any situation arise like this, you are always welcomed to have him stay here."

[Well thank you very much Marc. Could you send Jerry home so we can speak with his father about this. I'll have him call you if he is agreeable and see what he will need to bring over including the phone number we can be reached at and keys to this house should you need anything.]

"Sure, I'll send him right home. If you need our help getting ready to leave, Danny and I can come over to help make it easier."

[Thank you sweetie, but we should be all set. Would you mind keeping an eye on the house while we're gone though?]

"No problem. Jerry will be on his way in a minute."

[Thank you Marc. I'm sure Jerry will have much more fun there than at his uncle's. I'll bet his father will agree.]

"I'll keep my fingers crossed that he does. Talk to you soon Mrs. Owens."

Marc hung up the phone and smiled at Jerry. "Go talk to your parents, I think everything is set now. You just need to sit down with your dad."

Jerry literally leapt from his chair and hugged Marc tight. "Thanks Marc! Thanks Danny! I'll be right back!" He shouted as he released his bear hug and bolted for the door shouting, "This is gonna be sooooo cool!" as he almost fell out the door just barely closing it behind himself.

"You don't think he's excited, do you?" I grinned as I asked Marc.

"Oh no, he definitely hates the idea." He replied with a giggle. "Wanna help me set up the guest bedroom so he doesn't have to sleep on the floor?"

"Sure. Although judging from his reaction, I bet he'd even be happy with the floor as long as he didn't have to leave." I said as we both stood to get Jerry's room ready.

After putting fresh sheets on the bed and checking that the adjoining bathroom was stocked with clean towels and extra toiletries, we went to the kitchen to grab a drink while waiting for word from our possible border.

"Well." I said putting my glass down on the table and sitting back in my chair. "Looks like we need to make plans out here in the real world for the week."

"Yup, wouldn't be much fun for him to be stuck in the house with two catatonic androids." Marc replied with a grin. "We can always work on Kevin at night while Jerry is asleep." He added as the doorbell rang.

"He rang the bell?" Marc said as I stood to answer the door. "I half expected him to just rip the door off the hinges." He added with a chuckle.

I opened the door to see both Jerry and Mrs. Owens carrying bags and boxes, Jerry with a huge smile on his face.

"Whoa, let me help you." I said grabbing half of the load Jerry's mom was carrying. "It's only a week little buddy. You got enough stuff here for a month." I said with a grin as I motioned all to the kitchen.

"Hi Mrs. Owens, Hi Jerry!" Marc said standing to help with the bags and boxes. "What's all this?"

"Well, since we weren't planning to be gone for a whole week. We had just done our grocery shopping and decided it would be put to better use where the bottomless pit went." Jerry's mom said with a smile. "No need to have him eat you out of house and home." She added with an almost evil grin. "Besides, I don't want it all to go to waste."

"Ahhh..." Marc said as he began to put the groceries away. "Would you like a coffee or something Mrs. Owens?"

"Oh no dear, thank you. I need to be heading back. Jerry's dad and I have a lot to take care of still. We will be leaving first thing in the morning." She added grabbing Jerry's chin and raising his face to meet her gaze. "You promise me you will behave for Marc and Danny while we are gone."

"I will mum." Jerry said with a big smile as he plowed into her for a hug. "You'll call when you get there, right?"

"Yup, and we will check in now and then to make sure you haven't driven the boys up the wall." She said as she broke the hug and kissed Jerry on the top of the head. "Boy's, you have no idea how much we appreciate this. If you need anything at all, use the phone at our house and call us. Jerry has the hotel number where we will be staying." She said as she put her house keys on the table along with some money. "Just incase." She added with a smile as I was about to tell her to keep the money on her.

One at a time we all gave Jerry's mom a hug, and wished her a great honeymoon. Jerry also got one more lecture about behaving before she finally retreated to her house, leaving us to put the rest of the groceries away. That task out of the way, we picked up the bags that contained Jerry's things and showed him upstairs to his room.

"Wow, I got my own bathroom?" Jerry said as we both dropped his bags on the bed.

"Yup, you can put your clothes and stuff in the dresser, and your toothbrush and things in the bathroom. Make yourself comfortable cause this is your space for the week." Marc said as he paused as if in thought. "Actually, the whole time we've owned this house it's never been used so if you decide to stay over in the future, you are welcomed to it."

"Cool!" Jerry exclaimed as he began to unpack his clothes. "Is it ok if I hook my PlayStation up to the tv?"

"Sure, you need a hand?" Marc asked.

"Nah, I can do it." he replied as we both silently laughed watching as he excitedly went to work. "Thanks guys, this is awesome!"

"No problem." Marc said roughing up Jerry's hair. "Why don't you get settled in and then jump in the shower and get dressed for bed. We'll see if we can find a movie or something to watch."

"Jerry, have you eaten?" I asked as Marc turned to leave the room.

"Yup, just before I came over earlier." He said.

"Great, we'll be downstairs if you need anything." I said getting an ear to ear smile as a reply before I followed Marc's lead and left him to get settled in and ready for bed.

Back in the kitchen, Marc started a pot of coffee and we both sat down at the table with smiles on our faces.

"It's going to be great having a real kid here to keep you in line." I said with an evil grin as I took a sip from my cup. "That's an awesome bedroom, why didn't you take it for yourself instead of the one down here? It has an awesome view and is larger."

"I like my room." Marc said with a smile. "It's close to the lab and easier to roll equipment in and out of." He said sipping his coffee. "There are three rooms up there. Jim's, the one Jerry is taking and yours if you want it." He said with a smile.

"I never thought of where I would be staying permanently." I said realizing I just figured Marc and I would just share his room. "Why didn't you send me up there last night?"

"Well, first of all I was worried about all your new programming and how you were going to respond to it." He said with a smile. "Secondly, I'm not done with that room yet. I decided since it wasn't used either, that I would plan to let you have it but now that you are really here I need to make some modifications. Ones I never thought to make before."

"Modifications?" I asked tilting my head. "A room is fine, you don't need to do anything extra."

Marc grinned as he stood and motioned me to the lab. "Come here, I'll show you some of it." He said leading the way.

Inside the lab, leaving the door open incase Jerry came looking for us, Marc pulled open the doors to a large metal cabinet which was filled with wires and other computer components that I didn't recognize.

"What's all this?" I asked noting once again Marc's wide smile.

"Our network." He said flatly as he took a seat looking as if he had just won some prize.

"Network? I've never seen a network that needed this much stuff." I said as I recognized one of the connectors. "That's an uplink connector. What are you up to this isn't computer network stuff."

"He's quick." Marc said to the ceiling with a laugh. "No, it's not a computer network. There will be one of those too but this is OUR network." He said emphasizing the word OUR. "Having your own space is important sometimes. So I planned to set that room up for you when we moved here. About a year ago, I thought it would be cool if I set up our rooms so we could network at night if we wanted to. This way we can share dreams or work on issues, and still have our own space." He sat forward in his seat and continued, "Your room will have a networked connection directly to me, as well as a computer terminal that is networked to the mainframe system in the house for self maintenance or experimentation should you need it as well as a normal computer with access to the internet and stuff too."

"Damn bro, you thought of everything." I said as I closed the cabinet shaking my head. "It is a neat idea though. Is that kind of a network hard to set up?"

"Nah, The lines are already run. Like I said I planned this out about a year ago. I just never got around to setting up the equipment. I'll show you the room in the morning, I think you'll like it." Marc replied as a form appeared in the doorway.

"Hey guys, wat'cha doin'?" A freshly clean, pajama clad Jerry said as he walked into the room. "Wow, this place looks like something you would find on a federation starship or something." He said as he stood close to the door, probably afraid to look around.

"Nah." Marc said with a smile. "Starships don't have body parts lying all over the place." He said with a giggle as he picked up an android forearm and hand and scratched his head with it.

"Clown." I stated as Jerry broke out in laughter.

"Do you build androids in here?" Jerry asked taking a careful step forward.

"Dude, you won't break anything in here, go ahead and look around." Marc said as Jerry obviously wanted to explore but was apparently afraid to. "I could build them in here but, just repair them and myself when needed."

"Hey Danny, these old pictures look just like you." Jerry said pointing at the pictures and news clippings I had discovered on the wall just before my forced upgrade.

"That's cause they are me." I said now standing next to him as he looked in awe.

"But they look like they are like a hundred years old." he said with a giggle.

"Close, about 30 years less than that really." I said as I looked at the picture I had found after my initial activation.

"I remember when that was taken, you were so scared."

"Yeah I was, I had no idea wha..." I froze in mid sentence and looked first at Jerry, then at Marc. "You say something bro?" I asked Marc getting a quizzical look from him.

"No." He replied. "No one did, you were the only one talking just now."

I looked at Jerry who just shrugged his shoulders and returned to looking at the pictures.

"Where am I?"

"What do you mean? You're right here. Stop clowning around." I said as I looked at Marc who stood up and rushed toward me.

"Ok, what's wrong?" He asked causing Jerry to step back and look on with concern.

"You didn't say that?" I asked now beginning to get worried.

"I did. You can hear me?" The voice rang out clear as a bell yet, neither Marc or Jerry's mouth moved.

"Yeah, I can hear you... Kevin? Is that you Kevin?" I asked as Marc's eyes opened wide.

"Uncle Dan, where am I?" Kevin's voice asked.

"I'm not sure kido" I answered as I looked back at Marc. "Marc, something's wrong."

"What's going on, talk to me bro." Marc asked as he pushed me back into a chair forcing me to sit down.

"I can hear Kevin. He's talking to me." I answered looking at Jerry.

"Hey, who's he?" Kevin's voice asked causing my vision to blur as panic was beginning to set in and I felt as if I was going to cry out of fear.

"That's Jerry, he lives next door." I said with a snuffle and wiping at my eyes. "Marc, how can this be happening?"

"Marc, what's going on? Is Danny ok?" Jerry asked as he reached out and grabbed my hand, giving it a squeeze.

"I'm not sure buddy. Danny was broken when I found him and I guess he still has a couple of things that need fixing." Marc said to him patting him on the head.

"Uncle Dan, I'm scared. What's going on?"

"Can I help" Jerry asked Marc.

"Yeah, could you roll that computer stand over here?" Marc asked as he opened the port on the back of my head.

"What's he doing Uncle Dan?"

"Ok!" Jerry said as he almost ran to the computer to roll closer.

"Uncle Dan? Talk to me please. I'm scared."

"Danny, Talk to me, are you ok?" Marc said as he came into view and grabbed my face.

I was frozen in fear. Fear. Real fear. 'What the hell is wrong with me?' I thought as I felt as if I was beginning to gasp for air.

"Oh no, Danny breathe!" Marc yelled as he disappeared behind me and I could feel a hand take mine once again.

"Uncle! What's wrong with me. I can see and I can hear everyone but I... I... I can't find myself. Where am I?" A now panicked sounding voice yelled out.

Finally forcing my brain to refocus on breathing and regaining my composure, I looked at Jerry. Tears running down both cheeks as he squeezed my hand.

"I'm ok, I think." I said gaining a weak smile from him.

"Danny, I'm having a hard time getting the terminal to connect to you, can you feel the connection?" Marc asked as I realized I had felt the computer's request but was too panicked to acknowledge it.

"Yeah I did, it's my fault it couldn't connect. Try again." I said once again feeling the computer's request. This time allowing it access.

"Uncle Dan? Are we gonna be ok?" I heard Kevin ask in a tone that sounded more terrified than concerned.

"Yeah kido, we just need to find out what's going wrong." I said gaining instant glares from both Marc and Jerry. "Kevin's scared, he just asked if we were going to be all right." I added getting a knowing nod from Marc but a confused look from Jerry.

"Who's Kevin?" Jerry asked Marc.

"You see the kid in the picture standing next to the table?" He asked pointing at the same picture we were looking at earlier.

"Yeah." He answered, not looking any less confused.

"That's Kevin, I'll explain more later but he is the one Danny is talking to." He said patting Jerry's head and disappearing once again behind me.

"He can see and hear us too?" Jerry asked tilting his head at me as I just nodded my answer to him.

"If this works the way I think it will, he'll be able to talk to us in a minute." Marc stated as I heard him tapping away on the computer's keyboard.

"How?" I asked not knowing what he had planned.

"Simple. Well, simple if it works. We can redirect our thoughts through this terminal and actually speak through it. I guess it acts as a temporary platform for us to communicate through." He said as I heard the pop of amplified speakers being plugged in. "Kevin, can you do me a favor?" Marc asked.

"Yeah."

"He said yes." I answered for him.

"I know this is going to be hard for you to understand but, I need you to think about the connection I made to your uncle. I know you feel it just like he does."

"Yeah, I understand and I can feel it. What do you need me to do?" Kevin replied and I repeated it to Marc.

"This is gonna sound weird, but I need you to talk to it, or through it instead of talking to us. Does that make any sense?" Marc asked, even confusing me.

"I think so." He replied sounding deep in thought. "Like this?" We all heard from the computer speakers.

"Awesome buddy!" Marc exclaimed. "I wasn't sure you would understand what I meant."

"You can all hear me this way?" Kevin asked as Jerry looked at the computer than at me.

"Do I talk to the computer or to Danny?" Jerry asked, obviously totally confused as he looked at the speakers and replied, "Yup, we can hear you."

"Kevin is only speaking through the computer, he can still hear and see through Danny, so I guess talking to Danny would be better for him." Marc replied walking back into my line of view. "Danny, the computer is also running a full diagnostic on your brain. We will have answers soon I hope."

Jerry walked up to me and started staring into my eyes, causing me to chuckle. "What are you staring at?" I finally asked.

"How did he get in there?" He asked, like only a kid can.

"Well big guy, we're gonna have to explain this one a little, and I'm not sure even once we do that you are gonna really understand but, we put him in there." Marc said pulling up a seat in front of me for Jerry and then one for himself.

"I don't get one?" Kevin asked through the speakers causing a round of laughter that broke the tension.

"Glad to see this hasn't ruined your sense of humor." I said as a warm feeling rushed through me and everything somehow felt right for the moment.

We sat in the lab for over an hour explaining to Jerry the events of the last couple of days. He was surprised to hear that Kevin was somehow able to communicate with us and even asked questions that surprised myself and Marc as well.

"Where did you learn so much about androids?" Kevin asked Jerry.

"I took a robotics course in summer camp. They teach you all about the history and theories about androids when you learn anything that has to do with A. I." He replied.

"Well, Looks like you may become one heck of an assistant." Marc said while patting Jerry on the head as he returned to the keyboard. "This is almost finished." He added as I noticed Jerry craning his neck to see what Marc was doing.

"You can go and look if you want to. I don't think Marc will mind." I said earning an ear to ear grin from him as he bolted to Marc's side.

"Uncle Dan, you aren't gonna delete me or anything, are you?" Kevin asked making me realize he was really beginning to worry about what would happen.

"No way, not everyone has a shadow that is with you, even in the dark." I replied hoping that nothing would force me to have to wipe him out.

"Well, I have good news." Marc stated sitting back down in his seat, rolling the computer along with him. "Physically, everything checks out. There are no problems that I can see with your neural net or core programming."

"So, why is this happening?" I asked looking at the monitor.

"It seems our little friend in there somehow got tied into your dormant tech. mode, somehow reactivating it's personality and communication functions." Marc replied still looking very confused.

"Did I somehow cause that?" I asked.

"No, actually I don't even see how it's possible. But that's what happened. I'll look over all the information later on tonight. For now you are fine," He said adding "and so is Kevin."

We all paused noticing Jerry visibly trying to force himself to stay awake. "Hey sport, you should probably get some sleep." I said with a smile.

"Are you guys going to bed?" Jerry asked standing up and rubbing his eyes.

"Not for a while yet." Marc answered. "I have a ton of information to comb through and Danny may need to be brought offline if I need to make any programming changes."

"Can I just sleep down here?" He asked motioning toward the couch in the lab. "I don't snore or nuthin'" He said as a giggle came over the speakers causing us all to laugh.

"You wanna run up and get a blanket and pillow off of your bed then?" Marc asked getting a huge smile from Jerry as he almost knocked him over with a running hug.

"Ok." Jerry beamed as he rushed for the door, probably not wanting to miss anything.

"Was I that bad?" Kevin asked through the speakers.

"No." I answered with a giggle in my voice. "You were worse."

"Marc, do you think that coffee is still drinkable out there?" I asked realizing it was probably going to be a long night.

"Sure, you want one?" He asked standing up and placing one hand on my shoulder.

"Please, may as well grab one for yourself too since I ruined any plans of getting sleep tonight." I said as he started for the door.

"What are brother's for?" He asked with a smile as he left the room almost being run over by Jerry who was fumbling with his blanket and pillow. "Hey, you want some hot chocolate or something before you pass out?"

"Yeah please, that would be cool." Jerry said as he began to lay out the blanket on the couch and sat down.

"Be right back." Marc said as he turned for the kitchen once more.

"Danny? Is Kevin part of you now, or is he like a separate person, you know, separate even though he's inside you?" Jerry asked while sitting back into the couch and folding his legs up to sit indian style.

"I'm not sure now." I answered honestly. "I mean he is acting totally independent of me now, so I guess he's a separate person."

"I don't get it either." Kevin added. "But it's kinda cool. I mean I got to meet Marc and you and see my uncle again." He paused with a snicker. "Even if I have to see him from the inside."

Jerry leaned back and smiled. "I wish I could see you though. That'd be cool."

"Yeah." Kevin replied. "Maybe Uncle Dan would let me borrow his body for a while so we can go play and stuff. That'd be fun."

"Um, borrow the body?" I said raising my eyebrows. "You say that as if you were asking to borrow the car or something." I said getting a giggle both from the couch and computer speakers.

"What's so funny?" Marc asked as he returned to the room with three cups and began handing them out.

"Uncle Marc, Uncle Dan won't let me borrow his body to go out and play with Jerry." Kevin said causing me to almost drop my coffee in laughter, freezing Marc in mid step on his way to his seat.

"Actually," Marc said looking as if he was pondering something. "If he really is tied into your old tech mode, he probably could take over your motor functions and control your body." He said taking his seat and looking back toward the computer's display. "You would actually have to release control to him but it could work in theory."

"Marc, we're not even sure why this is happening yet. Let's take this one step at a time before I just go handing over control." I said as I finally got to take a sip from my coffee.

"I was really only kidding Uncle Dan, but that could be possible Uncle Marc?" Kevin asked breaking Marc's stare at the screen.

"What's with the Uncle Marc bit?" he asked with a smile.

"Well, you are Uncle Dan's brother, so that makes you my uncle too." Kevin answered getting a smile from Marc.

"I guess it does, never thought of that." Marc replied. "As for controlling an android body, since you are partially linked into tech mode, you have the ability since tech mode was originally designed as a totally separate individual from the recreational based personality an android normally uses."

"Every android has two personalities?" Jerry asked after taking a sip from his mug.

"Originally, yes. But the need for them was eliminated back when I was pretty new. It was used more for a direct link to the consortium to file operating reports, status reports and even perform upgrades and stuff without my ever knowing. It turned out that having two personalities active inside one brain was bad, since I could still somewhat hear everything that was going on anyway." Marc said remembering the day he finally told John that he could hear voices and that they scared him.

"Why wouldn't they just have you do your own reports and stuff?" Jerry asked innocently.

"Because the scientist who designed me, wanted me to believe I was human." He answered. "When that didn't work, my owner had to tell me that I wasn't. That was a horrible day."

"Why? What happened?" Jerry asked putting his mug down and wrapping himself in his blanket.

"Well, they began to implant clues in my programming. Hints that were supposed to make being told that I wasn't human a little less traumatic. Poor Uncle John had to be the one to tell me the truth. I remember how hard it was for him and just thinking back reminds me how much he loved me, android or not..."

Marc's voice seemed to trail off, as he was obviously remembering the events of that day.

"I remember how scared and confused I was when we finally sat down and I got the truth about myself from him..."

Once we were comfortably seated on the deck with tuna salad plates and iced tea, I began talking and sounding as serious and mature as I could; "Uncle John, there is something different about me."

"How do you mean sweetie?" He obviously tried to sound calm.

"Well first, I only have a few memories of my parents. Second, I feel funny because I'm not sadder. I mean, it's been too easy to forget that they died. Third, in these dreams it's not me ... well, it is but it's not the me I know or you love. I know you are talking with me but it's not me. Four, I sometimes ... when I'm alone and just thinking, I feel like ... I don't know ... well, like I'm really someone else or maybe I have multiple personalities."

For the first time since I started talking I began to lose it. My voice trembled. "I'm afraid you're going to tell me I'm crazy or something."

"Marc, I want you to know that, no matter what happens, I care very much about you. Your happiness is more important to me than anything. I love you completely and unconditionally. And I will support whatever you decide to do no matter how much it might hurt me for you to do it."

"Uncle John, you're ... you're scaring me." I said with wide eyes.

"Oh God. I'm messing this up. Marc, I don't mean to scare you. I am trying to reassure you that, well, that I'll always be here for you anytime you need me."

"I know that. Would you please tell me what's wrong with me?!" My voice was stronger now because I was getting more than just a little agitated as well as frightened.

"Nothing's wrong with you sweetie."

"Well." I demanded now irritated. "What's going on with me then?"

"Okay, ah, well I haven't been honest with you about something very important."

"Huh? What ... what are you talking about?"

"You ... ah, you aren't who you think you are ... or ... ah, ah ... Oh God... what you, ah ... you aren't what you think you are."

"I knew it. Who am I? ... wait, you said what. What ... what am I? ... Oh shit!" My voice grew to a shout. "WILL YOU FUCKING JUST TELL ME? GOD DAMN IT!"

My shouting startled him into clarity and it all came spilling out. "Marc, they thought it was better this way. But, you proved it wasn't. We should have been honest from the start. You've proved that you are strong enough emotionally, built and programmed well enough. I'm so sorry Marc. I was wrong to go along with them but it seemed so logical at the time. I mean... Oh God forgive me." He pleaded. "Oh Marc, can YOU forgive me?"

"What? Who are THEY? Forgive you for what?"

"Oh shit." He paused and took a deep breath. Then just blurted out. "Marc, you make other androids look like toys."

"Other Androids? Toys?" Disbelief, then shock and finally denial ran through my mind. "Oh Puhleesse!"

He looked me straight in the eye. His voice was filled with all of his love for me. "Listen to that inner voice Marc. I know you have been hearing it. So listen. Now. And please believe me. No matter what, I do love you ..." Then he added those special words that made me melt inside. "... with all my heart."

...I never really knew what love felt like, I mean other than the programmed meaning I had implanted in my brain until after that day." He finished with a sigh. "It was difficult, but after I was made to realize just what I was and accepted it, I had to integrate my "Tech" and "Recreation" mode personalities myself creating one mode of operation."

"So there is still two personalities inside you but they are one now?" Jerry asked looking more confused than before.

"Pretty much. Danny and I are the only ones who have had to integrate the two modes. All others built after us were designed with only one personality and never had to deal with changing programming modes." Marc said.

"So there is three personalities inside Danny now?" Jerry asked as he half lay back and stretched his legs out.

"How do you get three?" Kevin asked through the speakers.

"Well, There's him, His tech guy and you." He said with a smile as if he had just finally gotten it.

"Hmmm..." Marc hummed as he began tapping away on the keyboard. "That's weird."

"What is bro?" I asked wondering what he may have discovered.

"Well, in the status report this is generating..." He said as he punched a few more keys. "Well, look for yourself." He said turning the monitor back so I could see it once again. "I am getting reports from your rec mode and tech mode. I should see Kevin since he is active but, there's nothing."

"Could it be because he's a program I executed or something?" I asked trying to make some sense from all of this.

"No, I mean any mode is simply programming that is executed realistically." He replied, obviously trying to reason it all out. "It's almost as if Kevin replaced your tech mode..." He said as he read further into the information on the screen. "...That's not possible."

There was dead silence in the room as Marc tapped on the keyboard, paused and hummed, tapped some more and then just stood up as if he was disgusted with the answers he was coming up with. He paced the room mumbling to himself, Jerry, Kevin and myself remaining silent before the computer speakers came to life.

"Uncle Marc, I hope you don't get mad at me but I just found something that may help you." Kevin's voice said, sounding as if he had bad news or something.

"Why would I get mad?" Marc asked returning to his seat. "I could use all the help I can get at this point."

"Well, since I have a detailed listing of what was used to program me, I kinda just asked what affect each file had on my existence and how it would affect how my program was executed." He said, really impressing me until I remembered we were sharing the same positronic brain.

"What did you find?" Marc asked as he began to attempt to see the information Kevin looked into.

"This is all my fault." He said in a whimper.

I stopped for a minute and mentally took an inventory of all the uploaded information that I used to create his likeness when suddenly a cold chill ran right up my spine. "THAT SON OF A BITCH!" I shouted as I clenched my teeth and slammed my fists down on the arms of the chair. "I can't believe I didn't see that." I said as I looked over at Marc who still obviously had no clue what was wrong.

"Where did he get permission to do that!?!?" I shouted again finally being interrupted by Kevin.

"Because I gave him permission." Kevin stated and continued, "When they did the neuro-image of you, Dr. Strafford did one on me as well. I wanted to be able to come back so you wouldn't be alone if anything happened to me." He stated as I looked down toward the floor. "I didn't realize it until you made me understand what you did. I felt too real, and noticed it even before then. The way you programmed me should have allowed me to just realize that I was here, not question why just accept."

"But how could he have done this while you were still alive?" I questioned. "Your neuro-image couldn't have been complete if it was only the scan while you were alive. He needed access to your brain to complete that." I said trying to fish for the answer, or think of a way I may have failed in my programming him. "That's it, I said make him as real as possible. Maybe that programming is making him tell me all this to make him more real to me" I thought to myself as I suddenly felt Marc's hand on my shoulder.

"No Uncle Dan, your programming didn't do this." Kevin replied proving that he truly was tied into my thoughts. "Think, what part of the imaging process needs to happen directly with the human brain to make it complete." Kevin stated and losing me a bit.

"The chemical balance." Marc stated. "It makes the positronic brain replicate the environment in which the incorporated information from a neuro-scan can continue to function as it did before implanting."

"Marc, have you ever gone through all the information you uploaded into my brain?" I asked as he suddenly looked deep in thought.

"No. Anything involving you I inventoried and studied, but Kevin's files were personal. I never went through them." He said as he looked at me making it obvious he had no clue the image was included in the upload. "Oh no..." Marc gasped as he continued, "Once that Image was incorporated with the environment created by your own physical attribute imaging..." Marc trailed off.

"We didn't make an image of Kevin, we awakened him." I said looking over at Marc who looked like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car. "What have we done?" I asked no one in particular as tears began to well up in my eyes.

"So what happened to the tech guy?" Jerry innocently asked.

"Good question buddy." Marc answered. "How did tech mode get tied up in all this?" He asked as he sat back in front of the monitor.

"I think that's my fault as well." Kevin answered.

"How is that your fault? You couldn't have forced an integration with a foreign personality. Especially since you were never instructed to do so." Marc asked, and the speakers remained quiet. Marc continued, "Integrating two foreign personalities is very complicated as conflicts need to be worked out as they occur and adjustments need to be made. It's not possible to do that in the background without knowing it was happening."

"But it did happen, and I had no clue." I added trying to make some sense out of this. Kevin seeming to remain one full step ahead of me all the way.

"Uncle, you weren't aware of it because there was no integration." Kevin said with hesitation.

"Kev, I'm lost. How could there be no integration yet you clearly have replaced and reactivated Dan's tech mode. It doesn't make sense." Marc said as he pushed the keyboard away in disgust.

"Uncle Marc, do you know who the model for tech mode was? In the beginning I mean." Kevin asked.

"I never questioned it honestly." He answered flatly and sat forward placing his elbows on his knees and resting his chin in his hands. "What difference would the personality model for tech mode make? It was just a model."

Jerry sat up and looked first at me, then at Marc. "Kevin, was it you?"

Marc looked at me and then at Jerry with a smile. "Nah, they did a neuro-scan of Kevin. Something as basic as tech mode didn't need a full scan to create."

"That's true, it would only need the basic attributes of a personality." Kevin replied. "The rest would be replaced with the core programming from the system."

"Where did you learn so much about tech mode?" I asked adding, "I didn't even know that."

"Um..." Kevin began with a hesitation apparent in his voice. "Dr. Strafford taught me all about it when... Well, when I asked if I could be your tech mode, the personality I mean."

Just then a loud crash echoed through the room causing Jerry to sit bolt upright on the couch. "Marc? Are you ok?" he asked as he sprung to his feet and ran to his side.

Notes from the Author:

Well, looks like our beloved Dr. Strafford was quite busy in his day. Who knows what else he had done before the authorities finally put an end to his experimentations on humanity. I'm sure there were quite a few things that Kevin witnessed, or was even coaxed into taking part in that neither Marc or Danny were even aware of. The road appears to be getting a little rocky but, their new guide is bound to shed some light on some of the confusion. Time will tell...

Portions of this chapter would not have been possible without the creative input from ACfan of "[The Annex](#)" which was the direct cause of my finally getting it in gear and completing a half finished chapter that I could not for the life of me direct. Too many ideas, too many possibilities.. I guess I went into a bit of overload and needed the help from a real "Sci-Fi" guy. Let's call him my tech mode... LOL!

I also would like to attribute the creation of Marc's flashback "the day he was told he was not human" to it's original author as it was adapted directly from it's original text with a little editing to make it fit in a little better. AmaturishWriter, if you are reading this I would like to again thank you for your permission to continue on with this journey. The Marc in my story feels like the original to me and I do hope he is shaping up to be the Marc you once wrote about and your readers once grew to love.

And as always, This story is directly dedicated to my three "Nephews" (They know who they are). The driving force behind who Danny was in his human years is a direct result of who I am because of them and because of other extended family members who have in some way influenced me as my warped brain coughed and sputtered until STL was a reality.

Thanks to you all for reading!!! .

Notes from the Editing Team :

Boy, I gotta complain We just get out for summer vacation and what does Uncle Jeff do? He gives us HOMEWORK (&%#\$)

Oh well, gotta keep the grape from getting too squishy!

This chapter really rocks, and hey, we didn't have to really do that much editing. It seems someone has mastered the use of the coma (gotcha!)

If you all are anything like us, you want to see more of this story, and we understand you are about to get your wish. And even though it seems like we have taken a left turn with regards to the direction we were heading in, too bad ... Writers prerogative!

It is soooo cool to think that you know where a story is going only to find out you were wrong ... Wouldn't it really suck if you always knew what was happening? Where is the fun in that?

Stay tuned for more exciting adventures as our beloved android keeps us on our toes. Or is it Jeff keeping us on our toes? Is Jeff an android? Are we? *** Looks down front of pants *** Whew! I don't think androids have "those" kind of parts"

Until next time ...

The Pups!

"Chapter 5 - A Real Family"

"Y - yeah, I'm fine." Marc stuttered, as he and Jerry picked up his broken coffee mug and began to clean up the mess. "A real human was used?"

"Yeah." Kevin slowly answered. "Dr. Strafford knew why I wanted the scan taken of me as well and told me that if I really wanted to always be with Uncle Dan he had come up with the idea of using me as a personality model. There wasn't anything extra I had to do since he already had the image. You never recognized the voice?"

"No, I always thought I somehow chose the voice." I said as I sat back in my chair and held my head. "What else did he con you into doing?"

"He didn't con me Uncle, it was my idea." he replied as I closed my eyes and nodded my head.

After cleaning up the mess, Marc plopped down on the couch facing me with a concerned look on his face. "You ok bro?" He asked bringing me back from thought.

"No, not really. I mean what do we do now. I can't just undo what we've already done." I said as I looked at the floor. "I can live with the fact that Kevin is with me; but it's not fair that he's trapped inside my brain. That's no way to exist."

After a few moments of awkward silence, Jerry cleared his throat and mumbled something none of us could understand.

"What was that Jerry?" Marc asked leaning in closer to him.

"Well." He started with a hesitation. "What if you could build Kevin a body? Can't you put him in his own body? There are tons of parts in there." He said pointing toward the open closet. "If there's enough, I'll help build it too." He said with a look that told me he wasn't sure how his idea would be taken.

"I'm not sure that's such a good idea." I answered watching the poor kid's face melt with disappointment. "That kinda thing isn't legal to do and those parts are mostly from Cynthetilife models."

"Well, that's not completely right." Marc cut in. "I think I just got the answer to a question I never understood." He said getting confused looks from both of us as he stood and walked to the far side of the room to a closed metal case. "I need to call Jim and make sure I'm right but, I think this was built for the day Kevin was to come back." He said as he began clearing off the paperwork and books that were piled on top of the case. "It was left in a storage bin with other prototypes and projects and hasn't been touched in years. Jim thought it was for another model we started but I looked it over and noticed that its design didn't match the new configuration's specs.

"Another model?" Jerry asked as he got off the couch and began helping Marc clear away the rest of what had been hiding the metal case from view.

"Yeah, I actually had a chance to be involved in the design process for a newer model that was supposed to be the next generation of androids. His project name was A.U.S.T.I.N., which stands for Android, Upgrade, Second generation, Teen, Interactive Neuro-system and was supposed to be a huge line of androids to replace the outdated M.A.R.C. series. He would have been the first to have been primarily designed by one of his own kind." Marc said with a disappointed look on his face.

"What happened to him?" Jerry asked with concern.

"His project was dropped when all the MARC series androids began having breakdowns." He said looking at the case. "I hoped this was the prototype for Austin when we found it but, it was built way too early to be for him. Jim said he looked into its origin and thinks Dr. Strafford himself had this put in storage because it was logged in not to far from your activation date, Danny." He said as he tapped at what looked like a keypad on the case causing a loud click to be heard from inside.

I stood up from my chair and rolled the computer closer so I could see as Marc heaved the heavy lid upward exposing what appeared to be the skeletal workings of what was definitely a Vision Industries Android.

“Where's his skin?” Jerry asked with almost panic in his voice.

“He's dormant.” Kevin said through the speakers.

“Yup, until he is ready to be brought online his biological components aren't generated yet.” Marc said with his arms crossed looking over the body in the case

“Neat, I've never seen an android without his skin before. He looks kinda scary like this.” Jerry said as he risked a brief touch with the lifeless androids hand.

“He won't once we activate him. We're designed to regenerate cells just like a human with the only difference being that we can control the rate at which it happens. Activating an android puts them in an accelerated regeneration mode until the body is able to function normally, then the personality is brought online. All we have to do is give him the protein supplements he needs and implant his personality, he would do the rest.”

“Uncle Marc, how can we be sure this was built for me?” Kevin asked.

“Well, I'll call Jim in the morning and ask him what he thinks. There were lots of secrets kept back when Dr. Stafford was directing operations there so it would be hard to know for sure what his plans were for this one.” Marc answered watching Jerry nervously poke around at the contents of the case.

“Why not just ask him?” Jerry asked innocently. “Wouldn't he know why he was built?”

Just then Marc seemed to develop a slight grin as he patted Jerry on the head and ran out of the room.

“Did I say something wrong?” Jerry asked with a confused look on his face.

“I don't think so. By the look on his face you said something right.” I said as I moved back to my chair and sat down. “Kev, if this body turns out to be ok for you to use, do you think we should do it?”

“Unless you want me to stay in here forever, I really wanna try.” He answered causing me to smile.

“It would be nice to have you around again, sport, but it means that you may be stuck here just like I am...” I got out before the speakers cut me off.

“And never be alone again.” He said making me stop and realize that he was sure he wanted to go ahead.

”You're a genius Jerry.” Marc said as he ran back into the room with his arms loaded with what looked like cables and connectors similar to the ones Marc and I connect to each other with. “We'll ask him.” He repeated almost to himself as he rushed around the room. “Jerry's right.” Marc said as he tilted the table I originally woke in to an upright position. “Even without his body in a functional condition I can supply his brain with power and see any information that may be stored in it. If this body was designed

for Kevin then Dr. Strafford may have left instructions or something in his brain. It would be found eventually even if he wasn't around.”

“Then why wasn't it found before now?” I asked thinking to myself that it just didn't add up.

“Mostly because it was buried in a forgotten storage facility. No one went in there anymore and logs of its existence were missing, so it may have been put in there before Dr. Strafford was brought up on charges. I never tried to activate it cause Jim said he wanted to know what it was built for first. Well, we may know now.” He said as he approached the computer Kevin was speaking through. “Kevin, I need to terminate your connection to the computer so I can use it to access his brain.”

“Ok Uncle Marc. I'll just watch for now.” He said as I reached behind my head and disconnected the cable.

“Jerry, I'm going to need you to connect these cables to the computer while Danny and I move him out of the box and on to the table, ok?”

“Cool!” Jerry shouted as he set to work.

“Danny, can you help me get him on the table and strapped down?”

“No problem bro.” I replied as I reached in to grab the androids shoulders.

“It's ok to just grab him, you won't break anything.” Marc said probably noticing I was carefully trying to find a safe way to grab him since he had no outer covering.

After just a couple of minutes, everything was in place and Marc was satisfied with each connection Jerry had made to the computer. “Just like a pro.” He said and patted Jerry on the back causing Jerry to smile with some pride. “Now, let's give his brain some power and see if he'll talk to us.” Marc said as he typed furiously on the keyboard with us both watching over his shoulder.

The computer screen scrolled lots of information and suddenly went blank before displaying something that gave me a knot in my throat.

System Analysis: OK

Power cell: OK

Positronic Matrix: Stable

Model: Prototype – [K.E.V.I.N.] Kinetically Enhanced Virtual Interactive Neuro-image

Personality Imprint: Not found

System Ready For Activation

Marc blankly stared at the monitor for a few seconds before seeming to snap back to reality. “Well, I guess we know now.” He said as I turned and looked at the lifeless body on the table while Marc swung it to a horizontal position.

“He must have known that the idea would be shot down so, he hid the body in storage.” Marc stated as he returned to the computer and cancelled the activation sequence. “Or he just planned to be around for the day Kevin needed the body.”

“Marc, can Kevin use the computer again? He wants to be able to talk.” I relayed.

“Oh yeah, one sec and I'll have it ready.” Marc stated as he rolled the computer back over. “Plug in, it'll just be a second.”

Sitting back in the chair and connecting the communication cable, I stopped and noticed Jerry circling the dormant body. He didn't seem to be distressed or anything, just curious. “Hey Jerry.” I said getting his attention. “What's on your mind bud?”

“Well,” he began. “I was just thinkin. Since we know that this is gonna be Kevin now, he's gonna need skin and the rest of his inner stuff.” He said causing me to smile.

“Yup, he is.” I answered.

“Well, it would be faster if Marc had a Panda, but I don't see one.” He said, causing Marc to freeze and give Jerry his full attention.

“How do you know what a Panda is?” Marc asked, looking as if Jerry had just unlocked some android secret or something.

“What good would a Panda do?” I asked, now totally confused.

“Not a Panda Bear.” Jerry said with a giggle. “A.P.A.N.D.A.E. it means Android Positronic and Neurological Development Acceleration Environment. It's just easier to say panda.” He stated as if to say ‘Everyone knows that’.

Marc looked on in awe as Jerry explained the meaning of the device before completing the connection for Kevin and plopping down on the couch without saying a word.

“It looks like a big metal box with a window in the top.” Jerry said spreading his hands wide to emphasize the word big, “and it has a computer built into it so you can work on his brain and stuff while he grows all his human stuff and it even feeds him while he's in there. Stuff that looks like goop and tastes nasty but is good for him.” He continued as he sat back on the couch next to Marc. “I got to see one in school when we were learning all about robotics and artificial intelligence. They never showed us an android with no skin though.”

“Well, looks like I have an assistant then.” Marc said with a smile as he ruffled Jerry's hair. “I didn't know you knew that much about androids, and you're right about the Panda. I do have one but it's way too big for this room. I have another workshop in the basement, that's where the Panda is.” He stated, causing Jerry to smile wide. “Do you think you can help me prep and activate him in the morning?”

Jerry bolted up and dove into a hug with Marc. “Really? I can help? I'll do good, I promise!” He shouted.

“Awesome Jerry!” Kevin's voice echoed through the speakers. “That means you're gonna be family dude.”

Jerry stopped and stared at the computer and then at me. “Family? Really?”

“Yup.” Kevin answered. “You'll be like a parent, or even a brother cause you helped to bring me to life.”

“When can we start?” Jerry shot his gaze to me and then to Marc.

“Well, it's awful late now.” Marc answered. “How bout you go up and get rested. We'll move Kevin's body down and set up the Panda in the morning. Cool?”

“OK!” Jerry shouted as he jumped up and gave Marc and myself a bear hug before stopping in front of the computer and patting the monitor. “Night Kevin, I can't wait to see you face to face.”

“Night bro, I can't wait either.” Kevin replied being repaid by a huge smile from Jerry before literally running to his bedroom.

“You think he's a little excited?” I asked as I looked back at Marc with a smile.

“Can you believe how smart he is?” Marc asked sitting back into the couch. “That kid is gonna be a robotics professor or something when he grows up.”

“If he waits that long.” Kevin added giving Marc and myself a laugh.

“Well Kevin,” Marc started once silence settled over the room. “I know this is going really fast but, what do you think.

“I have a question.” He stated. “Is there any way I could be lost or anything?”

“Well, even though there is a risk that somehow information being transferred could be damaged. It is unlikely and easily fixed since we have everything we need to repeat what brought you to us in the first place. If something were to happen, I would simply re-imprint tech mode from my own brain into Danny's, and then we could reintegrate your scan like the first time. You may lose memories of everything that has happened up til now that way but you will still be here with us.”

The speakers remained silent for a few moments before Kevin broke the silence. “Ok, what do we have to do?”

“Well, Danny is gonna have to override your programming and shut you down. That way he can have his brain totally eliminate the changes made to his inactive tech mode. After he does that, I'll have the computer move you from his brain into the terminal and begin prepping you to function on your own. It just needs to complete the technical aspects your image that are missing.” Marc stopped and thought for a second before continuing. “There won't be any changes made to you, just that you depend on portions of Danny's programming to function right now and need to be independent.”

“I understand.” Kevin answered. “Will I feel any of this?”

“Nope. You will simply go to sleep tonight and wake up in your new body. From your perspective it'll probably seem like only a few moments will pass.” Marc said in reassurance.

“What will I have to do?” I asked trying to figure out how this was going to work.

”That's simple.” Marc replied. “You just need to manually shut down Kevin and send him to the computer. Then your programming will restore tech mode automatically. It's a safety measure that is built into your brain to protect primary programming.” Marc paused and then continued. “There is the possibility that your brain could restore tech mode thinking it is corrupt which would wipe out Kevin as he is now if you were to do a full system analysis. Overall, this is the safer way to go.”

“Uncle Marc, are you sure that body is gonna be ok?” Kevin asked with concern showing in his voice.

“I'll know during the activation sequence if anything is wrong. Don't worry. I've implanted images before. It's rare to have something go wrong.” Marc said as he motioned toward the door. “You two wanna do this tonight or wait on it?” Marc asked standing up.

“I think it should be up to Kevin. I mean it is his life we're talking about.” I said standing up and stretching.

The speakers remained silent for almost a minute before a nervous sounding voice came over the speakers and said, “Tonight. Let's do this tonight. I don't want to take the chance of anything going wrong.”

“Ok then, let's go get ready for bed and we will start the transfer. Danny, go ahead and disconnect. I'll bring the terminal in there.” Marc said as he walked over to the computer and patted the monitor as Jerry had earlier. “Don't worry bud, when this is all done I will be giving you a real hug, for the first time. I promise.”

“Ok Uncle Dan. I love you.” He said just before I unplugged the connection.

“I'll be there in a minute.” Marc stated as he began rolling up the cable. “You'll have enough time to go in and say goodnight to him if you want to. When you are finished, order your brain to shut down tech mode and package for transfer. I'll take care of the rest.” He said as I paused in the doorway. “Go ahead, the lights are on. I'll give you some time alone.” He added with a smile.

“Thanks Bro. For everything.” I said as I left the room and walked down the hall to the bedroom.

Once in the bedroom I quickly kicked off my shoes, pulled my shirt over my head and went into the bathroom to brush my teeth and empty my bladder. Kevin remained silent the whole time. Then once back in the bedroom, I stripped off my pants and socks and climbed into bed. “I'm coming in to say goodnight Kevin.” I said out loud and closed my eyes.

In the darkness, I looked around for a second before asking, “Where's my shadow?” before realizing he had control. A white light appeared in front of me and in the center was Kevin, looking just as he did when last we saw each other. With not a word spoken, he took my hand and led me to the spot he was standing in.

“It was kinda short notice that tonight was going to be the last I was gonna be here so I did what I could.” He said, as suddenly we appeared to be sitting in a car. It was totally dark but felt oddly familiar.

“Kev, is this...” I got out before he closed his eyes and the instrument panel lit up. I recognized instantly what he had done. “My Camaro?”

“Yup, I only had time to get the interior done but wanna finish it once I am on my own so we can go for a ride in her again someday.” He said as he looked out the window and it suddenly got light enough outside the car to be able to see the hood and nothingness in the rearview.

I looked around and realized he had thought of every detail. The small crack in the dash near the CD player, the key chain I had at the time, even the smell was perfect. “Wow, I don't even know what happened to this car.”

“Well, now we will have it forever.” He said as I reached over and ruffled his hair.

“Thanks Sport. Are you sure you want to go through with this?” I asked looking foreword and gripping the wheel. “I mean you haven't even been back for one whole day and already we are saying goodbye again.”

“Not goodbye.” He said with a smile as he stared into the nothingness in front of the car. “You never said goodbye when you dropped me off at my house, remember? You hated to say goodbye.” He said making me realize why he chose the car. “Remember when my family moved, and you drove like 45 minutes to come pick me up on weekends?”

“I'll never forget that. I hated when the weekend ended.” I said as I looked over at him and saw him unbuckle his seatbelt. “You used to take your time getting out of the car when we pulled up in front of your house. Every week would be the same.” I said thinking back and smiling once I noticed the house he lived in at the time faded into view on Kevin's side of the car. I just nodded my head knowing this was for him.

“I love you Uncle.” He said as he reached across the middle console and gave me a hug.

“Love you too Shadow. See you next week?” I said with a smile.

“Yup, I get to drive home next week, right?” He said with a smile, reviving an old memory that was perfect for the moment. I knew he was nervous but, he wasn't gonna give in to it.

“In your dreams buddy.” I said getting a giggle from him as he opened the door and climbed out. “Everything is gonna be fine, Marc is the best. Just keep that in mind ok?”

“I will.” He said with a smile and a tear in his eye as he walked up the walkway to the house. Just as in years past, he turned and waved as he reached the front door before going inside.

I turned and looked foreword as I said out loud, “Disable tech mode and package for transfer.” And then looked once more at the passenger seat before opening the door and climbing out.

When I opened my eyes I spotted Marc who had just finished making the connection to the computer and was getting undressed for bed.

“Everything go ok?” He asked as he finished and climbed into the bed next to me.

“Yeah, he was nervous but still came up with a special way to not say so.” I said getting a knowing nod from Marc. “So what do I have to do now?”

“Nothing. Just go to sleep. The computer is set up to wait until you are asleep before it retrieves the packaged program you left. Then it is going to help restore your tech mode and once again disable it so you will be back as you were before we activated Kevin.” He said as he laid down facing me with his head propped up on one arm. “Then tomorrow morning Jerry and I move Kevin's body into the Panda to start the regeneration process and integrate his personality.’

I rested my head back and realized that Marc must have plugged my end of the connection in while I was with Kevin and smiled. “Marc?”

“Yeah bro?”

I looked up at the ceiling knowing I was fairly confused about how this was all going to work still but trusted him whole heartedly. I just needed to put some worries to rest. “If that body is defective in some way, what will we do with Kevin's image?”

“We build him a new body.” He said with a smile. “Trust me, one way or another he will be stable and independent once we're done. Even if it means he doesn't look the way Dr. Strafford planned.”

“Hmmm.. I wonder if his body is designed to look as he did when he was alive.” I said, still looking at the ceiling.

“I'm sure it does. That would explain the need for the extremely detailed images he had on file.” Marc said while placing his hand on mine in reassurance. “Dan, I know you are worried and have a ton of questions. Just promise me you will trust me and let me do this for you. I promise that this will work and Kevin won't be harmed in any way. You guys are the only family I have and I don't plan to lose either of you now that you are here.” He said with a smile as I squeezed his hand. “Now, go to sleep and let's get Kevin ready to come out here in the real world.”

“What are we doing first in the morning?” I looked at him and asked.

“Well, Jerry and I have a full day planned. You will just have to find something to entertain yourself.” He said now putting his head on the pillow.

“I'm not helping?” I asked as I went to sit up but Marc's hand pushed me back down.

“You're emotionally attached.” He said in a soft tone. “I want the next time you see him to be a hello and a hug.”

“Oh, like you are so emotionless.” I replied with sarcasm in my tone.

“You and Kevin are human at heart, I’m not. He won’t be any less real to me just because I witness his activation procedure. To you, some of it may be a permanent reminder that he is a little less than real.” He continued, “Besides, if for some strange reason something should go wrong, you will respond with emotion and panic. That won’t help anyone.”

“I guess, but I can see him once in a while during the process, can’t I? I mean I have already seen his dormant body.” I said knowing even if he said no I would probably sneak down and peek anyway.

“Yeah, I guess it would be sorta like witnessing his birth in a way.” He said with a smile. “Ok, visits are cool, but no tampering with the master’s work, Deal?” He said with a giggle.

“Deal.”

“Now go to sleep or else the computer won’t have Kevin ready for us by morning.” He said as he pushed his head deeper into the pillow and wrapped his arm around me before saying, “Lights off” bringing the room into darkness.

“Marc?”

“Now what bro?” He giggled out.

“I love you.”

“Love you too.” He replied with a squeeze before adding, “Love ya even more if you closed your eyes and went to sleep though.”

“Yes sir.” I answered with a giggle and finally closed my eyes to slowly drift off.

“Danny! Danny! Get up!” Marc half whispered as he shook Danny’s arm.

“Wh-what? What’s wrong?” Danny stuttered out, not knowing who it was trying to wake him, or even who he was yet.

“Nothing’s wrong. You just gotta see this.” He replied excitedly as he dragged Danny out of the bed and to the workshop door. “Shhhh” he added before quietly turning the doorknob and tiptoeing in.

Danny followed Marc’s lead and silently tiptoed in before freezing in his tracks. On the workbench where Kevin’s dormant body was left for the night was Jerry, who had covered both up with a blanket he must have dragged down from his room before curling up into a ball with what was soon to be his new friend.

“Oh, how cute.” Danny said with a smile, still rubbing the sleep from his eyes getting a nod from Marc as his response. “We gotta save this and make a hard copy of it for Kevin when he’s with us again.”

The two brothers snuck back out of the room and quietly closed the door before smiling to each other and heading to the kitchen for their morning caffeine fix.

“Dan, I have a better idea.” Marc said as he began filling the coffee pot with water.

“Better? No way. Coffee. No substitutes, no experiments. Just coffee.” Danny said with mock sarcasm.

“I meant about the picture for Kevin you clown.” Marc answered with a giggle. “I wanna save portions of my memory of all this and give it to him in the form of a dream he will remember.” Marc said getting a smile and nod from his brother. “All the stuff he woulda missed like Jerry cuddling up with his body and the explanation we will probably get which has got to be good for a laugh, or a good ‘aw-wwww’ at least. He can't miss all this.”

“That's an awesome idea. I think your gonna be good at this uncle stuff.” Dan replied with a smile as he peeked over hoping the coffee was finished. “I know he will appreciate it, big time.”

“Well, we have a full day planned. I hope Jerry's up for it.” Marc said just as the door to the lab opened and Jerry shuffled over to the table.

“We didn't wake you, did we kidoe?” Danny asked ruffling Jerry's already ruffled hair.

“Nah.” He replied with morning hoarseness to his voice. “I had to pee.” He said with a grin as he went into the bathroom as Marc got up from his chair.

“You want cereal or something buddy?” he asked through the closed door.

“Just orange juice please.” He replied. “I don't really like having breakfast.”

“Ok, one O.J. coming up.” He answered and went right to getting it for him.

One flush later, Jerry came out looking as if morning just was not his time of day. “Thanks.” He said sitting down and taking a large gulp from the glass Marc had laid out for him. “So when do we start on Kevin?”

Marc grinned and looked at each person at the table before sipping his coffee and saying, “Well, after we all shower and get dressed. I don't think it's a good idea to create a new life in just our underwear and stinking.” He said getting a giggle from Jerry.

“So what are my plans for the day?” Danny asked knowing he had been banished from being involved.

“Well.” Marc started. “You can watch tv, read a book, mess with my computer, build a new addition on the house.” He said with a laugh getting a raised eyebrow as an answer from his brother. “Whatever you want. I mean you can check in on us and stuff; I just don't think it's a good idea for you to have to work on something like this. Kevin's in good hands, I promise.”

“I know he is bro. I guess I'm just excited. I mean I'd like to help, but really don't know how to be a help.” He said sipping his coffee. “I mean I've never built an android before.”

"I've built one or two." Marc said with a grin. "Besides, I got Jerry to make sure I don't forget anything." he said, getting an ear-to-ear smile from Jerry. "How'd you sleep last night buddy?" Marc turned to Jerry and asked with an evil smile.

"I couldn't sleep. I was busy thinkin about Kevin and stuff." He said beginning to blush. "I came down with my blanket and stuff and talked to him for a while til I was tired."

"How'd you end up sleeping with him?" Danny asked getting Jerry to turn a brighter shade of red.

"He was cold." He answered simply and guzzled the rest of his glass of juice. "I'm gonna go take my shower and get dressed so we can start." He said quickly to end the embarrassment and rushed out of the room.

"He's so cute." Marc said watching him bolt out of the discussion. "I can't wait to see just how much he really knows. I had no idea they were teaching kids this stuff still."

"He really is into it too." Danny said standing up to pour another cup. "I guess I'll play around with the computer for a while today. It's been years since I've even seen the Internet so I'm sure there's tons of new stuff I can learn."

"Cool." Marc said getting up to put his cup in the sink. "If you wanna learn some history on Vision Industries or even some of my past, there's a link to a folder called 'Personal' on the desktop. There's a ton of stuff in there that you definitely haven't seen, or even know about."

"Nah, I don't wanna go poking through your personal stuff. I'll just see what I can find on the web." Danny said taking a sip from his coffee as Marc walked past and put his hand on Danny's shoulder.

"Bro, look through it. I'm an android, to you it may personal but to me it's just documenting events and stuff. My past doesn't need to be a mystery to you." He said giving a Danny's shoulder a squeeze before heading towards the bedroom. "Dibs on the shower!" He yelled back to the kitchen.

"No argument here!" Danny answered as he looked at the coffee maker. "I'll be out here working on draining the coffee pot."

"Oh by the way," Marc shouted from the bedroom door. "If line two on the phones should happen to ring, go ahead and answer but you gotta say 'Vision Industries, how may I direct your call?' and then put it on hold and get me."

"Vision Industries? Why are you still getting calls for that place?" Danny shouted back totally confused.

"I'll explain later!" He yelled and vanished into the bedroom.

Two cups of coffee later, Jerry shot into the kitchen freshly showered and dressed looking as if he was ready to take on the world.

"Where's Marc?"

“In the shower. I guess he plans on getting started as soon as he gets out.” Danny answered with a smile.

Jerry pulled out a chair and sat down looking deep in thought. “Danny. Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure sport. What's up?”

“How old is Kevin gonna be?”

Danny emptied his cup and sat back in his chair, turning to directly face Jerry. “Well, since he is designed very much like Marc and I, I'd have to say 13.” He replied studying Jerry's facial expression. “Why? Something bugging ya?”

“Well, I was thinking about what Kevin said about me being like a brother or uncle or something.” He said looking as if he was still deep in thought. “I kinda want him to be my brother.”

“You know, I bet he'd like that.” Danny said with a smile.

“Do you think my mom would be upset?” Jerry asked, finally looking at Danny.

Danny laughed and asked, “Why would she be upset? I would think she would be proud of her son for helping to create another life.”

Jerry looked back down at the table. Danny wasn't sure but he could have sworn he saw a tear run down Jerry's cheek as he looked away. “I had a brother.” Jerry muttered in a barely audible tone. “He's gone now though.”

Danny could hear the pain in his voice and decided it best to just let Jerry say what he wanted, however he wanted. “Wanna talk about it? It's cool if not but I'm here for ya if you need me to be.”

“Thanks.” Jerry said with a sniffle. “I don't wanna sound like a baby.”

“Never.” Danny said resting his elbows on the table. “It hurts to lose someone you love. My whole family except for you guys are gone now and even though many years have passed that hurt never goes away. I've cried myself to sleep quite a few times thinking about them.” Danny said waiting for Jerry to look up at him. “So if your gonna worry about sounding like a baby, just remember one thing. I'm about to become your uncle since I'm already Kevin's. That means I'm not only gonna be here for you no matter what but, I also understand how you are feeling and would never think you were a baby because you love your brother.”

Jerry nodded his head and gave Danny a weak smile. “When I got to bed last night, all I could think about was Kevin. He said I would be like a brother.” Jerry said as Danny silently listened. “Davie was my best friend. I was 6 when my mom and dad adopted him. My mom couldn't have any more kids after I was born and Davie was my dad's best friend's son.” Jerry continued, “His dad died and he had no other family so, he came and lived with us. I even asked him to be my brother and my mom heard me and asked my dad about adopting him. I was only 6 and he was 10.”

Danny got up and poured himself a cup of coffee and Jerry a glass of orange juice. Jerry just watched as the android never even asked if he would like another glass but smiled encouragingly as he set the glass on the table before sitting back down. Not a word spoken.

“Thanks.” Jerry said as he took a sip and continued, “Just after I turned 8 Davie left the house one night to go out with his friends. Before he left he promised me the next day we were gonna go to the park and play catch. I was all excited and even got both of our gloves and a ball out and put them on the desk in our room so he wouldn't forget his promise.” Jerry became silent and Danny could see tears welling up in his eyes. “He never came home.” Jerry said and took a huge gulp from his glass as he tried as hard as he could to keep himself from crying.

Danny got up and walked around behind Jerry's chair and wrapped his arms around him. “You don't need to go any further sport.” Danny said as Jerry grabbed Danny's arms and squeezed the hug tighter.

“No I wanna.” Jerry said with a broken voice. “Davie was missing for days before the police called and said they found him.” He said before losing control as he openly began to cry.

Just then Marc came down the hall into the kitchen and froze in his tracks. “What's wrong?” Marc asked as he approached the table.

Danny looked up and just mouthed the words “I'll tell you later.” As he squeezed Jerry to reassure him that he was still there.

Jerry wiped the tears from his eyes and somehow got the crying under control as he looked at Marc and said, “I was tellin Danny about my brother.” he said; causing Marc's face to drop. Jerry just lost control and began to cry harder

Danny walked around to face Jerry and lifted him into his arms and sat in the seat to just hold and rock him as he looked at his brother.

“Jim told me about that.” Marc said shaking his head.

Danny continued to rock Jerry as he looked at Marc squinting his eyes and asked, “What happened?”

“Jerry, would you like me to tell him?”

Jerry seemed to calm down a bit and simply nodded his head before burying his face in the nape of Danny's neck.

“Just before the Owens family moved in next door, Jerry's older brother David was abducted by some guy who was responsible for quite a few missing kids it turns out he, um...” Marc stuttered out before Jerry cut in.

“He did nasty sex stuff to him and then beat him with a board until he died.” Jerry practically spit out and began to cry harder into Danny's neck.

“Jim said he was found in a park near the school he went to.” Marc added before getting a concerned look on his face. “What brought this up?” He asked.

“Jerry was upset cause Kevin told him he would be like a brother to him cause he was helping to bring him back.” He answered. “He's afraid that if he is gonna be a big brother his mom might be upset.”

“And my dad...” Jerry got out between sobs. “They'll be mad at me for trying to replace him and what if Davie can see me somehow? He'll think I don't love him anymore.” He cried as Danny and Marc sat silently looking to each other, both at a total loss for words.

Danny shifted Jerry in his lap so they were eye to eye. “Jerry, I'm sure Davie is watching over you. I'd be willing to bet that he knows how much you love and miss him.” He said gaining Jerry's attention and calming him some. “When Davie was with you, he looked out for you and protected you like a real big brother. Now he can't do that anymore like he used to and I'm sure that upsets him. For all we know, he may have had something to do with your family moving to North Carolina.”

Jerry's sobs finally subsided and he looked deep into Danny's eyes with a confused look. “We moved to get away from where it happened.”

“What made your parents choose Sullivan's Island?” Danny asked making Jerry think a bit more. “For all we know, he may have known you would find someone out here to look after you for him.” Danny stated making Marc nod his head and smile warmly. “You seem to be really taken by Kevin which will make him happier than he's been in a long time. He said what he said because he really likes you too and would be honored to become a part of this whole family. He may not be Davie but knowing him the way I do, I know he would swear to watch out for you and be a brother to both you and Davie whether he is here or not. I know he would never wish to replace someone you love and would agree with me that he is still with you, now and forever. None of us would ever want to see that change just because we are now a part of your life.” Danny finished now seeing a smile creep across Jerry's tear stained face.

“You really think Davie still watches out for me? He can do that?” Jerry asked wiping the tears from his eyes.

“I really think so.” Danny said ruffling his hair.

“Do you think he knows I still have the ball and the two gloves on my desk?” Jerry asked looking a little embarrassed. “I always kinda thought if I never put them away that someday he would come home and play catch with me.” Jerry shifted and stood up while drying the tears with the backs of his hands. “He won't think I'm a baby, will he?”

“I know if I were him I wouldn't.” Marc said standing up from his seat. “As a matter of fact, I bet that if he didn't know how much you miss him, those gloves would tell him loud and clear.” Marc said putting his arm around Jerry.

“I never thought of that.” Jerry said smiling up at Marc. “So you guys are gonna be my uncles?”

“If you'll have us.” Danny said taking a sip from his coffee. “Just remember in a few years it may get kinda weird for you cause you will get older, we can't.” He said with a giggle.

“Marc? Can we start now?” Jerry asked with a renewed smile on his face. “You guys can't be my uncles if we don't build a body for my other brother and make it official.” He said half pulling Marc toward the lab door.

“We'll be in the basement if you need us Dan.” Marc said with an ear-to-ear smile. “You can come down but you aren't allowed to help.” He added with a giggle.

“Thanks bro. I'll hang up here like we talked about. Maybe I'll check in on you later on.” He answered still holding his coffee as a sign that he still wanted his caffeine fix.

“Ok.” Marc said closing the door behind him, leaving Danny on his own.

Not really sure of what he should do next, Danny finished his coffee and placed the empty glasses in the sink. *'I'll clean those up later.'* He thought before wandering into Marc's bedroom to shower and get dressed. While gathering a change of clothes he looked at Marc's computer and decided that he would take his brother up on his offer and see if he could waste some time on the internet. “Haven't done that in years.” He said out loud as he entered the bathroom. “Thanks for leaving the lights on.” He giggled remembering that he couldn't turn them on himself.

“Ok, gently set him into the unit.” Marc said to Jerry as the two cautiously set the androids form into the large box shaped Panda unit.

“He's heavy.” Jerry said with a sigh. As he watched Marc roll the form over on its side to begin making the physical connections.

“They feel heavier than they really are when they are deactivated.” Marc said with a smile. “Hey, do you know what any of these connections are for?”

Jerry leaned in closer and seemed to develop a huge smile as he began to point at each. “That's the up-link port, that's a nutrient feeder, and those two are gonna be used as life support and biomechanical monitoring.” He said getting a surprised and impressed look from Marc.

“Wow, you really do know your stuff.” He said standing up. “Why don't you prep him then and I'll bring the unit online and get it ready.”

“You want me to prep him? Really!?!?” Jerry almost shouted in excitement. “I never got to do this on my own before. This is so cool!” he shouted again and got right to his work with Marc looking over his shoulder until he was convinced Jerry really did know what he was doing.

Walking around to the control panel Marc busied himself while carrying on with the conversation. “How many times have you seen this done?”

“Twice, I saw a film on it while we were in the exploration camp and one time we got to be there when a unit was set up in our school. It was a smaller Panda and it was only meant for organ reproduction.” Jerry answered not once looking away from his work. “I've studied biomechanical engineering, cyber-

netics and Neuroimaging systems since I was 9.” He stated like a pro. “My teachers thought I wouldn't be able to handle the classes but, I worked real hard and got A's in them all.” he stated with pride.

Marc continued typing away on the unit's console nodding his head and smiling. “Not bad. Most people don't grasp the theories until they are well out of college and even then most don't make it in this field.”

Jerry just smiled in response, not diverting his attention from his work. “Are you ready for a power test? His uplink is ready.” Jerry said with an ear-to-ear grin.

“Already?” Marc rushed to catch up. “Commencing primary power test, stay clear.” Marc said before entering the commands into the computer causing the androids body to flinch then once again lay lifeless. “Looks good buddy.” Marc said before powering down. “What do you have left?”

“I gotta get the feeder connected but it looks like it's leaking, could you check it for me?” Jerry asked looking at his hands as if they were covered with toxic waste. “This stuff is nasty!” He added with a scowl.

“That happens sometimes, there should be replacements in the storage compartment at the foot of the unit.” Marc said as he began to bring the unit's systems online.

Jerry got right to work like a seasoned pro replacing the malfunctioning connector and making the final connections. “Ok Marc.” Jerry said with a huge smile. “I think everything is ready to go here.” He continued double-checking his work.

Marc left the console and looked over Jerry's shoulder verifying that everything was as it should be before helping to roll the form onto it's back. “Awesome work dude.” He said raising his hand in the air getting a High Five from his new assistant. “The Panda is running a self diagnostic now. Let's lock down the regeneration chamber and see if we can get this going.” Marc added as the two raised the side panel and locked it into place.

Jerry stood over the unit looking at the lifeless android before leaning over and placing a kiss on his forehead. “I'll be right here waiting for you bro.” Jerry half mumbled before swinging the door to it's closed position and engaging the three locks that seal the unit while it is in use.

Marc stood and watched the care Jerry took in each and every procedure he performed. All completed flawlessly and double checked before Jerry would be satisfied enough to tell Marc he was ready. After giving it some thought, Marc motioned to Jerry to take over the console and start the activation process. “All yours buddy.” he said getting a horrified look from Jerry.

“Y-y-you want me to run the activation sequence?” Jerry managed to stutter out.

“You know how to, right?” Marc asked folding his arms with an almost evil grin creeping across his face. “If you're gonna bring him home to us, then I think you should have the honors.”

Jerry blankly stared at Marc, frozen like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car before nodding his head and slowly approaching the console. Marc pulled up a folding chair and sat and watched as Jerry began the startup checklist, recording every last second for Kevin to remember.

Jerry cleared his throat as he looked over the systems display.

“Oh boy, System Diagnostic complete.” he said as he punched in the command for the detailed report and began reading them off;

“System power at 100%.

Communications uplink enabled and functioning.

Life support, Ready and Standing by.

Initiating environment sterilization, Um...”

Marc grinned knowing this was going to happen. “What's wrong buddy?” He asked containing a giggle.

“I don't have the authorization code to begin the startup sequence.” He said looking at Marc.

“Oh yeah.” Marc said with a smile before pulling what looked like a security card and slip of paper from his pants pocket. “I suppose you would need security clearance.” He said with a giggle handing the two to Jerry.

Jerry looked over the card and paper before looking at Marc with a lost expression on his face. “I have priority one security clearance? Are you serious?” he asked finally causing Marc to burst out in laughter.

“Well, yeah. You are active in the system and on staff now doctor. You need priority one clearance to perform your duties.” He said before finally taking on a serious tone and adding, “I believe the system is waiting for your identification doctor.”

Jerry looked at the name on his security clearance card and read it out loud. “Vision Industries, Inc. Dr. Jerald Owens, BMD. PC.” He visibly refocused his eyes before looking back at Marc. “Is this for real?”

“Yes it is, I entered you into the entire system after I saw what an amazing job you were doing prepping Kevin. Now, would you care to continue?” he added once again breaking out in fits of giggles.

Jerry scowled at Marc before reading his clearance code and committing it to memory before continuing his work at the console.

“Proceeding with activation sequence.” He said with nervousness in his voice. “Initiating environment sterilization, Authorization, Kevin-One-Zero-Alpha. Personal Identification , Jerald Owens.”

Just then the system's panel came to life and displayed ‘Authorization; Jerald Owens, Accepted. Startup sequence commencing.’

Jerry watched through the window on the cover of the unit as a blue light seemed to glow and the compartment seemed to be filling with a sort of fog created by the environmental control. Once the fog

seemed to settle, a hiss was heard as the Panda vented the excess gas and hummed to life. "Sterilization complete." He beamed with pride as the Panda automatically performed the final preparations and reported its progress with each phase. "Final system test complete, all systems online and functioning." He said with a smile as Marc nodded his head encouragingly. "Activation sequence complete, regeneration in progress." He said as he thrust his fist in the air in excitement. "I did it!!!"

Marc smiled as Jerry left the console and peeked through the window at the androids body through the fine mist. "Only thing left to do now is upload his personality imprint and wait for his biomechanical systems to come online." Marc said as he stood up and joined Jerry beside the unit. "Give him until tomorrow before we upload to his positronic matrix."

Jerry only nodded his head before looking at Marc and smiling. "Can I help with that too? I've designed an imprint before but never implanted one."

"You've designed a personality imprint?" Marc asked with surprise.

"Yeah, in my second year in Bio this past summer. We were allowed to create a personality imprint. It was fun." Jerry answered with a smile.

Marc scratched his head still trying to digest what Jerry had just said. "Did it work?"

"In simulation it did but I never implanted it into a real positronic matrix before." He answered while grabbing the chair Marc was sitting in, spinning it around and sitting down leaning forward into the backrest.

"That must have taken forever to create." Marc stated almost as a question.

"The whole semester." Jerry said with a smile. "I got an A+ on his design and even won a Biomechanical Achievement award with him." Jerry looked at the Panda again and continued, "Now that I know I can do it, maybe someday I'll try to build a body for him and see how he works."

Marc tilted his head, obviously deep in thought. "You know, if you wanted something to pass the time while waiting for Kevin, you could use the lab and piece together a functional body from the Cynthetilife parts. There's more than enough parts to complete it here."

Jerry looked thoughtful for a moment before seeming to deflate a bit. "Nah, his imprint won't work on a Cynthetilife brain. They aren't designed to function like your brain and would eventually wipe itself out and destroy my implanted image."

Marc once again began to smile. "One second." He said as he rushed over to something that appeared to be a safe mounted in the wall. After typing in the access code on it's panel and swinging the door open, he retrieved a metal box with another keypad built onto it and brought it to Jerry placing it in his hands. "It would work with this." He said as he typed an access code into the pad and the box spring open displaying a positronic brain. "That one is clean and will work in any environment, Cynthetilife or not."

"Are you serious?" Jerry said in awe as he stared at the brain. "These are impossible to get, I can't use this for my project, what if you need it?"

“I have a few of them stored.” He said waving it off as if it was no big deal. “Since you are now on staff, you are authorized to make use of the available materials to continue your work Doctor Owens.” He added, watching as Jerry looked completely lost. “Do you still have the imprint or does it need to be retrieved from your school?”

“Huh? Oh no, I have it at home. I work on it and run simulations on it there. Should I go get it?” Jerry asked carefully placing the box in the chair.

“If you think you want to try, the facilities are at your disposal.” He added in a mock professional tone before giggling. “Go get it, I’ll open the store room for you so you can choose the parts you would like to use on your own and make him unique.”

Jerry almost tackled Marc with a hug and then bolted for the stairs. “I’ll be right back! This is gonna be awesome!”

Upstairs, Danny was just finishing up on the computer before deciding to make lunch and bring it down to have an opportunity to peek in at the progress being made with Kevin. On his way to the kitchen the basement door swung open and Jerry crashed right into him knocking them both into the hallway wall.

“Whoah dude, what’s your rush?” He asked as he now had an armful of excited kid.

“I’m gonna build an android!” Jerry said hugging Danny before bolting off once again for the door. “I’ll be right back!”

Danny just stood and watched Jerry run off as Marc came up the stairs and closed the door.

“Did a streak resembling Jerry pass through here?” he asked with a giggle.

“Yeah, I take it things went well down there.” Danny answered with a smile. “What’s this about Jerry building an android?”

Marc smiled and took Danny’s hand and let him toward the kitchen. Marc updated Danny on all the events that happened and then filled him in on Jerry’s project personality imprint and their plans to test it out.

“Another android? Is that a good idea?” Danny asked preparing to make sandwiches for lunch as Marc sat at the table and watched.

“Why not? That kid is destined to work in this field. He did all the work down there on Kevin with very little help. He designed the imprint on his own as a school project so it seems only right that he should have the opportunity to test it outside of a computer simulation.” He stated as Danny laughed and shook his head. “Would be a waste if he never got to.” He added.

“Ur nuts.” Danny said getting a huge smile from his brother.

“Runs in the family I guess.” Marc quipped as he thumbed his nose at his brother just in time to see Jerry walk in with a cardboard box and an ear-to-ear grin. “Whatcha got there?”

“I got all my papers on his personality, his imprint and the notes from all the upgrades I did and what modifications I would need to make so he will work in a real environment.” He said as Marc grabbed a rather thick report off the top of the box and looked it over.

“A+, nice work!” Marc exclaimed showing the cover to Danny who nodded his head with an impressed expression as he opened it and grinned as he read out loud, “Project J.O.E.Y.” You named him already?

Jerry looked at him with a grin. “Well, yeah. Ur supposed to name your projects. His name does mean something but it's kinda stupid. I may have you help me come up with a real name for him.” He said beginning to blush.

“What does Joey stand for?” Danny asked causing Jerry to turn a deeper shade of red.

“It's dumb, I made it up from the report title.” Jerry answered looking at the floor.

“Marc flipped past the cover and introduction before reading aloud, “Jerry Owens, Experimental imprint, Year 2. J-O-E-Y, I like it.” Marc said as Danny shook his head in agreement.

“You do? I thought the name was kinda dumb.” He said looking back and forth between the two.

Marc ruffled Jerry's hair as he placed the report back on the box. “It stands for what he is. I think it's perfect.” He said being rewarded by a smile from Jerry. “Let's have lunch and I'll show you what you have to work with for parts down there.”

The three sat down as Danny served up tuna salad sandwiched and soda, which vanished in almost no time. “Guess you two were hungry.” Danny said as he took the plate to the sink.

“Yeah, I was starved!” Jerry exclaimed as he jumped from his seat and grabbed his box. “I'm ready.”

Danny laughed as Marc got up from his seat and sighed as if overworked.

“Have fun you two!” Danny shouted with a laugh as they vanished into the basement.

Danny spent a few minutes cleaning the lunch dishes and the mugs from earlier in the day before plopping down in the living room and switching on the television.

“Wow.” Danny said out loud as he watched the tail end of a commercial regarding “Off Planet Vacations” as the perfect getaway. “I guess I really am behind the times.” He added as he flipped through the channels settling for cartoons.

Downstairs Marc sat and watched as Jerry began to pick through the android storeroom. Looking at each part and either nodding his head in disagreement or approval and putting them aside. Once he was

convinced he had enough to start with, Marc rolled a terminal over toward the workbench closest to the Panda, he helped Jerry move the body parts that were selected to the table.

“Should be enough to get you started.” Marc said as Jerry examined each item. “Are you sure you want to create such a young model?”

Jerry looked at Marc with a grin and answered “Well he's gonna be learning allot. I thought he should be younger than the rest of you.” He said as he began laying the new androids parts out on the table in the order he intended to assemble. “I want him to be little.”

“Ok but remember, Cynthetilife only produced a limited amount of pre-teen models so we are limited when it comes to replacement parts for him.” Marc stated grinning that it was probably fitting that Jerry chose the ‘8 year old model’ since his programming is basic and his size will make it easier for Jerry to move him around on his own. “I suppose we can fabricate parts if we really need to.” He added.

Jerry began to busy himself assembling the components when he looked at Marc and asked, “Why did they make such a young model anyway?”

Marc pulled up a seat and thought for a moment before answering. “Well, they had both good and bad reasons I guess. The good was for people who may have lost a child. They were offered the 8 year old, with the option to upgrade as time went on. This would give the child the appearance of growing older while at the same time the programming would only allow him to learn just enough to act as expected. They were always mechanical enough to not be taken seriously because once they began to learn more, their brain would wipe out non-permanent memories and knowledge. That's one of the reasons people began to throw them out. They stood out way too much and never showed real emotion, cause they were never allowed to develop emotion just emulate it.” He said shaking his head in disgust.

“What were the bad reasons?” Jerry asked innocently.

“Well, Cynthetilife had no problems with being dishonest to earn money. Some of the younger androids were sold off and used to work the streets in place of real kids. There was even an infant model that was originally intended to be used in parenting classes or even as a first stage to their ‘Growing Up’ package but, they even fell into the wrong hands and were also sold to people with less than nice ideas for them. Some were even used to trick people into paying money for what they thought was a real baby. It was just sick and Cynthetilife couldn't have cared less.” Marc said causing Jerry to stop what he was doing and look up with a horrified expression on his face. “Vision Industries even intended to break into the market by selling young androids that were locked to a certain age. They had androids that would appear to naturally age but, that idea failed since the body of an android would age to a point that they, well... Their bodies would literally come apart but they would still function normally. Besides, androids that were designed as companions sold better if they never changed in appearance.”

“I won't let any of that happen to Joey.” He said looking the parts over before continuing his assembly.

“I know you won't buddy, but because of what was done with them, I just wanted to be sure you knew that we don't have that many parts to use as replacements. Honestly, considering he will be a brand new program it does kinda fit that he's gonna look younger.” He added getting the smile he wanted from Jerry. “You gonna be ok doing this on your own?”

“Oh yeah.” Jerry said not even breaking his concentration. “We got to do this in school plenty of times. I got the fastest assembly times in class.” He seemed to beam with his announcement. “You gotta learn to put them together right before you can move up to I.A. programming in school.”

“Awesome!” Marc exclaimed. “I’ll be upstairs with Danny for a while then. Could you keep an eye on Kevin while you’re down here? The first 24 hours is the most important.”

Jerry grinned and finally broke his concentration to give Marc a serious look and say “Sure thing Doctor Marc.” Which got a giggle from both.

Upstairs, Danny was beginning to get extremely bored with the tv and decided it was definitely time to find something to do. “I can’t help down stairs. I could go back on the computer and see if anyone replied to my message in that reader’s forum I found. That would use up some time.” He mumbled while turning off the tv.

“Hey bro, whatcha up to?” Marc said enthusiastically on his way in the room, shocking Danny.

“God dude, how long you been standing there?” He said as he began to laugh.

“Long enough to know you’re starting to talk to yourself, not a good sign.” He said with a giggle.

“Yeah.” Danny answered with a shrug. “I’m already getting bored and running out of things to do.”

“Where’s the addition you were supposed to add?”

“Oh yeah, I added a second floor. My bill will be in the mail tomorrow.” He said with an evil grin.

“We already had a second floor.” Marc answered tilting his head. “I’m gettin ripped off here.

“Take it up with my union.” Danny said throwing his hands in the air in mock disgust earning more giggles from Marc.

“You wanna see your bedroom?” Marc asked thinking that may occupy his brother for a while.

“Sure, I’ve been kinda curious about what plans you had for it, let’s go.” He answered walking to the staircase. “Oh yeah, I tossed in a flight of stairs, no charge.” He added breaking into a run up to the second floor.

“Clown!” Marc yelled and gave chase ending in the upstairs hallway. “Ok, you’ve already seen Jerry’s room, the door directly across the hall is Jim’s room.” He said opening the door. “As you can see, he’s rarely ever home.” He added in his best tour guide voice, pointing out the fact that the room literally looked like a hotel room that hadn’t been used yet. He closed the door and giggled as he led the way down the fairly narrow hallway. “Please note the linen closet to your left and light switches at both ends of the hallway, installed for your convenience.”

“You’ve lost it.” Danny snuck in dodging a playful slap.

“Ok, before we go in here I gotta warn you.” He said blocking the doorway. “It’s not finished yet and I did something kinda sneaky to get some of the stuff in there.”

“Sneaky? Oh god, should I be scared?”

“No, but you will be surprised at some of it.” He said while unlocking the door. “High security.” He said with a giggle dangling the single key on its chain.

Marc opened the door and entered with Danny trailing behind him. Once in the room marc just watched as Danny's expression suddenly changed from curiosity to visible astonishment.

“Oh my god dude, That's my bed... My desk... How did you get this stuff? It all came from my apartment.” Danny gasped out as he looked around at the furnishings, which he hadn't seen in years.

“It wasn't easy. After Daniel Page passed away. Vision Industries took temporary possession of all his belongings, as stated in the agreement Kevin made. Well, your family was going to take possession but when they learned what had been done, they wanted nothing to do with any of it. V.I. put it all in storage, the same storage facility we found Kevin's android body in.” He said as they both sat on the bed. “You knew your family was angry about you being brought back but, what you never knew was that they refused to claim your possessions since they looked at your being activated as you not being gone, which is kinda right.”

“Did Kevin know that all this stuff was in storage?” Danny asked wondering why it was never offered back to him.

“No, unfortunately it all turned into a paperwork nightmare because you legally left all of your belongings to your family but, your family wouldn't take possession of it. V.I. didn't have the authority to do anything with any of it so, they decided to temporarily house all of it hoping your family would give them permission to either let them handle what to do with it all with you, or have you legally petition for it.”

“I would have had to petition for my own stuff? That's messed up.” Danny said as he scanned the room again. “This is my entire apartment, well most of it, dude this room is huge.”

“Yeah, took me a year to get it done. It's actually two rooms opened up into a studio apartment. I wanted to be able to give you your own place if we ever found you. It has it's own bathroom, kitchen and deck that overlooks the bay. Everything here came from your old home except the computer terminals. One is a Vision Industries terminal giving you access to the company's files and any work you would like to do. The other is a standard personal computer. Your old one is stored here but, way too old to use now. I did transfer all your personal files into it though.” He said obviously studying his brother's face for a reaction. “You aren't mad that I did this, are you?”

Danny stood up and walked around the room. “My stuff. You know I never dreamed that I would ever see any of it again. Never even gave it a second thought.” He added, picking up and looking at a small toy car that was placed on a shelf over the work area. “Kevin found this for me. It was a replica of a car I used to own. He found it one day and saved up his money to buy it for me when he was 12.” Danny said now fighting back tears. “How could I be mad at you? You just gave me back a part of my life I thought was gone forever.”

Marc looked around the room with a smile before standing up and walking over to the large picture window, which overlooked the private deck and gave a beautiful view of the bay. "Danny, come here." He said staring out over the calm water. "Something I want you to know." He added as Danny walked over and stared at the scenery in awe. "When Uncle John and I lived here together in the old house, this view could be had from his bedroom. Even if you were in bed you could watch as fishing boats slowly went past. I did plan originally to recreate his bedroom and keep it for myself until I tried sleeping in here." He said as he looked at Danny. "I couldn't sleep that night."

"Too much of a reminder?" Danny asked reaching his arm around Marc's back and placing his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Yeah." He replied. "I sat up all night remembering sleeping in here and watching the boats sail past. Just how much it meant to John that this view was ours and ours alone." He said as he quickly added. "So before you ask me why I decided this should be your room I wanted you to know that this view was never just mine. I never want it to be just mine cause then it wouldn't mean as much as it does right now or did then."

"Would you sleep up here tonight?" Danny asked, wanting to sleep in his old bed but, not really wanting to sleep alone yet.

"On one condition." Marc said with a grin.

"Name it." Danny answered tightening his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"I get the side of the bed closest to the window." He giggled out breaking Danny's hold; knowing he was probably about to get swatted.

"That's not fair, you play dirty!" Danny shouted as he broke out in laughter before letting the scenery outside capture his attention once again. "The view is unbelievable."

Marc plopped back down on the bed and propped his head up with his hands. "Yeah, that's why the bed is raised up on a platform, higher than the rest of the room, Uncle John had his bed set up that way too." He said rolling on to his back and staring at the ceiling. This room is bigger than the original but in a lot of ways is real close to the original." He said as he pointed at the lights. "These you can turn on yourself."

"Great, so I won't have to come searching for you late at night?"

"Nope, at least not the nights I sleep over." He said with a giggle.

Danny crossed his arms and turned to look at the entire room and then settle his attention on his brother. "This may sound kinda rude but how is all this paid for I mean do we need to find a way to get work or something cause none of this comes for free."

Marc patted the bed indicating to Danny that he wanted him to sit down. "I am the sole owner of Vision Industries, Inc. now that you are here half owner." He said with a smile. "The company shut its doors and ceased operations but, from a legal standpoint it is still in operation for technical aid and emergency assistance."

“That can't be making any money though.” Danny said laying back on the bed.

“Dan, V.I. was a multi-billion dollar company in the end. To make a long story short, the company was turned over to me as part owner after its retail closing to continue to run. I accepted the responsibility knowing that it would help me financially and I would also have possession of the equipment needed to help other androids, and even then hoping one of those would someday be you.” Marc stated rolling over onto his side to face Danny. “The financial status of the company was turned over to me completely to run as a non-profit organization, which is also partially funded by the government. Not to mention the trust fund that was put aside for the company's prototypes.”

“Trust fund? What's that all about?”

“Well, a percentage of the company's gains were placed in a trust fund for each of the models that were not terminated. Eddy, the man who had me designed for my first father fought to have money put aside for the active prototypes since they were never really sold. It was intended to be their way of saying thank-you for helping to bring their company so much success and to help should the need arise to survive on their own.” He said with a grin. “You may not know it yet, but you are a pretty wealthy 13 year old.”

Danny tilted his head and stared at Marc blankly. “I thought I had nothing.”

Marc stared at Danny silently knowing the lost expression on his face all too well. “You have Kevin, Jerry and me. You have a home here for as long as you can put up with me and, yeah, you have a couple of bucks in the bank. Not to mention you are half owner of the company that created you and I which makes us very little money in grants but is enough to keep it functioning.”

Danny sat up and looked around the room once again before shaking his head. “Too much.” He said as he stood and walked over to look out the window again. “Would we have enough money to build a house?” he asked hearing a giggle being stifled from behind him.

“You alone, might be able to build a neighborhood and still not worry about where your next meal is coming from if you are trying to figure out the scope of how much was put aside and what interest has built over the years.” He said not moving from his spot.

“No, I mean, yeah I guess. Well what I was really wondering was why we couldn't have this house restored, you know. It's nice and all but I can tell it isn't the same for you like this.” Danny stated still staring out over the bay.

Marc smiled warmly at his brother's thoughtfulness. “I have thought of that, lots of times really. This house is nice, it's modern...” He got out before Danny cut him off.

“It's stale, it's plain and it may be on the foundation of your first home, but it isn't the home you loved.” He said with his seriousness hanging on each word. “Couldn't we think about it at least? I mean you gave me back my life and a reason to want that life. I would really like to do this for you someday if you would let me.”

“You're serious?”

“You thought I was kidding?”

Marc stared at Danny silently, as if frozen by his brother's words.

"I could take the original blueprints, combined with your interactive memory and design a house to replace this one that would appear to be identical in appearance but still furnish you with your full lab in the basement. There is no reason you need to live the life of an android all day every day." Danny said finally turning around to meet his brother's gaze. "At least think about it, ok?"

"Real human." Marc muttered.

Danny walked over to the bed, leaned over and kissed Marc on the forehead. "No, real brother." He said with a smile as he plopped down on the bed finally getting a grin from Marc. "I missed this bed." He added being distracted by the sounds of someone running up the stairs.

"Marc? Danny?" came Jerry's voice from the hall.

"In here kidoe!" Danny shouted with a giggle. "Real kid." He said with a laugh while poking at Marc playfully.

The door swung open and there stood an extremely distraught looking Jerry.

"Uh, oh..." Marc got out. "What happened?"

"Marc, I was... There's something wrong with Joey."

"Something wrong?" Marc asked in a confused tone. "Little dude, you only started assembling him what? An hour ago? What happened?"

Jerry took a deep breath and then seemed to overflow with the events in almost one breath. "I installed his brain and tested his neural interface and it was fine so I decided to upload his imprint while I put together his upper torso when the computer started failing and I don't know what happened but it won't let me even compile his personality imprint."

"Ok buddy, why don't we take a walk downstairs and see if we can't find out what's troubling the little guy, ok?" he said with a smile getting up off the bed and turning toward Danny. "You coming?"

"I'm allowed to?" Danny shot back with a hurt expression on his face. "I thought I wasn't allowed to go down there."

"No dork, you're not allowed to work on him. You can come see him." Marc said with a laugh as he followed Jerry out into the hall, just barely being missed by the pillow Danny threw at him. "You missed!" he shouted with a giggle as he picked up his pace just in case he suddenly had to try to outrun his brother.

"I'll give you dork." Danny said as he got up and walked to the door and picked up the pillow. "That was just a practice shot. Next time you're in for it!" He yelled as he listened to the giggling from both Marc and Jerry going down the stairs.

“See” Jerry said in an excited tone pointing at the computer's monitor. “it won't let me compile his imprint. I messed him up somehow.” He said sounding as if he was on the verge of crying.

“Hmmm, calm down buddy. This does happen from time to time and is usually just some tiny little incompatibility being a nuisance.” He said as he began to read the error messages. “Personality Handler not found.” He read out loud as he brought up the raw imprint and began scrolling through it at an almost blurring rate.

“You can read it like that?” Jerry asked as he watched in awe.

“Yeah, and you have this coded out like an expert by the way. Nice work.” He said with a smile.

“What's the verdict doc?” Danny asked coming down the stairs. “Oh man, this looks like a lab in some old sci-fi movie” he said as he took a seat on the lower step. “Cool.”

“I like it.” Jerry said as he pointed toward the Panda. “Wanna see Kevin? He's doing real good.”

Danny walked over toward the unit and gazed at the lifeless form through the thick glass window on the top. “Amazing how all this works, isn't it.” He said looking at Jerry then back through the window.

“Yeah, look how far he's gotten in just about an hour.” Jerry said pointing out the clear film that began to cover some of his components.

“Danny, check the Panda and see what his rate of cell development is, we can estimate his activation time frame from it.” Marc asked as his eyes remained glued to the terminal in front of him.

“Me? I've never done stuff like this before.” Danny stated in a shocked tone.

“Bro, you have all the information you need to build one from the ground up in your tech. files. You need to learn to think in two different modes now since you only have one mode of operation. When you need to think in research mode, you just will.” He said as Danny approached the unit's console and was amazed that the controls didn't look alien to him.

“Oh wow.” Danny gasped as he instantly seemed to realize what each control was and what its function was. “That's neat.” He said with a giggle as he began bringing up the progress data. “Cell regeneration at 14,322cpm, Regeneration circuit functioning normally, all synthetic systems standing by, biological systems obviously not enabled.” He said with a laugh. “Positronic matrix reads ready for personality imprint upload. Estimated time to full systems activation, 8 days, 4hours, 32minutes, 14seconds and counting.”

“I knew you had it in you.” Marc said playfully as he screwed up his face and stared at the screen.

“This wasn't your fault Jerry.” He said motioning to Jerry to come see what he had found.

“It's not?” Jerry asked as he rushed to Marc's side and studied the terminal's readout. “What's a personality handler? Wait, I've never seen this string before. Where did this code come from? It's not mine.” He asked as he tried to figure out what he was looking at.

“Well doctor, it appears you were taught what you needed to know, and nothing more.” Marc replied getting a confused look from Jerry. “What you are looking at is the replacement for the programmable variables in an android.”

Jerry looked away from the screen and up at Marc. “Variables?”

“Remember when I told you about the ways some androids were programmed and what they were used for?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, in your school's simulation program, there are hidden variables to replace the original template's design. Variables that control mannerisms, sexuality, and maturity needed to have extra options that could be locked in making them what they consider normal and safe to teach with. Your personality profile was written perfectly for an android that will mature just like a real child would. In simulation, your personality coupled with a personality handler would function well but, in a real android won't work without modification.”

Jerry seemed to think over what Marc told him before looking at the code on the screen more closely, pointing at the lines he understood. “Heterosexual preference?” he questioned. “Does this mean no sex drive?” he asked pointing to another line.

Marc looked at the screen and grinned. “You can read this, I'm impressed.”

Jerry half smiled as he continued to scowl at each new string he came across. “They hid these from us, didn't they?”

“I don't think it was your teachers or the school so much; you would need a level one security access to see any of this, and schools would never be handed that kind of clearance. My guess is they felt no need to teach you that you could build an android that was capable of being anything other than the standard ‘cookie cutter’ perfect household variety.”

Jerry scrolled back up to the first string he had found that was new to him and asked, “Ok, how do you set these parameters to be undetermined and naturally maturing. I want him to grow up like a real boy and become what he wants to become.”

Marc smiled and brought up a second file, highlighting portions of the code for him. “This is how we determine ‘Normal Growth’ in an android. It is the base code that should be where your simulators handler takes over.”

“Hmmm...” Jerry hummed as he read over the highlighted code. “This is good.” He said as Marc watched this 11-year-old scientist read raw code like a professional. “It won't work though.” He added.

“No? Why not?” Marc asked not even looking at the screen.

“Cause there is a variable that controls growth. Synthetlife androids can't grow. The other stuff is good though. I like how it sets parameters to self-knowledge and activates each query as the logic center deems required. It will make him realize stuff like if he becomes gay, or falls in love, or mourns a loss.

His brain will kinda say, ok it's time to make a decision and incorporate it into his personality. Whoever wrote this really knew what they were doing, and was better at it than anyone I've ever read about.”

“Thanks Jerry.” Marc said patting him on the head. “That was the personality profile I wrote for the Austin prototype. It never got used but has been tested and is much better than the old standard ‘On / Off switch’ style programming that was always used. Extra likes and dislikes can be added but he would also have the capacity to just develop them, for no good reason. Just like a human.”

“Yeah.” Jerry said with a smile. “How often could you ask an android why they don't like something and have them answer by sayin ‘Cause I don't’ and be honest.” Jerry paused and looked up at Marc. “Can I use this in Joey's profile?”

“Would be a shame if it never got used.” Marc stated with a smile. “Go for it.”

“Cool!” Jerry exclaimed as he began to pick out the failing strings and replace them with the coding Marc provided. “Is there a way to do a simulated activation test without using my simulator since it isn't right?”

“Yeah, it's built into that terminal. First chance we get, I would love to upgrade yours so you can run some real simulations without being limited.” Marc said as he turned to join Danny who was once again simply gazing into the Panda. “Not until I get to make a copy of your schools simulator though. I want to see what else they are hiding.” He added.

“Deal!” Jerry exclaimed as he buried himself in his work.

“That was a cool thing to do.” Danny muttered in a barely audible tone as Marc rested his elbows on the Panda right next to his brother. “That code must have taken forever to write.”

“It was born out of necessity and supposedly not possible to create or realistic to use. Who would wanna buy an android that might just mature like a human and possibly become more than his creator had planned.” Marc spit out in disgust.

“Marc, people are like that with their own children. How many kids are abused because they think they are gay, how many are thrown out into the streets because they fell in love with someone their parents don't approve of, how many end out killing themselves because they could never be the perfect child their parents expect. Your programming is perfect but people who buy an android expect it to be exactly what they order and nothing more.” Danny said staring into the box. “Did you ever include that code in your own programming?”

Marc looked at Kevin's body, answering as if he was thinking out loud. “I like who I am. Programmed that way or not. Some people may not approve what I was originally intended for but without that simple personality alteration, my whole life may seem as if it were a lie. I don't want my perspective to change. I'm happy with who I am whether I got to choose for myself in the beginning or not.”

“So am I” Danny said placing his hand on his brother's shoulder. “I wouldn't change a thing.”

“Marc, how do I run a test simulation on this?” Jerry asked snapping the two brothers back into reality.

"Duty calls." Marc said with a grin leaving Danny by himself next to the Panda.

"How strange it is to look at this body and know it will be you soon." Danny said low enough to not be heard, as thoughts of the last time he laid eyes on his friend began to run through his mind. Replaying the memories of a day he would rather forget.

"I'm so sorry for your loss." An unfamiliar distant relative muttered as she offered her condolences.

"Kevin always spoke so highly of you Daniel." Another muttered, as I only half acknowledged what was being said and walked over to kneel beside the casket to say my final goodbye.

"You look like you're sleeping, please wake up. I can't go on like this on my own." I said as I reach over to brush his hair to the side as he wore it in life.

"Get your hands off of him!" Came a shout from behind me. "That's that stupid little android that Kev got hooked into taking care of." She yelled.

"Leave him alone Amy." I heard another voice whisper to her. "You were rarely there for your cousin and he was with him until the end. This isn't the time and place..." The whisper began but got cut off.

"Bullshit! That little piece of scrap plastic is the reason Kevin never had the time to be bothered with any of us. He was too busy waiting on that little junk pile to even have the time. I wouldn't be surprised if the little leech were to find another person to leech off of before Kevin is in the ground." She yelled, making a total spectacle of herself.

I looked around the room and saw a mixture of family members nodding in agreement and embarrassment at her outburst. *'They all feel this way.'* I thought to myself before I turned back and took one more look. "I don't know how long this body will last. They say forever, but that can't be true." I said with tears running down my cheeks and onto your arm. "If this is the price I have to pay for the years that you gave me to be with you, then it was worth it." I leaned over your lifeless form and kissed you on your forehead. "I love you my shadow, now and forever."

I turned without another word said and walked toward the door. Just as I was about to open it, a close friend of Kevin's cut me off.

"Danny, don't leave. His family was never there for him. Only you were, no matter what the situation, no matter how good or bad things were, right up until the very end. If anyone deserves to be here with him, it's you." He said frantically.

"Thanks Andy." I replied. "But let them win. He's not here so I don't need to be." I answered still wiping tears from my eyes. "Only you understand what I owe him. You know I was only able to enjoy my time with him because of what he did for me. He'll always be a part of me, now and up to the moment this body fails. I don't need to be here, cause he's not lying in that box, he's right here with me." I said as I pointed to my heart.

“Danny?” Jerry asked shaking his arm. “You ok?”

“Huh? Uh... Yeah, I'm fine.” He answered wiping the tears from his eyes. “I guess seeing him in this box just reminded me of when I lost him.”

Marc came over and rubbed each of his brother's shoulders while speaking in a soft tone. “I didn't even think of that. Would it be easier if we covered the window so you don't have to see this part of the process?”

“Oh, it's not seeing him in this condition. Not at all.” Danny answered with a sniffle. “Realizing that this body will soon be Kevin, and seeing Kevin lying in a box... It reminded me of, well... Of his funeral.” He said turning up the corners of his mouth. “It's nothing, I just let my mind drift at the wrong time. I'm fine, I promise.”

Marc rested his elbows on the top of the unit and smiled a thoughtful smile before saying, “The last time you saw him in a box, he wasn't really there. People always say that at a funeral, the person you knew in life isn't really what you are saying goodbye to. Our bodies are a very small portion of who we are in life, human or not.” Marc said without breaking his gaze into the confines of the Panda unit. “Realistically, he's not in there yet either but, his positronic matrix is ready to receive him anytime now. Then he will really be in there and just asleep as his body prepares itself to wake.” With that said, Marc stood up and walked over to the control console and smiled back at his brother. “Positronic functions at 100% and ready for personality imprint. Would you like to initiate the final command to begin the integration Dan?”

Danny thoughtfully looked at his brother and smiled weakly. “No, I want his other uncle to be the one to complete this gift.”

Marc smiled and busied himself while Danny decided it was a good time to check on Jerry's progress. “How's it goin kidoe?”

Jerry pointed to the monitor, which was displaying the simulation and debugging process with a huge smile. “Everything's checking out fine so far. I'm putting his body together now.”

Danny looked at what Jerry had already accomplished. The little android's head shoulders and arms were assembled leaving his mid section, legs and feet to go. After looking over the parts that had been chosen, he began to giggle a little, gaining Jerry's attention.

“What? Did I forget something?” he asked as he frantically reviewed the remaining parts.

“Well, you have two right hands laid out for starters.” He replied picking up both hands and showing them to Jerry, getting an embarrassed grin as a response. “You also may want to talk to Marc about your choice of lower torsos. His body is supposed to be what? 8 years old?”

Jerry looked at his creations lower abdomen and scratched his head in confusion before looking at Danny and shrugging his shoulders.

Trying not to bust out laughing Danny managed to force out, “I'm pretty sure it's not supposed to be that big unless you are going for one of the best hung 8 year olds on the planet.”

Marc joined the two at the worktable and saw what Danny was referring to before blushing a deep red and putting his hand on his forehead. "Well, I guess we're gonna have to alter his program to allow for extra weight in the front or else he's gonna constantly fall over." He said keeping his hand on his forehead and visibly trying not to laugh. "Dude, he's gonna be bigger than us." He added coughing over what I knew was destined to be a giggle.

"Hey, It's been a long time since I was 8 guys." Jerry interjected. "Besides, what's wrong with him being a little bigger than normal?" He got out before Danny and Marc finally lost control and broke out in fits of giggles.

"Th-there's noth, nothing wrong with being a-a-a little bigger but..." Marc got out and lost it.

Danny was able to recompose himself, cleared his throat and was able to get out, "But he could get work in a carnival, or take up pole-vaulting with that between his legs." Before once again losing it and laughing. "I need ah, um, a drink. I'll be upstairs." He said and retreated as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Coward!" Marc playfully yelled after him before getting serious and made a more appropriate choice of equipment for the little android. "This is better suited for his age and appearance buddy."

Jerry looked over the parts once more before folding his arms and raising an eyebrow. "Okay, but when he complains about how small his willie is, I'm gonna tell him it's all your fault" He got out with a giggle. "You see any other mistakes Dr. Clown?" He asked with an evil grin.

Marc looked over all the parts on the table before shaking his head no.

"How do you like him so far then?"

Marc began stating out loud as if listing the options in a car. "Strawberry blond hair, almost an olive completion, average height and build for his age. Looks good so far." He got out getting an accomplished smile from Jerry.

"I did make a change you may not like though." He said as he opened the little one's eyes displaying one bright blue and one bright green eye. "I wanted him to have the same look Davie did. That's why he has this color hair and skin. His face even looks a little like Davie. But I couldn't decide on his eyes. I wanted him to have Davie's eyes but I also wanted him to have the same color as you and Danny. So I gave him one of each." He said looking at his creations face and then back at Marc. "It's a stupid idea, right?"

Marc smiled and reached over to close the sleeping androids eyes before ruffling his hair. "That's wicked thoughtful." He said as he repeated the hair ruffling on Jerry. "I wouldn't change a thing then." He said with a smile before heading to follow his brother's lead and give Jerry some more time to himself. "Have you ever fused the seams on these androids?" He paused and asked.

"Yup, and I don't even leave scars." He beamed with pride knowing it's hard to hide the seams in an android with synthetic skin.

"Cool." Marc answered with a smile as he continued up the stairs. "Just yell if you need help then."

“Ok.” He answered and then yelled up the stairs, “I’ll call for you when I’m ready to activate him.”

Upstairs, Marc looked around for Danny briefly before spotting him sitting on the steps to the deck gazing out over the beach.

“Penny for your thoughts.” He said as he slid the door open and stepped out onto the deck, closing the door behind himself.

“Just thinking about Joey.” He said as he turned to lean his back on the railing to face his brother. “I know it’s good for Jerry to learn more about something he obviously loves and help him to bring his first attempt online but, aren’t we helping to bring another life into the world as well?”

Marc sat down at the table and seemed to think a bit before answering. “Yeah, that little one will have a life. He’ll mature and learn just like I did.” He said with a smile creeping across his face. “He’s gonna have a great family.”

Danny smiled and nodded his head. “Will he mature enough in that body?”

Marc smiled and nodded his head in agreement. “Well, he can mentally. I mean Cynthetilife androids didn’t really feel, they have touch receptive sensors throughout their bodies so their programming can emulate response to touch but not like the way we feel. The way he’s programmed, he could be tested in that body easily. We can work out any personality flaws he may develop, make any changes we need to before considering options for a better body.” He said as if he already had plans. “It would be great if we can get the looks he wants and create a V.I. series body for him to mature in. That would take a ton of time and with the equipment I have, some money to upgrade the lab a bit.”

“We can cross that bridge when we get to it I guess.” Danny replied as he stood up and walked to his brother. “You already thought of upgrading him, didn’t you?”

With a giggle Marc replied, “Yeah, if he’s gonna be a part of this family, he deserves better than that synthetic shell but, it’s not a bad way to start out.”

Danny leaned over and planted a kiss on Marc’s cheek getting a confused smile from his brother. “What was that for?” He asked with a smile.

“For being the most thoughtful, selfless brother a guy could ever hope for.” Danny said retreating into the house. “I’m gonna grab a soda, you want anything?”

Marc stood and slowly wandered toward the steps. “No thanks bro, I’m gonna take a walk on the beach.” He said with a smile as he brought his hand up to the spot Danny kissed and smiled back at his brother. “It’s just a beautiful day.” He said as he turned and left for his time alone.

Danny recognized that smile and was happy he was able to make his brother so happy. On his way to the kitchen, he was frozen in his tracks by the phone ringing.

“Oh God.” He said out loud. “Line 2?” He added as he looked out and saw Marc slowly wandering the beach, not far away at all so he decided it was safe to answer it and cleared his thought before picking up the receiver.

“Hello, um I mean, ah, Vision Industries, how may I direct your call?”

[Yes this is Clan Short of Vulcan headquarters, I need to speak with Dr. Furst or Dr. Owens please.]

“Excuse me, who with what?”

[This is Lt. Thomas Short, Clan Short of Vulcan headquarters. We have a medical emergency and need to speak with Dr. Furst or Dr. Owens immediately.]

“Um, ah, lemme put you on hold.” Danny replied as he hit the hold button and ran for the slider, almost throwing it open. “MARC!!!!!!”

Marc's head seemed to snap in Danny's direction as he broke into a run back for the house. “What's wrong bro?” He asked as he bolted up the steps to meet him on the deck.

“Um, there's a call on line two.” Danny said with a confused look on his face.

“Oh? Who's it from?” Marc asked as both made their way to the phone and Marc picked up the receiver, which fell off the table in Danny's rush.

“Well, it's some kid claiming to be a Lieutenant from, I think he said Clan Short and he says it's a medical emergency, it might be a prank call.” He said knowing instantly he was wrong as his brother's face almost instantly went pale.

Marc looked at the receiver and then back at Danny before swallowing hard and replying in almost a whisper, “Clan Short? Oh my god Bro? That's no prank!”

Notes from the ~~Author~~:

Hi everyone! It's me, Danny! I figured since Jeff went into serious overload writing this chapter, and planning out future chapters for us to have fun in, I would do him a favor and write his notes for this chapter. You know, poor old guy needs his rest now. [G] (Also gives me a chance to let you in on my perspective of this last chapter.)

Yup, those authors are at it again, conspiring behind the backs of the readers. I understand how you all must feel right now but, take my word for it, we couldn't be happier that he finally listened to us about how we want the story to go. I mean come on, whose story is this anyway? Honestly, Marc and I sat down and talked about it with Jeff and, it wasn't easy to get him to realize that if he really wanted us to be happy, he was going to have to let go of his plans a little bit and let us make our own plans. We thought it would be easier for him if we filled in the blanks. By the look on his face right now, I think he has his own opinions.

Since this will probably be the only time he will ever let me write this footnote, Marc wanted to make sure that I say “thanks” to some really important people.

First, we want to say thank-you to AmaturishWriter, cause he is the one who told the story of Marc's beginning, and cause he told Jeff that it was cool to write about his life years after. Marc sends a big hug to you, and so do the rest of us. You're the best!

Second, We want to thank “Acfan” and “Boi From Aus.” For explaining to Jeff that he needs to write

“our” story and kinda ditch the short version he was gonna write. Way to go guys! We owe you, bigtime!

Third, now that I am finally learning how big our universe is about to get, We also would like to say thanks to Greybear, Gunrunner, Eric W., and Multimapper for forming one of the best places in the universe to live. We just hope we have big enough feet to walk in your footsteps. (I know Marc, it does sound kinda lame, doesn't it? Oh well.) Big hugs to you guys too!

Fourth, (Gasp) We got to read some of the emails and stuff some of you reading have sent Jeff and know they made him real happy. Thanks and yes it's true what they say. 4 out of every 5 authors do believe their characters are real. That's the way it should be, um, cause we said so. (The fifth guy is probably writing his own life story, or some boring junk like that anyway. ;)

Fifth, (Jeff's definitely not letting me do this again. [Giggle]) A huge thanks to the Editing Team for doing an awesome job making Jeff's horrid spelling readable. Maybe some day we'll get to meet you guys. Well, it could happen. ;)

Notes from the Editing Team :

This Chapter is awaiting it's final Edit. Unfortunately it's scheduled release could not be pushed back. Hope there aren't too many misspellings ;)

Notes from the Other Nutcase:

I'm really excited at the way this is turning out – after hundreds of hours on cell phones (and one battery on the far end) this chapter finally came together. As those of you who frequent the Message Board know, sometimes the characters want to go in a totally different direction than what the author planned; this chapter is one of those cases. Watch carefully over the next few chapters; there are a lot of surprises yet to come! Huge thanks to Jeff for allowing me to play a small part in what hopefully will be viewed as the turning point in the STL series. Hugs to the Editing Team also; you guys really do make a difference in the flow and readability of the story – your hard work is greatly appreciated!
AC

"Chapter 6 - Invasion: S. Carolina (Part 1)"

Co-Written By: ACFan

Marc looked at the receiver, covered the mouthpiece and cleared his throat before bringing it to his ear and speaking. "This is Dr. Furst, what's the emergency?"

[Doctor Furst, Patriarch Short wishes to speak with you. I will have to connect you, he is aboard the starship *Lafayette*.]

"Thank you Lieutenant, standing by to be connected." Marc replied before covering the mouthpiece once again. "Oh my god bro, you're not gonna believe this." he whispered to Danny, who simply tilted his head and gave a confused look as his response.

[Dr. Furst, this is Cory Short, Patriarch of Clan Short of Vulcan. Do you have visual capabilities?]

"No Patriarch Short, I'm sorry but at this time we don't." Marc replied, noticing the voice on the other end sounded unusually young for a Patriarch. "How may I be of assistance?"

[Doctor, do you have any knowledge of the 'Austin' series android?]

Marc's eyes widened as he almost coughed out, "Um, yes; I was part of his prototype programming, but he was never completed, why do you ask?"

[Apparently, somebody completed him, we have him here right now. He needs some serious help. Are you capable of repairs to him?]

"Um, well, yeah. I mean yes, I can , I mean... somebody finished him?"

[Don't worry, he's still active.]

Marc held the receiver away from his head and glared at it in question before continuing. "Still active? He wasn't even finished! How was... I mean who activated him... Where did you find him?"

[Well, he was off planet; we found him in an alley with extreme modifications attempted to his skin structure.]

Marc shook his head in disbelief. "I'm sorry Patriarch Short; you are catching me a little off guard. Did you say he's been physically modified? How serious is his condition?"

[Well, If I didn't know any better, I 'd say his body is rejecting the work.]

Without thinking Marc replied "Oh shit... Oh god, I'm so sorry Patriarch Short. I mean I can be ready to receive him as soon as possible." Marc could swear that he heard a stifled laugh on the other end.

[Ok then Doctor, in approximately 3 minutes there will be a knock on your door for installation of a terminal at your premises.]

"How do you know where... wait, three minutes? Where exactly are you sending them. This number is registered to a classified location that I am not currently working from, you're gonna need my address."

[You are on Sullivan's Island, aren't you?]

"Um, yeah, how'd you know that?"

[I'll have my son explain it to you when we get there.]

"Your what? Oookay, we'll be ready to receive your party and equipment, when should we expect your arrival sir?"

[At maximum warp we should be there within a day, approximately 16:00 hours tomorrow.]

Marc looked at Danny, who was still standing there looking totally lost. Just as he was about to tell him not to worry, his train of thought was cut short by the voice on the phone.

[Doctor. send someone to answer the door to receive my party.]

"Huh?" Marc managed to get out when he suddenly heard the knock on the front door. "Oh, ok." He said before looking at Danny and waving his hand to get his attention. "Dude, answer the door, and be professional ok?"

Danny looked completely lost as he lowered his voice and almost whispered, "Be what?"

"Dude, just let them in and don't say anything dumb." Marc said loud enough to be heard on the phone. The Patriarch began to giggle, reminding Marc that he was still on the line. "Oh god, I'm sorry sir, we haven't had too many emergency calls in the past few years."

[No problem, I tend to surprise people a lot.]

"Well, you surprised one more." Marc replied with a smile before he realized that his brother had probably never seen a Vulcan face to face before. "Oh no, about to be two more." He added with a giggle picturing Danny's response.

Danny swung open the door and stood frozen until the technician introduced himself and requested to see Dr. Furst. "Um, right this way." he got out as he led the man through the kitchen toward the living room. " Um, Marc..." he meekly got out as they both came into view.

[I'll leave my technicians to install your terminal, they will assist you in it's operation, use it to contact me as soon as possible.]

"How will I be able to get through to a starship over sub-space frequencies? I don't have that kind of access."

[You do now. Contact Clan Headquarters as soon as possible, my technicians will instruct you on proper procedures.]

Marc cleared his throat for what seemed like the hundredth time during the call before responding.

"Yes sir, thank you. We will be ready for your arrival." Marc heard the call disconnect and hung up the phone.

"You would be Dr. Furst, I presume?" The distinguished looking Vulcan asked as he approached Marc.

"Yes sir I am. Um, what can I do to help?"

"May we inquire as to where you wish the terminal placed?"

"Um, I think... yeah, let's set it up in the lab, right this way sir." Marc replied as he began to lead the way. Danny was standing in the doorway, frozen with shock and confusion at the appearance of their guests. "You Ok bro?" Marc asked on his way by, receiving an unsure nod from Danny as a response.

As he opened the door to the lab and flipped on the lights, Marc looked up to the technician and asked, "Is that enough space?" as he pointed to the far corner of the room.

"This will be acceptable. Be prepared for training in 7.5 minutes." The technician replied as another technician entered the room carrying a large box.

"Um, ok... Do you need any help?" Marc asked the first technician.

"Your assistance will not be required during this procedure." he answered flatly as he began to inventory the contents of the box. The second technician exited the room, apparently to bring more equipment in.

"Ok then, I'll be right back." Marc said as he left the room to check on his brother. "Dude, you look like you've seen a ghost." Marc commented as he walked up to Danny.

Danny just looked shocked as he shook his head, before answering in almost a whisper. "Who are they? I mean what are they? They ain't even human, are they?"

"You have some catching up to do bro." Marc said as he drew his brother into a hug to help reassure him. "They are from a planet called Vulcan. Don't worry, they are friends but have no emotion. If you talk to them, state the facts, no clowning around and you will earn their respect." he said as he broke the hug and looked his brother in the eyes. "If you're ok with it, we can take some time and upload a history catchup into your brain, so you'll have a better understanding of how much you missed over the last few decades."

Danny just shook his head agreeing as he looked toward the lab. Danny watched as the two Vulcans wheeled a rather large piece of equipment through the kitchen and disappeared into the lab. "I know what Vulcans are, just never seen one in person before." He sighed out as he leaned into the hug. "They look more like humans than I pictured for some reason."

"What's goin on guys?" Jerry asked as he closed the door to the basement behind himself.

"We have company. I'll explain more later but there is some work being done in the lab, you may wanna steer clear for a bit." Marc said turning to face Jerry, leaving one arm across Danny's shoulders.

"An emergency?" Jerry asked tilting his head as one of the technicians approached the mini meeting in the hall. "Oh." Jerry said as he straightened his stance before raising his hand in a Vulcan salute. "T'nar pak sorat y'rani." He said with a smile.

"T'nar jaral." The technician responded with question in his expression. "You speak Vulcan?"

Marc looked at Jerry with a grin. "Any other surprises you've been hiding?"

"I don't speak it well, I did take Vulcan as a foreign language in school but I'm still learning."

The Vulcan raised his eyebrow and looked down at Jerry. "Your greeting was acceptable."

"Cool!" Jerry said with a grin.

"Sir." The technician said as he turned his attention to Marc. "How many in your group will require training?"

"Oh, myself, Dr. Owens and Dr. Page" Marc replied, slipping a grin in Danny's direction. "It will save time if we are all present."

"We are prepared to begin, do you require additional time to prepare?" The technician asked.

"No sir." Marc replied. "We are at your disposal."

Jerry looked at Marc questioningly. "What are we training for?"

"Well buddy. It looks like we are about to go to work." Marc answered as they followed the technician into the lab. "I'll explain later but this is a serious matter, you up for it?"

"I'll do my best." Jerry said as Danny ruffled his hair and they gathered around the new terminal.

Training went well, and surprisingly only took a little less than 15 minutes, as Jerry had a couple of questions. Marc and Danny were amazed at the efficiency of the training session and Jerry's ability to retain all that was taught to him.

"Your teachers must love teachin' you." Danny said to Jerry as the technician began to pack up the equipment he had used.

"Sir, you are now prepared to contact Clan Short. I am required to remind you Patriarch Short is awaiting your communication. Do you require further assistance?"

Marc looked at Danny then Jerry before responding, "No sir, your training was adequate and most informative."

Jerry walked the technician to the door as Marc sat down at the terminal with Danny looking over his shoulder. "This is overwhelming." Marc stated as he brought the terminal out of standby and initiated the call.

"This is Patriarch Short. It's great to actually see you."

Marc's jaw visibly dropped when he saw Cory on the screen. "Umm ... ahh ... sorry Patriarch Short, but ... you're HUMAN!"

Cory tried hard not to giggle. "Last I checked, yes! Let's drop the formality dude; leave it for the old folks and people I'm mad at. Just call me Cory, okay?"

"Cool, I hate formalities. Just call me Marc and the two you see behind me are Dr. Jerry Owens and my brother Dr. Daniel Page." Marc said with a giggle as the two waved Hi and smiled. "Jerry and Danny." he continued with a smile.

"Hey guys!" Cory replied with a giggle. "That group you see behind me is my family." Cory turned and pointed out each one as he said their names. "That's my life-partner Sean, sitting on his lap is one of our sons, CD. Next to them is Calen, Beau, and Toby; also our sons. The silver headed kid whose lap Calen

is sitting on is my brother Gavin. Over by the bed are two more sons, DJ and Tanner. The little one cuddled up on the table is our youngest son Timmy; and the big one on the table is the subject of this call, Austin."

"Wow!" Jerry squeaked out as Danny was visually trying to take a head count.

"7 kids? You two got yur hands full." Danny added with a smile.

The whole time, Marc was focused on the two forms on the table. "That's Austin? I've never seen him, I mean in a functional form." He said as tears began to well up in his eyes. "Danny, That's my son." Marc said as Danny grabbed his shoulders and leaned in for a better look.

"Cory, what's wrong with him?" Danny asked, knowing Marc was preoccupied with his first meeting with the son that he had never met.

Cory looked Danny in the eyes over the connection. "From what we can tell, Danny, a bunch of his critical circuits shut down; he actually looks better now, since the ship's Medical Officer figured out a way to regenerate his skin."

Danny gave Marc's shoulders a rub as he accessed his Tech files. "Ok, looks like you have the right idea. Is there any way you can send us a copy of the technical data you are working with" Danny asked as Jerry began to tug on his shirt. "Wassup sport?"

"Is Cory's son safe in that field with Austin?" Jerry asked with concern showing in his voice.

"I dunno." Danny replied, and looked at Cory's image on the screen. "The bed knows the difference between Austin and Timmy? Right?"

Cory glanced over at the Doctor, who nodded. He turned back to the screen. "Timmy's just fine; in fact the bed needed good skin to use as a template to generate from and it says Timmy is an exact match. Marc, look at the lower left corner of your console, there should be a flashing button there shortly – once it starts flashing, push it and a window will open with real-time data." Cory then glanced down and pressed a few buttons on his console.

"Great, Thanks Cory." Danny just managed to get out as the button appeared.

Marc seemed to snap back to reality as he brought the info up and began surveying the data. "Lemme get this straight. The bio bed is using Timmy as a biological model to regenerate the dying skin on Austin?" He said as he looked back in Cory's direction. "How did you guys come up with that solution? That's... just amazing." He added with a thoughtful smile.

Cory giggled. "Don't ask me; I was busy on the Bridge commanding the ship! I let the doctors do their stuff, I'll stick to engineering – it makes more sense!"

Marc finally seemed to loosen up and laughed. "Well anyway, it is an awesome idea. I don't think anyone has ever tried that before."

Danny smiled and then got an instantly confused look on his face. "Commanding the ship? Is that what you said?"

Cory giggled. "Yep; Sean did it on the way out, so I figured it was only fair I got to on the way back. I cheated though; he was asked to, I ordered them to let me."

All three began to giggle. "I'm not sure I want to know what that conversation sounded like." Danny said as he began to laugh harder.

Marc, who was focused more on the incoming data than the conversations, began muttering almost to himself. "Regeneration circuit, offline. Motor functions disabled... Cory, how did you find out what model android Austin was? There are no identifiers on him and he was far from being public knowledge." he asked as he looked back at the group on the screen. "Heck, I designed his entire program and had no idea someone went ahead and completed him."

"You're not gonna believe this; but he was able to initiate a telepathic link with Timmy; he told Timmy what his model was and what was wrong." Cory replied.

Marc's mouth dropped open as what Cory said began to sink in. "Telepathy?" he almost coughed out as Danny and Jerry got dead silent. "He used telepathy to tell Timmy?"

"Yep, telepathy – I think he takes the Clan up to double digits now on telepaths."

Marc grinned but obviously had a thousand questions to ask on his mind. "Well, I'm sure I don't need to explain that we never created an android that was equipped with telepathy. How can we program something we don't understand?" Marc asked rhetorically, then continued as if in a running thought. "Overcome physical disabilities... It *is* part of his programming."

Cory did a double take. "Dude! What do you mean 'overcome physical disabilities' is part of his programming??" Cory asked as Marc noticed that two more boys had entered the room with the Clan and stopped to listen in.

"Ok, when I programmed him, I incorporated as much as I possibly could; everything I had learned I was incapable of doing in comparison to a human." Marc saw the confused look on Cory's face so he continued, "If a human goes blind, his other senses become sharper to make up for the loss. His programming must have reasoned a way to find an alternate way to communicate."

Danny tilted his head and grinned. "Well, I guess his logic center is a little more complex than ours, but to just learn telepathy cause he needs to? That's unreal."

The two new boys finally grinned; one which looked surprisingly Vulcan commented loud enough to be heard by all, "I believe I am beginning to understand your opinion that a blond having an intelligent conversation is an oxymoron."

Cory and Marc chorused at the same time: "HEY!!!!"

Danny began to giggle as Marc poked him hard in the side. "OWWW, I didn't say it." He said as he side stepped a second attack and added; "I always heard Vulcan's were logical, now I have proof."

Cory shot the two new boys a dirty look. "That is Xain and Jake – Xain is the smart alek who is gonna end up in the nearest body of water as soon as we land."

"Dude, plenty of water here." Marc said with an evil smile, "You get his arms, I'll have his feet and we'll see how far *'Two Dumb Blonds'* can throw one small Vulcan." Marc continued breaking out in an almost evil laugh.

Jerry snuck up to the screen and quickly got out, "He's serious Xain, run while you can." before Marc swatted at him and missed.

Marc finally settled down as the laughter from both sides of the conversation died down before getting serious again. "Cory, your Doctor is right on the money with the progress he has made. Continue with the treatment as is and we will... Oh no." Marc groaned as he smacked his forehead.

"What's wrong?" Cory asked with sudden concern.

"We have a slight problem." Marc said as he put his hands over his face and sighed. "The unit I will need for Austin is in use right now and we don't have another."

"What do you need? I'll get it for you." Cory stated forcefully.

Marc shrugged his shoulders as he heard Jerry clear his throat and step forward. "Whatcha thinkin?"

"Cory? Can your Doctor import an android's bio mechanical profile into a bio-bed? It could act like a Panda." Jerry said with uncertainty showing through in his voice.

Cory looked back at the doctor. "Well Doc, what do you think?"

The Doctor tilted his head in thought. "I need someone higher than me to unlock the upload function; after that I see no reason why it wouldn't work. I seem to remember something in school about the bio-bed being descended from the Panda."

Cory got an evil grin. "Prepare for upload Marc; I'll handle the unlock."

After noticing Cory had put the call on hold, Jerry grinned and looked at Marc. "I can help with the upload if you want to give me access to the technical information for the Panda."

"You familiar with the technical differences between the two" Marc asked.

"Sure, the doctor is right. The first bio-bed was modeled after the Panda idea, just not using solid walls and for humans, not androids. It would take nothing to get the profile converted to work."

Marc smiled, "Looks like you have a project then Buddy."

Just then, the terminal came back to life and Cory's image returned. "Okay, in about two minutes start your upload."

"Ok Great Cory. Jerry is going to iron out the parameters needed and we'll send them your way. That will definitely stabilize him until you arrive. I guess instead of bringing him down here, we could go up there instead. Would that be ok?"

Cory smiled. "Actually, unless you have room inside we can set up a portable bio-bed just outside your doorway. I can arrange for it to arrive just as we get there; it's self-powered anyways."

"Um, Cory?" "Are y'all coming down? I mean, all y'all?" Jerry asked, getting Marc's attention.

"Not sure they all wanna be cramped up in this house sport." Marc replied. "We have three beds and a couch. Nothing else but floor available here."

Cory giggled. "Not a problem dude; ain't you ever heard of a nest? We usually just pile up a bunch of pillows and blankets and just pile in."

"Cool!" shouted an excited Jerry. "I'll get to work an strip my bed!" he shouted as Danny and Marc burst out laughing.

"Well Patriarch Short," Marc said through a giggle. "I do believe your plans for the bio-bed and nest building have been accepted by our team so, you are all welcome to come down and teach us about your nest building techniques."

"It sounds like a plan, Doctor. I'll give you a call as we're on the way down. Have a good day."

"You too Cory, Nice meeting ya'll and can't wait to meet you in person." Marc replied with a smile. "Ok guys, we got work to do. Jerry, work on the profile before stripping your bed, we gotta prioritize here." he said as Jerry gave him an 'Up Yours' glare followed with a grin. Marc turned to the terminal and smirked at Cory before half giggling out "Furst out." and ending the call.

Marc swiveled in his chair to face Danny and Jerry before letting out a sigh and opening his eyes wide. "Well guys, looks like we have some serious catch up work to do now.." he said as he looked at Jerry and smiled. "Dude, you sure you will be able to get that profile ready for the *Lafayette's* doctor?"

"Yup, I just need to know how and where to send it." Jerry said with a smile as he almost jumped up and down with excitement. "The changes are minor, I can have it done in about 20 minutes." he added.

"Great, use the main terminal in the basement to compile it, while I figure out how to link this terminal so our system can uplink through it." Marc got out, just in time to watch Jerry turn on his heels and bolt from the room. "Danny, you're gonna have to link to the system in the bedroom while he does that so we can give you a cultural, history and technological upgrade. This way you won't be in the dark with all of this." Marc said as he stood up from his chair. "Besides, I'm gonna need all the help I can get right now."

"Ok bro, I'll do my best to help out." Danny said as they both went to Marc's bedroom. "How long will this take?"

"Well, I have the files you need from an image backup I took from myself about a year ago. That should work." Marc said as he sat at the computer, bringing the monitor to life. "Looks like our plans

for your golf lessons will have to be put on hold I guess." he added, smiling once he felt his brother's hand on his shoulder.

"No prob, we will find the time once everything settles down." Danny said, giving Marc's shoulder a squeeze.

"Ok, This entire file needs to be uploaded and executed. Open it and integrate it, don't just execute it right away or else it will attempt to restore my personality over yours. One of me is more than enough around here." Marc added with a giggle.

"That's possible?" Danny asked with shock in his voice.

"Well, that's what it would try to do. Your programming would override the damage and repair it; but, until your overnight maintenance, you would think you were me." he said as he stood up from the chair. "We don't need your head to be all messed up tomorrow, cause it could make you unstable as well."

"Gotcha." Danny said with a smile as he sat down and began making the connection. "Exactly what effects will this have on me."

"Some good, some may be a little unexpected tomorrow morning." Marc said as he stepped back a bit. "If I had the time, I could clean out personal memories and stuff; but tomorrow morning you will be stuck with them." Marc paused. "I won't have any secrets from you about my past anymore." Tilting his head and grinning he continued, "Your system will know what memories are mine cause it will index them separately from your own. You will be able to look into any aspect of my past and see it. First hand."

"That won't bother you?" Danny asked as he turned to face Marc. "I mean knowing everything about you is sorta personal."

"If you were anyone else, it might." Marc replied with a smile as he turned to leave the room. "I'll be in the lab working on the new terminal." he said over his shoulder as he turned into the hall.

Less than an hour later, Marc plopped down in a chair near the new Vulcan terminal and sighed with relief. Wires were strewn all about the room, along with printouts of Vulcan specs and the diagrams of the original Vision Industries base network. He had just closed his eyes as the door being thrown open startled him.

"Dude, you scared the hell out of me." he said with a grin as he looked at the excited expression on Jerry's face. "Everything go OK?"

"Yup." Jerry said as he looked at the mess on the floor. "Better than it looks like it went in here." he added with a giggle.

"Hey, it went fine in here Bozo." Marc replied; ruffling Jerry's hair as he went to the terminal and sat down. "I'd like to see you network Vulcan technology with an old Earth business network." he said as

he brought the terminal out of standby. "Was more complicated than I expected it to be using this old junk."

"I bet." Jerry said as he began to gather the mess up off the floor. "Looks like a computer exploded in here." he added with a giggle.

"Can it, squirt." Marc said, laughing out loud. "I'm sure it doesn't look any better downstairs."

Jerry grinned and responded only with a giggle.

"Thought so." Marc said as he turned and looked at the blushing boy. "Got it done, that's the most important thing." he said as he looked at the screen. "Computer." Marc ordered; the terminal immediately acknowledged with a chirp. "Connect me to Clan Short Headquarters, Priority 1 communication." Marc continued. Jerry stopped what he was doing and looked at Marc, confusion showing on his face.

"Since when does that terminal respond to voice commands?" he asked.

"Since I integrated the communication bridge. It's gonna need some work but it came together great."

"Clan Short Headquarters, How can I help you Doctor Furst?" rang the voice of Lieutenant Short from the speakers.

"Sorry to be a bother Lieutenant, but I need assistance transferring an important file to the U.S.S. *Lafayette* as per Patriarch Short's request. I'm just not sure how to handle the routing." Marc replied; he then added with a smirk "By the way, you can call me Marc."

The face on the screen smiled as the boy seemed to be punching away at his terminal's controls. "Ya'll can call me Tommy." he replied with a giggle, noting the shocked expression on Marc's face. "Ya look like ya seen a ghost. You wasn't expectin' my accent?" he added now laughing out loud.

"Wow, no. That's unreal how you kinda hide it." Marc replied with a smile, feeling more relaxed at dropping the formalities. "Tommy, I need to send this profile to the ship's doctor on board the *Lafayette*. He's expecting it."

"No problem. Send it here an' I'll get it straight to him." Tommy replied as Marc accessed the lower labs terminal and sent the file along. "Got it." Tommy responded as he relayed the file right off. "An' it's on it's way. Need anythin' else?"

Marc smiled and sat back in his chair. "Nope, thanks man; I owe you one."

"T'aint nuthin. They was expectin' it anyway. Talk to ya'll later." Tommy said with a nod and the view screen went back into standby.

"They all seem really cool." Jerry stated as he gathered the last armload off the floor, dumping it in a box.

"Yeah, I've heard stories about Clan Short and how people don't want to mess with them." Marc stated as he stood up and stretched. "I guess they just aren't what I had pictured."

"Yeah, They're cool." Jerry said through a giggle; waving his hands in the air to emphasize the word 'cool' as Marc simply shook his head in mock disgust.

"How close is Joey to activation?" Marc asked, remembering Jerry was in the middle of working on him when the Vulcans arrived.

"Oh, he's ready I think. I almost forgot, I need you to check him out before I activate him." Jerry said as Marc grinned.

Marc turned Jerry, aimed him toward the doorway, and began pushing him along. "Well, let's check in on Danny. Then we'll go down and see what we can do for your kid then."

"Cool!" Jerry exclaimed, still leaning into Marc's hands as if needing to be pushed along.

"Hmmm." Marc said as he peeked into the bedroom doorway, noticing Danny's head on the desk. "If he fell asleep, it will integrate the new files too early."

"Is that bad?" Jerry whispered back.

"Not really, but he won't wake back up until it's finished." Marc replied as he began tiptoeing into the room. "That won't be for at least 4 hours."

"More like 5." Danny said as he sat up and stretched his arms out in front of himself. "Almost done with the transfer, this computer is so slow."

Marc stopped and smiled. "I could have told you that bro. You gotta figure how old some of this equipment is. That and it's processor is no match for yours."

"Yeah well, that doesn't make the wait any less boring." Danny got out through a yawn. "What are you two up to? Other than trying to sneak up on me."

"We're gonna see if we can activate Joey!" Jerry almost shouted from the doorway in excitement.

"Sweet." Danny continued, "We can celebrate birthdays together."

"2 days apart bro." Marc said with a smile. "Besides, you have a real birthday to celebrate in April so your activation here would be more like an anniversary."

"You got 2 Birthdays?" Jerry said with surprise. "That's so cool!"

"More like 3. My real birthday is March 17th." Danny said with a smile. "But that was as a human, so I don't count that one cause I'm an android now. Then I have April 7th, which is my birthday in this body." Danny's smile grew as he continued. "But my most recent is 2 days ago after Marc spent months fixing me. I'll celebrate the Birthday my brother gave me now, cause it means more to me here and now than the others do."

"So, how old are you?" Jerry asked with a look on his face that showed his brain was in overdrive.

"2 Days" Marc said with a giggle as he ruffled Danny's hair before walking back towards the doorway.

"I mean really." Jerry asked with a scowl that was an obvious put on.

"You two are on your own. I'm going down to see what we can do for a little android." Marc said as he snuck right out of both the conversation and the room.

"Really, 2 days." Danny continued with a giggle.

"Nah-ah! You are older than that. I know you're older than Marc and he's way old." Jerry said with a giggle.

"I heard that!" Marc yelled from the basement steps causing both to break out laughing.

"Okay, okay." Danny said as the laughter settled. "13."

"Noooo..." Jerry whined as he folded his arms and assumed his pout stance. "You are designed to be 13, you aren't really 13."

"You got me sport." Danny said beginning to giggle again. "I got to be 28 as a human. That good enough?"

"No." Jerry once again whined. "Oh come on, how old are you?"

"From my first birthday or second?"

"Um, the second is the one where you were in that body, right?"

"Lack of a better way to put it, yeah." Danny said now openly laughing.

"Ok, that one then." Jerry said looking like he was going to blow a fuse anytime now.

"104 years old." Danny replied as he watched Jerry's jaw hit the floor.

"Whoah... Really? That's old!" Jerry got out; just in time to duck the airborne pillow heading in his direction. "13 sounds better tho. You know, less pre-historic." Jerry giggled as he turned to retreat to the basement with Marc.

"That's right, run and hide." Danny giggled out after him. "You're gonna get yours the second I can disconnect from this computer." he shouted as Jerry disappeared down the stairs.

"Hey! Slow down! There are androids trying to sleep down here!" Marc yelled before starting to giggle.

Jerry stopped quick and tip-toed down the last three steps. "Sorry guys." he whispered into the room.

"Oh, that makes up for it." Marc said getting a laugh from Jerry. "Kid, If I didn't know any better, I would swear you have done this all before." he said as he continued scrolling through the information on the screen.

Jerry tilted his head at Marc and smiled. "I have. I mean I've done personalities, and I've assembled androids. I've even made parts myself from scratch. I've just never run any of my own programming." He sat on the edge of the table Joey was strapped to and continued. "I didn't make too many mistakes, did I?"

Marc closed the file he was looking at and smiled. "Yeah, one big one." he said with an evil grin. "You forgot to activate him. He's ready."

"Really? I did it on my own?!?" Jerry shouted excitedly as he hurried to the terminal. "Is he really safe to activate?"

"Yeah." Marc said as he wandered off toward the Panda to check on Kevin. "All I needed to do was edit his speech. Your engine is rough but functional so it didn't need much." Marc turned toward him and smiled. "Just a warning, He's gonna have a lot to learn so he may be a little hard to understand for a while as he progresses."

Jerry hopped off the table and looked at his small creation. "You ready to wake up little guy?" he whispered; a warm smile taking over his expression.

"God, you're just as bad as I am." Marc said with a grin. "I talked to Danny for months before he woke up."

Jerry giggled and approached the terminal. With a deep breath he hovered the mouse over the execute command. "Here goes nothing." he said, closing his eyes and clicking.

Marc focused his attention toward the lifeless form as he whispered to himself, "Please god, give this little guy life."

Jerry looked around the console to see as Joey's body twitched and remained motionless before taking his first breath. "There ya go." He said with a sigh of relief as he slowly walked over to the side of the table and took the little one's hand. "Joey?" he asked, almost as if waking him from a deep sleep. "Joey, it's time little guy."

Joey's rhythmic breathing was broken by another deep breath as his facial expression changed and his eyes flickered open. He stretched, yawned and cleared his throat a few times before locking his gaze on Jerry. "Ih, I is Doe-ee?"

Jerry giggled at the question. "Yep, you are Joey. Do you know who I am?"

"Ahm... Yousa Dahddee?" Joey once again answered with a question. "You isa Doe-ee Dahddee?"

Jerry looked a little surprised. He knew Joey would recognize him as his creator but never anticipated being called 'Daddy'. "Um, yeah." he said with a little hesitation. "I am your Daddy." he finished saying with a smile.

"Congratulations Dr. Owens." Marc said with a smile as he slowly approached the table. "It's a boy!"

"Noo. Isa Doe-ee" Joey said as he tried to sit up, suddenly noticing he was strapped down. "Ahp pwease." he whined while sticking out his lower lip. "Isa geht ahp Dahddee pwease?"

Jerry smiled as he looked up at Marc. "Wanna help me release the restraints?" he asked as he began working on the ones holding Joey's wrists.

"Sure." Marc said with a smile as he approached Joey's ankles and went to work.

Joey's gaze followed Marc and studied every move he made. "Yousa no Dahddee. Who you ihs?" he questioned with wonder showing in his expression. Wonder which Marc didn't expect to see so early on from such a basic personality.

"Well little guy, I'm um..."

"Joey, he's your Uncle Marc." Jerry cut in noticing Marc was a little distracted. "What's wrong Marc?" he asked moving to the other side of the table, not once breaking eye contact with Marc.

"Um, nothing." Marc replied quickly before releasing the last restraint. "I'll talk to you later about it."

"Okay." Jerry answered, getting the feeling something was brewing. "His motor functions are online." he commented as he unlocked the table and swung it to an upright position. "Don't move yet Joey. Lemme come help first."

"Oday Dahddee." Joey said craning his neck to look at his father and enjoying the ride as the table changed position. "Fahnee!" he shouted with a giggle.

"What's so funny?" Jerry asked as he stood in front of him and grabbed his hands.

"Doe-ee moof bahd, Doe-ee no moof." he said with another fit of giggles.

"Oooohhhh." Jerry replied with a smile. "You liked that, huh?"

"Doe-ee wike." he said as he squeezed Jerry's hands.

"Can you stand up?" Jerry asked.

"Isa no faw." Joey replied, displaying a little fear. "Doe-ee no faw dahwn?"

"I won't let you fall." Jerry said with an encouraging smile.

"Pwomise?"

"Yes, I promise." Jerry said as he coaxed Joey into an upright position. "Awesome! You're doing it." Jerry shouted with excitement as Joey took his first step toward his father. "You're walkin buddy."

Joey took a few unsure steps before gaining a little confidence. "Doe-ee no faw dahwn!" he shouted with glee.

"Nice work Jerry." Marc said as he walked back over to the Panda. "Walking is really complicated to program, especially for a beginner."

"Mah Dahddee gimmee wahwkin ahn he gimmee tahwkin ahn fahnnee." Joey announced with pride, causing Marc to scratch his head.

"Dude, he really needs speech therapy." Marc said with a giggle as Jerry shot him an 'Up Yours' glare.

"He said I taught him to walk, talk and giggle. Come on, his speech isn't that bad." Jerry said, his arms sternly crossed.

"As long as you understand him *Daddy*. That's all that matters." Marc answered as he began going over the readouts from the Panda.

"How's Kevin doing?" Jerry asked with concern as he approached the side of the unit, Joey in tow.

"Waddah Kebbim?" Joey asked as he stood on tiptoes trying to look into the big metallic box. "Ah can-nahd see da Kebbim. Ahp Dahddee, Pwease Doe-ee do ahp?"

Jerry knelt down and lifted his son up so he could sit on the unit. "Ooff, I shoulde made you lighter." he said as he exaggerated his strain.

"DAHDDDEE!!!" Joey whined. "Doe-ee no dahd hebbee." he said with a giggle. "Doe-ee widdew." he added as he turned to look inside the box. "Dahd a Kebbim?"

"Yup kidoe, That's Kevin." Jerry answered.

"Kebbim gedda skim?" he asked with amazement.

"Yup, he's getting his skin. Kevin will wake up just like you in a few days." Jerry said as he watched his son's amazed expression.

"Wha happem da Kebbim skim?"

"He never had any."

"Why?"

"Cause he's never been awake, just like you were before."

"Why?"

"Well little guy, Life begins somewhere."

"Whe he ad now?"

"He's here, just not awake yet."

"Kebbim sweepin?"

Jerry looked at Joey and smiled, forgetting to answer.

"Doe-ee ahs doo memmee quessins." Joey said, the excitement beginning to wash out of his expression.

"No way!" Jerry said ruffling Joey's hair. "It's good to ask questions, that's how you learn."

"I wearnded gud, I pwomise." Joey said with a smile.

"That's all I can hope for." Jerry replied with a smile.

"You two are so cute." Marc said before putting the Panda back into auto run.

Joey looked inside the box one more time and smiled. "Nah-nighd Kebbim." he said as he sat back up and smiled at Jerry. "Kebbim dweem happee dweem?"

Marc smiled knowing that he still had to compile Kevin's 'dream' and upload it before he regained consciousness. "Kevin is having very happy dreams." he said, watching Joey's face light up.

"Dahddee, Doe-ee do dahwm. Pwease Dahddee." Joey pleaded as he shuffled to the edge.

"Ok little guy." Jerry replied as he placed his hands beneath each of Joey's arms. "Ok, 1, 2, 3 and umph." he said as he lifted Joey and set him back on his feet."

"Tankoo Dahddee." Joey said as he started to explore the room a little.

"Well guys, I don't know about you but, I'm starving. We gotta eat before it get's too late." Marc announced as he looked at Joey. "Jerry, is he a supplement setup or an intake extraction build?"

"Um, he's an eater." Jerry said tilting his head. "Is that ok? I mean, there weren't too many to choose from, and there was only one non eater in there; but it was in bad shape."

"God no, that was actually the best choice. He will only need to shut down at night to be recharged instead of 3 times a day. That, and you don't need to worry about maintenance fluid changes, supplement intake and waste removal. That was one of the reasons they tried to emulate the V.I. extraction digestive design." Marc said as he spotted Joey and giggled. "Jerry, look at Joey." he whispered.

Jerry turned around and almost burst out laughing. Joey had found a mirror and was standing in front of it making faces. "Whatcha doin over there?" he asked, still trying to stifle his laughter.

"Edat Doe-ee?" he asked as he turned toward Jerry and pointed at the mirror.

"Yup, that's your reflection." Jerry said as he walked over and joined him. "See, and that is Daddy." he smiled and pointed.

"Dahddee skim is diffwen. Cowwew and baddee." He said causing Jerry to even scratch his head. "It's what?"

Joey screwed up his face before turning and grabbing Jerry's shirt. "Pweddee cowwew."

"Oh." Jerry said realizing it would probably be a good idea to find some clothes for his son. "Marc, do we have anything that will fit him?"

Marc stopped in his steps and scratched his head. "I'm not sure. For now you may need to loan him something of yours. We'll find him some clothes later."

"Ok, come on you little nudist. Let's get yer butt covered." Jerry said with a laugh.

"Doe-ee noobishd?" Joey asked as he started to follow Marc up the stairs. "Doe-ee do cwoves wike Dahddee and no be noobishd." He got out as they reached the top of the stairs, getting Danny's attention. Danny was now in the kitchen; cooking something that smelled incredible to the boys. "Dunno who be dahd?" Joey asked as he pointed to Danny.

"He's your Uncle Danny." Jerry said as he smiled at Danny, who turned and just smiled back.

"He's awake, Awesome dude!" Danny said, kneeling down as Joey slowly approached him with a questioning look.

"Do be Unkah Dahnnee?" he asked, stopping so he could look him in the eyes.

"That's me." Danny said as he stood up and smiled. "Someone gonna find some clothes for the poor kid?"

"Doe-ee do geddin cwoves wike ebeebuddee?" Joey asked, causing Danny to giggle.

"Well little guy, I hope so; cause we don't want you catchin a cold." Danny said and then turned back to the stove. "I made spaghetti and it's almost ready guys. Jerry, get Joey something to wear and we'll eat." Danny said as Joey went back over and grabbed his father's hand. "We should plan on turning in early tonight, tomorrow is gonna be a long day."

"Ok, C' mon Joey." Jerry said as the two retreated through the living room.

"He's cute." Danny said as Marc began pulling out the dishes for dinner.

"Yeah but, something's up with his programming. It's weird." Marc answered flatly, gaining Danny's attention.

"Weird? Other than the speech hang up, I think Jerry did an awesome job. His eyes even add to the cute factor." Danny said with a giggle.

"No, I mean there's something up with his personality. He's got more than programming goin on in his head I think; and it's too soon for that to develop normally."

"More?" Danny asked. "What do you mean by more?"

Marc sat down and closed his eyes before answering. "Simple programming can create a questioning program execution. A desire to learn to improve knowledge. Once they get the answer, they accept, file and move on. That's how his program is designed. He showed signs of amazement and wonderment. That's not programmed in, at least not the way he showed it."

"Isn't that a sign that Jerry did well?" Danny asked, now beginning to serve dinner.

"Well, yeah... Kinda. It also means there is something different. I can't explain it." Marc answered as Jerry and Joey ran back into the room.

"Wooket, I gedda cwovin wike Dahddee!" Joey shouted with excitement.

"Awesome, you hungry little guy?" Danny asked as Jerry piled some books in a chair for Joey to sit on.

"Uh-huh!" Joey replied rubbing his belly. "Isa geddim emtee." he said, raising giggles from everyone.

"Well, let's eat, collapse in front of the television for a while and then get some rest. We all gotta be up really early tomorrow." Danny said; surprisingly getting no arguments.

Dinner was fairly quiet; except for the occasional mishap, with fork fulls of spaghetti landing in various places in Joey's area causing lots of laughs. After dinner, Jerry got his son cleaned up as Marc and Danny cleared the dinner dishes; then they all landed in front of the TV for a couple of hours. Realizing it was beginning to get late, Danny dropped the bomb shell.

"Ok guys. We have to get up early." he said as he stretched and yawned.

"Buh Unkah Dannee, Doe-ee no sweepee." Joey whined as Jerry got up and scooped him into a fireman's hold.

"Yes you are." Jerry said with a giggle as he walked him to each of his uncles. "Do kisses."

"Oday, nah-nigh" Joey said as they made a pass and the two disappeared to the basement so Jerry could power down and recharge Joey's cell.

"Dibs on the shower!" Marc giggled as he bolted up the stairs.

"Hey! That's not fair. You got your own shower!" Danny yelled as he chased his brother.

"Yeah, but your's is new and sooo much bigger." Marc shouted back as he swung the door to the bedroom open. "I've been dying to try it out."

Danny crossed his arms and pretended to pout. "Fine, just this once, since you had it put in. But next time I win or you have company." Danny added, getting an evil grin from Marc.

"We can share, it is big enough you know." Marc said as he watched Danny walk over to the bed and fall backwards on it.

"Nah, Just be quick. I'm startin' to get drowsy; and this programming is itching to be incorporated." Danny replied with a grin.

"Then you should go first, 'cause if you doze off you aren't waking back up; and I'm not putting you to bed." Marc said with a laugh.

Danny giggled and half sat up so he could see Marc. "Nope, dibs is dibs. You know the rules."

Marc crossed his arms and shook his head. "Either get your butt in the shower now, or I take you with me. End of discussion."

Danny opened his eyes wide and shook his hands in mock fear. "Oooohhh, look, I'm shakin." he said as he rolled off the bed to dodge Marc, who aimed to pounce his brother but got an armload of blanket instead. "Gotta be faster than that buddy!"

"I will get you, and drag your sorry butt in there if I have to wash it myself." Marc giggled, jumping off the bed and chasing Danny through the room.

Danny leapt over the couch and stood near the windows, laughing so hard he couldn't run. "Du - Dude! Wash your own butt. You can't handle this butt!" he got out with a yelp as Marc landed a flying tackle off the couch and finally hit the mark.

"Just remember where the skin grafts came from." Marc commented with an evil grin. "You are all butt. As a matter of fact, My Butt!" he said as Danny wiggled free.

"Nice mental image bro." Danny giggled. "I'll just go in the bathroom and rub toilet paper all over myself now."

"Get in there and strip mister! That's an order." Marc said in his best military yell. "My butt needs cleaning!"

"GROSS!!!" came a yell from the doorway. "You two are nasty!" Jerry shouted while pretending to dry heave.

"Oh shut up. He's the nasty one." Marc said as the two got up off the floor still laughing. "Danny won't get in the shower and he smells horrible."

"Yeah." Danny pretended to agree while lifting his right arm and sniffing. "Kinda like um... YOUR BUTT!!!" he shouted dodging another attack.

"Yup, you two need serious help." Jerry said in a serious tone as Marc and Danny took turns dodging the other's attacks until they both just collapsed on the bed. The whole time Jerry watched on and laughed hysterically. "Now that you two are done destroying the house, I came up here cause the Panda needed a recalibration. I already started it but just wanted Marc to know it was taken care of."

"Oh sweet, Thanks dude. I was gonna do it after Danny fell asleep." Marc said with a smile. "You can just let it do it's run through if you wana crash. I can go down and do the restart after butt boy takes his shower. That takes almost an hour to run anyway."

"No, you two get washed up. I'll do it. It's not all that late yet and I want to make some small changes to Joey's core programming while he's recharging anyway. So I can finish it up and then head for bed."

"You find problems with Joey?" Danny asked sitting up and crossing his legs.

"Nothing major. I couldn't get him to power down. Kinda like he tried to lock out his override protocols on his own." Jerry said leaning against the door frame. "I just want to make sure he doesn't do any damage when he tries to alter his own programming."

"Or lose control. The good thing is eventually he would run down and pass out. Just like a real kid who doesn't wanna go to bed." Marc said with a smile. "That brain is a little more advanced than that body so it will try to make improvements on it's own. Making Joey even more like a defiant young boy."

Jerry laughed and reached in to grab the doorknob. "Well when Daddy says bedtime, he means it." He said laughing harder. "I got Kevin covered, you two wash butts or whatever it is you androids do for fun. I'll see you in the morning." Jerry closed the door quickly, not allowing the inevitable come back comments.

"You androids?" Danny said holding out his hands and examining them with a hurt look on his face. "I'm an android?"

"Bonehead." Marc shot back. "Get in there now!"

"Ok, but if you come at me with toilet paper. I'm outa there." Danny laughed as he was closely followed into the bathroom. "So I got company then?" he asked with a smile.

"Unless you're shy." Marc said opening the shower door and starting the water.

"Shy? Dude, I don't think there is anything about this body that you don't know about. Hell, you probably know it better than I do now." he said as he pulled off his shirt and looked in the mirror. "It's different than it was before."

Marc kicked off his sneakers and looked at his brother with concern. "Different?"

"Well yeah. Not in a bad way." Danny said as he leaned in and looked at his reflection. "Like, I used to have a couple of birth marks on my face, and even some freckles too. Now my skin is clear of any marks of any kind." he said with a smile. "Even my skin tone is better, just like yours. It's like it's a newer body now."

"With all the work you needed, it pretty much is." Marc said as he smiled and continued to undress. "I can put the marks back if you want. Never even thought of it really."

"Nah." Danny said as he turned away from the mirror. "Looks better now." he said with a smile.

Both finished undressing and hopped into the large 2 head shower. Danny spent more time playing with the spray heads than washing at first before Marc finally got his attention.

"Stop playin around. Come here so I can get your back." he said, hearing Danny's giggle as he backed up to him.

"Yes Daddy." Danny said as he soaped up his own wash cloth and got his front. "It is nicer with help." he added as he relaxed under Marc's soapy massage.

"Yeah, be even nicer when it's my turn." Marc giggled getting nothing but a hum in return.

"K, turn around bro." Danny said once Marc was finished, and began a massage emulating every move Marc made. "Left a pretty big scar." Danny commented; seeing the squarish scar on Marc's right butt cheek.

"It was worth it." Marc said, not wanting Danny to feel bad. "I could repair the damaged skin to get rid of it, but I kinda wanna keep it like it is."

"I guess." Danny replied running his fingers over the less than perfect patch of skin. "Just kinda stands out since every inch of your body is perfect, until you get here."

"Nobody's perfect." Marc quipped back. "Besides, scars are like trophies. Every one has a story and that one tells the story of when I got a family. I'm keepin it."

Danny didn't say another word as he finished the backs of Marc's legs and hung up the wash cloth. He took one more look at the scar then wrapped his arms around his brother. "That's why I don't want this body altered to look exactly like it did. You gave it to me."

Down in the basement, Jerry was happily bouncing between the Panda's controls and the terminal connected to his son. He finished off what he was working on for Joey and uploaded it. While waiting for the upload to finish and the Panda to finish it's calibration cycle, he rested his elbows on the cover and looked in on Kevin.

"You're doing really well bro." He half whispered as he looked up and down Kevin's entire structure making a mental note of the progress that had occurred. "I can't be your brother." he sighed, once again gazing at what would soon be Kevin's face. "I had a brother and it wouldn't be fair to replace him."

"Had a brother?" A voice broke into his thoughts. It was the same voice that visited him in his dreams now and then.

"What the..." Jerry said in a startled tone as he spun around and gasped at what he saw. "Davie?" he questioned, now face to face with the image of his lost brother. Davie's image was partially transparent; with a gold glow which made it almost blinding to look at him in the darkness of the basement.

"Yeah Booger Brain, it's me." Davie replied with a smile. "A friend told me you needed someone to talk to." he said as he walked to a chair and sat down. "You've been really busy I hear."

Jerry couldn't believe what he was seeing. "This can't be happening." he said as he closed his eyes real tight and opened them as if to adjust them.

"It can when the right people get involved for the right reasons." the semitransparent image said before sitting back. "I'm here for two reasons, well it's more like three but the third is sorta like an extra."

Jerry's eyes began to tear as he just stared in disbelief. "Can I touch you?" he managed to whisper as he watched every move Davie made.

"I don't know." Davie replied with a smile and got back up out of his chair. "Put your hand out." he said, kneeling down in front of his little brother and bringing his hand up to touch them palm to palm. Both brothers smiled as their hands came together and didn't pass through one another. "That answers that." Davie said pulling Jerry into a hug. "You've gotten so big." he said as Jerry buried his face in his older brother's neck and began to cry.

"I miss you so much." Jerry gasped out between sobs.

"I miss you too." Davie said with a little hoarseness building in his voice. "But I can see you everyday you know." he added as he held Jerry out at arms length. "That's one of the reasons I was allowed to let you see me."

"I don't get it, someone let you come here to talk to me?" Jerry asked, using the sleeve of his shirt to wipe away the tears.

"Yeah, like I said, we've gotta talk." Davie replied, sitting back on the floor and crossing his legs. Jerry, following his lead, did the same. "First thing we gotta talk about is your new brother."

"He's not my brother. I wouldn't ever try to replace you." Jerry said with a forced smile that quickly faded as he saw his older brother's disappointed look.

"You really think that's how I would see it? As being replaced?" Davie asked, folding his arms. "You still think like a dufus sometimes, you know that?" he asked, getting the smirk from Jerry that he had hoped for; knowing in life, the two loved to pick on one another. "You couldn't replace me you little monkey, not even if you tried."

"But..." Jerry began to say before being cut off.

"No buts. I will always be your big bro. You could grow to be 400 years old and I would still be your big bro. If along the way you find family, and they care about you as much as you care about them, they'll be my family too. That couldn't do anything but make me proud of you, and love you even more." he said with a smile as he watched Jerry's eyes begin to well up once again. "Besides, Kevin is going to be very important to you. He is gonna need an older brother in his life and you may just be the mini-man for the job you know."

"He's older than I am." Jerry said looking toward the floor.

"If that's how you wanna look at it then, yeah he is. I have a feeling that he isn't going to see it that way though." Davie said with a smile. "You just have to remember the kind of people androids are inside. They don't hold much value in physical age like humans do."

"Oh." Jerry said looking over toward the Panda unit. "So you won't be upset?"

"I could only be upset if you turned someone away who really looked up to you because you thought I would be upset about it." Davie said pointing at the table Joey slept on. "Including him."

"He's just an android though." Jerry said looking at his sleeping creation. "He's not like the others."

"Really?" Davie said as he stood up and approached the table. Placing his hand over the little one's head he smiled and continued "What makes him less than the others? Just the fact that you created him?"

Jerry stood and shook his head. "Well, he's not as good. I mean he could never be as perfect as the others. I got him to work but he won't ever be much more than just some kid's programming." Jerry grumbled as he approached the table knowing in his heart that he hoped to be wrong.

"You don't believe that. I know you don't." Davie said turning to face Jerry. "He deserves a chance to live just like anyone else. He may have started out '*some kid's programming*' but you can't be sure what he could grow to become in time." Davie said reaching over to run his fingers down Joey's cheek. "He's so much more than you think, and he loves you. Not because he's programmed to." Davie said looking at his brother. "I never questioned why you loved me or even how, I just tried to be the best big brother I could be for you. You are his Daddy and he deserves to be more than just code and wire. He is what he is."

"He is what he is?" Jerry looked up questioningly.

"I can't answer what that means, no one can yet. But he deserves the chance to be all he can, just like your brother there in the machine. You'll understand soon enough." Davie answered, ruffling Jerry's hair.

"They are the reason you came here?" Jerry asked as Davie turned and sat back down in the chair.

"Two of the reasons. The last one is a bit more complicated." he said gaining Jerry's attention.

Still wrapped in towels, Marc and Danny came out of the bathroom. "I'll grab us a couple of pairs of shorts to sleep in. I got these really light track shorts a few months ago. They feel like silk almost." Marc said as he began to dig through the drawers.

"You keep clothes up here?" Danny asked as he sat down on the corner of the bed and watched Marc dig through drawers that appeared to be full of brand new clothes.

"Yeah, I started buying new stuff after we found you. I mean it's cool that we are both designed the same and can wear the same clothes; but I thought it would be nice if you had some you could call your own." Marc said as he pulled out two pairs of lightweight shorts. "Red or Blue?" he asked, holding them at arms length.

"Red. That's my favorite color." Danny said with a smile, getting a grin from Marc.

"Cool, cause blue is mine." Marc giggled. "So there won't be fighting over one thing at least." he added as he tossed the shorts to his brother.

"Wow, you weren't kidding. These are nice." Danny said after putting them on and lying back on the bed. "You can pick my clothes anytime."

"Yeah, so I can steal them." Marc giggled as he threw his towel over the back of a chair, and then hopped up onto the bed next to Danny.

"Lights Off." Danny said, turning off the overhead lighting as he reached for the bedside lamp and turned it on. "Way to bright in here." he added as both rolled to look out the windows overlooking the bay. "Look." Danny whispered as he pointed to a flashing light in the distance. "Fishing boat?"

Marc leaned in and followed Danny's gaze to the same spot. "Yup, gotta be a 30 footer at least."

Danny watched as the boat slowly worked its way north before realizing Marc was exceptionally quiet. He half rolled back over to face his brother and grinned as their eyes locked on each other. "You watchin the boat, or me?" he whispered with a giggle.

"A little of both I guess." Marc replied with a smirk. "Both are just as amazing."

"Amazing? You feelin ok?" Danny asked jokingly as he put his hand on Marc's forehead. "No fever." He got out before Marc grabbed his pillow, and hit Danny in the face with a soft thump.

"Yeah, Amazing." he said as he curled back up with his pillow. "Just a few short days ago, I wasn't even sure you would be, um..."

"Alive?" Danny finished Marc's thought with a warm smile getting a nod in agreement as his answer. "Well, you do good work." he said, looking down the length of himself to his feet.

"Yeah." was Marc's only reply as he began to look out over the ocean again. "So many memories tied to that view." he said with a sigh, drawing Danny's attention back to the view. "If I do have a soul, I think right here and now it's at peace."

"What do you mean *if*?" Danny questioned rolling back over to face Marc. "How could you even question whether you do or don't have a soul?" he continued. "To me its obvious you do."

Marc looked at his brother warmly then back at the fishing boat which was slowly vanishing from view. "I'll never really know, for myself I mean." he said as his eyes suddenly appeared to be confused. "Did you set a fire earlier?"

"No." Danny answered rolling back over and seeing what Marc had spotted. "What is that?" he asked, sitting up as a gold glow seemed to get brighter, but not from the fireplace.

Both boys gasped as the glow began to form into what looked like a boy. "You are seeing the same thing, right?" Marc asked as he rubbed his eyes and refocused on the form.

"Uh... Yeah." Danny said, now both sitting up and staring. "Hello?" Danny meekly got out. "Is someone there?"

The form finished solidifying into a older teen with a glowing halo and enormous golden wings. "Hello Danny, Marc." the form replied as he walked over and sat on the edge of the bed. "You might say I'm here." he added with a giggle.

Danny looked at Marc then back at the form with astonishment. "Um... Who are you?"

The face of the glowing image grinned before stiffening his back into a noble stance and saying "I'm Saint Mikey of Urbandale, Protector of Gay and Abandoned Youth, at your service sir!" He giggled as he watched the confusion on both boys faces grow. "You're probably wondering why I'm here." he continued; trying to gain their attention.

"Well, yeah; you could say that." Marc said in a cautious tone with Danny nodding in agreement.

"I was in the neighborhood." Saint Mikey got out with a laugh before realizing the joke was lost. "I brought a friend here to visit his brother, and overheard the conversation up here. I usually don't evesdrop, but I couldn't help but to hear what Marc said."

"About having a soul?" Marc questioned softly.

"Yeah." replied the angel as he turned and faced Marc directly. "I should explain something to you." he said with a serious tone. "I have been watching you, both of you, for a while now. It isn't as if I watch over everyone my little brothers come in contact with, but you two are different than the rest."

Marc scratched his head as Danny asked the question he was thinking.

"Your little brothers?"

Mikey smiled and sat back. "In life, my name was Michael Patrick Short."

Danny's mouth dropped open as he shook his head. "Short? As in Clan Short?"

"Yup, my family. That's what brought me here tonight." he replied as he seemed to relax. "You are about to do something amazing. Something you can't even comprehend yet."

"What do you mean?" Danny asked.

"I won't go into details cause it will all be clear soon enough." he replied. "But not if you doubt yourselves like Marc is now."

Marc's face flushed at being singled out. "But, I'm not human. Only human's have a true spirit. I may appear to have a soul or a purpose in life but it's all just programming. Not like him." Marc stated with teary eyes as he motioned to his brother.

"Do you really believe that?" Mikey asked as he reached over and wiped a stray tear from Marc's cheek. He held the tear on the side of his finger and turned his hand so Marc could see it. "What caused this then?"

Marc looked into the perfect droplet on Mikey's hand. The golden glow emanating from Mikey seemed to be reflected through the tear which shone as little golden beams. "Programmed response." he sniffled as his eyes met with Mikey's loving gaze.

"Oh." Mikey said as he looked at the tear in his hand. "Turn it off then."

Marc tilted his head questioningly as the angel looked back up at him. "I can't."

"But there was a time when you could, wasn't there?" Mikey said with a warm smile.

"Well, yeah. Kinda. " Marc sniffled once again. "Something happened long ago, I'm not sure exactly how but, I lost control to just eliminate emotional response."

Mikey looked upward and sighed. "I know when it happened, and even why." he said as he waved his hand over the single tear on his finger; causing it's glow to become red in color. "That was the day our father chose for you." he continued, as the tear seemed to evaporate into a red mist and vanish. "The day you truly became one of his children." he added with a smile.

"That was a horrible day." Marc replied, as he uncontrollably ran through the memories of the day his first father told him what he really was...

..."Pick a color; sun yellow or powder blue."

He looked totally confused as he stared up at me, answering almost helplessly. "Ah, Powder blue. I suppose."

"Thank you." I replied without emotion before turning to go into the house. "I'm going to my room."

His eyes followed me, but he didn't say a word. I couldn't control what I was doing, almost as if another personality took the wheel while I watched from the back seat. I heard him cry as I walked up the stairs and my heart exploded but, I couldn't cry. That should be my response but, I can't do it.

I threw myself on the bed and just laid still, staring at the ceiling as a voice in my head told me it would all be fine. Uncle John even looked in on me a couple of times. I wanted so bad to run into his arms and cry, but couldn't force myself to move.

It was clear to me for a second. In so many ways, I was becoming 'One'. Two completely separate; programmed personalities merging to become one.

Hours passed, the silence in the house was deafening. "Did he go to bed?" I asked the silence of the room as a tear began to form. I suddenly realized that the other personality used to control when those

things happened in the background. Pain, fear, sadness, happiness, love and hate. All controlled by a running program I wasn't even aware was there before tonight. Now suddenly happening, uncontrollably. All on it's own.

A noise from Uncle John's room; I could hear clearly again now that the noise of my confusion is fading. He must have gone to the bathroom. I should go to him. I still can't move.

Finally, I sit up. I am in control. There is one voice in my mind, my voice and no other. It is gone. Tears began to come. I couldn't stop them, I didn't want to. I cried until I felt there were no more tears. I have to go to him. I love him. I really do.

I tiptoe through the darkness into his room and pull back the covers. He's rocking back and forth on his side and moaning. Like a child having a nightmare. I gently touch his back, but he jerks away from my touch.

"Everything's okay old man. I'm here and everything's going to be okay." I whispered to him.

He froze and seemed to hold his breath for a while before finally whispering

"I know what you are. Stop trying to fool me. I know you're just another nightmare so you can go way." His whisper turned to a low growl; "Please ... leave ... me ... alone!"

I leaned in to whisper into his ear now beginning to cry again. "Uncle John. Please. It's really me. Marc, your Godson. Your boy Marc. Please Uncle John, you're scaring me again." I said as I wrapped one arm around him and cuddled up to his back and buried my face in his neck and sniffled. "Please Uncle John. Please." I whimpered. "Please don't leave me. I'm so afraid. I need you."

The silence from him was almost unbearable. As if he was frightened of me. I hurt the one person in the world I should never have hurt. "Marc?" Came his voice finally with a hesitation. "You ... you are not a nightmare? ... are you?"

"No Uncle John. It's me." I replied as I kissed the back of his left ear. "I'm sorry I took so long coming to bed but I'm okay now and I just want us to be together. I love you so much."

Mikey sat back and simply listened as Marc sniffled his way through telling his story. Once Marc seemed to have finished, he smiled warmly. "All acts of programming?"

Marc wiped the tears from his eyes with the backs of his hands before shrugging. "What else could it be?"

Danny shifted his position and wrapped his arm around Marc's shoulder, which Marc quickly cuddled into. "If I could bet my existence on it, I would. There is no question in my mind that you have a soul, just as real as mine or anyone else's." Danny said, kissing Marc on the forehead. "And a heart of gold as well."

Mikey sat forward and extended his wings a bit, the show causing an amazed gasp from the two androids before smiling. "No need to bet anything. Marc, you are one of God's creations. I have access to the Book Of Life, and your name has been in it for a long time. Besides, if you didn't have a soul, how could I have heard you?"

Marc continued to stare into Mikey's eyes, his doubt being washed away by the love he felt from his stare. "I never thought of stuff like that as being a prayer. I guess it could be, huh?"

"You have asked for so little in your lifetime but you have given so much. You love, and it is genuine. You would freely give your life to save another. All these things are known about you from much higher than I am. Trust me when I say you may be of mechanical build, but in no way does that mean you are any less in the eyes of the one who decided to give you true life. It may have taken a while to develop, as normally is the case with a life form born of human hands, but a life form none the less." Mikey said finally seeing a weak smile creep it's way across Marc's face. "People are born with a soul. Androids earn them as they mature, and yours shines bright Marc."

Danny gave Marc's shoulder a squeeze before looking back at Mikey questioningly. "Who were you visiting? You said you brought a friend to visit his brother, didn't you?"

"Sure did, You had a very conflicted little man in your team. I just happened to know his brother so, I brought him to visit." Mikey said with a smile.

"Jerry?" Marc asked as he laid his head in Danny's lap and got comfortable.

"Yes, he felt he was betraying his love for his brother somehow by adopting this new family." Mikey stated.

"I thought that was cleared up?" Danny said in a disappointed tone.

"Only one person who could clear that up, and he's with him right now." Mikey said as he stood up. "I should check on them and then be on our way. You two should get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a trying day for you all."

"Saint Mikey?" Marc squeaked out as he tried to get up quickly.

"Mikey is cool bro." He replied with a smile as Marc jumped out of bed and rushed over to face his new friend.

Marc tilted his head and then grinned. "Mikey, can I give you a hug? I mean, is that ok?"

Mikey didn't answer but just opened his arms as a silent invitation, one Marc didn't have to think about accepting.

"Thank you. For everything." Marc whispered into the angel's ear as he snuck in a small kiss on his cheek.

"You have nothing to thank me for. Everything you have in life you've earned." Mikey said with a squeeze. "There are other things in life you need to be more open with." he added in little more than a

whisper, so Danny wouldn't overhear. "Be honest with your brother, he is destined to be with you for a very long time." Mikey said with a wink.

Marc looked at Danny and smiled before looking back at Mikey and stepping back. "You know, don't you?"

"Your secret is safe, but I think in time it won't be much of a secret. You will know when tho." He said as he giggled, watching Marc blush. "And yes." he continued. "Your Uncle John has been watching, and is so proud of you." Mikey added as he watched a content grin develop on Marc's face.

"Mikey? Will you be around? I mean..." Danny started to ask as Mikey began to fade.

"Just call my name, I always hear my family." Mikey said as he faded into nothingness.

Marc smiled and crossed his arms as he stared into the spot where Mikey was standing, not saying a word.

"You ok?" Danny asked as Marc turned and slowly climbed back into bed.

"More than ok." he replied, kissing Danny on the cheek and snuggling up close. "I love you." he added before Danny could say another word.

Danny smiled and settled back into his pillow. "I love you too bro."

Jerry sat silently, trying to swallow everything his brother had told him; before gasping at the golden glow appearing behind his brother. "Whoah, who's he?"

Davie turned and smiled. "Jerry, I want you to meet My friend, Saint Mikey. He's the one I told you about."

Jerry got up and held out his hand. "Thank you Saint Mikey, for bringing my brother to see me, and everything."

Mikey took Jerry's hand. "No need to thank me." he said with a smile. "Just Mikey is cool." he added as he turned his attention to Davie. "We need to get going, everything go ok down here?"

"Yeah, looks like there's one more to add to the list though." Davie replied, motioning towards Joey.

"List?" Jerry questioned as both began to laugh.

"Yeah, it's this growing list of family we've been putting together." Mikey said with a giggle.

"Joey? You think he's really gonna be family?" Jerry asked in an excited tone.

"Why not? He calls you Daddy so that makes him my nephew." Davie said with a grin.

Mikey smiled and took Davie's hand in his own. "We need to get going. Tomorrow is gonna be a busy day, for them and for us." he added with a wink.

"Mikey? Can Davie visit once in a while?" Jerry asked in a pleading tone of voice.

"I don't see why not. I mean it's not up to me but I think he will be able to now and then." Mikey replied with a smile. "You should get some sleep. Tomorrow is gonna be a tough one for you guys."

Jerry rushed and gave Mikey a hug and thanked him once again, then rushed over to his brother and wrapped him in the tightest hug he could. "I love you Davie!" he said with his face buried in his chest.

"I love you too Booger Brain." Davie giggled. "I'll see you soon." he said as he released his brother and stood back beside Mikey.

"Booger Brain?" Mikey asked with a laugh.

"Long story, I'll explain later." Davie said with a giggle. "Jerry, if you get a chance could you oil my baseball glove? It's getting dried out just sitting there." he asked, getting a huge smile from Jerry as the two vanished.

"You have been watching!" Jerry said in astonishment as he looked up at the ceiling. "I will! I promise!" he shouted after them.

Danny sat up from bed as if woken from a nightmare. "My head." he mumbled as he held the sides of his head tight.

"What's wrong bro?" Marc asked with a stretch and a yawn.

"I have a headache I think." Danny replied, feeling miserable from the pain but laughing at the idea that an android could even have one.

"It'll pass." Marc said as he sat up. "It's caused by your neural processor overheating during a large amount of work. Give it about 15 minutes and it'll be gone." Marc added as he groggily swung his feet out of the bed to stumble to the bathroom.

Danny watched his brother leave the room with a grin as he tried to force his brain to do as little as possible to relieve the pain quicker. "This bites bro! Why does it have to really hurt?"

"Cause if you were to overheat due to a malfunction, the pain of a headache will make you stop doing anything and just sit for a few. It kinda forces you to be more inactive while the problem is repaired." Marc said as he began to relieve himself, the sound pushing Danny over the edge and in pain or not, he ran in to do the same.

"What time is it?" Marc yawned out as he finished draining his bladder and grabbed his tooth brush.

"Can you see the alarm clock from there?" Danny asked with his eyes closed, still holding the side of his head with his free hand.

"Um..." Marc said as he poked his head around the corner. "Almost 2:00." he stated and then froze. "Oh my god, we forgot to set the alarm!" he said in a panic as he began to violently brush his teeth. "Clan Short is supposed to be here at any time now!" he spit out as he continued to brush his teeth. "I gotta get food ready and stuff!"

Danny finished relieving himself and walked over to the sink just as Marc spit into the sink and thrust his toothbrush into Danny's hand. "I used yours by accident." Marc grinned. Danny looked at the toothbrush, and shrugged his shoulders as he put more toothpaste on it and began to brush his own.

Marc rushed and stumbled as he ripped clothes out of the dresser for both and then hurried to get dressed. "I'm gonna get those sandwiches and stuff ready so there is something for everyone to pick at." Marc shouted as Danny finished in the bathroom and laughed at Marc. "What?" Marc, who was now sitting on the floor asked with a scowl.

"Your shirt is on backwards." Danny giggled out as Marc pulled his arms back into the shirt and spun it around.

"There." he said as he stood and held his arms out to his sides. "Look ok?" he asked, getting another giggle from his brother. "What Now?!?"

"Nothing, will you relax? Go get the stuff Mrs. Owens brought over out and ready. I'll make sure Jerry and Joey are up and ready. I'll also check on Kevin." Danny said with a smile as he walked over to his brother and looked him in the eye. He then proceeded to reach over and zip up the fly on Marc's jeans. "I got your back, take a deep breath and everything will be fine." he said to his now blushing, but calmer brother.

"What would I do without you?" Marc asked as he pulled Danny into a hug.

Danny smiled and sat on the bed to get dressed while answering, "I dunno. Walk around poorly dressed with a breeze in your shorts maybe?" he got out just as Marc opened the door; causing Marc to turn and stick his tongue out before closing it behind himself.

Danny pulled off his shorts and threw them on the floor with the ones Marc was wearing before grabbing the clothes his brother laid, or more like threw, out for him. "Bright Pink Bikini Briefs?" Danny questioned out loud before looking at the tag. "Bubblegum." he stated as his brain brought up one of Marc's memories, taking him by surprise. With an evil grin, Danny went to the dresser and put the briefs back and pulled out a deep purple pair instead. He checked the tag before putting them on and finished dressing.

Downstairs all was relatively quiet. Joey and Jerry were happily watching the end of a cartoon as Danny reached the bottom of the staircase. "Morning Guys." Danny said while massaging his temples, his headache beginning to fade.

"Monin Unkah Dahnnee!" Joey shouted and slammed into a hug.

"You guys are dressed. Been up long?" Danny asked as he saw Jerry still rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

"No." Jerry replied. "I fell asleep downstairs. I woke Joey, and got him showered and dressed and fed, then we came in here to wait like a minute before Marc came rushing through like his butt was on fire." he said with a giggle. "I'm still tired." he added with a stretch and a yawn.

Danny smiled and looked at the impish little android attached to his leg. "Joey, why don't you see if Daddy will take you for a walk on the beach. The ocean air will help him wake up."

Joey gave Danny an ear to ear smile before jumping in Jerry's lap. "Dahddee, Unkah Dahnnee sed da beesh id a waked ahp an we godda wock." he said with a toothy smile that broke Jerry's serious expression.

"Ok, ok." Jerry said laughing. "Let's go take a walk." Jerry smiled at Danny and the two opened the slider to go out to the beach. "We'll be right out here." Jerry said before closing the door.

Danny opened the door to the basement before looking into the kitchen. "You need a hand bro?" he asked as he saw his brother rushing back and forth to the refrigerator.

"Nope." Marc replied with a smile. "Mrs. Owens brought a ton of sandwiches and stuff. I think we're gonna be set. You checking on Kevin?"

"Yeah, I'll just be a minute. When is the crowd supposed to start arriving?" Danny asked.

"The shuttle won't be for another couple of hours, but the Clan should be sending a security team first. That could be anytime now." Marc replied as he saw his brother rub his temples. "Head still bothering you?"

"Nah, It's just about gone now. I'm just still trying to get over the fact that I actually had a headache. It's just weird." Danny grinned.

"It felt that real?" Marc asked.

"Yeah, Grade A Migraine. Whoever programmed the feeling got it right on the mark." Danny replied as he walked down the stairs.

"Cool." Marc said as he continued to lay out plates of food.

"Morning My Shadow." Danny said as he brought up the Panda's display and checked the readings. "A bit too much Co2 in there buddy." he said with a smile as he adjusted the settings and set the unit back on auto. "I'm gonna give your uncle a hand upstairs." Danny said patting the top of the unit and heading for the stairs. "Be back later."

"Just a carbon dioxide build up, everything else was perfect." Danny said as a rumble from outside caught his attention.

"Good god!" Marc yelled from the kitchen. "Jerry! What are you doing out there?" he continued to attempt to yell above the noise that was becoming a roar from the beach.

"What is that?" Danny shouted as the two brothers almost collided at the slider leading to the back deck. Both boys grabbed the handle and threw the door open only to see a dust cloud from the beach. Jerry and Joey were frozen in their positions on the back deck, mouths hung wide open in awe.

"Unca Mawhk. It a pwane" Joey said jumping to his feet and grabbing Marc's hand.

"I guess that would be them." Danny said as the dust cloud began to settle and a group of kids began unloading. "You really think that food Mrs. Owens brought over is gonna be enough?." Danny asked with a giggle getting an *'Up Yours'* glare from Marc.

Joey was about ready to explode with excitement, bouncing between Danny and Marc, finally landing in Jerry's lap, who at this point was still sitting on the steps stunned. "Dahdee, it a biwdee" Joey shouted, pointing just above the shuttle where what appeared to be an eagle was circling.

"Huh?" Was all Jerry could force out before feeling a squeeze on his shoulder.

"Dude, get it together. It's a shuttle. You've seen em before. We need you to be on this planet with us, ok?" Marc said, gaining a grin from Danny.

"Don't worry sport, I've never seen anything like this and have a feeling we need to get used to it." Danny added as he grabbed Marc's hand and walked down the steps. "We have guests gentlemen, um... Jerry. That means get yur butt movin."

"C' mon Dahdee. Wahnna see da biwdie!" Joey added, now half dragging Jerry off the steps.

Reaching the group. Marc was approached by a uniformed strawberry blond boy, just a bit shorter than himself. *'They're all kids'* he thought to himself before holding his hand out. "That's some door bell you guys got there. I thought we were having an earthquake."

"Doctor Furst, I presume?" the youth replied with a giggle. "I'm JJ Richardson, Head of Security for Clan Short."

"Great meeting you." Marc said as he shook the boy's hand. "Marc is cool tho, unless there is some rule that we all need to pretend to be exceptionally professional and stuff." he added, gaining a wide smile from his guest. "Much larger group than I expected."

"You should see it when we all show up, Marc!" JJ giggled as he was joined by a silver-blond haired boy. "This is my boyfriend and Cory's lil' bro, Adam. Why don't y'all come on over to the shuttle and I'll introduce everyone."

"Cool." Marc replied. "Introductions as a group would be much easier I'm guessing." Marc said with a wide smile. "C'mon guys, let's meet everyone. Jerry, grab Joey."

As they approached the shuttle, two adults emerged from the craft; one carrying a sandy-blond haired boy who appeared to be about six years old. JJ led Marc and his group over to the adults. "Marc, This is

Doctor Austin Michaels, Federation Youth Services Medical Director. The leech on his side is his son Ricky."

Marc shook the doctors hand and smiled at Ricky. "Nice to meet you. I'll save the rest of the introductions to save some time cause I have a feeling this is gonna take a while with this group."

The other adult stuck out his hand. "Hello Marc, I'm Lieutenant Matthew Barnes, Federation Security. Just call me Matt, if you'll come up here with me I'll introduce the savages to you."

"Ok Lieutenant, we're right behind you." Marc said with a smile as they turned and approached the group.

As they headed up the ramp, Ricky whispered loud enough for them to hear. "Daddy, when are we gonna getta see the an'roids?"

Marc and Danny overheard the little ones comments and smiled. Danny turned so he was face to face with Ricky and smiled. "You came here to see androids?"

"Uh huh." Ricky responded shyly. "Where 'dey at?"

"They're here." Danny said as he put his hand on Joey's shoulder. "He's an android."

"Ima wittew anroid" Joey said straightening his back with pride. "Unca Mawhk and Unca Dahnnee isa anroid too" he added with a smile.

"Nu uhh! You're just big kids!" Ricky exclaimed. Just then, Ricky's eagle Duke swooped in and landed on Danny's shoulder. Ricky looked at Duke for a second, then grinned. "No way!! For real Duke??!! Why they look like kids then?"

Danny stood frozen as the bird seemed to nod his head at the little one. "Hi little guy." Danny carefully whispered, drawing Joey's attention to his shoulder.

"Edat you biwdee Wickee" Joey asked as he looked back at Ricky. "He pwettee."

"You can pet him." Ricky grinned. "Why do you look like big boys?"

Danny knelt down so Joey could pet Duke, as he looked up at Ricky and smiled. "Androids are supposed to look like Boys. Well we are, some look like big people too."

"Ricky." Marc cut in. "Can you look into Danny's eyes?"

Ricky nodded his head. "Uh-huh."

"If you look real close, you can see they are different than yours. They look really cool but the little black circle in the middle looks kinda like a star instead of a circle. Even Joey has different eyes but they look real like mine. His are different cause one is blue and one is green." Marc added as Joey opened his eyes wide.

"Mah Dahddee pikt em cuz day is coow dat way." he grinned, getting a giggle from Ricky.

Ricky jumped down out of his dad's arms and looked at Danny's eyes. "They look kinda funny. Duke says he can kinda look into Danny and your head; but not Joey's, Marc. Whyzatt?"

"Mikey." Marc said as he looked at Danny getting a knowing smile. "A friend told me that an android isn't like a person. A person is born with a soul, which is sorta what Duke can read or feel. An android needs to grow a little before he is more than just programming. Joey is less than a whole day old, so he has some growing and learning to do still."

"You met Unca' Mikey!! KEWL!!!" Ricky yelled. "I kinda unnerstan' - Duke's 'splainin' it to me."

Doc Austin knelt down to Ricky. "Okay kiddo, are you done picking on our hosts yet?"

Ricky looked over at his father with an innocent look. "What you mean, daddy?"

Joey walked over to stand next to Ricky and with the same look added "He wadnt pikin on nobody. Mah Dahddee sed it gud to ax kwesins." Joey stated, finishing his sentence with a smile and a nod.

"It sounds like you have a very smart daddy, little one." Doc Austin said as he rustled the little androids hair." That's the best way to learn and grow. You should be really proud to have a daddy that smart."

Joey smiled wide as he looked over at Jerry, who had been extremely quiet, but was now turning a deep shade of red. "Dahdee?" He asked as he tilted his head. "Id you awight? You face wook funnee."

Marc looked at Jerry and began to giggle. "Doc, his daddy is definitely a smart guy, and maybe a little modest as well." he said as he shook Jerry's shoulder.

Jerry smiled and raised his hand for a quick wave. "Thanks Doctor, I try to do my best."

"He's usually loud and uncontrollable. I think Fatherhood is messin up something in that human brain of his." Marc spouted off earning an ice cold stare from Jerry. "That's more like it." he added with a grin.

Matt shook his head. "C' mon guys, lets get the introductions out of the way." He turned his head and emitted a shrill whistle. "Alright you clowns! Get your tongues out of your boyfriend's ears and listen up! Line up single file, and keep your hands to yourselves!"

Marc took Matt's lead and turned to his group. "Us too guys."

Joey looked at Marc with a horrified look. "Bu, Unca Mawhk. Dobudy gut a tung in mah eaw. Dat yuckee." he said with his hands on his hips, earning laughs from everyone in earshot.

Once everyone was lined up, Matt began the introductions. "You have officially been invaded by Clan Short, guys! You've already met the head of security, JJ, and his partner Adam; these guys with them are their sons Harley, Joey, and Brad. Next up are my little angels Antonio, Noah, and Caleb. The guy holding Antonio's hand is his boyfriend Byron, liaison between Clan Short and Camp Little Eagle."

Danny grabbed Marc's arm and a bit louder than he wanted to whispered. "His boyfriend?" Looking at Marc's blank expression and then at Matt once realizing his question was heard. "You did say boyfriend, Right?"

Just as Matt turned to respond to Danny, Joey grabbed Jerry's shirt and excitedly shouted, "Cam wittew eegew! Wike dook!" breaking the tension and getting giggles from the gang.

Matt giggled at Joey before responding to Danny's question. "Relax, Danny; it's not what it appears. Antonio has an unique medical condition that makes him age at 1/4 the rate of normal humans. If anything, it's the reverse of what it appears."

"Whoah." Danny said raising his eyebrows. "I'm sorry guys. I didn't mean to say it like that. I mean it just surprised me and, well... I didn't mean.."

"Danny has the ability to stuff his foot, shoe and even a portion of his leg in his mouth." Marc stuck in with an evil grin. "It's a rare condition older androids have." he just barely got out before having to dodge Danny's attempted poke in the side.

"I'm sorry guys, I didn't mean anything by it." Danny said looking at the couple.

Antonio smiled. "It's okay; I guess you and me have something in common - we both are older than we look. I'm really 36 years old; how's about you?"

Danny began to blush. "Well, as an android I am 104. That's not including the 28 years I had before as a human."

"Mah Gawd! You'n be oler than them thar hills!" one of the boys commented from the back of the line.

Matt looked up in surprise. "Thomas Clyde Short! Get that skinny butt of yours up here and apologize before I kick it into next week!"

A twelve year old boy with shaggy brown hair shuffled up to Danny. "I'm sorry y'all. I was'n thinkin' when I yelled that. I dinna mean nuthin' bad."

"No biggie man." Danny said putting his arm across his shoulder.

"Nice to meet ya face to face Tommy!" Marc said as Jerry smiled wide and waved.

Joey walked over to Tommy and pulled on his shirt to get his attention. "I dun see da hiwws. Jus da wattah."

Tommy grinned. "Thanks y'all; I had to come to meet y'uns. You'uns need to meet my lil'bro - Ty, c'mon up her' an' bring Kyle. Joey, them hills isa sayin', kinda like older 'n dirt. Ain't nutin' you can see, it'd be just a sayin' from the hills."

"Oh" Joey responded as he stepped back and leaned his back against Danny, craning his neck to look up to him. "Unca Dahnnee, you nevw sed you had diwty hiwws. I nebba seen dem."

Danny covered his face trying to stifle a laugh. "Oh gawd." Was all he could get out as Jerry crept up and knelt down next to his son.

"No li'l buddy, Tommy said Uncle Danny is older than the dirt and the hills."

"Oh." He replied looking confused. "I gedda see da diwty hiwws, dun I?"

Just then, Kyle and Tyler joined them. Tyler walked over and put his arm over Joey's shoulder. "Joey, if Danny is like my big bros, the only thing dirty on him is his mind! Dirty hills are just like the beach, you ain't missin' nothin'. I'm Ty, and this is my boyfriend Kyle; you wanna come stand with us while these old guys finish introducing each other?"

"Can I Dahddee?" Joey asked Jerry with a pleading look. "I bee gud. I pwomis."

"Sure, just don't give them a hard time." Jerry said as Joey gave him a quick hug before all three ran back toward the shuttle.

Doc Austin grinned as the three boys ran off. "I guess it's time for you to meet the rest of my kids! You already know the tornado here," he chuckled as he rustled Ricky's hair, "but you still haven't met his brothers. Gabe is busy in Orlando with another project, but his other brothers came along to help. From left to right, I give you what we adults affectionately call 'double-double trouble'; a parent's worst nightmare, twins dating twins!" Doc Austin laughed as all four boys groaned, then continued. "First up, my son Benji and his boyfriend Sammy Martin. Next to Sammy is his brother 'Bastian; and finally my other son Eli ..."

Doc Austin paused for a second. "Elijah Christian Michaels!!! Just WHAT are you doing???"

Everyone looked over at Eli, who was standing on his one leg. "Sorry Dad, it was gettin' uncomfortable in the shuttle, so I took it off." He stuck two fingers from his only hand in his mouth and whistled, a few seconds later, his prosthetic leg came bouncing out, followed by the three 8 year olds.

"DAHDEE!!! Wooket da weg!!!" Joey shouted as all three giggled and chased it to Eli. "Dat you weg? Mah Dahddee cud fiss it."

Eli grinned. "Yeah, that's what has replaced my leg, lil' guy. There ain't any real way to 'fix' it though, I just have this fake one so it looks normal when I stand."

Joey watched as Sebastian knelt and reattached Eli's prosthesis. Once 'Bastian stood back up, Joey ran his hand up and down his leg, glancing between Eli's and his own. "Dahddee!" He said with tears welling up in his eyes.

Jerry looked over and saw as the first tear ran down his cheek. "Marc, something's wrong with Joey!" he shouted as he ran full speed and pulled his son into a hug. "You ok?"

"Dahddee, eeweeye weg id bwoke. You can fiss, pwease." Joey choked out as Marc stood over the two and smiled at Eli.

"He's never cried before." Marc said as he ruffled Jerry's hair. "Joey's right tho, I'm not so sure about his biological knowledge of humans, but Jerry is a wiz when it comes to android anatomy." he continued. "It's never been allowed as a medical procedure, but with the right equipment and the two of us we could build replacements that would be compatible with your biological makeup."

Doc Austin looked at Marc in shock. "Do you mean to tell me you have the facilities here to attempt such a procedure, Doctor? Additionally, how could he possibly control such a thing? You said replacements; are you considering his arm too? There's not enough shoulder socket left to attach to!"

Marc looked at Eli and smiled before turning his attention to Doc Austin. "It's been done, just not on a public level and not entire limbs. The Scientist that designed Danny's entire structure and neuropathways did it. Danny was derived from a prosthetic hand that was privately designed by Dr. Strafford to replace a prosthetic hand... for himself. He never sold his idea cause he had bigger ideas in mind" Marc said as he shot Danny a smile. "Danny's entire structure and neuropathways were designed to be fully compatible with the human components that were incorporated. I don't have the facilities here, but I could perform the procedure myself and Jerry could design the implants with no problem. The only real difference between Danny's build and an implant would be that they need to be self contained units." he said as he watched the doctor's eyes widen.

"Hold that thought, Doctor." Doc Austin replied as he gave JJ a meaningful glance. As soon as JJ nodded, Doc Austin continued. "Why don't you introduce your staff to us, then I've got an idea that will surprise you."

"Oh, yeah. That would be nice, wouldn't it?" Marc replied as he smiled. "Danny, would you handle this?" he said as he scooped Joey up in his arms."

"No problem." Danny replied with a smile. "Guys, You must get a laugh at the surprised looks on people's faces when you explain your positions and purpose." he started with an evil grin. "I'm happy to say you are all in good company here. I'll start with our newest addition to our family. The little one over there is Joey which stands for '*Jerry Owens Experimental Imprint Year 2*'; meaning he is less than 24 hours old and the first creation of our youngest Doctor. Which leads me to Joey's father; the blond headed kid next to Eli is Jerry Owens, well Doctor Jerald Owens, but he may throw a fit if you go around calling him that. He's not only a robotics wiz, but also one of the only humans we have on staff here. Holding his son is my brother Marc; which stands for '*Multi-Model Adolescent Research Companion*'. Marc is the only remaining director of a company that used to be known as Vision Industries; the company that designed us. He's on record as Doctor Marc Furst; probably Marcus for all I know." Danny added as Marc shot him a dirty look. "He was the first android created incorporating true 'A.I.'. I am Danny, the oldest of the bunch. My name stands for '*Developmental Artificial intelligence Networked Neuro imaged Youth*'; and I was the first fully functional E.A.I. android created. The doctor that created me was a pure genius, but borderline insane. My personality is derived directly from a human being, meaning I am a real person in a synthetic body. There is one more like me who isn't online yet. He is still in the process of having his body brought online. His name is Kevin meaning '*Kinetically Enhanced Virtual Interactive Neuro-image*' and is almost as old as I am." Danny said letting out a sigh of relief for getting as much info out as possible.

Doc Austin grinned. "You really said a mouthful there! Knowing Cory, they will probably be here shortly; if you don't mind I have an idea for some local facilities which might be more suited to your needs if you really want to tackle the project you suggested. Antonio, Byron, Eli and Benji will handle placing the portable unit wherever you want it. I think JJ has something to say though."

JJ stepped forward, obviously all business. "Doctor Furst; the level of work you are suggesting might possibly be considered unlawful by Terran authorities. With your permission, I wish to instigate procedures to protect yourself and your staff from any possibility of interruption by local authorities."

"Illegal? How could helping him be Illegal?" Marc asked with confusion showing in his expression.

"There are still laws on the books in the United States banning cybernetics work at advanced levels; they are usually not enforced, but could easily be brought back into use if someone was to learn that self-aware androids are again being produced. Those same laws are the reason why implants such as you suggested for Elijah are not actively being designed and produced. With your approval, I am capable of negating any possibility of those laws being used against you. May I ask the limits of your property?"

Marc nodded his head in agreement. "I never thought of that dude. You definitely have my permission and our gratitude. Our property extends to cover beach front on the east and north sides of the house, and should include the house and property next door since it is Jerry's home with his family. That also includes beachfront on only the east side of their property." Then Marc turned his attention back to Doc Austin. "To answer your first question, yes we would be happy to help Eli, if this is what he wants. With a facility suited to perform surgical procedures as well as physical therapy, we would be equipped to perform the procedures."

JJ looked over at Eli. "Bro, I know you understand what's been said. It's your body; what do you think?"

Eli thought it over. "It'd be kinda kewl to get a working leg back; this fake one is a pain in the butt sometimes. Dad ain't worried, so I feel pretty safe. If Marc says he can do it, I'm willing to try."

JJ nodded. "Okay bro; I'm gonna make it happen for ya'." JJ then turned to the group of kids behind them. "Listen up! Condition Yellow; Security secure the grounds. I.T. and Intelligence, prepare the premises for surveillance. Tommy, contact the Vulcan Embassy; inform them to pull all deeds to these properties and place them under Clan Short diplomatic protection. Designate these premises as Clan Short Artificial Intelligence Division. Medical, prepare the portable bed for arrival of Patriarch Short."

Doc Austin closed his communicator and interrupted. "Tommy, include the Charleston Naval Hospital and surrounding grounds in that. I just got it for Clan use."

"You heard the Doc, Tommy. Lets move it guys!"

Danny walked over to Marc and tapped him on the shoulder. "Um... What just happened here?" he said as the group broke up and got right to work.

Marc stood watching as his face went pale. "Well, it looks like Vision Industries is all done now; for starters."

Matt walked over and placed a hand on each of the boy's shoulders. "I take it you just got a little shock there. Let me fill you in on what JJ did; sometimes he's as bad as Cory when it comes to doing things. First off, Tommy is in the process of having your property declared Vulcan territory under the stewardship of Clan Short. Assuming the Vulcan's normal efficiency, I'd guess in about fifteen minutes the FBI

won't even be able to walk up your driveway - not that they would try after what was done to them when they tried to take Eli and Benji when I was bringing them home from the hospital. On top of that, all of you are now not only members of Clan Short, but you actually have your own division. That means all of the resources of the Clan are yours now. While I was checking to make sure the old Naval Hospital was still not in use, I heard JJ's orders and instructed Federation Medical to transfer it to the Clan as a goodwill gesture. Since it is your building now, you can do whatever you need to take care of yourselves, and get set up to help Eli. I would like to ask a favor though; would you be willing to lease a couple of floors to Federation Youth Services for us to use instead of public medical facilities in this region?"

"Of course we would. I would be really happy if we would be able to help. We do have partial funding for the upkeep of V.I. since it had to remain active as the only entity responsible for A.I. welfare. I could put that towards the equipment that we would need to create a functional A.I. ward and lab." Marc responded as he began running finances through his head.

Matt smiled. "Forget about finances. You have the resources of Vulcan at your disposal now - if you need equipment for R&D or ongoing support just ask and you will get it."

Danny looked at his brother, who stood with his mouth wide open and unable to move and giggled. "Dude, I'm not sure exactly what is going on but, equipment is being moved into the house. I'm gonna go help." He was answered by a slow nod from Marc and a smile from Matt. "I'll see ya when you get your chin off the ground bro." Danny added with a giggle and ran for the front door. "Caleb right?" he asked the blond boy kneeling on the steps who seemed to be preoccupied with an overturned container; one that seemed to have been holding a large amount of computer equipment, which was now scattered across the steps.

"Oh Hi." Caleb replied with a smile, standing up and holding out his hand. "I've been hoping to meet you."

"Meet me?" Danny replied with a confused look as he shook Caleb's hand.

"Well, you guys I meant. I had to do some research when we found out the guys found Austin and he needed help." Caleb added as a brown haired boy that Danny remembered was another of Matt's boys walked up with an armload of more equipment and grinned.

"Yeah, he found a living computer to hack." the boy said with an evil giggle as Caleb shot him an ice cold glare before beginning to blush.

"Well, I am curious about how a positronic brain processes and stores information, if *that* is what you mean." Caleb replied getting a laugh from the other boy.

"I was only kiddin, by the way I'm Noah." The boy said as he shifted the large carton and held his hand out to Danny. "Blushing boy's bro." he added with a laugh.

Danny shook his hand and noticed Caleb's embarrassed grin, "Hi Noah." he said with a smile. "You know, if your brother is looking for a living computer to hack, he's in the right place to learn."

Noah rolled his eyes and began to carry his cargo into the front door, while saying over his shoulder in a playful tone; "Okay, but no one will sleep tonight if you get him started. Don't say I didn't warn ya."

Caleb smiled at Danny before shooting back; "You won't need to worry 'bout me keeping you awake if you're sleeping in the shuttle." he said with a giggle as he knelt down to pick up the carton and loose equipment that had fallen out of it. After fumbling the box a couple of times he looked at Danny with an embarrassed grin. "Guess I shoulda put this mess in two boxes."

"Lemme give you a hand." Danny replied with a smile as he leaned over to pick up the box, but gasped as it began to levitate on it's own. "What in the?"

"Told you it would be to heavy at the house dude." Eli giggled as he walked up the stairs with Joey in tow.

"You're doing that?" Danny asked as he looked at the box, which now seemed to be floating into the house.

"Cool, huh?" Caleb said as he led the formation inside.

"Very." Danny answered, patting Eli on the back as he took up the rear. "Looks like you've got help too." he said with a smile as he ruffled Joey's hair. "He's not getting in the way is he?"

"Nah, he's cool." Eli said with a smile. "You should see us all at home, trust me he's no trouble."

"Eeweeye sed id gunnah wewk ahn cawwey de hebbie tuff." Joey announced proudly, beaming up at his new friend.

"You wanna show your Uncle what you can do little guy?" Eli asked as the box lowered itself on down onto the kitchen floor. "Go ahead, I'm getting kinda tired anyway." Eli said as Joey's smile got bright and he ran over to the box with Eli watching.

"Unkah Dahnnee, wookett I do!" he shouted as he lifted the box effortlessly. "I id twon!"

"You sure are strong sport!" Danny said as he grinned at Eli who responded with a wink.

"Doctor... um..." Noah began.

"Page, but Danny is fine guys."

"Cool, we need to know where this stuff is going Danny." Noah said, as he pointed to the equipment that had been brought in and was scattered all over the kitchen.

"Ok." Danny replied scratching his head. "Depends on what it is, we have two labs so, anything related to the medical work being done on Austin will be in the lower lab, which is through the door right down the hall and to your left." Danny pointed out the direction. "There is also access to it from outside on the north side of the house if anything is too large to fit through this door. If you have computers or anything that would be used for communications or need network access, the upper lab is through this door right here and should be a good place to set up. The new terminal that you guys sent is already up and running in there."

Caleb smiled as the others began sorting through the boxes. "Danny, you guys already have the house networked, right?"

"Well, the old network from the company that created us is up and running here. There are three computers in the upper lab, two in the lower lab plus the Mainframe system, one in Marc's bedroom and one in mine." Danny stopped to think a second before adding "Oh. There's also three personal computers in the house, they are all kinda old too though."

Caleb grinned and pulled out a PADD and started tapping on it's panel. "You guys are gonna need some upgraded equipment here then too." he said as Noah and Eli returned from the basement.

"We are gonna need to move some of the stuff that's down there to set up the Bio Bed and support equipment." Noah said to Danny as Eli looked into the Upper lab.

"Same in here. I'll get started." Eli said as he began to clear more space near the Vulcan Terminal.

"No problem, just don't disconnect the PANDA, Kevin's activation sequence can't be interrupted." Danny announced as the traffic began to pick up through the kitchen.

"Guys, The Bio-bed is going down stairs the rest up here in their lab. Antonio, you and Benji help Eli prepare the lab for the terminals, the rest of you are with me." Eli said as he nodded to Danny and Caleb and then retreated down the basement steps with his crew as the others filed off into the lab.

"Um..." Danny started to say before Caleb started to giggle.

"It's nuts now, but in about an hour it will look like all this equipment was here all along. They are the best." Caleb said with a smile that beamed pride. "Will replacing the existing network be a problem?"

"I don't think so. I mean you would have to pass that through Marc since he has been the one to maintain it all these years." Danny replied; knowing Marc would probably agree but he just wanted to be safe.

"Ok, then. I'll check with him and go over my plans before doing anything." Caleb replied as Tommy came in the front door.

"Where y'all puttin the main office hub?" Tommy asked, all business.

Caleb looked up from the PADD and smiled, simply pointed toward the open door and then went right back to work.

Danny was just about to take a walk downstairs to just check up, when Eli came out of the lab with Joey on his shoulders and his crew following him. "You guys need a hand?" Danny asked as Eli and Joey looked like they were more *'hard at play'* than *'hard at work'*.

"Nope, just need to start bringing in the wiring we're gonna need. Joey is gonna set up the system for us, right?" Eli said, looking up to the giggling little monkey on his shoulders.

"I gedda hep Eeweey pud in da pooter." Joey said with a giggle as they rushed out the door, leaving Danny shaking his head and giggling.

"Pooter?" Caleb giggled as he looked up at Danny. "I better recheck the inventory, I don't remember a Pooter being packed." he said as he motioned toward the door. "I'm gonna talk to Marc about this configuration. I hope he likes it."

"Talking computer with Marc? Not only will he love it, but may be your new best friend for it." Danny said with a smile as he turned toward the basement door and was once again stopped.

"Danny, ya'll got a call from Cory in tha lab." Tommy shouted from the doorway. "Lookn' like we is gunna be busy, shortly."

Notes from the Author:

This has been one heck of an experience so far. Not only have I learned to appreciate the hard work that goes into co-writing with ACfan, but our androids are slowly learning that they have a purpose. One that they can only begin to understand now. At this point, I'm guessing only "Saint Mikey" and Davie have a clear picture of what the future holds. Stay tuned, things promise to get interesting once the Lafayette arrives and our gang finally meets 'Face to Face'!

Just a reminder... Those of you who haven't read "Memories" may not fully understand what this group is capable of or even have a clue what surprises are in store for our small family. You just gotta read it! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us>

Hold tight; Chapter 7 - Invasion S. Carolina (Part 2) is already on it's way!

Merry Christmas from our Gang, now known as "Clan Short; AI Division!"

Notes from the Editing Team :

Our Pups are still kinda off-line. I did a careful read through for now but, know readability would be much better with their help. We'll gang on and wait til' they return :) "Missin you guys!"

Notes from ACFan:

DUDE!! This is total trip!! I'm not sure how many of you have spotted it yet, but the characters have taken over once again! I've been a fan of this story since the first day the idea to start it was mentioned, and am honored to be able to work with JeffP as the boys take life to the next stage. Was this planned? No, but there are very few good stories which are written exactly to plan. It takes a special kind of au-

thor to roll with any storyline which develops as he is writing; fortunately Jeff can do that and the story has become more realistic in the process.

Stand by for an exciting ride; the next chapter looks to be as full of surprises as this one! We managed to do something I never thought I'd see - we had a really good start on Chapter 7 well before Chapter 6 was officially complete -- I'd recommend you decide now who to accuse of supergluing you to the seat once Chapter 7 is done; I doubt you will want to move until you reach the end!

Merry Christmas from myself and the boys of Clan Short!

"Chapter 7 - Invasion: S. Carolina (Part 2)"

Co-Written By: ACFan

Special Contribution By: Multimapper

"Oh, ok. Thanks bro." Danny replied as Tommy rushed for the door and Danny went in to accept the call. "Um Cory... Hi Bro!" Danny said with a little hesitation.

"Hey Danny; it sounds like y'all've been having fun! How's it going down there?"

Danny looked at the equipment that had been moved out of the way to make room for newer equipment and shook his head. "Goin ok? I mean it's getting kinda nuts dow... Hold on a sec." he said as he rushed to the door "Caleb, it's down stairs... No, no, tell Noah he has access to power in the lower lab." Danny added, getting an inaudible response he seemed to be happy with. "Sorry dude, your crew doesn't mess around."

"I'm almost afraid to ... SEAN! LOOK OUT FOR THE SATELLITES!!! ... Sorry, as I was saying, I'm almost afraid to ask. IF this bonehead don't kill us trying to get there, we should be down in about twenty minutes."

Danny scowled and looked at his watch. "It's 4:10 pm now. Guess you guys are runnin the time envelope right to it's edge. Looks like we will be ready to receive Austin in about 15 minutes. I have no idea how you timed it that close, but I'm really impressed."

"Lets just say I'm learning the Vulcan procedures for scheduling. I'll let you get back to work, just make sure the beach is clear about the time we are coming in."

"No prob, I think security has that base covered already. I don't even think insects are able to get on or off the property right now." Danny said with a giggle as Noah stuck his head in the door and waved, seeing Cory on the viewer.

"We need your help Danny." he whispered loud enough to be heard on the other end.

"Be right there." Danny said turning back to the viewer. "We'll be ready for you. Just don't forget there is another shuttle on the beach."

"No problem Danny. I'll let you get back to work; if Eli or Benji is there have them meet us to move Austin out. Talk to you shortly."

"You got it. Talk to you soon Cor, tell Sean no more playin chicken with satellites." Danny replied with a giggle.

Cory giggled back. "Will do. Later dude!" and then screen returned to it's standby mode.

"Something wrong?" Danny turned and asked Noah.

"Well, for us to install the support equipment in that half of the lab, we need to disconnect two of the computers. I don't want to go ahead and do it without checking first." Noah said with a grin.

"I can help there." Danny said as he accessed Marc's files and looked up how the system was configured. "Show me which ones dude." he said to Noah as he lead the way to the basement.

Out on the beach, Matt and Doc Austin were still talking with Marc and Jerry when Caleb stepped into the conversation.

"This is unreal." Marc just said looking at Jerry. "Your Mom is gonna flip when she get's home." he added with a giggle.

"Marc, can I borrow you for a minute?" Caleb asked, getting a smile from the group.

"Sure dude, what's up?" Marc turned and replied.

"Well, it's about the existing network." Caleb said with a cringe. "It's all too old to interface with the equipment we should add. I mapped out what we would need to fully upgrade your house. This way all of your computers can safely network with the Federation and Vulcan Terminals and you can monitor all equipment, as well as access information over both systems. It also will give you communications access in any room that already is outfitted with a system." he said handing the PADD to Marc. "This is what I have so far. My question is, can you work without the terminals in place where they are now?"

Marc looked at the plans Caleb had mapped out in awe. "You want to replace everything?" he asked in shock.

Caleb looked at the display and pointed out the wiring. "If we replace the existing network, we can use the existing configuration. But the older computers won't be able to handle what I'm planning for them." he said with a grin. "The new system can take the place of the old one functionally with no problem. I'd just need your help transferring programs and files into the new systems. That and decide what functions each will perform."

"I'll work on that with your team. Considering the age of some of the files from the old company network, a simple archive would work well I think." Marc said as he looked up and saw Matt, Doc Austin and Jerry silently watching the two pour over the plans like two kids at Christmas time.

"I can help too." Jerry said with a grin.

"We have a team then." Caleb said being cut off by a loud roar and Joey's excited squeal.

"Wookett da waddah!" Joey almost screamed over the roar as a shuttle craft bombed right past the property kicking up a huge rooster tail close enough to mist the beach.

Marc looked at Caleb and then back out over the bay. "Well, if none of the neighbors knew something was up before, I'll bet they do now." he got out as the two started to giggle.

"Clear the beach Guys!" Matt yelled out as the shuttle craft turned back in their direction for it's final approach. "Eli, Benji; get ready to receive and move." he added, getting nods from both.

"Id wainin Dahddee" Joey yelled as Eli put him down next to his father to get ready.

"Yup! In a minute it's gonna be dusty too. You may wanna close your eyes when they land little guy." Jerry shouted as the roar of the incoming shuttle grew louder again as it set down on the beach and powered down.

The group waited a minute for the dust to clear before making their way toward the shuttle. Just as everyone regrouped, the door opened and what appeared to be all of the passengers literally ran out of the back and dropped to their knees.

"Mapp? Why is dey kishin da samb." Joey asked Matt.

"Well little guy, once you've been for a ride in a shuttle Sean is piloting and is in a rush, you really learn to appreciate the sand." he said as both Matt and Jerry began to laugh with Joey still looking confused.

A minute after the beginning of the ground worshipping ceremony, three boys walked out of the shuttle and stopped with 'Oh Please' looks on their faces. Just as Cory was about to ask what the deal was, a young Vulcan boy looked over his shoulder and announced seriously "We shall be just a moment, Patriarch. We must complete our ritual of appreciation for reaching the ground with all appendages still attached to our bodies, despite our pilot's best attempts to arrive otherwise."

Cory looked at Gavin with a grin. "Good point, Xain!" he replied as he dove to the ground with Gavin following suit.

Sean blushed and shook his head. "I'll get you later, Cor!" he announced, earning a hearty round of laughter from all the onlookers.

"Ok guys." Matt announced. "The sand is happy to see you too, we have work to do." he added with a laugh as the team began to giggle and stand up.

"Cory!" Marc shouted as he filtered to the front of the group. "We have everything ready. Can I see him?"

Cory looked at Sean and then back at Marc with a smile. "Sure, we gotta make sure he's gonna be ok to move. Sean you wanna handle the group out here?" he asked, giggling when Sean closed his eyes and nodded.

"Handle them? Yeah right." Sean replied with a giggle as Cory led Marc inside.

Inside the shuttle Marc froze at the sight. The Bio bed was up and running with Austin and Timmy appearing to be fast asleep as they approached. "He wouldn't let us take him away from Austin." Cory said with a smile as Marc looked the two over.

"Who's that Daddy?" Timmy stretched and just about whispered to Cory.

"That's Austin's Daddy munchkin. He's gonna help." Cory said as Marc smiled at him then began to look over the controls.

"More systems have failed." Marc said as his eyes began to cloud with tears. "I don't even know how he's kept himself from going into full shutdown, but he's fighting." he added with a snuffle.

"I been talkin to him." Timmy said as he tightened his cuddle with Austin. "He's scared an asked me to keep talkin."

Cory smiled at his son then put his hand on Marc's shoulder. "We aren't too late are we?"

Marc stood up and cleared his throat as he wiped his eyes with the backs of his hands. "Thanks to Timmy, I don't think so." he said leaning over to Timmy and placing a kiss on his forehead. "Thank you little guy." he whispered as Timmy snuggled back up and closed his eyes. "If I ever find out who is responsible for this, I swear on my life I'll..." Marc growled out with his fists clenched tight as the hand on his shoulder squeezed and stopped him in mid sentence.

"When *we* find out who is responsible, I promise they will be punished Marc." Cory said with a serious expression on his face before being cut off by an alert beep from the bio bed.

Marc dropped to his knees and looked over the controls. "We gotta move him now!" he said as he stood back up. "His main respiratory system is failing..."

Cory's jaw dropped open as he simply turned and ran to the open door. "ELI! BENJI! ANTONIO!" he yelled. "Get in here NOW! We've got to get Austin moved yesterday, he's shutting down!"

Danny took one look at Jerry, then they both sprinted towards the house. Eli and Benji didn't even bother with running, they literally flew into the shuttle with Antonio right on their heels. The rest of the boys cleared a path just in time, as the cot off of the shuttle's bio-bed came flying out; Timmy and Austin were onboard, with Antonio, Cory, and Marc running behind it and Benji and Eli alongside. Sean tapped Gavin on the shoulder as he ran by, motioning for him to join them. They sprinted into the house through the door being held by Jerry; as soon as they were inside Jerry came in right behind them.

Down in the basement, there was a bustle of activity as everyone rushed to finish clearing the area as Austin and Timmy were quickly moved to the new bio bed and set in place.

"Cor, you may want to take Timmy for now." Marc said as he rushed to bring the lab's systems online.

Cory reached over and lifted Timmy off of the bed. "C'mon kiddo, you gotta move while the Docs help Austin. You can watch, but you need to stay out of the way."

Jerry rushed toward the bed before realizing Joey was attempting to keep up with him. "Cory, could you take my son too. They can sit up on the Panda unit over there so they can see what's going on without getting run over or anything."

Cory looked down at the 8 year old glued to Jerry's side. "Hey there little guy; this is Timmy. You wanna go sit with him and watch?"

Joey looked up at Cory then back at his father. "Oday Dahddee. Dimmee an meesid wib Kebbim."

Cory smiled as he guided the boy over to where Jerry had indicated for them to sit. "What's your name, little guy?"

Joey slowly walked up to the two with a lost expression. "Im Doe-ee." He said more to his feet than to Cory.

Before Cory could say anything, Antonio interjected "Joey, it's okay. Timmy and Cory are good people; they are friends."

"Oday Domeeo." Joey said with a forced grin. "Id Dahddee fissen da boy on da beb?"

Cory placed a hand on Joey's shoulder. "Yes Joey, your daddy is helping fix Austin. You get to watch, ain't that kewl?"

Joey grinned as he walked up to the Panda. "Mah Dahddee fiss aneeffin. No bwoked wen he fiss no moe." He said as he looked up at Cory. "Cam yoo hep mee ahp, pweasee?"

Cory smiled as he lifted Joey onto the unit. "That's great to know, Joey!"

Gavin had joined them, and was lifting Timmy up. Timmy saw the confused look on Gavin's face and translated. "He said his Daddy can fix anythin' – it ain't broke no more once he fixes it!" Timmy announced proudly.

Gavin smiled. "Thanks, little one. I still need to get used to the differences in the way you talk."

Just then Jerry broke into the conversation. "Gavin, Cory, We're gonna need you guys to help salvage the parts we need for Austin. Danny is grabbing the unit to remove them from and will show you exactly what we need."

Danny rolled 2 computers over to the table and motioned for them to join him. "There's a full torso here that is in operational condition." He said as he found the unit he was looking for and set it on the table Joey was assembled on. "You guys have all the tools you need here and the schematics on the computers will walk you through their removal procedures." he added pointing at the screen. "Which one of you guys is the most comfortable doing this?"

Cory looked at Gavin, and saw the shock on his face. "Gavin, if you're comfortable taking the stuff out, I'll work the computer and give you the instructions."

Gavin relaxed. "That'd be fine; I've been taking micro-engineering in school, so removal should be easy."

Danny smiled. "Awesome, start with the regeneration circuit. If they need any other parts, they'll just yell for them. You can do a search on these systems for the schematics you may need," He said as he left to help out with Austin.

Cory brought up the schematics for the regeneration circuit, and was going over them with Gavin before beginning. Gavin suddenly froze, then turned and yelled "Danny! Get over here!"

Danny ran over as Gavin pointed to a spot on the screen. Just as Danny arrived, Cory nodded his head. "I agree Gavin. Good catch."

"What's wrong?" Danny asked as he approached the table.

Cory nodded to Gavin. Gavin smiled an acknowledgement then replied. "We were going over the schematics, and we noticed that the regeneration circuit has one major input to it – the bio-feedback module. If I'm reading this right, that module could be bad too."

Cory added in his thoughts. "From what I see, that module is the only one that could have overdriven the regen circuit. I think they should be replaced as a set to play it safe."

Danny quickly reviewed the schematics in his head. "You might be right; go ahead and grab both of them. You might want to get the fibre interconnect harness for them too; just to play it safe."

As Danny returned to help Antonio, Cory took one more look at the screen. "I'm ready when you are dude, let's hit it!"

"Unkah Dahnnee, Dimmy id cowd." Joey shouted getting Danny's attention.

Danny looked quick and saw Sean looking around to find something to cover his son. He reached under the table Cory and Gavin were working at and pulled out a blanket and tossed it to Sean with a smile as he retreated to give Antonio and Marc a hand.

Sean grabbed the blanket out of midair and walked over to the Panda. "Here ya go, munchkin. This better?" Sean asked as he wrapped Timmy in the blanket.

"Yeah." Timmy replied soberly. "Austin says it hurts bad, Pappa. Make it stop."

Marc overheard Timmy's comment and gave Danny a serious look before staring at the abused body on the table in front of him and clenching his jaw. "He's in pain Danny." Marc said as he looked at Antonio and then back at Danny. "Protocols didn't shut down pain reception." Marc stared at Austin once more and just muttered, "Get me the communications cable bro, I'm goin in to do it myself."

Danny's eyes opened wide as he took a deep breath and nodded his head. "Alright bro." he said as he grabbed the cable off of a nearby computer cart and began connecting Austin while Marc prepared to make the connection on his own end.

"Just keep on him. I'll put out as many fires in there as I have to until you guys get him stable. Just hurry." Marc said noticing the concerned look on Danny's face. "I'll be okay bro, I promise."

"I'll have someone monitor your life signs just so his brain doesn't force yours to shut down." Danny said as he snapped the cable connector in place.

"Worry about him, I'll be fine. Please just worry about him!" Marc said as he sat in the chair, completed the connection and closed his eyes.

"Stubborn." Danny said to Antonio as they both shrugged their shoulders and went right back to work.

Marc suddenly found himself in his familiar interface area and his eyes opened wide at the sight in front of him. Surrounded with a red colored glow, a boy was curled up in the fetal position crying. Deep gasping sobs were echoing throughout the area as Marc slowly approached him.

"Austin?" he said softly as he risked a brief touch on the boy's shoulder.

"I... It hurts. M... m... make it stop... Please make it stop!" Austin cried out as Marc attempted to override Austin's reception of pain by defeating his nervous system's communication.

"Damn it." Marc grumbled; frustrated as he realized that the system was locked and wouldn't allow his override. "Come on guys, hurry." he said as he sat on the floor and continued to rub Austin's back. "Austin, can you hear me?"

"Yeah." Austin whimpered.

"Can you sit up?" Marc asked with a concerned but soft tone.

"Yeah." Austin once again whimpered out as he slowly sat up and looked into Marc's eyes. "I know you?"

"If your memories are intact since first activation, you might." Marc said as both cringed and Austin sat up rigid in pain.

Marc shuffled over and pulled Austin into a hug as he attempted to divert as much pain as he could to himself but was unable to completely. "Austin, there is a whole team of people trying to fix this, just hang on for me."

"I.. is Timmy there still?" he asked as another jolt of pain made him gasp and begin to shiver.

Marc couldn't hold the tears back but remained strong. "He's there and is waiting to meet you along with the rest of his family." Marc said with a sniffle.

"I.. am I gonna die?" Austin asked breaking down in tears causing Marc to begin to lose his resolve and the tears began to come.

"Not if I can help it." Marc replied as he whispered into Austin's ear "Now that I've found you I'm not losing you."

Both cringed again as Marc continued to divert control of Austin's functions; now finally gaining some control to stop his pain as Austin seemed to relax in his arms.

"Give me control Austin." he whispered. "Let my brain take over."

"I can't." Austin cried. "I have no control. It will hurt you." he whispered with a snuffle. "Why would you want my pain?"

"You've been in pain too long already." Marc said as he began to get a warm feeling and the red glow began to surround him as well as Austin. "That's good son, as physical systems come back, let me control them."

"You're him." Austin gasped and looked up. "I dream about you sometimes." he added. "Who are you?"

"I hoped you would remember me." Marc said with a smile as the glow surrounding Austin began to become white and what appeared to be indian war paint slowly became visible on his face; while at the same time the glow around Marc became a deeper shade of red. Marc tilted his head in question but continued, "I'm your father, I was the on..." he got out before a surge of pain like he had never felt before hit suddenly and screaming out, he fell over and curled up into a ball.

"No!!!" Austin screamed as he watched Marc try to take control but appeared to not be able to. *'Help!'* he thought as he watched helplessly. "What's happened?" he asked, watching as Marc's body heaved.

"Neur... Neuro... Tran..." Marc got out.

"My Neuro-transmitter? The interface? Is it failing?" Austin asked as he closed his eyes and suddenly looked frustrated. "I can't see it, you have control. '

Marc screamed again but was able to remain calm enough to get out. "Timmy, tell Timmy!"

"Yeah!" Austin said as he closed his eyes and thought, "Timmy, please hear me! I need a new Neuro-Transmitter Interface. They gotta hurry cause Mine is failing and is hurting... um... my father.'

Suddenly he could hear Timmy's voice and he sighed with relief. "I just told Daddy."

Austin began rubbing Marc's back as he helplessly watched. "Why did you do this? I'm hurting you." he said as he began to cry.

Suddenly, Timmy spoke up from the other side of the room. "Daddy!!! Austin says he needs a new-o-train-meter in-her-face. He says hurry."

Danny slapped his forehead. "SHIT! Cory, get me a neurotransmitter interface module NOW!"

Cory and Gavin were already halfway back to the table. "Just give me a hand!" Gavin said as they reached the table. "It's right next to where the regen was at; I remember it from the prints!"

Gavin grumbled as he looked inside. "Shaft this! It'd take too long to pull just that module! Cory, grab a box; I'm pulling the backplane for the left systems interface board – modules and all."

By the time Cory had the box in his hands, Gavin had pulled out a board with six modules on it. He laid in the box, and they hurried back to Danny's side.

"What the hell?" Danny spit out, seeing the contents of the box. "Um, you two went a little overboard on that order buddy." he added with a giggle. "Could you at least dismantle that so I can install it?"

Gavin giggled. "I thought you might say that!" he replied as he pulled the tools out of his back pocket. "We might as well replace all of them though since we have them out!"

"Probably not a bad idea dude, but we gotta do it quickly. If Marc did what I think he did, he's in an awful lot of pain right now." Danny said as he watched Gavin go right to work. "Give me a second tho, I need to make the incision a little larger."

By the time Danny was ready, Gavin had the first module off and was starting on another. Danny grabbed it and quickly interchanged it with the old one – as fast as he was done with one, Gavin had the next one ready. Just as he made the final connection, Sean spoke up.

"Danny, you might want to hurry! Marc's temp just spiked to 104.7, and his blood pressure is dropping"

Danny nodded to Sean and looked at Marc's body. "Should be functioning now, ball's in your court bro."

Antonio watched the bio bed's display and suddenly shouted, "Systems are activating, we did it!"

The boys erupted into cheers, high-fiving whoever was nearest. Jerry reached over the table and grabbed Danny's shoulders. "We DID it!! He's gonna be okay!! Thanks for letting me help, Danny!"

Joey got into the excitement and shouted. "ISA BEEN DA AWSIN AHN UNKAH DOO EET!!!"

The entire room hushed and turned to face the two boys who were now wrapped up together in the blanket with ear-to-ear grins.

"Yeah, what he sed!" Timmy shouted as everyone broke out in laughter which instantly returned to cheers and more high fives as both Timmy and Austin's warpaint faded away.

Danny watched and smiled at the outburst, not fully understanding the whole "War Paint" idea before returning to complete closing Austin's incisions.

"Sean, how's Marc doin?" Danny asked as he finished showing Antonio how to pick up where he was leaving off and knelt down next to Sean.

Sean scanned the tricorder's display. "He's starting to stabilize; but he had me worried; the display here was going nuts."

Danny shook his head and looked over Sean's shoulder at the display. "He's run down now. I'm not exactly sure what he did in there but he cut it close."

"Is he gonna be okay dude?" Sean asked with worry. "Some of the readings I saw coulda killed someone."

"He's beginning to stabilize so his systems are recovering. We need for him to attempt to regain consciousness before we can disconnect the uplink and tie him into one of the systems to see if there is any real damage though." Danny replied, now focusing on Marc's lifeless face. "Come on bro... Wake up. Please..."

Cory walked over and placed a hand on each of the boy's shoulder. As the three of them watched Marc, Cory softly spoke. "That was a really brave thing Marc did; kinda stupid in a way, but brave. He risked his life for Austin; I just wish he had taken the time to plan a way out before he jumped in. Danny, Sean and I were told something by one of our Uncles a while back that I think you need to listen to. He said that Sean and I need to watch out for each other; we are each other's safety net, and have to keep the other one from doing stupid stuff. Marc don't have that; nobody is there to say 'stop and think before you do that'. I think you need to be that person for Marc; I can see that of all people you are the one he'll listen to. Marc is a great guy, Danny – please keep him safe if he pulls through this."

Danny put his hand on Cory's and looked up at him with a thoughtful smile. "I don't think I could have stood in the way of this decision." he said as he looked back at Marc's face and wiped the sweat drenched hair from his eyes. "Your brother was right. He told him that he had a soul and couldn't believe that Marc ever doubted it." Danny said as he softly repeated Mikey's words from last night to his brother. "People are born with a soul. Androids earn them as they mature, and yours shines bright Marc." he said as his eyes began to tear up a little. "There was no time to plan a way out this time. He made the decision with his heart, not his brain. It would have taken a full deactivation to stop him from doing this for..." he said with a snuffle. "...his son."

Just then Antonio shouted in a panicked voice. "DANNY!!! Help!!! Austin's life signs are getting weak!"

All three jumped and ran to his side. "What happened?" Danny asked as he began going over the Bio-bed's display.

"Dunno! Everything looked fine, then just started droppin." Antonio said as Cory wrapped his arm around Antonio's shoulder and Sean used the Tricorder to attempt to see what the problem was himself.

Danny sighed out loud and looked at the group. "It's ok guys. This is a good sign. His body is in full control now." he said as he put his fingers under Antonio's chin and raised his frightened wide eyes to meet his own. "You didn't do anything wrong. He is going into low power consumption and accelerating his regeneration like he's supposed to." he said with a smile as a weak voice from the head of the table gained all of their attentions.

"Wh... what's wrong? Did it work? Is he ok?" Marc said as he strained to get the words out.

"Thank you God!" Danny said as he closed his eyes and ran to his brother's side. "Austin's gonna be fine." he said with a smile as he began to disconnect the uplink cable from the back of Marc's head. "But if you ever scare me like that again..." he got out before Marc tried to stand.

Danny and Cory both grabbed an arm and helped him to his feet. "I'm ok, just tired." Marc got out with a weak grin before he looked into his brother's eyes. "It worked, that's all that matters right now." he said as he tried to take a step but was only able to raise his foot; the effort it took was too much for his system, causing his eyes to roll back, flutter shut and his body just went limp.

"Gavin, quick! Clear the table. We gotta get Marc on it." Cory shouted as he tightened his grip on Marc.

"On it!" Gavin shouted as he literally swept the parts off into a box in a rush.

Danny and Cory each grabbed a leg and carried him over, gently setting him down. "I gotta get him connected to a terminal. Jerry, grab the cable from Austin and plug it into the terminal."

Joey and Timmy sat and watched as everyone in the room hurried to Marc's aid before Joey broke his silence. "Dahddee..."

Jerry handed the cable to Danny and rushed to his son. "It's ok. Uncle Marc is gonna be fine, he just wore himself out." he said with a forced smile as he turned back toward the group. "He's gonna be fine." Jerry added, watching as Danny brought the terminal online.

"Oday Dahddee." Joey almost whispered hugging Timmy tighter. "Isa fwitened foa Unkah Mahwk." he said as Timmy nodded and hugged Joey back.

"Everything is fine guys." Danny announced as he scanned the display. "Other than being severely overloaded, his systems are all functioning. He's gonna need to build up some strength before his system will allow him to wake up."

Sean nodded as he scanned Marc with the tricorder. "He's right guys; Marc's readings are just like Austin's – he's repairing himself right now I'd guess. How long does that usually take, Danny?"

Danny concentrated for a second. "If I understand right, Marc should be okay in the morning. He's just got to recover some power and let a few overloaded circuits repair themselves. Austin should ..." Danny paused as he glanced over at Austin and found that there were already visible signs of repair. "Austin is *supposed* to take a *few* days to recover; I don't believe what I'm seeing, but I think it'll be a lot sooner than that!"

"What do we have to do now?" Jerry asked as he double checked Austin's readings.

"Nothing except check up on them." Danny said moving over to the Panda and checking on Kevin, with two small sets of eyes following his every move from under a blanket. "According to Kevin's cellular regeneration rate, Austin is regenerating nearly 4 times faster with the Bio-bed's cooperative acceleration. It may be a race to see who wakes up first." He said as he stepped down to see matching smiles beneath the tiny gazes beneath the blanket now. "You two wanna go upstairs and play for a while? You look kinda bored."

Both boys nodded their heads so fast Danny was afraid they'd pop off. As they threw off the blanket and held their arms out to be lifted down, Cory giggled. "Hey Gizmo; I think you better find some clothes first!"

"But Daddy!" Timmy pouted.

"No buts, kiddo. You're not at home, so get dressed, then you can go play." Cory said as he lifted his son down; taking time to give him a quick hug before setting him on the floor.

Timmy took Joey's hand. "C'mon Joey! Let's go get me dressed so's we can play!"

"Oday Dimmee. Wee pay dah samb an go simmin?" Joey asked with a wide smile as Jerry lifted Joey up and set him on his feet.

"Joey, why don't you guys just throw on some shorts so you can go play in the water then." Jerry said looking at Cory for his opinion.

Timmy grinned. "YEAH!!! We gotta get Ricky and Unca Kyle and Unca Ty too!"

Sean shook his head with a smile. "You guys can swim only as long as Deej and Tanner can watch you; Dad and me gotta go find Uncle JJ."

"You all head on upstairs." Danny said as he began setting systems to standby. "I'll be right up as soon as I get this all to run on auto."

Antonio looked over at Cory. "Go ahead, I'm going to make sure the bio-bed is set, I'll come up with Danny."

With that the group filed up the stairs bringing the basement into silence with the exception of a few keys being pressed and the hum of the equipment.

"How's everything lookin dude?" Danny asked Antonio as he moved to the side of the bed Marc was on and pulled up a seat.

"He's doing great. His healing is going so fast. If you sit and watch him long enough, you can actually see it happen." Antonio said, smiling at Danny and then at Byron who had stayed behind when the rest left.

Danny sat in the chair and took Marc's hand in his own and squeezed it; getting a smile from the boys who were whispering back and forth between themselves before they slowly approached the table and looked at the face of the sleeping boy.

"Is he, um... Is he your boyfriend?" Byron asked as Antonio shot him a look that clearly said '*Bad Question*' all over it.

Danny smiled at the two before looking at the hand he was holding. "No, just the best brother anyone could ever ask for."

"Oh, sorry. We just kinda thought..." Byron got out before Antonio elbowed him in the side.

"Nuthin to be sorry about." Danny replied with a smile. "You look beat Antonio." he added, getting a nod in response. "After everything that has happened today, I don't think any one of us isn't."

"Ask him..." Byron whispered to Antonio who just rolled his eyes as if his cover had been blown.

"Ask me what?" Danny asked with a giggle.

"Well, um..." Antonio started but began to blush causing Byron to break out in fits of giggles.

"Ok guys, out with it..." Danny said trying to contain his giggles himself and failing.

"Danny," Byron began. "Is there a place we can go to um... take a nap?" he said as Antonio nodded in agreement.

"Just need to be alone?" Danny asked; finally giggling after getting relieved looks from both boys. "It's not a problem guys, if you go up to the second floor, just follow the hall way to the last door. That's my room and you guys are welcome to wind down up there if you need to. Cool?"

Both boys smiled and scooted around the table and gave Danny a hug. "Thanks Danny." they whispered in unison before Byron tore for the stairs. "C' mon Lil' Elf" he shouted back getting a blush from Antonio.

"Lil' Elf?" Danny repeated in question getting a *'Don't Go There'* look from Antonio, followed by a grin. "Nuf said. Get outa here." he said as he watched the two disappear and the door shut. Danny just nodded his head and laughed hearing Matt yell "Hey you two! Slow down!!!" knowing the boys were still at a run.

Danny sat and looked over his brother before deciding there was still a ton of work to get done, and with his brother out of commission, he needed to get it in gear. He got up and placed a kiss on Marc's forehead and whispered "I'll see you in the morning." before powering down the unused computers, turning off the overhead lights and heading up the stairs.

As he closed the basement door, Danny saw the meeting going on in the living room and decided to see what was going on. "Everything checks out downstairs guys. By the looks of things, both Marc and Austin will be online by morning."

"Sounds great Danny." Matt replied. "By the way, you're gonna need these."

Danny looked at the communicators Matt handed him. "What's the difference between the colors?"

Matt grinned. "The blue ones are for normal Clan members; the silver one is for the division head. You get the silver one, Jerry and Marc get the blue ones."

Danny nodded his head and looked the units over before freezing, blinking his eyes a few times and then giving Matt a dead stare. "You mean Marc gets the silver one, right?"

Cory shook his head and replied formally. "You are mistaken, Daniel. It has been determined that you possess the requisite skills to perform the functions of the Artificial Intelligence Division head. It is only logical that you should receive the proper communications equipment to perform that function adequately."

Danny's eyes opened wide at Cory's response. "Um..." He got out as he looked at the communicators again and then back at Cory. Just then, he raised his eyebrows and with an evil grin replied; "Excuse me Patriarch Short. Might I inquire what information was involved in this determination process?" Danny giggled as he finished throwing Cory's logic in his face.

"Oh shit!" Matt muttered. "Logic war with an android! This should be good."

Cory shot Matt an evil glare, then composed himself to answer. "Both myself and Sean have observed your performance under stressful situations. Your ability to conform to the situation at hand while deducing the most expedient solution to the situation is proper. In addition, you possess the unique capability to reason both as an android and a human."

Sean looked over at Danny. "Your serve, dude!" he giggled.

Danny nodded his head and looked thoughtful for a second. "Understandable sir, may I add the fact that Dr. Furst not only has more experience than I possess, in this field as well as the fact that Dr. Furst would have made the same decisions based on his own programming; programming which I currently have access to."

"NEXT!" Matt chuckled.

Cory took a deep breath. "May I remind you, Daniel, that both in years and practical terms your lifetime experiences are approximately twice those of Marc, assuming his experiences are assimilated into his programming. As for your second indication, if you have access to the same programming as Marc, then that does not reflect for or against my decision."

"Slam dunk!" Sean giggled, enjoying the show.

Danny grinned knowing he was slowly losing the argument. "Excellent point Patriarch Short but, would the fact that Dr. Furst is already established as director of this facility hold any bearing in your decision?"

"The home team is stretching!" Matt commented, enjoying the show just as much as Sean.

Cory couldn't help but giggle before he replied. "Actually, it has quite a bit of bearing on my decision. It would be illogical for Marc to set aside the work he is performing to take another duty upon himself. In addition, despite his role as Director, Marc has very minimal supervisory experience. Your history before your bio-image includes managerial experience in the restaurant industry; experience which applies to this position as well due to the fast pace and requirements to adjust your response depending on the situation."

"Dude! You sunk his battleship!" Sean laughed, holding his side.

Danny's jaw hit the floor. "You did your homework?"

"He's staggering around the ring, it won't be long now!" Matt chimed in, getting into the play-by-play.

Cory nodded. "The intelligence division consists of telepaths; five minutes after we arrived I had full information on both yourself and Marc from Kyle. In addition, you have proved my determination to be proper in your actions during this conversation. Marc would have accepted my decision, but you were astute enough to question it and verify my reasoning was accurate. You are the first being to actively require verification of a ruling by me; that is an attribute which I value."

"Bottom of the ninth .. tie game .. the crowd screams as he hits a grand slam!" Sean giggled as he sat against the wall, about to collapse in laughter.

"Can I ask one question?" Danny asked Cory with a grin.

"Why not, this is fun!" Cory replied with a giggle.

"When these clowns vote you in for M.V.P. can I come to the ceremony?" Danny asked with an ear to ear grin.

Cory put an arm over Danny's shoulder. "Dude, I'll even let you help write the speech!"

Danny wrapped his arm around Cory's shoulder and squeezed while nodding his head. "Then I only have one thing to say." He said looking at Matt and Sean then back at Cory with a smile. "It will be an Honor to stand at your side, and I will do my best to never let this family down."

Matt couldn't resist one more jab. "Androids and Gentlemen; that's the game!"

Danny laughed. "Ten thousand comedians out of work, and we get stuck with these two!"

Cory giggled. "I couldn't agree more, Bro!"

Danny grinned and looked at his new communicator before looking at the peanut gallery and giggling. "Well then, as the head of Clan Short's AI Division, I think it's time to make my first decision." he said, getting concerned looks from Matt and Sean. "We ain't gettin nothing done just standing around and I know Caleb is pacing in the lab waiting to tackle the computer issues he brought up. Shall we get back to work gentlemen?"

Cory reached over and grabbed Sean's ear. "C'mon goofball; we need to figure out where Gavin wandered off to, then take care of a certain rogue 'Head of Security' who has outgrown his boxers."

Sean giggled as he stood up. "I bet he's quaking in his shoes! Next time, I bet you won't just leave JJ in charge with no limits!"

Cory shook his head with an evil grin. "Nope; but if you don't hurry up, I'll leave you in charge instead!"

Sean giggled. "Yeah, right babe! Let's go find our bro."

Danny smiled as the meeting broke up. "While you guys do that, I'm gonna see if Caleb and Noah have tossed the old computers out in the street yet."

Cory pulled Danny into a brotherly hug. As Sean joined in the hug, Cory commented "Don't worry about that! Those two are computer packrats – I'll bet when we get home they'll have the old ones torn apart and spread out all over their bedroom floor! Welcome to the family Bro, if you need anything at all we're here for ya'."

"Same here." Danny said as the hug broke. Taking his new communicator and clipping it to his belt with a thoughtful smile, he added "I'm gonna go see if I can rescue the lab now."

"Hey Danny!" Caleb said as he and Noah looked up from the computer display. "We got some of the replacement terminals beamed in a few minutes ago. I'm gonna start planning the locations while Noah and Antonio configure them with the uplink ports you guys need." he said with a smile.

"Great, you guys are gonna be able to network them with the existing wiring?" Danny asked as he sat down on the couch in the lab and looked over one of the cartons a federation terminal was shipped in.

"Kinda." Noah said as he climbed in behind the Vulcan terminal. "We can use the interface you guys created to transfer files to this system, but direct communication won't be possible with this equipment; so they can't be integrated."

Caleb nodded his head in agreement. "That should work fine as long as we put the mainframe in here to handle direct communications. We could call Allen, but that won't get this up and running today."

"Allen?" Danny looked up and asked in question.

"Xain and Jake's dad. He's done the best job integrating these systems so far." Caleb answered with a smile.

"So no matter what, we have two systems, using two separate platforms doing two separate jobs on site." Danny said scratching his head.

"Well yeah." Caleb said with a shrug. "We are the first to ever try to use both platforms together." he finished as Noah slid back out from behind the two terminals.

"We're set for the medical interfaces now Cal. We need Doc. Austin to help with the setup downstairs." Noah said motioning for the door. "Wanna go see if he's free bro?"

"Ok." Caleb said as he stood up and smiled at Danny. "We'll be downstairs for a while if you need us."

"Ok Guys, I'll get started breaking down the old systems to get them out of the way." he said as the boys left the room. Danny spotted Jerry walking past the door with Eli and Benji. "Jerry!" he shouted, getting his attention.

"Yo?" Jerry shot back with a giggle as he stuck his head in the room. "What's up?"

Danny went into his pocket and pulled out one of the blue communicators and held it out to him. "You're gonna need this." he said with a smile as Jerry's eyes opened wide.

"Dood, that's a Federation communicator!" Jerry said as Danny placed it in his hand. "What do I need this for?"

"We are their A.I. division now sport. Does them no good if they don't have communication with us." Danny replied with a smile.

"Oh, never thought of that." Jerry said as he looked the unit over and clipped it inside his pocket. "Can I use it to call for pizza?" he asked as he turned and ran for the door giggling.

"Oh yeah..." Danny replied sarcastically. "Only if the *Lafayette* is delivering it, you bonehead." he shouted as he began to disconnect one of the old terminals.

"If it's not here in 20 seconds or less, it's free ya know!" Jerry shouted back as the three disappeared toward the living room, leaving Danny in the lab by himself laughing with a chorus of giggles coming from the kitchen echoing in the background.

"What a clown." Danny said to himself as he noticed Jake entering the room. "Hey."

"Hey man, I hate to ask, but can I borrow your terminal to make a quick call?" Jake asked with worry.

"Sure, it's over there..." Danny pointed it out. "That was really the only open space we had in the room to install it." Danny said as Jake made his way through the mess in the room.

"I won't keep it tied up too long, I just need to check on something at home." Jake said with concern obvious in his voice.

"Is something wrong? You sound worried." Danny asked softly.

"We have been away from our daughter for an extended period of time. Jake's sense of apprehension has been increasing at an exponential rate during the past sixteen hours." Xain said as he joined Danny and Jake in the lab.

"Your daughter?" Danny asked with surprise.

"Correct." Xain said with his Vulcan demeanor fully in place.

"It's kind of a long story. I'll tell you after I've called home if you're interested." Jake said as he took a seat before the terminal and quickly initiated the call.

"Where could they be? Shouldn't Dad be home by now?" Jake asked as his anxiety began to spiral out of control.

"Be calm T'hy'la. They must have sufficient time to accept the incoming transmission." Xain said as he rested a hand on Jake's neck.

"I'll just leave you guys alone." Danny said as he began to walk toward the door to allow the two some privacy.

"Please don't go, I mean, unless you have something else you need to be doing." Jake asked as he turned away from the terminal screen briefly.

"No, I just don't want to intrude..." Danny said cautiously.

"Thompson residence." A woman's voice said directing their attention to the screen.

"Hola Mamacita. Como estas?" Jake asked with relief in his voice.

"Bien Jake. Give me a moment, Allen is in the next room with Edovina." she said quickly.

"It appears that Mamacita is overcoming her hesitance to use the computerized office equipment." Xain observed.

"I don't think she'll be cooking up her own database anytime soon. But at least she'll answer the terminal now." Jake said with a smile as he anxiously watched the screen.

Allen walked into view holding Edovina to his chest, wrapped in a blanket.

"Hi Dad, I'd like you to meet a new friend of ours, this is Danny. Danny, this is my Dad, Allen Thompson." Jake said proudly.

"It's nice to meet you Mr. Thompson." Danny said with a huge smile.

"Dad's holding our daughter Edovina... Dad, can we see her?" Jake asked hopefully.

Allen smiled, then reached under the blanket for a second, before pulling it off completely.

There was a long moment of silence as the three boys stared at the screen.

Finally Jake had to ask, "Dad, why did you let Mamacita dress Vina as a cowgirl?"

"I find the costume to be... curious." Xain said in a considering voice.

Danny just started to snicker to himself, not as much at the tiny cowgirl's appearance as Jake's reaction.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I'm the one who dressed her like this... We had some free time last night so I took her to the store... I just couldn't resist." Allen finished helplessly.

"Maybe we can ask Cory if we can leave early? You know, for a family emergency?" Jake asked Xain desperately.

"Perhaps..." Xain said in thought, then continued, "I do not know if Patriarch Short recognizes 'fashion emergencies' to be of sufficient importance to warrant our early departure.

"Come on, she sooooo cuuuuuute." Allen said as he jiggled the little girl slightly in his arms.

Edovina got a strange look on her face, then promptly threw up.

"Oh, I guess I shouldn't have bounced her right after eating." Allen said as he looked around for something to clean her up with.

"Dad, I'm pretty sure it was the dress that made her puke." Jake said seriously.

"Hang on. I'll be right back." Allen said quickly and stepped out of view of the monitor.

"Your Dad seems really cool." Danny said with a smile.

"Yeah, I always thought so... at least until I saw the cowgirl outfit." Jake said slowly.

"Okay, all better now." Allen said as he came back into view.

"So how has she been?" Jake asked as he marveled at the beauty of his daughter.

"Just fine. I took her to see Doc Austin yesterday..." Allen began to say, but was interrupted.

"Why? What's wrong with her? Why didn't you call me?" Jake asked in panic.

"...for a checkup." Allen continued.

"Oh... um, I guess I got a little worried because I haven't seen her in a while." Jake said shyly.

"By the same logic, one could classify Mount Everest as a bump." Xain said to Danny in explanation.

Danny smiled at Xain's statement and continued to watch the screen.

"One strange thing did happen." Allen said in thought.

Jake restrained his panic and in a voice that was calmer than he felt, he asked, "What was that?"

"It seems that Possum has sort of adopted Edovina." Allen said in a considering voice.

"How do you mean?" Jake asked curiously.

Allen adjusted the view just a bit wider to reveal the large oafish form of a dog sitting beside the chair.

"Well, night before last, when Juana was going to take Edovina up for her bath, I kept Possum here and he just about went crazy trying to get to her. I thought he just wanted to go for a walk, but when I took him out, the only place he wanted to go was Juana's apartment." Allen said in thought.

"I kept him here that night and he made us all miserable, whining and crying all night long."

"When Juana came back with Edovina in the morning, he was fine again."

"Last night, I talked to Juana about it and she agreed that Possum could stay in her apartment."

"Possum slept right beside Edovina's crib all night long and didn't make a sound." Allen said seriously.

"Given this new information I must reconsider my earlier judgment regarding the canine's intelligence." Xain said in thought.

Jake reached to his shoulder where Xain's hand was resting and gave the hand a quick squeeze.

"That's about all that's going on right now. Kenny and Kevin are in their room. Juana and the boys are in the kitchen." Allen said with a shrug.

"Dad, thanks for taking care of Vina." Jake said sincerely.

"Sure. What are grandparents for?" Allen said with a smile.

"How's Billy?" Jake asked and waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

"Packing." Allen said with a downcast look.

"Packing?" Jake asked cautiously, concerned that something might have gone wrong.

"Yeah. He has a shoot in Switzerland for the next two weeks. Deacon and Lawrence are going to be staying with us until he gets back." Allen said in a dejected tone.

"Well, I don't know exactly when we'll be done here. But you've got Vina and Possum to keep you company until we get back." Jake finished with a smile.

"Between taking care of both of them, I won't have time to miss Billy." Allen said with a chuckle.

"We'd better get off here and see if there's anything we can do to help." Jake said reluctantly.

"Say goodbye to your daddies." Allen said to Edovina in baby talk.

"Oh Dad." Jake said with a shake of his head.

"I look forward to our reunion with anticipation." Xain said firmly to the viewscreen.

"I've missed you too Xain. Take care of each other." Allen said tenderly.

"You too." Jake said with a smile.

"She's gonna take good care of me... yes she is... yes she is..." Allen said as he devoted all his attention to Edovina.

Jake rolled his eyes and said, "Goodbye Dad."

"Bye boys." Allen said with a chuckle, then reached up to terminate the connection.

"Wow, you've got a really cool family." Danny said with a big smile.

"Just wait till you meet my grandma." Jake said with a chuckle as they turned for the door.

Danny giggled and returned to the computer he was working on while he replied; "Thank god I'm not still human, there is no way I would have been able to get through this many meetings in one day and not fry a brain cell." he finished with a giggle as a chirp made him stop and stare at the two in question.

"You may wanna answer that." Jake said to Danny with a giggle on the way out the door.

Danny watched them leave the room as another chirp made him jump before realizing it was his communicator making the sound. "That's gonna take some getting used to." he said as he pulled it off of his belt and flipped it open. "Danny here." he stated with his eyes closed while rubbing his forehead with his free hand.

"Danny, it's Caleb. When you get a free moment could you come down to the lower lab? Doc. Austin has an idea that may give you control over your Panda unit remotely through the network." Caleb stated with excitement. "Sounds like it could be helpful."

Danny nodded his head and smiled. "Sounds great, on my way bro." he said as he closed his communicator and looked at it taking a deep breath. "Too much." he mumbled to himself as he clipped it back on his belt and left the room.

"Hey Matt?" Jerry asked as he met up with him at the shuttle where he was in the process of reading something on one of the onboard displays.

"What's up kido?" He replied with a smile.

"I didn't wanna bother you but I was talkin to Eli and Benji an they said I should talk to you." Jerry said, looking at the floor of the shuttle. "I was gonna go over to my house to call my Mom and Dad and let them know what's goin on, but they said the house's interior has to be checked first an I should tell you cause security is kinda tied up."

"That's no bother." Matt replied with a smile. "I was just goin over Caleb's shopping list for the house." he added with a chuckle as he grabbed a phaser and attached it's holster to his belt. "Just in case you have any man eating, alien dust bunnies under your bed." he said with a chuckle.

"Riiigghht." Jerry replied, rolling his eyes before giggling and following Matt toward the house. Jerry waited outside the back door as Matt went in to check the interior.

"Is something wrong Dr. Owens?" Xain asked as he jogged up to the back porch with Jerry.

"I just wanted to make a call but Eli told me someone had to check the house before I went in." Jerry replied shrugging his shoulders.

"Ah." Xain replied with a smile. "He's following standard protocol, it is imperative to verify security before allowing staff access to any structure." Xian explained, getting a nod from Jerry.

"Thanks, I didn't understand why it would have to be checked." Jerry replied as Xain just smiled and nodded, then turned to join back up with Jake.

Jerry turned just in time to see Matt returning with his communicator open. "...and the Owens residence is secure."

"Acknowledged Matt. Richardson out." the voice on the other end responded.

"Barnes out." Matt replied before closing his communicator and smiling. "Ok, nothing frightening in here except that bedroom down the hall there." he said with a chuckle as Jerry shot him an '*Oh Please*' stare. "Clear to make your phone call sir." Matt added with a chuckle. "I'll give you some privacy."

Jerry had just picked up the phone when he froze and yelled back to Matt; "No wait, could you stick around for a few minutes? I don't think they are gonna believe half of this so I may need your help explaining it to them." he said with a giggle. Matt agreed and pulled up a chair. "I won't be long." Jerry added as he dialed the number his mom left on the refrigerator.

"Yes, can I have room 307 please?"

"No, room 307. My parents are staying there. Mr and Mrs. Owens."

"Checked out? When?"

"That can't be right, they were staying for the week. Could you make sure please? I really need to contact them."

"Thank you."

Matt tilted his head and gave Jerry a questioning look.

"This lady says my parents checked out like, over 12 hours ago." Jerry whispered with his hand over the receiver.

"Maybe there was a problem with the room or something and they went somewhere else." Matt added to help keep Jerry calm before the phone got Jerry's attention again.

"Yes."

"Did they give any reason, or say that they were going to another hotel or something?"

"Oh, ok. Thanks for your help then." he finished saying as he slowly hung up the phone. "They left with no explanation."

Matt thought for a second before standing up and motioning toward the door. "It is possible through all the confusion that they could have left a message and in the insanity, it got missed."

Jerry's face seemed to brighten a bit as he nodded his head. "Yeah, I never thought of that." and they both went back outside and walked back to the house.

In the living room, Antonio and Byron were sitting on the couch with a partially disassembled view screen between them as they looked busy with the wiring. "Something wrong?" Antonio looked up and saw the upset looks on Jerry and Matt's faces.

"My parents aren't where they said they would be. Do you know where Danny is?" Jerry asked.

Both boys looked at each other before Byron spoke up. "I think he's downstairs but, I'm not really sure. We just got down here ourselves."

"Ok, thanks" Jerry said as he walked past the couch and opened the door in the hall. "Danny, you down there?"

"Yup!" Danny yelled back up the stairs. "You need me Sport?"

"Do you know if my parents have called at all, last night or today?" Jerry shouted back down the stairwell.

"No, nothing. Is something wrong?"

"I don't know. I tried to call them and the hotel says they checked out more than 12 hours ago." He said as silence fell, followed by the sounds of 4 sets of foot steps roaring up the stairs.

Danny, Caleb, Noah and Doc. Austin rushed out of the basement and they all moved into the kitchen.

"You don't think something happened to them do you?" Jerry asked Danny as Matt pulled Doc. Austin aside to talk to him.

"There's gotta be a reason dude." Caleb added. "Maybe there was a problem at the hotel and they went to another one or something."

Jerry was just about to respond when the chirp of Danny's communicator cut him off.

Danny flipped it opened and answered, "Page here."

"Danny, this is JJ. I have a Jonathan Owens and Mary Owens enroute to the Security Office for identification. Are you able to come up and identify them?"

"Oh thank god, we just found out that they were not where they said they would be and we have a few worried kids in here. I'm on my way JJ, Thank you. Page out." Danny said watching the tension drain from the room.

"No problem Danny. We'll be waiting then. Richardson out."

As Danny was just about to turn to lead Jerry outside, he realized that Jerry was already out the door with Caleb and Noah on his heels. He turned and shrugged his shoulders to Matt and Doc Austin with a grin and then followed their leads.

"MOM! DAD!" Jerry shouted as he rushed his mother and tackled her with a hug.

JJ walked over to Jerry's father and stated, "Mr. Owens, I believe Dr. Owens has confirmed your identity sufficiently. I am JJ Richardson, Head of Security for Clan Short of Vulcan. May I ask that yourself and your wife accompany me into the office so I may issue proper identification to both of you?"

Jerry's father almost choked as he attempted to answer. "I'm sorry son, did you just say Doctor Owens?" he said with a chuckle. "Daniel, is this one of your friends?"

"Sorry Mr. Owens, he is the head of security so it's best if you just do as he asks and we can explain the rest." Danny said with a smile at Jerry's father's confused, but amused expression.

"Well then, lead the way young man." Jerry's dad replied smiling at his wife.

"Hold on a minute." Jerry's mom interjected. "Jerald, exactly what is this about? Daniel, who are these kids and just exactly what is going on here?"

Cory motioned for Danny to wait. He very formally walked over to Mrs. Owens. "Please pardon my intrusion, Mrs. Owens." Cory handed her his IDs "I must introduce myself. I am Patriarch Cory Short of Clan Short of the family of Sarek of the House of Surak of the planet Vulcan. The time it would require to provide a full explanation of the events of the last twenty-four Terran hours would exceed the duration of comfort to remain standing. My Security Director is correct in his statement that it would be preferable to continue with the issuance of identification. Upon completion of that procedure, it would be logical to retire to Mr. Page's domicile for debriefing."

Mr. Owens walked around the car and looked over Cory's identification. "Cory Short?" he said as he repeated the name to himself. "The same Cory Short with Starfleet? You are the Patriarch of Clan Short? I'll be damned." he said with a smile.

"I'm glad you have an idea who he is, I still just want to know why they're here and why we can't even get on to our own property." Mrs. Owens spat out in disgust.

"Oh Honey, why don't we jus..." Mr. Owens got out before being cut off by Jerry.

"Dad, JJ's waitin on ya." Jerry cut in pointing to the guard shack that had been constructed.

Cory spoke up. "Mrs. Owens, due to both Director Page and Doctor Owens being members of Clan Short, the properties on which their domiciles reside are required to be patrolled by Clan Security."

"THE PROPERTIES ARE WHAT?" Mrs. Owens blasted at Cory causing everyone in the area to freeze. "I don't know who you think you are but my husband is the owner of that property. Do you think we were born yesterday? And what's this DR. OWENS being a member of anything?" she continued to rant.

"Honey." Mr. Owens attempted to get his wife's attention.

"In a minute!" she said hurriedly. "My son is no doctor and not even old enough to join anything..."

"Honey!"

"I said in a minute!" she barked. "He can't join anything without MY permission so you have no clai..."

"HONEY!" Mr. Owens shouted, finally freezing his wife but getting a death glare from her for being cut off.

"Let's just get our identifications like they asked and I'm sure they will explain..." He managed to get out before she went off again.

"I'M NOT PLAYING THESE CHILDISH GAMES WITH THESE KIDS!!!" she blasted her husband.

"You don't happen to be programmed with the Vulcan Neck Pinch, would you?" Caleb whispered in Danny's ear causing him to snicker.

"And what do you think is so funny!" she shouted at Danny, who just opened his eyes wide and shook his hands as if to say nothing. "Jon, call the police. I'm done with this."

"The police?" Jon almost laughed out as he noticed Cory opening his communicator. "These people are Starfleet and Vulcan Diplomats. What do you think the police are going to do?" he got out as his wife folded her arms in disgust.

Cory keyed the communicator. "Lieutenant Barnes this is Patriarch Short. Set Security Condition Yellow; your presence is required at the Security Office immediately."

"Acknowledged Patriarch. Setting Condition Yellow. Barnes out."

A second later, everyone heard over the audibles on the communicators. "Security Condition Yellow. Security Condition Yellow. This is not a drill. This is not a drill. All non-essential personnel report to A.I. Division Main Building immediately."

Jon's eyes opened wide as he looked at his son and then his wife. "Hun, there is going to be real trouble if you continue this." he got out as he noticed Noah and Caleb leading Jerry back into the house and Danny move closer to JJ; who, along with Adam, Cory, and Sean, had his phaser drawn and at the ready.

"They come in and take claim to our property and our son and you want to play along?" she spat out.

"This is a diplomatic Clan for christ sake! If they are here there is a damned good reason for it. Why don't you calm down before you force them to do something you're gonna regret!" Jon said and then took one step back.

Cory switched channels on his communicator. "Patriarch Short to Commander Martin. Priority One Message."

"This is Commander Martin. Proceed Patriarch Short."

"I am presently at Security Condition Yellow. I require yourself as Federation Southeast Regional Security Director and Director Short of Federation Youth Services at my location as expediently as possible. I authorize emergency transport."

"Acknowledged Patriarch Short. We shall depart shortly. Martin out."

Jon looked at Cory with a knowing nod. "They will use force if you keep this up." he said in a hushed tone as he watched two baby eagles fly past, circle the guard shack and perch on the roof.

"Force me to hand over everything we own?" she said in a disgusted tone. "You're going to hand over our son and house just because they are here. There are laws against that kind of behavior."

"Up to you now, I'm sure they aren't here to take anything." Jon said as his eyes met Cory's. "I'm really sorry about this Patriarch."

Cory nodded. "You are not responsible for her responses Mr. Owens."

Matt jogged up to the group, phaser out, and immediately went to JJ and Danny. "Mr. Page; all personnel present and accounted for. What are your orders Mr. Richardson?"

JJ answered without removing his gaze from Mrs. Owens. "Stand by, Mr. Barnes. If Mrs. Owens loses control, immobilize her."

"Immobilize me? You can't be serious. Go ahead and try!" Mary shouted with fire in her voice.

"Mom." A small voice came from behind her.

"Not right now Jerry!" she shouted gruffly waving her hand behind her back to shush her son.

"Mom!" the voice repeated.

"In a minute!" she responded without looking as she scanned the entire group through squinted eyes, stopping at Cory. "So I have no choice, just let you waltz in here and take claim to my home and family?"

"Mrs. Owens." Cory replied quickly. "I promise you we aren't taking claim to anything. You don't have all of the details. If you would just give me a moment." he got out as she looked about ready to blow at any moment.

"MOM!" The voice broke in once again, this time all eyes that were on Mrs. Owens, were now wide with surprise.

"Jerry! I said wait a..." she managed to get out as she spun around, and froze in shock at the sight before her. "David?" she asked the semi-transparent form in front of her.

"Yes Mom, it's me." Davie replied. "Please Mom, listen to them. They are here to help, nothing more. You can trust them." he said as Mikey appeared next to Cory.

Mary opened her mouth to say something, but simply rolled her eyes back and fainted into her husband's arms, who stood with his mouth hung open.

"David?" Jon asked as his son smiled wide.

"Hi Dad." he replied as he gave Mikey a thumbs up. "It's all gonna be fine." he added with a smile.

As two shimmering columns began to appear behind him, Cory replied. "You have my assurances that I have no intentions of breaking up your home or family. You no longer owe a mortgage on your home; as a matter of fact, the plans which the state has of turning this section of beach into a public recreation area are now null and void. As of 15:30 local time today, you have been listed as the legal conservators of the property; until your death Vulcan recognizes you only. No entity on Earth can touch this property now; eminent domain no longer applies. Jerald is still your son; he has been given the opportunity to not only use the natural skills he has, but to be trained by experts to expand them beyond any training which a school environment could provide."

Jon shook his head and snapped back to listen to what Cory was saying when Davie grinned and pointed to redirect his father's attention. "Um... Yeah... I mean they were planning on taking the property?"

Cory nodded. "The council meeting for the final vote is tomorrow in closed session. They don't know that my Intelligence Division got word of it."

"I'll be damned." Jon replied as he eased his wife to rest on the ground and turned to look at his son once again. "But how did you get involved in this?"

"You would have to ask Cory's older brother for that answer." Davie replied as he saw Jerry running from the house, closely followed by Ricky and Timmy; both displaying full war paint. "Hey Boog!" he shouted as he was tackled with a hug.

"Cory's older brother?" Jon asked, still somewhat in shock.

"That'd be me, Jon!" Mikey giggled as he watched Timmy and Ricky slam into Teri. "Hey Cor; don't you think you might be forgetting something? Look behind you."

Cory turned his head. "Oh! Hi Mom, hi John – I didn't hear you beam in." He then noticed the two little urchins shimmying their way into Teri's arm. "Oops! Cancel Condition Yellow, Mr. Barnes."

"I'll explain more next time I can come down, we kinda have to go." Davie said with a shrug as he looked down at his brother. "Don't you have work to do or something?" he added with a giggle as he ruffled Jerry's hair.

"Great." Jerry said as he threw his hands in the air. "Second visit and yur already on my back." he sarcastically barked through a smile.

"Second visit?" Jon asked, raising his eye brows.

"Well..." Davie whined as he looked back at his father. "Second that anyone could see me." he finished with a wink.

Mikey grinned. "Yeah, you and I have an appointment at the Pearly Gates, Davie. Since my nephews just shed their 'war paint', I think it's safe to go. Cory, Sean we'll see you at the Battery in a little bit. Jon, talk to Mom and my lil' brothers; they won't lie to you."

"An appointment?" Davie said as he closed his fist and held it out to Mikey to do the same and knock knuckles. "You never said anything about an appointment bro." he added as he rushed to his father and gave him a quick hug. "Talk to you soon Dad. I love you." he added as he turned toward Mikey.

Mikey grinned. "There are some things a Saint has to keep quiet about. Since this went better than I expected, it looks like we'll be on time. You ready?"

"Yup." Davie said with a mischievous grin. "Told you it'd work." Davie snuck in having to dodge a playful poke from Mikey as they faded out, getting giggles from their onlookers.

"He's happy." Jon said with an inward smile as he rested his wife's head in his lap, not knowing what to do next.

"Wait! Mikey; what's the Battery!" Sean yelled towards the sky.

Cory shook his head. "Too late bro. Mr. Owens, I'd like you to meet our Mom, Federation Youth Services Director Teri Short. Next to her is JJ and Adam's Pop, Commander John Martin; Commander of Federation Security for the Southeast North American region. I think that between the two of them they can explain things to you and your wife; I know my age is a disadvantage when you hear some of the things you need to know, so it would be better for an adult to tell you. Mom, John, this is Jonathan Owens and his wife Mary. Matt, could you please get someone to help and get Mrs. Owens inside and comfortable; preferably someplace quiet so she can talk with Mom?"

"Eli's on his way out, Daddy." Timmy piped up."

Okay Timmy, thanks." Cory replied.

Matt walked over to Jon. "Mr. Owens, might I suggest we retire to your house? It will be quieter, and when you do come back over here everything will make more sense."

Jon looked down at his wife and back up to Matt. "Sure, I'm guessing this isn't going to be a short discussion." he replied with a confused smile.

Just then Eli ran up. "You called Cor?"

Cory glanced down real quick before responding with a giggle. "Yeah, Eli; I'm glad you remembered your 'pet' BEFORE you came out! Could you help Mr. Owens and Matt get Mrs. Owens over to their house?"

Eli chuckled. "Sure thing; by the way, I'll get you for that 'pet' comment later – when you DON'T expect it!" Eli turned towards Matt. "Okay Matt, ready when you are!"

Jon looked at the boy who was about to help and raised his eyebrows. "Um... I can probably carry her, there's no need..." he got out just as his wife began to levitate right before his eyes. "Definitely not going to be a short discussion." he added, shaking his head in disbelief.

Teri and John both chuckled. "Might as well order dinner now and put on a really big pot of coffee!" John snickered. "This is nothing, I got some stuff you really are not going to believe!"

Jon stood up and rolled his eyes. "I'll start the coffee then." he said with a chuckle. He walked over to Cory and Sean. "Guys, the Battery is the perfect place to go if you need some time to unwind. If you look close, you can see it; it's the park over there in downtown Charleston just across the harbor from here. It's got a lot of history to it; pirates were hung there, it's played a big part in a couple of wars, and just on the other side is one of the most famous historic districts in the US, Rainbow Row. In fact, there are still cannons there from the Civil War. Mary and I have been over there a few times, you can feel the history and it is quite relaxing."

Cory and Sean both smiled. "Thanks Mr. Owens." Sean replied. "Blondie here's been working too hard; that sounds like just the place we need to go." Sean then turned his head. "Matt, can you get us a car?"

"Sure thing, Sean. You need a driver?"

"No, I'll look up directions on the terminal. Might as well make sure we have the car for a couple of days until Danny picks out one to buy for them here."

"Okay Sean. I'll do it as soon as we get to the house."

Jon smiled at Sean and then his comment sank in. "You can drive?"

Sean nodded. "Both of us have full drivers licenses; but I'm not too sure you can call Cory operating a vehicle 'driving'; I think 'thrill ride' covers it better."

Danny overheard Sean's comment and started to giggle before a little light went off in his head. "Sean?" He called out and trotted to his side as Jon laughed and turned to follow Eli and his wife into the house. "Would that mean that there would be a way for me to get my drivers license back? I have never been allowed to drive in this body."

Cory smiled and replied for Sean. "I can't have a division head with no wheels! Consider it done, bro; I'll handle the details tomorrow. JJ, call for reliefs for you and Adam, let's get inside and see if there is a house left. I need to call Australia anyways, I'll get that out of the way real quick."

"More Coffee?" Jon asked Teri as he refilled Matt's, Mary's and his own cup.

"Thank you Jon I'd love some." Teri answered with a smile before redirecting her attention toward Mary. "You see, just after becoming a part of Ambassador Sarek's extended family when rescuing Sammy and Sebastian, Sarek gave the boys the power to do their magic by giving them Clan status."

Jon sat back down and took a sip from his cup before appearing to be deep in thought. "But they are parents as well." he said looking back toward Teri. "How did that happen?"

"You mean Timmy?" Teri asked with a wide smile.

"If Timmy is the little one who was calling Cory 'Daddy', then yes." Jon replied.

"That was a frightening night quite a while ago." Teri answered sipping from her mug. "One that will always stand out though" she said as she sat her cup down on the table. "We had just had a lovely evening out and were on our way home..."

(Direct Flashback from Memories: Part 1 - Chapter 20 - Written By: ACFan)

Teri had asked the limo driver to take the long way back, as she wanted to enjoy some private time with 'her' boys. They were on Hwy 5 just past the Hwy 28 exchange when they heard a loud BANG and an Explorer came flying across the road and rolled down the bank.

Cory reacted first. "STOP THE CAR! Sean, call McCoy and get a med team down NOW, everyone else follow me. We need to see if we can help. Aaron, grab the fire extinguisher just in case. David, direct traffic. MOVE!"

As Cory led the group to the vehicle, Sean pulled out his newly-issued communicator. "Ensign Sean to *Enterprise*."

"*Enterprise*, Uhura here. Go ahead, Sean."

"Commander, I need a full med team at these coordinates ASAP. There is a civilian vehicle which just did a very good imitation of a tumbleweed across the road here."

"Understood, Sean. Dr. McCoy was on the bridge, he is on his way. *Enterprise* out."

Sean closed his communicator as McCoy and Chapel beamed down next to him. "Thanks, Doc - this way!" he yelled as he headed down the hill.

They arrived to find that Cory had used his phaser to remove what was left of the top of the SUV, and was working inside in the back seat. Adam and JJ were removing the debris from the front seat to give the med team access.

"Sean!" Cory said as he saw him, "Get ready to catch!" A minute later, Sean was surprised to be handed a kid who looked to be five or six, still in his booster seat. Once they had him free, they took him up the hill to a safe area.

Lt. Simpson checked the young boy over. "Well, except for the arm it looks like he's gonna have a few bruises, but I'd bet that booster seat saved his life." The lieutenant then proceeded to set the boy's arm and then put on a soft cast. "This is just to protect it while it finishes healing naturally; the field unit is

not as strong as the shipboard ones. He's all yours, Ensigns, I'm gonna prescribe some cuddles to prevent shock."

For the first time in the last 30 minutes, Sean and Cory made an attempt at smiles. They looked down at the vehicle, and saw McCoy and Chapel still working on the driver, which told them there was still a chance.

Sean carefully picked up the boy and took him to the limo to sit down, with Cory following right behind.

Cory gently ruffled the kid's hair. "Hey buddy, I'm Cory and the teddy bear you are cuddled up to is Sean. What's your name?"

"Timmy," he whimpered, "is Daddy goin' to be okay?"

"We got the best doctor in the universe checking on him right now. How old are you, Timmy?" Cory answered, trying to change the subject.

"I'm almost six. Why are you dressed like space guys?"

Sean giggled. "That's 'cause we are. Our Captain just threw a party for us."

Just then Aaron came up. "Bro's, Doc needs to see ya'. Why don't you introduce me to the stunt rider here?"

Timmy turned and looked at the source of the new voice. "I'm Timmy. Hey, you look like Aaron Carter!"

"That's because I am Aaron Carter. Hop on over here, these guys gotta talk to their boss."

Timmy moved over to Aaron, and then both Sean and Cory headed to where the Captain, Dr. McCoy, and Teri were standing.

"You needed to see us, Doctor?" Sean asked as they walked up.

"Yes, Sean, I do. The Captain, your mom, and I were just discussing the situation Cory got you into. Jim, why don't you break the news?"

"Ensigns, you did an outstanding job trying to save the occupants of the vehicle. We had to beam out a second bomb that was under the dash. The first one blew off the driver's side front suspension, and the driver's foot. Fortunately, the trigger on the second one failed. For the record, the official story will be that a front tire blew on the vehicle, the information I just gave you is for Starfleet internal purposes only."

"Excuse me, sir, but why is Starfleet that involved?" Cory asked.

"Good question, Cory. The driver was Terrance O'Neal, the only son of Ambassador Marcus O'Neal, who happens to be the only Earth representative allowed on Rigel VII. Unfortunately, Terrance was

unable to be saved; he lost too much blood before Bones got to him. He regained full consciousness long enough to ask about his son Timmy and to make one final request. That request is what got me involved. Seeing as Timmy's only relative is the Ambassador, I contacted him and he insisted his son's last wish is to be complied with."

Sean looked at the faces surrounding him, and addressed the Captain. "Sir, how does that affect us?"

Captain Kirk gave the boys a half smile before continuing. "Terrance's last wish was that the officer who was working so fast to save them is to be the one to raise his son. He specifically stated that he was talking about the one who cut off the roof. I explained to the Ambassador about your age, Cory, and he reminded me of a little-used regulation. When you both accepted active commissions, you immediately gained full status as adults Federation-wide. In other words, you both now have the full rights and responsibilities of adults."

Kirk looked at Teri, who nodded her head slightly, before he continued. "I realize the two of you are a couple, so you both need to make the decision; but only Cory can answer the question when I ask it, since he specifically was requested. Go talk about it, you have five minutes to decide."

The two boys joined hands, and walked down the road a few yards for privacy. Sean began first. "Babe, what are we gonna do? I don't want to put the little tike out, but I don't think I'm ready to be a dad."

Cory had a pained look on his face. "I know; I can't let him go, but yet I'm only 14, I'm too young to be a daddy!"

The two boys hugged each other for a minute while sorting their thoughts, when they were interrupted by a small voice. "Bro's? What's wrong?"

The two looked up to see Ty and Kyle looking at them with concern. Cory answered "Little Timmy's daddy is dead. Before he died, he said he wanted me to be Timmy's new daddy. Timmy's grandpa said that he wants us to do it too. Thing is, both of us are too young to be parents."

Kyle looked at the two older boys, and then said something neither expected. "Don't be dummies. Cory, you have been like a Daddy to me since the first day I met you in the home. When I was bad, you made me admit to it and take my punishment. JJ has been a big brother, but you always were more."

Ty continued. "Yeah, and Sean, all the times I came over you made me sit down and do homework before I could play. I know we all call you our big brothers, but really you are like our Dads; if we do somethin' wrong you are gonna make us answer for it. Besides, don't ya' think Mom will help you?"

Cory and Sean held out their arms to the two young boys. "Come here, group hug." As they broke the hug he continued. "Thanks, guys. I never thought you saw me like that, I just was doing what I thought was right."

"Same here." said Sean. "Are you sure you won't mind, Ty? This is gonna affect you guys too. Same with JJ and Adam."

"Justy and the twins say 'Hurry up', or else they are gonna sic their Dad and Pop on ya'. Does THAT answer your question?" Kyle stated with a grin.

When Ty nodded in agreement, Cory looked at Sean. "We know how everyone else feels, now what do you think, babe?"

"I'm willing to give it a shot, like Ty said Mom will probably help. What about you, no matter what you are affected more than me since you are the one taking custody."

Cory looked Sean in the eyes. "Sean, WE are doing this, your name is going to be right there with mine. That is one thing I will NOT bargain about."

Sean hugged Cory, then they turned to rejoin the Captain and Teri. "Thanks Ty and Kyle; y'all just helped more than you know."

As they were walking, Cory thought about how he was going to approach this. He finally decided just as they arrived at where the Captain was standing.

Kirk looked at the two boys, surprised that he was unable to read their faces. "What did you decide, Cory?"

Cory came to attention. "Sir, I request the *Enterprise's* Medical Officer record this conversation for inclusion in the Ship's log, with all due respect."

Kirk raised his eyebrows, he had been going to suggest just that himself, but Cory beat him to it. "As you wish, Ensign. Bones, could you do the honors?"

"I don't believe it, an Engineer with common sense!" Dr. McCoy muttered just loud enough for everyone to hear as he was setting up his tricorder. "You're on, Ensign. This should be good."

Cory grinned slightly; the Doctor's humor having its intended effect and relaxing him. "Thank you, Doctor. Captain; after discussing Timmy O'Neal's situation with my partner, we have reached a decision. I am willing to accept permanent custody with two requirements. First is that both myself and Ensign Sean Short be listed as parents, and second is that Timmy be required to change his last name to Short for his own protection. Due to the cause of his fathers' death, I don't think it would be safe for him to keep his original last name." Cory then gave the Captain a look which clearly stated it was his turn.

McCoy saw the look, and before the Captain could respond he tapped him on the shoulder. "Jim, don't bother arguing. He reminds me of a certain hot-shot captain I met quite a few years ago. Namely you. Honestly, you still get your way one way or the other."

Kirk grinned and shook his head at the Doctor's comment, then responded. "Ensign, I agree with your conditions, but need to clear them with the Ambassador. Give me just a minute here." He then pulled out his communicator.

"Kirk to *Enterprise*."

"*Enterprise*, Uhura here. Go ahead, Captain."

"Uhura, I need a priority channel opened to Ambassador O'Neal on Rigel VII. Relay it to my communicator please."

"One second, sir. Opening the channel."

It took a minute, but then the communicator sprang back to life. "Captain, I have the Ambassador for you; I'm putting him through now."

"Captain Kirk, this is Ambassador O'Neal. Is there a problem?"

Kirk responded. "Hello, Ambassador. I would not say a problem, but there are two conditions which Ensign Cory Short has before he can accept custody of Timmy. The first is that his partner, Ensign Sean Short, also be listed on the permanent guardianship as adoptive parent along with Ensign Cory."

"So am I to understand that Cory and Sean are a couple, both of which are in Starfleet? What is Sean's age?"

"Ensign Sean is thirteen, and yes they are a couple."

"In that case, I will accept that condition. If Starfleet recognizes them as a family then so shall I. What is the other condition?"

Kirk tensed slightly before replying, he knew this would be the tough one. "My Ensign believes that Timmy is still at risk from whoever caused his father's death. To reduce that risk, he requires Timmy to change his surname to match theirs."

The communicator was quiet for a minute, and then the Ambassador answered. "Unfortunately, I believe your Ensign could very well be right. Timmy is the last surviving member of my family; if that's what it takes to keep my grandson alive then so be it. Tell Cory and Sean they have already impressed me, and I look forward to someday soon meeting them in person."

Cory reached out his hand for Kirk's communicator. "Ambassador, this is Ensign Cory Short; we both were listening. Thank you and we both look forward to meeting you too. I'll give you back to the Captain now."

Kirk retrieved the communicator. "Thank you, Ambassador. I assure you Timmy is in good hands."

"I already get that impression. Thank you Captain. O'Neal out."

"Kirk out."

Kirk turned to Teri. "Teri, I believe this is your department, could you do the finals?"

Teri looked at her sons. "Cory, Sean, before I finalize this, I want you to know I'll help you as much as I can; all you have to do is ask. As much as it worries me, you two are now adults legally and have to live with your decisions. Ensigns Cory and Sean Short, do you accept full custody of the minor child Timothy Christian O'Neal?"

Cory spoke for both of them. "We accept custody and request his surname be changed to 'Short'."

"Approved. From this point forward, he shall be known as Timothy Christian Short. This concludes these proceedings."

Both boys gave their mom a hug, then turned to the Captain and extended their hands. Sean spoke for them both when he told the captain "Thank you for your support sir. I just hope we can handle this."

"You both can, your Mom is the best support network I know of. Now go get your son, Bones will go with you to help break the news."

As the three walked up to the limo, it was obvious the rest of the boys had joined Aaron and Timmy. Doctor McCoy opened the door, and everyone fell quiet as him, Sean, and Cory climbed in.

Cory and Sean sat in their favorite corner spot, and then Cory spoke. "Timmy, could you please come over here with Sean and me?"

Timmy walked over, and stood in front of them. When Cory signaled for him to sit on their laps, he climbed up and snuggled Cory.

Cory spoke in a soft voice. "Timmy, this is Doctor McCoy. He is the Chief Medical Officer on the Federation Starship *Enterprise*. He was the one trying to help your daddy; the one I said was the best doctor in the whole universe."

Timmy looked up at Cory, tears forming in his grey eyes. "Did Daddy die?"

Cory pulled the skinny four-foot tall boy closer and nuzzled his face into Timmy's short red hair. "I'm really sorry, he was hurt too bad to help. He woke up long enough to tell the Doc something. He loved you so much the last thing he did was to make sure you were going to be okay."

Timmy buried his freckled face in Cory's shoulder, tears freely flowing. After ten minutes, he calmed enough to ask "What did daddy say?"

Sean reached over and kissed the boy's forehead. "Why don't we let Doc tell you?"

Timmy looked over at McCoy. "What did he say, Doc?"

McCoy pulled out his tricorder. "Instead of me repeating it, I'll let you hear." He then played it back.

"Doc, is Timmy okay?"

"If Timmy was the boy in back, he's fine. Now let's get you out there with him."

"Doc, if I don't make it, tell Timmy I love him. If that happens, find the officer who cut the roof off the truck. I heard him working to get both of us out and want him to raise Timmy."

"I don't plan to have to pass that message, but I will."

There were some wet coughs, then one last statement. *"Thanks Doc, it's my time now."*

Timmy looked at McCoy. "Was Daddy hurting when he said that?"

"Yes, he was Timmy."

"Is Daddy hurting now?"

McCoy looked into Timmy's eyes. "No, I don't think he will ever hurt again."

"What about Granpa? Does he know?"

Sean answered. "Yes he does, Tim. We talked to him just before we came to the car. Do you understand what your dad asked to be done?"

Timmy thought for a second, and then realized who was being talked about. "Cory, does that mean you are my new Daddy?"

"Yes it does little buddy. Actually you got two new daddies - Sean and me both."

"How can I call you both Daddy?"

Sean answered "Well, how does Daddy and Pappa sound? Would that work?"

"... another 6 seconds and none of them would be here today." Teri said noting the look on Mary's face. "It's difficult to handle at first, realizing you are suddenly a grandparent. Once you get over the initial shock, your love for your children overshadows the fact that your babies now have babies."

"Joey must have had the same impact on you." Matt said, causing Jon to choke on his coffee. "Um, didn't you already know about Joey?"

"Joey? Joey who?" Jon asked as he cleaned up the mess he had just made.

Matt laughed as he noticed the confused look on even Mary's face. "You didn't know about Jerry's son?"

Jon looked at Mary before answering; "He didn't have one when we left."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I just assumed you knew about the little android boy." Matt added with a surprised expression.

"Android?" Mary questioned while rolling her eyes. "I suppose that was bound to happen sooner or later."

Teri smiled and leaned back in her chair. "Judging on the events that took place before I arrived, your crew here is fitting in with mine quite well." she added with a smile; "I'd get accustomed to surprises if I were you."

"You mean like having to get clearance to get into your own home?" Jon said with a chuckle.

"It all begins there." Teri said raising her cup; earning a round of laughter as the door opened and Doc. Austin wandered in.

"Well, the A.I. Division is forming nicely. We have our IT team totally destroying the house right now." he said with a chuckle as he took a seat and Jon poured him a coffee. "Thanks, I needed a break. How's things goin over here?"

"Much better now." Matt replied. "It seems our new division is just as full of surprises as the group that just adopted them."

"Birds of a feather." the doctor laughed. "They are working so well together over there. It feels like home."

"So, that's why you needed a break." Teri shot in reply.

"Yup, the only thing missing is Aaron being tossed in the pool." Doc. Austin answered getting a few laughs.

"Unkah Dahnnee. Me tummy id geddin empee." Joey said breaking into Danny and Caleb's conversation.

"Mee Toooo!" Timmy added with Ricky nodding his head in agreement.

Danny smiled at Caleb and then looked at the fridge. "Oh boy. I almost forgot dinner." he said as he looked at the kids. "Man, I don't think there's enough food in the house for this many people."

"Let's order in pizza!" Caleb said excitedly.

"YEAH!!!" the little ones screamed in reply; causing Danny's face to suddenly turn a pale white.

"Do you have any idea how many pizzas we'd need to order?" Danny said, now holding his head.

"Grab a phone book and pick the lucky pizza shop." JJ interjected; tossing his Federation Visa on the table. "Just charge it to that."

"Phone book?" Jerry piped up. "Just call 886-4242."

"Who's that?" Danny asked the now grinning boy.

"Domino's. It's on the other side of the breach. We call them all the time." Jerry said with a smile. "They're awesome!"

"Anyone opposed to Domino's?" Danny asked the group getting a round of smiles as his answer. "Domino's it is then, break off in teams. Ask the groups you are working with what they would like and we'll make up the order from that." Danny said just as JJ closed his communicator.

"It's just us, The adults are just gonna eat in." JJ said with a smile. "I hope this place can handle a big order." He added with a giggle.

Domino's Pizza: 1515 Palm Blvd. Isle Of Palms, SC

"Domino's Pizza, Pickup or delivery?" Eddie, the shop's shift supervisor answered the phone in a semi-musical tone.

"Delivery, unless the order is too large."

Eddie smiled before answering "Never seen the order large enough to stop us from delivering. Just to verify the call information for delivery, are you located at 3199 Marshall Boulevard, Sullivan's Island?"

"That's us." The voice on the other end replied. "This order is really large though."

Eddie laughed and replied. "Don't worry about it. What would you like this evening sir?"

"We need 50 large pizzas. 10 cheese, 20 pepperoni, 4 half..." The voice on the other end got out before being cut off.

"Excuse me, did you say 50 large pizzas? Is this a joke?"

"It's no joke. I did warn you it was a really large order." Was the reply on the other end as Eddie, who was also the Manager's son attempted to wave his arms to get his father's attention through the office window from the front counter.

"Could you hold for one second sir, I need to grab the Manager for this one." Eddie asked as he frantically waved his father to come up front.

"No problem." The voice answered as Eddie pressed the hold button.

"DAD! Get up here!" Eddie shouted placing the phone on the counter.

"What's wrong?" Eddie's father questioned.

"I have some kid on the phone trying to order 50 large pizzas." he said with his eyes open wide.

"Is the call for real?" his father asked as he picked up the receiver.

"I don't know, like I said it sounds like a kid. I didn't talk to an adult." Eddie explained, as his father brought the call off of hold.

"Good evening sir, This is Alex Fraser, Manager and Franchise owner. I hear you have a rather large order for us this evening." Alex said in a warm tone.

"Yes sir we do." The voice replied.

"Is your father home son?" Alex asked while winking at his son.

"My father? Umm..." The voice giggled. "Sir this is an order for our staff. I'm actually a lot older than I sound." the voice answered.

"I'm sorry son, your address is not listed as being a business. Unless I speak to an adult I'm sorry to say we can't take such a large order." he said as he looked at the partially filled out slip and gasped as he covered the mouth piece. "He really tried to order 50 large pizzas?"

"Yeah, that's why I yelled." Eddie answered.

"Sir, I assure you this order is for real. This address has just been obtained by Clan Short of Vulcan as it's A.I. Division. I sound young because I myself am an android and head of this newly formed division."

"I'm sure son, but I really need to speak with an adult regarding this order. I do apologize for the inconvenience but that is a policy." the manager said politely.

"I understand your position sir. We will call back in a few moments." the voice replied before disconnecting the call.

"There you go, one prank diffused." Alex said ruffling his son's hair.

"Thanks dad." The 16 year old smiled as he resumed his position in the quiet shop assembling pizza boxes, before the phone ringing once again got his attention. Without looking at the caller ID he picked up the phone and recited his practiced "Domino's Pizza, Pickup or delivery?" greeting.

"Um yes, This is Lieutenant Commander Mathew Barnes, federation security assigned to Clan Short of Vulcan. May I speak with your manager please." The voice on the other end politely requested.

"Yes sir, one moment please." Eddie replied as he placed the call on hold and looked at the caller ID, verifying the same number as the call placed earlier. "DAD!" Eddie yelled as his father poked his head out of the office door. "It's them again, this time an adult claiming to be with the federation."

"I'll take it in here son." Alex replied as he picked up the phone. "This is Alex Fraser, Manager and Franchise owner. How can I help you this evening?"

"Good evening sir, I am Lieutenant Commander Mathew Barnes, Federation security assigned to Clan Short of Vulcan. I am calling you from our newly formed A.I. Division headquarters. I understand the

head of this division attempted to place an order with your establishment. An order you refused to take. Might I ask why that is?"

Alex cleared his throat while loosening his tie. "Well sir, um... We have to be careful when deciding if an order being called in to us is a prank or not. Your division head sounded like a young boy, and was unable to produce a parent to verify the validity of his request. I'm sure you can understand our position."

"Considering the fact that his voice is youthful, I will give some margin for your hesitance. Sir, I am about to give you the credit account this order is to be charged to. Please verify the credit line origin now as proof that this order is not a prank as you described, as will be any future orders originating from this location." the voice on the other end stated before giving the credit card number for the owner to punch into his system.

"Thank you sir." Alex replied as he waited for the credit information to pop up on his screen, gasping when the card displayed one of the highest ranking credit lines he had ever seen from a federation account. "I do apologize for our actions sir, we had no way of knowing."

"Understandable, please insure that I needn't be bothered over issues of this nature in the future." the Lieutenant requested firmly.

"Yes sir, if you would like to place your division head back on the phone, I will redirect this call to our shift supervisor so he may resume taking your order." Alex responded as he placed the call on hold, grabbed an apron and hurried into the kitchen. "Eddie, grab that call and take the order. Be exceptionally nice, they weren't kidding about who it was for." Alex ordered as he began to assemble the kitchen staff to rush the order as much as possible.

Eddie watched a moment as his father seriously rushed the staff into action before clearing his throat and picking up the phone. "Um... Yes sir. Can I take that order please?" he said with his voice cracking.

The voice on the other end giggled before responding. "Yes please. By the way, don't sweat it dude. No offence taken on this end. Ok?"

"Yes sir." Eddie replied.

"Danny." the voice simply said, confusing Eddie.

"I'm sorry, my name is Eddie, not Danny sir." Eddie said, scratching his head.

"No, I mean my name is Danny, you can drop the sir." he replied with a giggle.

"Oh." Eddie said with a giggle. "Cool thanks man, now you said you wanted 50 large pizzas?"

"Yup, that's 20 minutes or it's free, right?" Danny giggled as he could literally hear Eddie gulp on the other end.

"Um... I would need to ask my dad about that one." Eddie responded as he realized Danny was just kidding and laughed as well.

"Bummer, I would have been impressed if you guys could meet it." Danny added and then began placing his order once again.

About two hours later, three cars pulled up in front of the Furst residence attracting the attention of the kids in the house. "The pizza's here guys!!!" Ricky shouted at the top of his lungs; causing a literal stampede for the door.

Just as he was about to approach the security guard, Eddie looked at the house and saw a wild looking group of kids relieve the other two drivers of their cargo within seconds flat.

"Um..." Eddie stated as he reported to the security shack. "Well I was going to let you know we had a delivery for this residence, but I guess the word got out." he said as they stood back and watched as the other two drivers were literally attacked by what would be recognized anywhere else as an angry mob.

"I guess you got lucky by coming over here first then." JJ said as he exited the shack. "You happen to have a meat lovers pizza in there?"

"I get extra cheese!" Timmy shouted as he and Danny walked over.

"You're in luck, those are in my car." Eddie said as Danny recognized the voice from the phone conversation.

"Eddie?" Danny asked and held out his hand for Eddie to shake.

"Danny?" Eddie's eyes opened wide as he accepted his hand and shook it. "You said you were older than you sounded dude." Eddie stated as they began to walk toward the car and opened the back.

"Well, I am." Danny replied with a giggle. "Have you ever met an android before? Our looks are usually deceiving." he added with a smile.

"Oh yeah, I've seen androids but none of them were as young or cute..." Eddie got out as he froze in embarrassment at the comment he let slip. "Sorry bout that man, I meant good looking." he said as his expression clearly said "I wanna die!"

Danny giggled and patted Eddie on the back. "Thanks man, as for the looks you would need to compliment the designer." as the two pulled JJ and Timmy's pizzas from the back and gave ample clearance for the stampede to change directions. "Guys! The rest are in there!" Danny yelled and pointed towards Eddie's car.

"Chickens!" one of the older gentlemen shouted to them as he was busy being tackled by the group.

"No just smart enough to stay out of the way." Danny yelled as he handed Timmy his pizza and Eddie gave JJ his.

"Sir." Eddie said as he handed the box to JJ. "We were able to salvage these for you." he added with a giggle.

"I was getting worried." JJ said as he pulled out his Federation Visa "Could you handle the gratuities for yourself and the others, if they survive the mauling, on this card please. Charge \$50 for each of you." he added as Eddie's jaw dropped.

"That much isn't necessary sir." Edie gasped out.

"No but it may help with the bill's to reattach missing fingers and any damage to vehicles from that crowd's attempt to eat their way towards the food." JJ said with a giggle as he noticed Danny watching Timmy sitting on the ground.

"What's he doing?" JJ asked as Danny held his finger to his lips.

"Shhhh... Listen to him." Danny whispered as all three froze and listened.

"It's ok. You can have some of mine." Timmy said as he opened his pizza box. "Do you like cheese?"

"Who's he talking to?" Eddie whispered to Danny.

"No idea." Danny replied just in time to watch a baby raccoon carefully approach Timmy and sit down. "Oh how cute!" Danny whispered as Timmy pulled a small piece off and began to blow on it.

"You gotta wait a second, it's too hot." Timmy said with a smile as the raccoon patiently waited for him.

"He's good with animals, isn't he?" Eddie asked with a smile.

"You have no idea." JJ said as he went back into the shack and opened his pizza.

"Well, we better head back, right now there are only two people in the shop." Eddie said with a smile.

"Yeah, next time we'll give you more warning. Tonight we were just too busy to think ahead." Danny said getting a smile from Eddie.

"It's no problem dude. I think my dad is just excited at the boost in sales." Eddie replied with a grin. "Call us anytime, I'm just glad I have a station wagon or else I wouldn't have been allowed to leave." he added with a wink; waving as he approached the other drivers. "Hold out your hands." he said as they did as he asked with confused looks on their faces. "Ok, no missing fingers. I guess we can all go back to work now."

Danny laughed and waved as he turned back toward Timmy. "Who's your little friend there?"

"He's a waccoon!" Timmy quickly replied with a mouthful of pizza. "His momma had a accident an he's all by himself." Timmy said as he pulled off another small slice and blew on it for his little friend. "Is it ok if he comes inside? Duke and William need to talk to him."

Danny looked over to JJ, who could hear all that was going on. "If Timmy says an animal needs help, it's probably cause it asked him for help. It should be cool for him to go inside." JJ said; knowing why Danny was hesitant with his answer.

"Thanks bro." Danny answered as he turned back around and watched them both eat. "Well if Duke and William wanna help, it's ok with me for him to go inside. Just let me know if you need anything to help, ok?"

"Ok Danny, thanks! Um... Can I call you Unca Danny like Joey does?" Timmy asked with a look that melted Danny's heart.

"You know little buddy, I'd be proud if you did." He said with a smile as Timmy put his slice down and gave Danny a hug while the raccoon watched.

"Ok we're gonna go inside then. Thanks Unca Danny." Timmy said with a huge smile as he turned back, closed the box and had the baby raccoon hop on to it to be carried inside.

"Another softie." JJ giggled out as Danny looked back and smiled. "He has that affect on ya tho. I think he goin pro at adoptin soft hearted family." JJ added with a smile as Danny simply smiled and nodded, then turned back to go into the house.

"That won't work bro, there is no way to bridge alien networks with only one operating system." Caleb stated to Danny as he sat back in his chair and eyed all of the empty pizza boxes stacked in the corner from dinner a couple of hours before.

"It just makes more sense to find a way to do it though. You could cut the equipment load in half that way." Danny replied as a very naked Timmy, Ricky and Joey ran into the kitchen. "Guys, where are your clothes?" he asked in a shocked tone as Caleb giggled.

"Dude, that's standard issue bedwear." Caleb said as Ricky hopped in his lap and hugged him. "You guys goin to bed now?"

"Uh huh." The three chorused as they made their rounds with hugs and kisses.

"Unkah Dahnnee, I gedda sweep with Dimmee and Wickee" he said as he hopped into Danny's lap.

"Oh no." Danny said looking at Caleb. "We have no way to charge Joey, Marc is on that terminal and the new system won't be up until tomorrow."

"Oooohh." Caleb said with a concerned expression. "How long can he hold out before his power level gets critical?"

"I have no idea what shape his cell is in. I know it is old and used so, it's anyone's guess." Danny replied as Joey hopped off his lap and all three ran full speed back into the living room. "Should be 24 hours before his system shuts down. It won't hurt him or anything. Just means once Marc wakes up, Joey will need an extra nap to get through the day."

"Hey Danny!" Jerry shouted as he and Noah came into the room. "We're plannin on putting a movie in and crashing in the living room. You guys comin or are you still working?"

"Still working." Caleb replied. "We really need to have this mapped out so we can get the new network online tomorrow."

"Yeah, just save us some floor." Danny added as Noah walked around the table and wrapped his arms around Caleb from behind.

"You guys need a hand?" Noah asked as he gave his boyfriend a squeeze.

"Nah, go warm up a spot for me. We'll be all set soon, I hope." Caleb replied as he gripped the hug tighter.

"Ok, don't stay up too late." Noah said as he began to pull off his shirt on the way out of the room with Jerry following his lead. Caleb's stare followed his boyfriend all the way out of the room, completed with a sigh as they disappeared from sight.

"How long have you two been a couple?" Danny asked with a smile gaining Caleb's attention.

"Two months on the 23rd." Caleb answered with a smile. "Why do you ask?"

"No real reason, just that you two seem so perfect together." Danny said with a smile. "We can put this off til morning if you wanna go in and cuddle up."

"No, we need to get this worked out before morning." Caleb answered as he grabbed a PADD and began typing.

"Ok, I'm gonna make myself a coffee, want one?" Danny asked as he stood and went over to the cabinet to grab a mug.

"Sounds great, we still have to figure out placement and map the internal wiring. That's gonna take a while." he said as he stood up and Danny handed him a mug.

"Sugar is next to the coffee maker, milk in the fridge. Have at it bro." Danny said with a smile as he sat back down with his mug and watched as Caleb started shoveling sugar into his cup. "Dude, leave some room for the coffee." Danny giggled.

Caleb looked at his cup then back at Danny as he shoveled 4 more heaping spoonfuls into his cup with a grin. "I like it sweet." he said as both began to giggle.

"You have enough sugar for four cups of coffee in there. I would hope you like it sweet. My teeth are rotting just thinking about you drinking that." Danny got out as he watched Caleb pour a little bit of coffee in his cup, and topped it off with an almost equal amount of milk. After stirring it and taking a sip, he gave Danny a mischievous grin and added two more spoonfuls of sugar. "Gross dude!" Danny giggled as Caleb took another sip and nodded his head in approval.

"Good coffee bro." Caleb said as he sat back down.

"You mean you actually can taste coffee in that concoction?" Danny replied with a grin.

"Oh yeah." Caleb said as he looked at the PADD he was working on. "How's this?" He added to change the subject as he slid the unit over for Danny to look over.

"That works, but according to this we need to upgrade the wiring downstairs. All of the downstairs stuff is older and won't be able to handle that kind of traffic."

"Oh." Caleb said as he slid the PADD back toward himself and spun it back around to look at it. "I didn't think about how it was installed. This is gonna take a while."

About an hour later, the boys were still hard at work creating theories and punching holes in them when the front door being opened cause them both to jump.

Sean and Cory opened the door and walked into a silent house. "Umm, Sean; Did you pull in the right driveway?" Cory snickered.

Danny looked at Caleb and smiled. "Dude, didn't I tell you to lock the door." he said as both began to snicker.

Caleb giggled his reply. "I thought you did it dude; now all the bums are sneaking in!"

"Bite me, Caleb!" Cory chuckled as they walked over to the table. "Is there any food around, we're starved!"

"Hmmm..." Danny said as if giving the question serious thought. "You might be able to scrape some cheese out of one of those." he said as he pointed to the tower of empty boxes in the corner.

Sean looked to where Danny was pointing and gasped. "DUDE! What did y'all do, roll a Domino's semi that was driving by?"

"Nah, but I know one Domino's franchise that can have our business any time now." Danny said with a giggle.

"Yeah!" Caleb added. "Their drivers are pretty tough. Not too many injuries after the gang attacked without mercy." he giggled out as Danny almost choked on his coffee.

"Just kidding guys, there are two pizzas in the oven with your names written on the boxes. Deej told me what you guys usually get." Danny said, getting a pouting look from Caleb for giving up the goods so easily.

"You are soo weak bro. You could have gotten an easy hour out of making them search that pile for scraps." Caleb managed to get out before Sean reached over and dummy slapped him in the back of the head.

"Keep it up Caleb!" Cory giggled as him and Sean headed for the stove. "If you ain't careful, the most advanced computer you'll be able to get near is a C-64!"

"A what?" Caleb scrunched up his nose and looked at Danny, who had obviously gotten the joke judging at how hard he was laughing.

"Commodore 64 dude. It's like one of the earliest systems that were made available to the public. You know, back in the day when not every house could even afford to have a computer." Danny giggled out as Caleb appeared to be deep in thought.

"Ok, but you guys will have to learn how to access the Vulcan network with it cause I will replace all of our terminals with them." Caleb said with a dead serious stare.

"Oh my God!" Cory exclaimed as he opened the oven and looked inside. He managed to get both pizza boxes out of the oven and onto the stove top before both he and Sean collapsed on the floor in laughter. As soon as he recovered enough to read again, Cory read the notes on the boxes out loud. "You touch, you die." "Daddys pissa – I ponce if u eat" "Radioactive – authorized persons only" "~^_| - {~^" "Diplomatic Property Of Clan Short" "Warning – fingers amputated for eating Pop's Pizza!"

Cory showed his box to Danny. "Hey bro; any idea what these scribbles are?"

Danny looked and burst out laughing as he tried to read the scribbles beneath "Radioactive – authorized persons only". "That's why Joey was looking for something to write with." he said as he looked closer at the scribbles. "No clue, does the clan have someone who can translate Juvenile Android markings?"

Cory chuckled as he sat down. "Did we miss anything while we were gone? How's the guys downstairs doing?"

Danny sat back and took a sip from his almost empty coffee before replying "Well, Austin is coming along at an incredible rate, I think he will actually gain consciousness sometime tomorrow morning. Marc suffered minor damage due to overload, but his system is doing a great job repairing the damage. He should be up and around by morning too. Your Mom, Doc. Austin, Matt and Jerry's parents have been at Jerry's house all night. I'm thinking Mary is handling this much better since Teri stepped in but we won't know til we see them. I guess the adults are staying there tonight. All equipment is in place and ready for installation once Caleb and I figure out the routing and how to make it all function and take the place of the systems they are replacing. We have major plans and are working well on it together. He's been one heck of a partner on this project." Danny said with a smile. Caleb pretended to not be paying attention, but his blushing gave him away. "Otherwise, our two groups are gettin along better than I could have ever believed possible. Your kids are the best I have ever encountered. Full of surprises too."

Sean was between pieces and replied, since Cory's mouth was full of about half a slice of pizza. "Sounds good. I'm afraid to ask what the surprises are though."

"Nothing serious bro. I had a great time today though. How was your break tonight? You guys actually look rested." Danny commented with a smile as he watched Cory pretty much devour another slice.

Cory swallowed his mouthful and then replied. "It went really good. Sean and I got in some quality cuddle time, made a new friend, talked to some ghosts, met a cool police officer and judge, and just generally chilled. Oh, we found out Davie got promoted."

Danny and Caleb both stopped what they were doing and stared blankly at Cory. After looking at each other and shrugging their shoulders in confusion Caleb responded. "Um... Danny. You wouldn't have a drug test kit layin round, would ya?"

Danny giggled and looked at Cory who was in the process of cramming another poor slice of pizza towards it's quick demise before putting down the PADD he was working on. "Quality Cuddle Time, Good! The rest of that... Um... What???" he got out before all four broke out in giggles and Sean spit pizza down the front of himself, gaining another round of laughs.

Once Sean had cleaned up, he clarified Cory's quick reply. "We had a visit from Mikey and Davie while we were there. We had met a kid named JR while we were watching the reflection of the sunset on the ocean. Mikey and Davie brought along a friend of his that died recently; while Davie was working with JR and Jeremy, Mikey introduced us to some local ghosts. It looks like we're gonna get some help from them, they are gonna guide kids to us. Once that was all done, a cop which kinda looks out for JR came up since we were out past curfew. We talked to him for a while; in fact he's coming by tomorrow to meet the rest of the gang. I think he's gonna be a big help for you guys. We took JR home; his Dad is a SC Superior Court judge and is really cool. Goofball here started a conversation that outed JR to his parents; we actually got to see parents responding the way they should all respond. They are coming over too – Judge Legette has offered any assistance which may be needed to the Clan; in return if he asks for help give it to him."

"That's awesome. You know we will be available to him if he ever needs us to be." Danny said with a smile. "I'm not so sure about the ghost thing but, since Mikey and Davie are involved, somehow it doesn't surprise me." Danny added giving Caleb a smile.

"What's this about Davie getting a promotion?" Caleb asked; getting a curious nod from Danny.

Since Sean had returned to stuffing his face, Cory replied while holding the last piece of his pizza in his hand. "Davie is now Mikey's assistant. He can appear without Mikey's help, and is able to do all but the real major stuff. He's got the same glow as Mikey has, about the only difference is his wings are white instead of gold like Mikey's."

"Oh wow." Caleb answered with a smile. "I bet he's excited."

"Yeah." Danny added. "Mikey really could use an assistant. From what I've seen he is a very busy saint."

"Yeah he is." Caleb continued as he held his PADD to Danny. "Here, how does that look. I figured out how to bridge information across the network to both systems without one terminating the other." He said as Danny took the PADD and looked it over, nodding his head the entire time.

"Told you that wiring wouldn't work." Danny said with a grin earning an 'UP YOURS' glare from Caleb.

"Yeah, but you also said that they would share communication and look where that led us." Caleb replied as both started to giggle.

"Ok, you win. That did kinda add an extra hour worth of work." Danny replied.

"Makes us even then, cause my bright idea to make all systems handle all formats added even more time." Caleb said with a smile.

Cory held up his hand. "Okay you two; it's getting too late to work. Pack it all up for the night and start fresh tomorrow." Cory giggled as he added "That's an order."

Danny looked up from his PADD and powered it down quickly. "Yes sir." He replied with a smile as Caleb did the same and rubbed his eyes.

"Sleep, need sleep" Caleb said as he stood up from his chair.

"Bathroom, need bathroom." Danny chimed in as he rushed to the restroom.

"Hey, I had to go." Caleb whined as Danny closed the door.

"You snooze you loose bro." Danny replied with an evil laugh as Caleb looked back at Sean and Cory before shooting them an evil grin and trying the doorknob.

"Hey now!" Danny yelped as Caleb joined him laughing hysterically.

"You forgot to lock the door, I still win." he said as both started to laugh.

Cory and Sean giggled as they waited in line. "Just like home!" Sean quipped as Danny and Caleb exited and he followed Cory through the door.

"Danny, can I ask a really personal question?" Caleb asked getting a concerned look from Danny.

"Sure bro, what's up?"

"Does um... Does everything work. You know, like a person?" Caleb asked with embarrassment showing in his voice.

Danny smiled and ruffled Caleb's hair. "Don't be embarrassed bro, it's an understandable question. Yeah everything works. Anything I have that's human, is really human." he said with a smile.

"I always wondered that." Caleb said with a weak smile.

"Makes sense. How would you know unless you asked. Besides, if you get into hacking the living computers like you originally planned, it's a good thing to know." Danny added, finally getting a smile from Caleb.

Once they were done, Sean and Cory met back up with Danny and Caleb. "Let's see if they left us any space!" Cory commented as he led the way. The boys came to a stop as they reached the end of the hall and looked into the living room.

"No walking space in here!" Sean commented. "Turn around, looks like we gotta get ready for bed in the kitchen."

Back in the kitchen, Danny followed the boys lead, figuring they were stripping to their underwear, until Sean, Cory and Caleb dropped their shorts and noticed Danny was frozen with a shocked expression. "You all sleep that way? Together?"

"Yeah dude, saves on laundry!" Cory replied with a giggle. "It ain't nothing, we're all boys."

Danny smiled and realized he was right. "Yur right bro, just kinda surprised me a little" Danny said with a laugh. "When in Rome..." he said as he dropped his underwear and tossed them on the chair.

Cory gave a low whistle. "Nice bod, bro! You're cute ALL over!"

Sean reached over and slapped the back of Cory's head playfully. "Hands off, babe. You're taken!"

Caleb snickered as he openly stared at Danny. "That is so unreal. I would never believe you're an android."

The now blushing Danny focused on Caleb more than Sean and Cory, attempting to get the blushing under control as he replied; "Yeah, it's real easy for me to forget sometimes too. Marc did one heck of a job bringing me back." he said as he shot Cory a grin. "Taken? Too bad bro. You're not so bad in the bod department yourself." he said as he got the blush he was aiming for and raised his hand to High Five Caleb. "One for one dude." Danny got out with a giggle.

Sean giggled at the display. "Okay, I think that y'all are getting silly from lack of sleep. Let's hit the sack guys!" Sean led the way back down the hall and into the edge of the living room. As he stood looking over the group of boys, Sean noticed a little brown and black furball laying on a pillow between Timmy and Ricky. "Hey Danny; what's that with Timmy?"

Danny giggled as he scanned the whole room before realizing the baby raccoon was curled up on the pillow Timmy and Ricky and Joey had found a way to share. "Um, Ricky and Joey?" he got out as he continued to pretend to look for an open spot before getting a playful jab in the ribs from Sean.

"That little ball of fur, goofball!" Sean replied in mock anger, trying not to giggle."

"Oh that. Yeah I did mention earlier about a couple of surprises. That would be one of them." Danny said as Caleb found Noah and waved the boys over.

"Huge open spot guys." Caleb said as he looked at the raccoon. "The furball is cool. He really likes cheese pizza." he added before snuggling up to his boyfriend, not giving Sean a chance to respond.

Cory had worked his way over to the young boys, and smiled when the furball looked up at him sleepily. "Awww, it's a baby raccoon! Worry about it tomorrow hun; I'm sure Timmy will explain it. C'mon, the kids saved us our usual spot. You too Danny, they left room for three."

Danny snuggled into his spot before sitting up and taking one last look around the room at the huge crowd which was nestled together. Joey was snuggled in right behind Ricky; they looked comfortable enough together as if they were born and raised with each other. Everyone else was snuggled up to someone else, whether it be a brother or a partner in just the same fashion. Even though he had only met these people earlier the same day, Danny was amazed that he didn't feel out of place. He let out a sigh and smiled as a voice broke into his thoughts.

"What's wrong bro?" Cory asked with concern as he rolled to see Danny and reached out for his hand.

Danny smiled and gave Cory's hand a squeeze. "Absolutely nothing. Everything just feels so right today. Kinda like our small family just got a whole lot bigger." he said as he rested his head on his pillow. "Just have a lot to be thankful for."

Cory smiled as he laid back down and pulled on Danny's hand until Danny was snuggled against his back. "Your family is huge now bro, and we all love you. Goodnight brother; I'm proud to have you as family."

Danny couldn't help but let a tear escape as he accepted Cory's lead and snuggled up close reaching across to rub Sean's shoulder. "I love you guys too, I couldn't have wished for a better family."

Notes from the Author:

Only one word could describe what I am thinking right now. "WOW!" That final scene with Danny, Cory & Sean was truly inspired by my feeling right now. It's funny, but ever since the opening line of Memories Part 1, ("*Do you remember which key it is?*" Sean asked.) I honestly fell in love with those guys and all who were to follow. Danny's thoughts just before snuggling up to Cory came from me just as much as it did Danny. I think the reality of what ACFan has helped me to create is starting to really sink in. Not just the work that goes into co-writing a chapter but the way our characters continue to lead us through each event as if they know just how they want this to all to turn out. Granted, once they all get going, we get nailed to our keyboards until they are through; or we pass out from exhaustion. (Usually the second option. Just ask anyone who has tried to chat with us during a writing session ;) It's been a rough couple of days for our group but they are lovin every second they get to spend with their new family. I won't argue with them, I'm having a blast too. I hope you all feel the same.

I want to give a very special thank you to both ACFan and Multimapper. ACFan for the countless hours it took to mesh his universe with ours and Multimapper for writing a scene which also ties us to another part of the Clan Short Universe. (You can find "One Door Closes" @ <http://bentandtwisted.us> Go check it out, I promise you won't be sorry!)

Once again, gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "Memories" are truly missing out on part of the story. You just gotta read it! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us>

Keep an eye out for Chapter 8. Things are just gettin going!

HUGZ from our Gang, now known as "Clan Short; AI Division!"

Notes from the Editing Team:

Our Pups are still kinda off-line. I did a careful read through for now but, know readability would be much better with their help. We'll hang on and wait til' they return :) "Missin you guys!"

Notes from ACFan:

FINALLY!!! I was running out of toothpicks to prop my eyes open with! For you trivia buffs out there, you have just completed reading the officially longest chapter in Clan Short History! The second longest is the companion to this chapter, Memories Part 2 Chapter 4. The previous record holder was the final chapter of Memories Part One! The reason I point this out is that JeffP and myself put in quite a few sleepless nights making sure that we covered everything that happened. The only way to truly understand it all is to read both chapters; while some sections are similar, there is a lot of work put into how the other side is seeing things happen. Also, things that are commented about in one are explained in the other.

This has been an awesome experience putting all of this together, and I'm looking forward to continuing working with JeffP on the next chapter - AFTER we catch up on sleep! The ending couldn't have said it better; his boys and my boys are now OUR boys, for better or worse they have blended into family. In the process, all of them are learning and growing; becoming stronger as each one develops their individual talents.

Thanks JeffP for letting me join you on this wild ride; see ya' next chapter!!!

Hugzzz to all y'all out there in readerland!

AC

"Chapter 8 - Future's Past"

Co-Written By: ACFan

Special Thanks to WolfDancer for the poem "Why" (written exclusively for this chapter)

Guess who?? <Grin>

Nope, it's me, Saint Mikey! C'mon, let's go into the kitchen so we don't wake anyone up!

That's better. I sent the rugrat over to Memories to introduce himself; so I figured I'd take the chance to say 'Hi!' to y'all! I figured my little brothers might have shocked a few of you that were not expecting them; don't worry, they do that to everyone! As you probably read, I was Sean and Cory's big brother; at least that was what I was before I was killed by a drunk driver. That drunk set a lot of things in motion on that day, starting a chain of events which are still unfolding. There's too much for me to explain here; ACFan has done a pretty decent job of documenting it in "Memories", so your best bet is to set aside a weekend and catch up there.

Now, for the scoop on my new cohort Davie. When he came to the Pearly Gates after being killed he made a request; almost exactly the same one I did. He requested to be the Guardian Angel for his family. Neither one of us said the word 'immediate'; a choice we are both extremely happy that we made. There's one little thing about my little brothers; when they let you join the Clan you really are a part of

the family. When Jerry joined the Clan, Davie suddenly had a TON of brothers; in fact his list is exactly the same as mine!

A little history; I was given Sainthood when I made the commitment to watch out for the kids no matter how many became family. I have a suspicion Our Father looked into my heart as I was asked the question; I know the only thought in my mind was that it could be every kid in the world and I would still do it. Now I watch over all Gay and abandoned youth, along with my ever-growing family.

That meeting I had to take Davie to had to do with just that; after spending time with him I saw that he is a lot like me. You shoulda seen his face when we walked up to Saint Peter! He was sooooo sure he had screwed up with a Saint present! Once Davie realized he was not in trouble, I pitched my case to Saint Peter. (I must be hanging around Cory too much; I used logic!) Basically, I said that since Davie now is watching over my family too, it would make sense for him to move up to being my assistant and we can then tag-team the troubled youth out there. Saint Peter agreed, and Our Father must have too, because no sooner did the words leave my lips then Davie suddenly was surrounded by a golden glow. His wings grew equal to mine in size; in fact visually the only thing that shows he's not a full Saint is his wings are still white instead of golden. We discussed his status with Saint Peter; basically he's able to appear whenever he wants and can perform small miracles, major miracles still require me to be there. Davie's already tested his power; in fact it took both of us to pull off the incident at the Battery with Sean and Cory.

Oops! It looks like today's fun is getting ready to start! Grab a seat; this is gonna be good! I think that the corruption is starting to set in already!!

See y'all in a little bit; Davie and I get ringside seats today!

Mikey

“Oh Man.” Marc groaned as he sat up. “I feel like I was hit by a bus.” He added as he reached behind his head and disconnected the communications cable. After shuffling off the table and switching on the lights, Marc rubbed the sleep from his eyes and focused on the pile of blankets, pillows and assorted arms and legs sticking out randomly on the floor between the table he was on and the biobed Austin was still occupying. He smiled knowing it was the three little ones; who must have been worried. Looking up, he also noticed both baby eagles perched in a watchful manner on top of the cabinet nearest to the biobed. “Morning guys.” He whispered and waved, and smiled as Duke opened his wings and William nodded his head up and down in response.

Half walking and half stumbling, Marc wandered over to the Panda Unit and smiled at what he saw. “Outer skin already? Way to go kid!” He said as he brought the controls up and noted that Kevin's pulmonary system was in fact online and his biological components were beginning to function normally. “Must have begun starting up last night.” He said as he put the controls back into standby and looked inside one more time. “We may be saying hi in a couple of days dude. I gotta get that dream ready.”

Marc then tiptoed over to Austin and was amazed to see so much progress. “Damn, this thing is awesome!” He said as he checked Austin's vitals. “Looks like one more for lunch, maybe even breakfast.”

He whispered as he leaned over his sleeping boy and placed a soft kiss on his forehead before tiptoeing toward the stairs. "Watch over our angels guys." He said to Duke and William as they both raised their heads high in response earning a smile from Marc before he quietly ascended the stairs.

Upstairs Marc closed the door and saw a much larger pile of blankets, complete with bodies strewn all about just like in the basement. He stopped and leaned on the entryway and smiled when he finally spotted Danny, snuggled up to Cory's back, both being embraced by Sean in what looked like a protective hug.

"You're awake!" a voice from the kitchen startled him.

"Oh, Hi Mrs. Owens! You came home early?" Marc replied with a smile as he turned and went into the kitchen.

"We heard about the commotion on the news and came right home." She said with a smile. "Marc, have you met Sean and Cory's Mom yet?"

"No." He replied as he walked up to Teri and held out his hand to shake hers. "Nice to meet you Mrs. Short." Marc said with a sleepy smile.

"I'm gonna start wearing a name tag that says '*Mom or Teri*' so you guys loose the Mrs. Short routine." She said with a smile as she pushed Marc's hand aside and gave Marc a hug. "I heard you had a really rough day yesterday. How are you feeling this morning?"

Marc returned the hug while answering; "Like I fought a round with a bear, and lost." He said with a weak giggle as an evil grin crept into his expression. "Is that coffee I smell?"

Teri reached into the cabinet and pulled out a coffee mug and offered it to Marc with a grin. "Help yourself, we knew coffee was probably going to be needed this morning." She said as she began to work with Mary preparing what looked like a breakfast for an army. "I'm led to believe I have a few more boys to look after now from what I've heard."

"Us?" Marc said with surprise as he placed the milk back in the fridge and sat down at the table.

"Well, from what I saw here yesterday, yes you and your family." Teri said with a smile.

"Family." Marc muttered with a smile as he began to sip from his mug. "A few days ago I had no real family, other than Jim. He's more of a friend than family though."

"Well young man, your family seems to have outgrown your house now. I hope you're prepared for this crowd." Teri said with a smile. "I know we just met, but I want you to know that should you ever just need a '*Mom*' I will always be there for you. My boys are pretty selective when it comes to adopting new brothers and ready or not, you have been adopted."

"I've seen some of their accomplishments, so I know not to take that lightly." Marc replied with a smile. "Awesome coffee Mrs.... Um... Teri?" He said with a questioning look, which turned into a smile when Teri kissed him on the forehead and ruffled his hair.

“Thank you. Looks like you need a little help getting going today.” Teri replied.

“He does look a little pale Teri.” Mary added as she placed her hand on Marc's forehead. “Are you feeling alright?”

“I'm fine, really Mrs. Owens. Just a little worn out after what happened with Austin yesterday.” Marc said with a weak smile.

“Just Mary, ok? This isn't a formal breakfast.” Mary said with a grin. “Kids now-a-days. Being all respectful and stuff.” She kidded getting a laugh from Teri.

“Yup, we need to break 'em in.” Teri added as both returned to the stove.

Opening his eyes and squinting from the light, Austin sat up and looked around the room. He looked down the length of his body to see that he looked more normal than he had in years and even though he was covered in bruises and scars, was happy to see his skin color resemble what it was before being '*altered*'. He looked around the room and spotted a mirror and very slowly slid off the bed and carefully managed to work his way on shaky legs to the mirror.

“I'm all scars.” Austin whimpered with a snuffle as he carefully looked his face over.

“Y... You're Awake!!!” Shouted a familiar voice from behind him.

“Timmy?” Austin turned and questioned tilting his head. “Is that really you?” He asked realizing he was getting his first look at the face of what he considered to be his guardian angel.

Timmy smiled wide and hopped up from the blankets, waking Ricky and Joey in the process as he bolted and cautiously wrapped Austin in a hug. “I knew you'd be ok!” he said tightening his hug slightly.

“I am because of you.” Austin replied as he knelt down and kissed Timmy's cheek and hugged him back. “Because of you I'm alive.” he whispered. “I can never thank you enough for that.”

“Wickee, Aussin id ahp!” Joey said shaking Ricky, who had rolled over and tried to go back to sleep.

“And who are these two?” Austin smiled and asked Timmy.

Timmy smiled and pointed as he explained, “Thats my boyfriend Ricky an' he's Joey.” He said with a smile.

“Our Brother?” Both chimed as Austin looked at William with a shocked expression and Timmy stared at Austin with the same look on his face.

“You heard him?” Timmy asked with a wide smile.

“Yeah...” Austin replied without breaking his stare at the baby eagle. “A spirit helper?” He asked as he looked into Timmy's gray eyes and smiled.

“Uh-huh.” Timmy replied with a smile and a nod.

Ricky, who was now sitting up and watching on as William explained to Austin and Timmy how they were related and why, smiled when Duke flew down to rest in the pile of blankets and explained to him what was going on. “Neat!” Ricky said as Joey tilted his head in question.

“Whadda he say?” Joey asked.

“He sed you an Austin come from the same place somehow, an Timmy is ur brother cause he shared part of him to save Austin.” Ricky said with a wide smile.

Joey looked at Ricky with a confused expression before he climbed out of the nest and walked over to Austin and Timmy. “My broffers?” He asked in Duke's direction, who began to nod his head in response. “Bahd you dahddee id Unkah Mahwk an my dahddee id nod.” He stated as Austin reached his arm out inviting Joey into a three way hug.

“If Duke is right, then my base programming is in there too.” He said tapping on Joey's head. “That makes you my brother. Because of Timmy sharing himself to save me from dying, he is my brother too. So, yeah. We are brothers.” Austin finished with a warm smile as Ricky wandered over and joined in the hug. “You are my family.” Austin said with tears forming in his eyes. “Real family.”

“Marc honey, could you go in and start waking up the boys?” Teri asked. “Breakfast will be ready soon.” She added with a smile.

Marc smiled and stood up. “Ok... Um... Mom?” He said as he tilted his head and Teri turned and smiled at the sight of his expression. “You've never called anyone that, have you?”

“I was programmed to have memories of a Mom, but they aren't real. There was a woman who was kinda my Mom, but she wasn't really. I mean she helped me when my Father died, and was there the first time I ever woke up or ever needed repairs, but I never called her Mom. Just Sharron.”

“Get used to it then.” Teri said with a smile. “Now go wake up your brothers.” She added with a grin.

Marc smiled at Teri as he pushed his chair in and raised his eyebrows as he noticed the deep purple colored briefs hanging from the back of the chair. He looked thoughtful for a second and then grabbed them and went into the living room.

“Danny.” He whispered as he put his hand on his brothers shoulder. “Danny, it's time to wake up.”

“Marc? MARC!!!” Danny almost shouted as he realized his brother was awake and shot up, wrapping Marc in a death grip. “You had me so scared yesterday bro!”

"I know." Marc replied smiling over at Cory and Sean, who were now half awake and watching with smiles. "I'm sorry, but there was no other way."

"I know, but promise me you won't put your life on the line like that again, ever." Danny said as he pulled back and looked into Marc's eyes.

"I can't promise that." Marc replied. "He's my son. If it means having to choose between my life or his, there is only one choice I can make." He replied watching Danny's expression melt. "You would do the same for Kevin." He added lowering his head to meet Danny's stare.

"Yeah." Danny replied weakly.

"Then you have to understand." Marc said with a grin. "Besides we really need to talk." Marc added with a serious tone.

"Oh?" Danny questioned.

Marc stood up and dangled the purple briefs, swinging them on the end of his finger. "You cheated!" He said in obvious mock anger.

Danny's smile returned as he stood up and snagged them looking them over. "I cheated?" He said folding his arms in defiance. "I'm the one who cheated? Mr. I'll pick the color and get him later? Is that what you are accusing me of?" He added with a giggle.

"Do you guys ever have normal arguments?" Jerry asked as he sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Butt washing and underwear..." He said in a mumble as the rest of the boys started to giggle. "Just weird."

Marc and Danny simply laughed as Danny began to walk toward the kitchen. "Enough of this, I gotta pee."

"That's pretty obvious bro." Cory exclaimed getting a playful swat from Sean as they watched Danny's *Morning Wood* lead him to the bathroom.

"Just wait til he realizes both Mom's are in the kitchen." Marc whispered as he sat down next to Cory.

"Omigod!!! I'm sorry..." Echoed Danny's voice as he shot back into the living room and began to fumble with his briefs to get them on. "You suck Marc! You knew they were out there!" He said as the now awake group started to laugh.

"Dude, you should spend some time at our house." Cory said as he and Sean got up sporting the same obvious need and walked right out into the kitchen.

"The look on your face..." Caleb tried to get out but was cut short as the tangled pair of briefs Danny couldn't get on hit him in the face. "Oh, that was just wrong!" Caleb giggled.

"I'll get even." Danny said freezing in his position as he turned to Marc and noticed he was holding the wall, no longer laughing with a paled look to him. "Marc? You ok bro?" He said as he wrapped his arm around Marc under his arms to steady him.

“Yeah, just got dizzy from laughing.” He said with a forced smile. “Danny, you think you could help me upstairs to wash up and change? I feel even worse cause I slept in this stuff.”

“We got time for a shower? You can sit on the seat in there at least.” Danny asked.

“Mom, do we have enough time for a shower before breakfast is ready?” Marc shouted toward the kitchen.

“Teri came around the corner and gave the boys a concerned look. “Are you alright Marc?” She asked as she knelt down and felt Marc's forehead. “You feel really warm, does a fever mean the same for you as it would anyone else?”

“It can, but this time I'm sure it means his system is seriously run down. He needs to relax, get cleaned up, dress warmly and then eat. It also means he's on light duty today. If he can't handle it from his chair, then he can't handle it.” Danny announced and added; “Yes Marc, that would be a direct order.” with a grin.

“I wouldn't argue.” Marc replied. “Well be as quick as we can Mom.” Marc added causing Teri to just shake her head.

“Take your time, I don't want you to get hurt trying to rush. Besides, breakfast is easier in shifts with a crowd this size.” Teri responded with a smile as she turned toward the kitchen.

“Can we take a shower too?” Antonio asked with a grin.

“Sure, use the one in my room.” Marc replied pointing to the door just across the hall from the basement.

“Sweet, thanks Marc.” Byron shouted as the two jumped up and ran for the room.

“Bathroom lights on!” Marc yelled and weakly giggled when he heard Antonio gasp and say “Cool!”

“Danny, Caleb and I will help you two upstairs. Just in case.” Noah offered as Caleb stood and nodded in agreement.

“Thanks guys, I owe you one.” Danny replied as he wrapped Marc's left arm over his shoulder and Noah did the same with his right arm. Caleb walked close behind with his hands on Marc's lower back to prevent them from falling backward.

Once reaching the room, Caleb started the shower and Noah and Danny got Marc undressed and safely on the seat in the shower.

“When you guys are done, Caleb and I will sneak in. We kinda need one too.” Noah said as Danny was about to step into the shower.

“Nah bro, first door on the right as you leave this room, there's another shower in there. Help yourselves. By the way, thanks for the help guys.” Danny replied with a smile.

Caleb grinned at Noah before watching him turn on his heel and bolt from the bathroom. "I'll warm it up." He shouted as he left the room.

"You two gonna be ok?" Caleb asked.

"We'll be fine, this one here just needs some rest." Danny said with a smile. "You better get in there before Noah comes hunting for ya!" Danny added with a smile earning a giggle from Caleb.

"Ok, but if you need help, just yell." Caleb answered and turned to join his boyfriend.

Just as Danny slid the shower door closed, he noticed Marc leaning against the shower wall with tears streaming from his eyes. He knelt down and took Marc's face in his hands and wiped away his tears.

"What's this for bro? You ok?"

"I'm fine." Marc mumbled through sniffles. "I guess I'm just having sorta selfish thoughts."

Danny screwed up his face while grabbing a face cloth and soaping it up. "Selfish? You of all people? I'll bet they aren't as selfish as you think they are."

"They are." Marc replied as he closed his eyes while Danny began soaping him up. "Dan, I really love all these guys. It's kinda like they have always been family." He added.

Danny simply smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

"It's just..." Marc got out being cut off by an uncontrollable sob. "I... I'm not ready for a commitment like they need yet." He almost spit out and began to uncontrollably cry.

Danny dropped the facecloth and pulled his brother into a tight hug on the shower floor. "That's what this is about?"

"I wanna get to know my son. I wanna keep doing the work I have been doing but, I don't want to lose them as family in the process. I can't lead an entire division. It was hard enough to continue on leading Vision Industries." He said with a deep sob as Danny continued to hug him. "It hurts too much sometimes... I can't do it anymore... I'm so selfish..."

Danny continued to let Marc vent. Never breaking his grip and slowly rocking him as Marc finally began to calm a bit. "They must have known that Marc." He whispered in Marc's ear.

"What do you mean?"

"I wanted to talk to you about this anyway. Cory and I had a little disagreement over who should act as division head yesterday." Danny said as Marc leaned back and saw a warm smile on his brother's face.

"Y... You did?" Marc asked wiping his eyes.

"Yeah. He must have known how you felt. They asked me to take that position so you could continue doing the work you love without having to spread yourself too thin." Danny paused and placed a light

kiss on his brother's forehead. "He won the argument and I accepted but was still worried if you would be upset with me."

A weak smile crept across Marc's face as he tightened the hug and buried his face in Danny's shoulder. "I love you." He whispered knowing he had worried himself to tears for no good reason.

"I love you too." Danny replied rubbing the back of Marc's head. "You will never have to bear that kind of burden again, I promise."

"You thinking what I'm thinking?" Noah asked as he and Caleb toweled each other off from their shower.

"Maybe." Caleb replied with an evil grin. "But if both of us are thinking just how cute you are, then one of us has a problem." He got out with a giggle and was just barely able to avoid being snapped by the towel Noah was holding as he escaped from the bathroom.

"Very funny." Noah laughed out as he followed Caleb and sat on the bed to get dressed. "We're supposed to be leaving tonight." Noah said causing Caleb to sigh.

"Yeah, I know." Caleb replied as he stopped dressing and just seemed to get lost in thought. "I wish we could stick around for a while." He added as he slowly began to put on his sneakers. "I mean, we were all just starting to become friends."

Noah leaned back on his elbows and stared at the ceiling. "Are they even ready to function on their own yet?"

Caleb thought for a second and replied as if a spark had just fired in his brain. "No way. There is so much left to do. Um... I mean Marc has to recover first but we still need to get the network online and work out compatibility issues with their positronic uplink on the new systems. Besides..." Caleb added as Noah's smile got wider each time Caleb added an issue. "...they are still learning how to operate the biobed. Not to mention having to work on Austin to get him back in shape. They are way too buried to be able to do it alone right now." Caleb finished and both broke out in a laugh.

"I had a feeling you were thinking the same thing I was." Noah said with a smile. "Honestly, I just want some time to get to know them. I mean just after yesterday, I feel like I found a couple of brothers I didn't even know I had." He said watching Caleb nod his head in agreement. "Now I feel like we're just kinda abandoning them by taking right off."

"Hey guys." Came Jerry's voice from the doorway, his hair still wet from his own shower. "I was wondering who was in there when I heard the shower runnin."

Noah and Caleb both smiled at each other and then back at Jerry. "Hey Jer!" Caleb said with a smile. "We was kinda talkin, you know about having to leave tonight."

"Yeah." Jerry replied hopping up on the bed next to Noah. "It stinks. I mean you guys just got here."

Noah smiled at Caleb and ruffled Jerry's hair. "Yeah it does." Noah said and added; "But that's not what we were talking about though. You guys are gonna need help..." He said as he repeated every issue Caleb brought up, adding a couple of his own.

Jerry smiled as he realized they were all on the same page. "Well, I could talk to Marc and see if he is gonna need Antonio to help with Austin. I mean I'm kinda busy with workin on getting everything together for Eli, so Marc is gonna need help... 'specially now since he's not feelin good."

"See." Noah said with a smile as he began to tie his sneakers. "We can't all leave yet. There's way too much to do." He finished as all three laughed.

"What are you guys scheming in there?" Danny's voice echoed from the doorway with Marc propped up against him grinning.

"Nothing!" all three chimed looking like three little kids who just got caught with their hands in the cookie jar.

"Stare at the ceiling and whistle a little, it's more convincing if you over act the part." Marc added getting giggles.

"Danny?" Caleb kinda weakly spoke up when the giggles died down. "If Cory and Sean are ok with it, would you be ok if some of us stayed behind to help out to finish with the setup and with Austin and stuff?"

"We really could use help." Jerry chimed in. "The computers aren't up yet, I gotta start work on the arm and leg for Eli, Austin is gonna need a ton of work still and Marc is gonna be busy once he feels better finishing up with the corrective surgery for him." He finished.

"Cory and Sean brought this up?" Danny asked.

"No, but they may suggest it once they know how much work still needs to be done." Noah answered.

Danny grinned and looked and noticed Marc's expression matched his own. "Well, you are right. There is a little more than we probably could comfortably handle. If you guys want to talk to Cory and Sean about it to see what they think, you can tell them you discussed it with us already and we're ok with having to babysit." Danny got out, managing to keep a straight face.

"BABYSIT!?!?" Caleb and Noah shouted as Danny and Marc turned to go back down stairs; laughing.

"Hold up!" Caleb shouted as he sprung from the bed and rushed to help with Marc, Jerry and Noah right on his heels.

"I'm ok guys, really." Marc attempted to say as Noah took the front, Jerry held Marc's shoulders from behind and Caleb lifted Marc's right arm and put it across his shoulders for support. "You guys are too much." Marc added as Danny took his left and the 5 slowly made it down the stairs.

"Yeah, who's babysitting who now?" Caleb giggled out as the group slowly descended the stairs.

“Austin!?!” Marc gasped as the group turned the corner into the living room and spotted Austin and Joey curled up on the couch under a blanket watching TV. “Omigod, how are you feeling?” He asked in excitement as he worked his way on shaky legs to the couch and knelt down. The rest of the group gathering around him with smiles on their faces.

Austin propped himself up on one elbow and pulled Joey tighter into his chest as he looked at the group with a smile. “I’m a little tired but ok Dad.” He said with a grin as a shocked expression washed over Marc’s face. “It’s ok to call you Dad, isn’t it? I mean I always knew I had one somehow but, never thought I’d ever meet him... um... you.”

A tear worked its way down Marc’s cheek as he sat on the edge of the couch and placed a kiss on Joey’s forehead and then Austin’s. “I just hope I’ll be a good Dad.” He said with a thoughtful smile. “But, look at you. What’s with the freckles?” Marc said in amazement as he looked closer. “Your hair color is changing. Omigod, you’re starting to look like Timmy. I never expected that reaction.” Marc said as if deep in thought. “We can fix it, just need to reincorporate your original DNA mapping...” Marc got out before being cut off.

“No!” Austin said quickly. “I wanna look like my brother. He saved my life and gave me a new one. I wanna keep everything he gave me.” He said as a tear escaped his eye. “I mean... if you say it’s ok.” He added with a sniffle.

Marc pulled him into a hug and then held him at arms length and looked into his son’s eyes. “No, I would never take away his gift. Forget I said it. I simply thought you would want to keep your original appearance.” Marc whispered as he wiped away Austin’s tears. “Besides, You looked way too much like me before. Now you are a very handsome combination of your whole family. It makes you happy, so it makes me happy.”

“I geddah doo Dahdee ahn ida foah kuzza Dimmee.” Joey cut in through a yawn. “Am geddim ah gwammah and moah unkas!” He got out before finishing the lingering yawn and cuddled back into Austin’s chest.

Marc looked at Joey puzzled before Austin added, “That’s a long story I guess. Maybe we can all talk about it later.”

“Yeah, I’m not so sure about the four Daddy thing but, after breakfast we really should talk.” Marc said as the smell of food caught his attention. “Let’s go eat guys, then we have a ton of things to get done.”

“Really?” Danny said as he helped Marc to his feet. “What do you think you’re gonna get done while restricted to the couch?”

“Restricted to the couch? You’ve gotta be kidding me. There’s no way...”

“No arguments. You are weak and need recovery time. Austin still has lots of healing to do and Joey’s power cell is low and in jeopardy of running too low if he gets too active. All three of you are out of commission today. End of discussion.” Danny said as he leaned Marc toward himself for support.

“Plug Joey in.” Marc simply stated as Caleb took Marc’s other arm.

“We need to replace that system and get the new hub online today.” Caleb replied as each of the other boys hugged Austin and Joey before following Danny, Marc and Caleb toward the kitchen. “We can't charge him until later on today. Shouldn't take too long to get it done though.” He finished as they entered the kitchen.

“I was just about to come get you guys.” Teri said with a smile as Tommy began refilling the empty platters on the table.

“You cook?” Marc asked Tommy with a smile as he settled into his chair.

“Yep, durn tootin' I do!” Tommy replied with a wide smile as Caleb elbowed Marc in the side.

“Some day if we can, you gotta come over when Tommy makes biscuits and gravy. You haven't eaten until you've had Tommy's southern breakfast.” Caleb said with a smile causing Tommy to blush.

“Aw shucks.” Tommy replied as he sat down at the table. “Taint nuthin to make. Ya'll's jus makin mountains outa molehills 'gain.”

“No way dude.” Noah added. “Maybe you guys can come over some day for breakfast to see for yourselves.”

“That would be nice.” Teri said with a smile as she took a plate and decided to sit down with the boys. “Maybe this time I'll actually get to eat something.” Teri said as the boys began to giggle knowing the last group was much larger. “Noah, Caleb... Where are your brothers?”

“Must still be in the shower.” Noah said with a smirk as he stood up from his seat. “I'll go get 'em.”

“Tell them to hurry before everything gets cold.” Teri added as Noah left the room giggling. “And no clowning around!” She added with a laugh.

Just then the front door opened and JJ strolled in. “Cool, I didn't know there was more!” JJ said as he reached for a plate but froze at the stare Teri was giving him.

“Git! Ya'll ate like a pig already!” Tommy said sternly causing everyone at the table to laugh. “If'n these guys don't finish, I's be throwin it in a pail an bringin' to yur pen!”

“Okay, okay.” JJ replied as he pulled his hand away from the table like a scorched puppy. “Just wash that pail out first.” He said with a giggle as he walked toward the living room, laughing as he heard screams coming from Marc's bedroom on the way by. Noah almost knocked him over as he ran full speed back to the kitchen, laughing hysterically.

“What did you do?” Teri asked Noah as he almost threw himself back into his chair and adopted an “I'm innocent” look.

“Nuthin.” Noah said with a smirk as two very wet, naked boys came racing out of the bedroom.

“YUR GONNA GET IT!” Antonio shouted. “He flushed the toilet and turned on the sink!!!”

"I tried to tell them breakfast was waiting, but they yelled at me and told me to get out." Noah said not losing his innocent expression.

"You just walked in without knockin!" Byron shouted.

"Nuh Uh! I knocked and they ignored me!" Noah replied more to Teri than Byron.

"Ok boys, that's enough. You two go get dressed. Breakfast is getting cold." Teri said as Byron and Antonio turned and slowly walked back to the bedroom. "After breakfast Noah, you get to clean up the all the water on the floor and in the hall."

"But..."

"No buts, that was a mean trick." She said trying to hide her grin.

"It worked though." Noah said under his breath as Teri simply shook her head and ended the discussion.

"Where's Mary?" Marc asked as Tommy finally took a break and sat down for breakfast with the group.

"She went back over to her house. I think she had a few things that needed her attention." Teri replied with a smile.

"She get a catering job?" Jerry asked just before stuffing half of a pancake in his mouth.

"I guess you could say that." Terry answered with a laugh. "This one doesn't pay that much though."

Jerry shot Teri a confused look, but shrugged his shoulders and continued filling his face.

"This is an awesome breakfast guys!" Danny said taking a sip from his coffee and looking at all the happy faces around the table. "I really missed having a whole family to sit down with at mealtimes, this is nice." He added reaching over and rubbing Marc's shoulder with a smile.

"How are you feeling honey?" Teri asked, turning her attention to a very pale looking Marc.

"Better now Mom." Marc replied forcing a smile. "I don't think my entire system has ever been run so low before."

"Because of me?" Came Austin's voice from the hall as he and Joey, still wrapped in their blanket slowly walked into the kitchen.

Marc looked over and saw the deflated look on his son's face before watching Joey come out from beneath the blanket and wiggle his way into his father's lap. "Don't worry about it, one day of rest and I'll be good as new." He said looking at what he could see of Austin's body now with the blanket partly open. "You really should rest up too, we have so much to repair still." He added as Austin opened the blanket and looked himself over.

“Dahdee. I no fewwin guhd.” Joey said as Jerry pulled his son into a hug.

“You both should be lying down.” Jerry said looking back up at Austin and grinning. “Why don't you and Austin go in and lie down on Uncle Marc's bed where it's quiet and no one will bother you.” He got out as he scooped Joey into his arms and stood up.

“Oday Dahdee. Bahd I guhna miss da moobee. Pace bawws is ahn.” Joey almost whimpered.

“Space Balls? Is that what you two were watching in there?” Danny asked with a giggle.

“I love those movies.” Marc said sheepishly. “Wait til you see what else is on that shelf in there.” He added getting a grin from everyone. “I've had tons of time to collect some of the best of them.”

“You can watch the rest of it later on, ok?” Jerry said as he started toward the bedroom.

“Jerry, just throw the DVD in the computer. I think it's still on.” He said as he looked up at his son. “You too. Nap time after you get your butt over here and give me a hug.” He said with a grin as Austin smiled and wrapped his arms around him. “Take it nice and slow for now. We'll get you back to 100% in no time. I promise.” He said as he wiped a stray tear from his son's cheek. “For happy I hope.” He said showing Austin his wet finger.

“Are you gonna be ok? I mean I didn't do you any permanent damage did I?” Austin asked with real concern in his voice.

“I don't think he would call it damage.” Teri stated as she stood from her chair and walked over to usher Austin to the bedroom. “You two will have plenty of time to talk it over later sweetie. For now just remember that any damage that happened yesterday is only a fraction of what your father would have done to save you.” She finished wrapping Austin in a hug and smiling at Marc warmly. “Right now, sleep is what you need.” Teri added and walked Austin to the bedroom to help Jerry get the two settled in for a nap.

“He's scared you're really hurt, huh?” Noah asked Marc from across the table.

“Yeah. This is all a huge shock for him.” Marc said with a sigh. “I have no idea how all this happened to him, but I think it's gonna be a while before he accepts it all.”

“He will bro, I'm sure of it.” Danny cut in with a smile. “Guys, today we have a full plate.” He said as Caleb looked at his empty plate, shrugged his shoulders and proceeded to shovel more eggs and pancakes into it.

“It is now.” Caleb giggled helping to lighten the mood.

“That's not what I meant dufus.” Danny said with a laugh. “Jerry, you may want to find Eli and see if we have a configurable arm for him. You're also gonna need a DNA sample from him so we can begin prepping it. Antonio, you are really good with the biological components from what I've seen. You think you can help Jerry out today?”

“Sure!” Antonio squeaked out with a smile. “Maybe Byron can help too. Once we know what Jerry needs done, Byron can help to set up the biobed to help.”

“Good idea. He's gonna need it to activate the arm's regeneration once you guys get a replacement and fit it to run independently.” Danny replied with a smile. “Dr. Owens, you have a team.”

“Sweet, you guys are gonna be amazed how it works. I've always wanted to try independently functioning units.” Jerry said excitedly.

“Marc, I know you had plans to help setting up the equipment. That is SOOOO not happening today. Caleb and I will start working on replacing the units physically if you and Noah can do a workup of the existing network.” Danny said getting a smile from all three. “Noah, you don't mind being Marc's personal assistant, do you?”

Noah shook his head as he swallowed what he had in his mouth. “I was gonna suggest that. I have my laptop and the one we were gonna issue Marc out in the shuttle. We can spend some time building models of what Marc already has in place and of what would be best with the new configuration.” He said smiling at Marc. “We can get it all done and you don't gotta leave your bed.” He added with a smile.

“Danny, we still need to finish what we started on last night. I had an idea for the interface you mentioned and we still have an argument to finish over it.” Caleb said with a laugh.

“It's not an argument. Let's call it a creative approach.” Danny said with a giggle.

“A creative approach to something that just CAN'T work.” Caleb added with a smile.

“Talking shop at the breakfast table boys?” Teri asked with a laugh as she walked back into the room to sit back down.

“Nah, just planning out what to start on after we eat Mrs. Short.” Danny said as everyone got silent and gazes shot between Teri and Danny. “What?” He asked looking at the faces.

“You betta be loosin' tha Mrs. Short routine.” Tommy said with a smile. “She don't like it.”

“I'm sorry.” Danny said getting a smile from Teri.

“Don't be.” Teri replied taking a sip from her coffee. “Mrs. Short works formally, not with family.”

“Mom?” Marc said getting a smile from Teri.

“Yes honey?”

“Exactly how many kids do you have now?” Marc asked with a smile.

Terry sat back in her chair and silently laughed to herself. “I lost track, that number just keeps growing by the day.” She said with a grin. “You guys done eating?” Everyone at the table nodded their heads

except for Caleb, who simply began to eat faster. “Good, I’ll start cleaning up in here if you guys want to get started on your projects. This afternoon is going to be pretty busy.”

“I’ll help with tha cleanin, then I gotta git out an help Matt with getting communications in tha place workin.” Tommy said as he gulped down the last of his OJ.

“I’ll make up a plate for you to take out to Matt. He missed breakfast.” Teri added as the boys began to stand and stretch.

“Doc neva ate neither?” Tommy added getting a nod from Teri.

“That was an awesome breakfast guys.” Danny said with a smile as all the boys smiled and agreed.

“That was nuthin. You jus wait til lunch.” Tommy added with a laugh earning excited ‘*Yeah*’ responses from the small group.

“Marc, Couch or bed?” Danny asked with an evil smile. “Choose well, cause you’re gonna be there for the day.”

“Couch I guess.” Marc replied in a defeated tone.

“Don’t worry, I’m stickin’ with ya.” Noah said with a smile as they worked their way into the living room.

“You need us, send Noah or use your communicator.” Danny said after he was satisfied his brother was comfortable. “Let’s get to work guys. Caleb, we should probably find Sean and Cory to talk to them about what we discussed upstairs.”

Caleb giggled as he stood up from his once again empty plate. “Ok, we should probably search the bedrooms or any bushes you may have around the house.”

“For what?” Danny asked tilting his head.

“You said we need to find Sean and Cory. Where else would we look?” Caleb got out as the whole room erupted in giggles.

“I got my laptop, your new one too!” Noah said as he almost threw himself on the couch next to Marc. “Do you know enough about your configuration to do it from memory?” He asked as he booted his laptop and plopped one in Marc’s lap.

“Um... This is really new.” Marc stuttered out as he looked it over but never touched it. “I’ve never used a laptop before, I’m not even sure I would know where to start unless I downloaded the specs of your operating system and integrated them.”

“You know how to use a computer.” Noah almost laughed out. “I can teach you. I mean not everything you learn has to be uploaded, right?”

“Well, no but I don't want to mess it up.” Marc said as he tried to figure out how to open it.

Noah smiled, reached over and unlatched the laptop with a giggle. “It's ok, that one is being issued to you anyway. If you mess it up. You gotta fix it.”

“Gee, thanks.” Marc said with a scowl. “This the power button?”

“Nope, self destruct.” Noah laughed out. “Press it and find out.”

“Oh, this is gonna be fun.” Marc said finally breaking his serious stare and smiling.

“It's a computer, just smaller and faster. I'm right here. You're not gonna break it, trust me.” Noah replied with a warm smile. “You able to do this all from memory? The network layout I mean.”

“I know what I set up, and even made notes of it, but Jim made a couple of changes I haven't gone over yet.” Marc replied as he figured out how to log in to the operating system. “Hey, I'm in! This is fast.”

“See, I told you.” Noah replied slapping Marc on the arm playfully. “So you don't know what changes Jim made?”

Marc thought for a second before replying. “He said he updated my notes, I just never looked at them. It's all in my notebook upstairs.”

“Where? I'll run and grab it for you.” Noah said as he stood up and dropped his laptop back on the couch. “Where's it at?”

“It's in Danny's room. Under the sofa. Just look for a red spiral ring binder, there's a couple under there. The one I need has wiring diagrams sketched out on the first few pages, you can't miss it.” Marc said as Noah turned and bolted for the stairs.

Upstairs, Noah dragged a pile of notebooks out from beneath the couch. “Nice filing system.” He giggled as he picked up the only two red notebooks he could find. He flipped open the first one to see if it was the one Marc needed and read out loud what he found,,,

“WHY?”

Why can't I tell you?

The many things you know not,

The many things I want you to know,

Things I have to hide,

Why do I have to hide from you?

Hide my feelings,

Hide my love,

Hide myself,

Why can't I show you?

I wish to show you everything.

Share with you all I have.

Become one with you.

Why am I a coward?

Why do I not tell you?

Why do I fear you?

I can't tell you.

I would lose you.

That's the one thing I can't do.

“He writes poetry.” Noah whispered with a smile as he read the bottom of the page. ‘My friend, my brother. Never to be more.’ Noah read out loud, almost questioning the words. “Danny? Oh man, I shouldn't have read that.” He said as he pushed the pile back under the couch and with both notebooks in hand, went back to the living room.

“Find it?” Marc asked looking up from the laptop's screen with a smile. “Dude, you ok?”

Noah handed the notebooks over, appearing to be on the verge of tearing up. “Um, yeah. But I looked in the wrong one first I think.”

“That's ok. The other one I just scribble in. Stupid thoughts, random stuff. No biggie.” Marc replied as he flipped open the other notebook and flipped to his wiring notes.

“Are you ever gonna tell him?” Noah asked as he sat back down and opened his laptop. “I mean it's none of my business and you can tell me to butt out.”

Marc looked up from his notes at Noah and saw a tear begin to work it's way down his cheek before being quickly wiped away. “Tell who what? Noah, what's wrong?”

“I didn't mean to read it. I don't want you to hate me. It was an accident, honest.” Noah said through a snuffle. “It was a really nice poem, I just didn't know it was about Danny until I looked at the bottom.”

“Why” Marc mumbled as he looked back at his monitor.

"I was just looking to see if it was the right one." Noah said, almost jumping when he felt Marc's hand on his own.

"No, I meant the title."

"Oh, yeah. That was the one." Noah said wiping another tear away.

"I'm not mad bro, don't worry. It's my fault for leaving that notebook up there."

"Does he know?"

"Know what?"

Noah squeezed Marc's hand until Marc looked back at him before continuing; "How you feel. Does he know?"

"No." Marc answered with an expression on his face that showed the pain Marc had been hiding. "I'm lucky to have him in my life. I don't wanna chase him away, not over something like this."

Noah booted up his laptop, glancing over at Marc periodically and looking away whenever Marc looked back. "That's not fair." Noah half mumbled.

"Huh?"

"It's not fair, to either of you. You don't know, he may feel the same way ya know." Noah said with a sigh. "If you never tell him, you'll never know."

"He's not gay. I've been in his head. I've seen his past. He could never feel the same way."

"Hmmm, isn't gay a human term? I mean, that should matter even less for androids I would think." Noah muttered as he leaned in and looked at the notes Marc had opened the book to. "I mean who defined gay and straight for androids? It's different, isn't it?"

Marc raised an eyebrow and side stared Noah for a few seconds. "You've given that some thought it sounds like."

"No way bro." Noah replied quickly before turning on the couch to face Marc. "It just makes sense. I mean for humans it shouldn't matter but for some stupid reason, it does. Androids are a different kind of life. I mean you guys would look like a gay couple, but really you are both two androids. How can an android be considered gay or straight? I mean you guys could raise a family like humans and have your own kids and stuff, just your kids would be created differently. I think that's even more perfect than being human and having to adopt."

"I guess that kinda makes sense. Realistically though, Danny was human before he became android. He's gotta be settled in knowing he'll never have a normal relationship. Unless we build him a girl-friend or happen to find one." Marc answered turning his attention back to his laptop. "I mean he can't look at me and see what it is he would have wanted from some girl."

Noah shook his head and sighed. “No, but he's been an android for an awful long time. How do you even know that he hasn't decided that things are different now? I know how he looks at you. It's more than just friends for him I think. I mean he loves you a lot. It's so obvious too, like you are his world now, he just hasn't thought any deeper about it I bet.”

“I don't know.” Marc replied quietly. “I really don't want to lose him as a brother. That's really all I want.”

“Liar.” Noah answered sarcastically. “You want him to JUST be a brother just as much as I want Caleb to just be a brother.”

“Yeah well, I'll take what I can get then.”

“How can you take what you can get, when you have no clue what he will share?” Noah said as they both locked eyes.

“How old did you say you are?” Marc said slightly squinting his eyes, as a grin slowly crept across his face.

“You may address me as *'Oh wise one'* from now on.” Noah said with a laugh, finally coaxing a giggle out of Marc. “Seriously, think about it. I bet even if you brought it up he wouldn't hate you or nuthin. I haven't known him long, but he doesn't seem like the kind of person who could instantly hate someone he really cares about.”

“I'll think about it, ok?” Marc said as he placed the notebook on the couch between them both, “But you gotta promise me you won't tell anyone. I'll deal with it when I'm ready. Promise?”

“I promise but, you gotta promise that if you need someone to talk to about it, that you aren't gonna just keep it in until you explode. You can always talk to me you know.”

Marc smiled and nodded his head. “Deal. Now if we don't get to work on this, we'll have more issues with Danny and Caleb to talk about.”

Noah giggled and looked at the notebook. “Yeah, and we'll have plenty of time to talk about it. You know, since we'll probably be confined to the couch until it's done.”

“Will this work?” Byron asked as he held up the skeletal workings of a forearm.

“Only if we can't find one with the shoulder attached. That'll make it harder.” Jerry replied as he looked around the fairly large store room of parts. “Or we could just take apart one of those.” He said pointing at a torso up on the wall. “It needs to be a simulated growth model like that one. Then his arm will grow with him.”

“It'll grow?” Byron asked as he and Jerry worked to lift the torso off the hook it was on.

“Yeah.” Jerry replied as he raised one of the hands and showed it to him. “See, it's designed to extend over time.” He said as he released one of the mechanical locks in the unit's forearm and extended it to show him. “You have to set the starting point, set the regen unit for natural or accelerated growth and the programming handles the rest.”

“That's weird. How do you know how fast to make it go?”

“That's nuthin.” Jerry said with a smile. “For Eli, we can have it set to be triggered by normal human growth hormones. Then it will grow when he does, and even stop when he's done growing.”

“But won't the skin and stuff get too tight?” Byron asked as they lowered the torso onto the cart they had been filling with parts.

“Nah, it grows, just like yours and mine. The only way you would need to worry about it is if the regen circuit failed and he was set to grow too fast. That can't happen with what we're doing.” Jerry answered as he pointed out a couple of sets of legs on the wall. “We need those too.”

“The biological image should be all set now Byron.” Antonio said as he entered the room. “Whoa, looks like you guys got a good start.”

“Yeah, I think we have all we need with the ones we have to take apart. Byron, see those small silver cylinder looking units on the shelf over there?” Jerry asked as he pointed to a nearby shelf, trying not to drop the armload of parts in his arms.

“These?” Byron asked holding one of the units out.

“Yup, can you grab three of them?” Jerry asked as he carefully placed each part on the rolling cart.

“What are they?”

“The one thing that'll make this all work. Since Eli isn't an android, these parts need to be able to have a kinda, basic brain. They're really cool. Mini regeneration unit, emulated growth translator and a power-cell that actually uses the natural energy we create to recharge. One needs to be implanted near each unit to help integrate it with Eli.” Jerry said with a smile.

“You can't just mount it inside the replacement part itself?” Antonio asked as he began to roll the cart back into the main lab with Byron and Jerry following.

“Has to be in full contact with the host, Right Jerry?” Byron asked with a smile.

“Yeah, You've seen one before?” Jerry tilted his head and grinned.

“Nah.” Byron replied. “But if it needs to recharge from Eli, and sense when to grow and stuff, I figure it just makes sense.”

“Wow, yeah that's right. I bet you'll learn this stuff even faster than I did.” Jerry said as all three began to place the parts on a nearby work bench.

“Well, as long as it makes sense, I'll get it.” Byron said with a smile.

“Me too! This'll be cool cause we get to teach each other some new stuff.” Antonio said as he lifted a medical case up on to the bench. “You said we gotta get DNA from Eli. Well, I know you was plannin on doin it the old way with a blood sample.”

“Well, yeah if you want to get a clean sample, blood's the best way. Why, what's that?” Jerry asked.

“Medical tricorder.” Antonio answered handing the unit to Jerry. “You ain't pokin holes in Eli.” He added with a giggle.

“Cool! I've never used one before though.” Jerry said as he looked the unit over. “I mean I've read about them, but you gotta be Starfleet or a doctor to actually get one. Even my school couldn't get a real one.”

“Your school didn't have us backing them.” Byron said with a laugh. “I mean we can get anything we need if we just ask. That's how we're gonna do our work.”

“I wanted to ask you about that.” Jerry replied setting the tricorder down in it's case. “Who pays for all of this stuff? I mean the biobed, all this new computer stuff, medical stuff. I mean most of this can't even be bought be regular people.”

“That's a long story.” Byron replied. “Show us what we need to do to get this stuff ready, an I'll try to tell you about us.”

Jerry looked at the stock pile of parts before distributing the pile on the table. “Well, we gotta get the DNA sample and measurements from Eli. Byron, if you can take care of that, Antonio and I can start to break these parts down to create the replacements we need. Then we can assemble the mechanical components and maybe even start the activation sequence tonight.”

“Tonight?” Byron asked in shock. “You really think we can get it done that fast?”

“They are already kinda ready to go, just need to be modified first, right Jerry?” Antonio asked with a smile.

“Exactly.” Jerry said as he began to isolate the parts he needed from the upper torso. “Just tell Eli I'll bring up the parts before activation, just to make sure the measurements look right.”

Byron turned and ran for the stairs shouting over his shoulder; “Ok, I'll tell him!”

Two hours later, Jerry and Antonio both excitedly shouted, which startled Byron causing him to drop the PADD he was working on. “What? What's wrong?”

“They're ready!” Antonio shouted with excitement as Jerry raised the arm and held it out for Byron to see.

“Just gotta bring them up and make sure they are set right, then we'll be ready to get the activation started.” Jerry said as Antonio grabbed the hand and positioned it in a *'Thumbs Up'* pose with a grin.

“Cool, well give me like 5 minutes and I'll be ready then.” Byron replied as Antonio scooped up the leg.

“Let's go show him!” Jerry said to Antonio with a smile as the two tore up the stairs.

“AIRBOY! Took you long enough to get here!” Antonio shouted as they turned the corner into the kitchen, freezing as he heard a crash from behind him. “Oh No, careful Jerry.”

“Yur... yu... Um. You... you're Aaron Car...” Jerry stammered out not realizing he had slammed the unit he was carrying into a chair, breaking it.

Aaron laughed as he ruffled Antonio's hair. “Car? No, I'm not Aaron Car. Never even heard of him.”

“You know who you are!” Jerry shot back finally looking at the damage he had just done to the hand. “Awwwww... crap!”

“Told you.” Antonio said to Jerry, then looking up to Aaron. “Maybe you should wear some kinda mask or sumthin when you show up for the first time. Somethin's gotta break your curse.”

“Curse? It's not my fault he recognized me.” Aaron said as he walked over to Jerry and knelt down. “Can it be fixed?”

“Huh? Oh that, um... yeah.” Jerry said still obviously in shock. “Why are you here? I mean it's cool... But... wow.”

“He's family!” Antonio cut in. “Dangerous to be 'round, but family.” He added dodging a playful swat from Aaron.

“What's this for?” Aaron asked looking over the damage.

“It was for Eli.” Jerry said with disappointment evident in his tone. “We are working up the replacements Marc and his Dad talked about and wanted to show him.”

“Where it's broken, if it were the other hand you could probably use it for Benji instead.” Aaron said with a smile. “Since it's kinda my fault, I'll help fix it if I can.”

“Naw it's cool.” Jerry said as his expression suddenly changed. “Benji!”

Antonio looked at the part then at Jerry with a smile. “You thinkin what I'm thinkin?”

“Yeah! We gotta ask him first but we can make one for him too if he wants! I'm sure Marc wouldn't mind!” Jerry added.

“Let me know if I can help then, ok?” Aaron asked as he stood back up.

“I think you just did.” Antonio replied with a smile as they all turned for the door. “Nobody's gonna believe it was your idea to make one for Benji.”

“What, I can have a good idea once in a while. It's not impossible.” Aaron said giving Antonio's shoulder a shove. “You guys have any idea where Mom is?”

“Probably over at my house. I think they are getting ready for lunch.” Jerry said reaching for Aaron's arm to get his attention.

“Wassap?” Aaron stopped and asked.

“Nuthin, Well, I mean it's a cool idea, you know, for Benji I mean.” Jerry said looking more at the floor than up at Aaron.

“I'll have to help you break more stuff then.” Aaron replied causing Antonio to roll his eyes.

“Yeah, like that's gonna be something new for you.” Antonio said as he broke into a run for the door.

“Hey Guys!” Caleb shouted as he and Danny walked up to Alec, Sammy and Sebastian who were standing between the two sets of drums.

“What's goin on here?” Danny asked with a smile.

“We're gonna play for lunch.” Alec said as he sat back down at his kit. “Provided DeeJ and Tanner can get the drum levels to match.” He said with a sigh.

“Get someone on the other set.” Danny said shrugging his shoulders.

“You wanna help? We could use a few hands since Aaron wandered off.” Alec asked getting an even larger smile from Danny.

“He won't mind?” Danny asked.

“Nah, he's really cool about it, besides it would be a huge help.” Alec said as Danny sat down and picked up his sticks. “Well, if we ever want to be ready to play sometime today.”

“Put on the headset, um... Danny right?” Alec asked.

“Oh yeah.” Caleb said smacking his forehead. “Guys this is Danny, The AI division head. Danny, That's DJ and Tanner on the sound board, Sammy and Sebastian on lead guitars, CD with the Bass and you've kinda met Alec now.” Caleb got out with a smile.

Danny smiled and waved before all the boys put on a headset and the two drummers began to work through their sound check. Once everyone was happy with the levels, JJ and Tanner led the other boys through the sound check before waving Caleb over to the mic.

“You've played before?” Alec turned to Danny and asked as they both adjusted the boom mic's on their headsets for backups.

“A little.” Danny replied with a grin. “It's been years since I've even tried though.”

“Well, it's time for a refresher then. Wanna do a run through Guys?” Alec asked into the mic getting a thumbs up from Tanner. “Something Easy... Hey, you know We Will Rock You?”

“I don't but Marc may have it in his files if he's heard it. Gimme a second to access it..” Danny replied as he seemed to think for a second, then with a grin began the 1,2,1 beat to get it rolling and Alec jumped right in.

Caleb waved to Timmy and Ricky to grab two headsets and mics then grabbed his mic and began the final part of the check.

“Buddy you're a boy... Bring my level up. Buddy you're a boy... Whoa, need bass. Buddy you're a boy, sounds good. Buddy your a boy...”

Just then Danny and Alec Hit their snares in succession and Caleb started;

Buddy you're a boy make a big noise,

Playin in the street gonna be a big man some day.

You got mud on your face,

You big disgrace,

Kickin your can all over the place.

* * *

Timmy and Ricky smiled and started in on backups singing:

We will we will rock you,

We will we will rock you.

* * *

Buddy you're a young man, hard man,

Shoutin in the street gonna take on the world some day.

You got blood on your face,

You big disgrace.

Wavin your banner all over the place.

* * *

As Ricky and Timmy began the second line, Caleb noticed everyone begin to gather around and begin clapping to the beat.

We will we will rock you,

We will we will rock you.

* * *

Caleb had pulled his headset off for a second and realized that DJ and Tanner had turned on the PA, but continued on”

Tanner and DJ, are clowns,

Didn't say a word, just threw on the damn PA.

Got a smirk on their face,

A big disgrace.

We're all gonna put you both into you're place.

* * *

Timmy and Ricky both giggled as they tried to sing out;

He will, he will, beat you!

You Better run!

He will he will beat you!

(Queen - We Will Rock You - © 1995-2000 Hollywood Records)

As soon as Timmy and Ricky got their parts out, they all stopped playing and laughed as Caleb had dropped his headset and chased DJ and Tanner away from the board, managed to toss DJ into the water, being shoved in by Tanner not even a full second later.

“Thank you! We'll be here all night. Try the veal.” Danny said into his mic in the corniest nightclub voice he could before they all watched as Caleb DJ and Tanner took turns tossing each other into the water. “Dude, That was fun. Thanks! I haven't done anything like that in so long.”

Alec smiled as he set his sticks onto his snare. “Never know it man, sounded like you've been playing right along. Maybe you gotta get a new set and play a little more. You know... Cause if that's rusty, I can imagine how you play with practice.”

“Eli! Why don't you wait til that thing is on before you start kicking him with it.” Marc yelled through the sliding glass door with a giggle as he watched Eli and Jerry kick and slap each other with the skeletal parts Jerry was supposed to be SHOWING him..

“Are you listening?” Noah asked as he dummy slapped Marc in the side of the head.

“Huh?” Marc replied as he snapped his attention back toward Noah. “Oh yeah, it's ok with me if we just scrap the original idea and base from the upper lab.”

“What?” Noah shook his head and snapped as he closed his laptop. “I asked if you were hungry, Dufus.” He finished with a laugh.

“Oh, sorry. I was a little distracted.” Marc said as he closed his laptop as well. “Yeah, starving. I hope lunch is gonna be soon. Think we can move this party out to the table on the deck?”

“Sure. Lemme give ya a hand.” He said standing up, nearly colliding with two eagles. “What the?!?”

“Dad, we gotta get outside. Like NOW!” A voice came from around the corner as Austin, Joey, Timmy and Ricky came around the corner; causing both Marc and Noah's eyes to open wide.

“Oh shit!” Noah choked out seeing the group, three quarters of which were displaying war paint. “ELI! HELP!” He shouted toward the door before getting Marc to his feet.

Eli threw the door open and literally had to duck to avoid being run down by Duke and William.

“Whoah, what happened?”

“Daddy's hurtin' an we gotta get out there.” Timmy answered with squinted eyes as Eli ran into the livingroom.

“Dude, quick! Help us walk Marc, Austin and Joey out there.” Noah said as Timmy and Ricky attempted to steady Austin and Joey on their own.

“No way, this'll be easier!” Eli said as he levitated the group and headed for the door.

“What's goin on?” Jerry asked as he watched the group go by followed by Eli and Noah.

“Dunno, just follow!” Eli replied as they all hurried out to the growing crowd on the beach.

“Daddy!” Timmy shouted as soon as Eli set the group down where the crowd had split to give them access.

As soon as Jerry realized his dad was in the center, he wormed his way in with Timmy. “Dad? Whats wrong?”

Jon looked as if he was about to burst out in tears. Sean seemed to notice and responded instead. “J ... Dad had to help Cory. Cory just had the memory come back about when his birth dad was killed, and it messed him up pretty bad. Dad helped him deal with it.”

"Is he ok?" Jerry asked as he crouched down and put his hand on Cory's shoulder.

Cory leaned his head over so that it was lying on Jerry's hand. "Yeah, lil' bro; I'm okay now. I'm just recovering; stuff like this hurts a lot." Cory replied softly.

"I'll help if I ca.." Jerry managed to get out before looking into his father's eyes. "Dad are you crying? What can I do?"

"Just be there for your brothers." Jon got out with a smile.

"My brothers?" Jerry asked looking at Sean and tilting his head in question.

"As long as you don't mind sharing a Dad." Jon added watching Jerry's jaw drop.

"Are you kidding?" Jerry asked and looked back at Sean. "Is he kidding? I'd share anything with you guys." Jerry answered tightening his grip on Cory's shoulder. "Especially if it means we get to be family. Then we can always be there for each other. No, I don't mind Dad... Really!"

Jerry felt a small arm wrap around his waist. "Dahdee, edat gwampee?" Joey asked.

Jerry grinned. "Yeah. Dad, meet your grandson, Joey."

Jon shook his head in wonder. "Now THAT is going to take some getting used to! Come here little one, I think there's still some space here somewhere between your uncles and your Dad."

"Cowee ahn Sahn isa moah Unkas? I gedda wotta unkas nahw!" Joey exclaimed as he wiggled his way onto Jon's lap.

Mary pulled Teri off to the side as the sound of occasional giggles from the pile assured them the crises was over. "Why is it I get the feeling I just gained a few dozen new kids in my family? Also, how did they manage to bring Jerry out of his depression in only a day?"

Teri smiled. "Welcome to my world, Mary. You have just seen what us adults call the '*Clan Magic*'; something about this combination of boys somehow manages to help kids just by being with them. One little warning though; don't take those two boys calling Jon '*Dad*' lightly. I tried to teach them to be open with their emotions; unfortunately the lesson did not totally sink in until after my son Mike was killed. They have taken it to heart now though, and they were totally sincere just now."

Mary gave Teri a small smile. "If I had not seen it for myself I wouldn't have believed it. Jon and I used to sit up late at night worrying about Jerry since Davie died; Jerry refused to try to make friends and totally absorbed himself into cybernetics. That's part of the reason we agreed to leave him here with Marc and Danny; when they came over and invited him to come out on the beach it was the first time he'd really smiled in a long time."

They turned and headed towards the house, comparing notes about the antics of their now-common sons. As they disappeared inside, the group of boys started to break up.

Jon found himself being guided down to the beach by his sons. Aaron, Alec, and Danny were bringing up the rear of the group.

"Hey Alec; that sounded pretty awesome; who was on the other drum set though?" Aaron commented.

Alec giggled. "It was the missing Bonham brother; Danny!"

Danny tilted his head and looked at Alec with a grin. "The missing Bone Head Brother?"

Alec giggled as he slapped the back of Danny's head. "In your case *'bonehead'* fits too, but I meant John Bonham; you know, the drummer for Led Zeppelin?"

"Led Zeppelin? Is that a band or something?" Danny got out causing Alec and Aaron to freeze in mid step.

"You can play Queen like you've done it all your life, but you've never heard of *'Zep'*? DUUUUDDDEEEE!" Aaron responded in shock.

"I just followed Alec's lead." Danny said with a smile. "Never heard that song before either." he added with a giggle.

Kyle had dropped back and heard the end of the conversation. "Hold it guys! Danny, you mind if I fill Airhead and Alec in on what you've been up to the last few years? It'd be faster than you telling them."

"It would?" Danny asked with a grin. "Go ahead, this I gotta hear."

A few seconds later, Aaron and Alec exclaimed in unison "You WHAT!!" Aaron added "Danny, please don't ever try to kill yourself ever again; you might not know it but Cory and Sean really do consider you their brother. If you tried that now, you'd kill both of them. Were you really laying by the Titanic for THAT long?"

Danny's jaw dropped open as his gaze shot toward Kyle. "How did you... Um what did you do?"

Danny suddenly heard Kyle's voice in his head. 'I did this! I'm a telepath, both ways! You better hurry up and integrate Marc's memories before I do it for you! By the way; Aaron is the one who is teaching Alec how to play. You gotta ask him the rest of his history yourself.'

'You can hear what I think?' Danny purposely thought to himself with a confused smile creeping across his face.

Kyle decided to answer out loud. "Yeah; I like listening to how you think! You're a lot more interesting than listening to the air going in one of Aaron's ears and out the other!"

Danny laughed out loud. "That's cold bro."

Aaron lunged for Kyle and grabbed him around the waist. "Speaking of cold, I think it's time you tested the water you little brain leech!" he announced with a giggle.

As Aaron carried a squirming Kyle to be tossed in the water, Alec put an arm over Danny's shoulder. "C'mon bro; let's go grab a seat. Aaron will join us once the munchkin is all wet; I think we should all three talk and fill you in on a few things."

"Sounds cool. Maybe you can fill me in on a few more bands to listen to for the next time you guys come up." Danny replied, cringing as he watched Aaron heave Kyle into the Bay. "I hope you guys all brought dry clothes."

"Clothes? We don' need no stinkin' clothes!" Alec giggled as they headed towards the nearest shuttle.

"Ok, I got Led Zeppelin in Marc's files. Actually I'd really like to try playin The Ocean, drumline sounds cool. What other bands you got in mind?" Danny asked with a grin which faded once he noticed Alec wasn't smiling.

"I wish it was bands we need to talk about, Danny. Have a seat, this is serious." Alec replied softly.

"Oh, ok." Danny said cautiously as he entered the shuttle with Aaron jogging to catch up. and took a seat. "Something wrong?"

"More than you know." Aaron replied as he stuck his head in the doorway. "Alec, you wanna handle this? I'm gonna keep an eye on my little brothers. If you need me, Kyle's listening and will let me know."

"Okay Aaron; go take care of Cor. I'll handle it bro."

Danny sat back in his seat and watched as Alec paced a bit before finally sitting. "Why do I get the feeling I'm about to get bad news dropped in my lap?"

Alec turned and stared at Danny. "Why did you try to kill yourself? Don't try to bullshit me either."

"Oh that..." Danny replied with a gasp. "That's a seriously long story bro." He continued, directing his stare toward the floor.

"I've got all day. Start talking." Alec replied. "I'm not gonna let my family go through that shit again."

After an extremely uncomfortable pause, Danny began to go over the history of his life, then of his death and activation. The pains of being shunned by his biological family and the loss of the only family he had left while Alec silently sat and absorbed his every word. "...I mean at that time, I could have never foreseen what a mistake that would have been." He finished and watched as Alec put his face in his hands and shook his head. "It's not something that would ever happen again Alec. I can promise you that."

Alec looked back up at Danny and stared him directly in the eyes. "You are right about one thing; it will NOT ever happen again. You are just as bad as DJ; you looked at the bad and never realized the good. People need you, even if you don't see them at the time. You and DJ were both stupid enough not to see that; both of you hurt someone deeply when you did it. At least Eli and Benji had enough brains not to go through with it like you two did. You ARE going to sit down and have a long talk with Dan!

He's JJ's dad and our resident shrink. I don't give a shit how bad you think life is getting; I'm NOT gonna let you ruin other peoples lives just because you are selfish."

"No dude, you're missing the point..." Danny started before being cut off.

"Missing your point? There is NO reason to kill yourself! I don't give a shit what kinda of bullshit sob story you can think up; there is no point to miss!" Alec spat out.

"Now wait a GOD DAMNED minute!" Danny barked out standing up from his seat causing Alec to jump a bit. "There is a point to miss here." Danny nearly shouted, then stepped back and took a deep breath. "I lived my life as a human." He began in a more calm tone. "You never considered that or you simply didn't know that. I lived and I died. End of story for anyone on this happy. I had a life, I lived, I loved and it ended already." Danny watched as a now pale looking Alec stared wide eyed at him. "Look, I didn't mean to scare you, but it's true. I was brought back to life as something that was considered a freak. Just about everyone in my life looked at me like I was some sort of abomination. Some kind of freakish version of what I was in life. My own Mother couldn't bear to look at the little android and call it Danny. In her eyes I was dead, nothing would change that ever. I was alive when she passed away but I never got to say goodbye to her. My family wouldn't let me near the hospital, and had the police remove me from the premises at the funeral home. The only family I had left was the one person who found a way to bring me back. I stayed alive through all of that for him. When he passed away, what did I have left? What was my point to remain? When was it my turn to finally rest?" Danny got out with tears running down his cheeks.

Alec thought about his response carefully and replied in a calmer tone. "Okay, this is how I see it. The monster that created you committed delayed murder. He gave you a new life but took it away from you in the way he did it. You should have been programmed to silently pass away when the one person you were there for died. What about now? All that bullshit is over with; what's gonna keep you from deciding you're not needed again?"

Danny took a deep breath and wiped the tears from his eyes as he slowly moved to the seat Alec was sitting in, patted him on the head and sat down. "I'm not alone. I have a family again. I'm not living in the streets getting beaten for change, I'm not forced to live as an android simply to give people a reason to torture me for fun, just because of what I am." Danny got out with a snuffle. "In just a few short days from my point of view I've been given back some of what I lost. Most of which includes a reason to live. I have people in my life again I love, I have someone there to be someone for, you know? A reason. I have a life now, not just an existence. I don't know if that would make any sense on a human level cause to a human that is simply a way of giving reason to give up." Danny said wiping more tears from his cheeks before staring into Alec's eyes. "There is no giving up on life, not as long as there is ever a reason to live it. My new family, just gave me a reason to live life, not just to exist. As long as they are my family, I could never bail out, cause THEN that would be selfish."

"What if Marc, Cory, and Sean got killed? Would you give up, or do you have the guts to step up and continue what they are doing in their memory? You are nothing but a robot if you can't do that."

Danny nodded his head and broke eye contact as he muttered; "What makes you think their purpose didn't just become mine?"

Alec placed a hand on Danny's shoulder. "It's not your purpose until you accept it in your heart. Just like you have to accept that this time you really ARE starting a brand-new life. Until you do that fully,

you are just as much danger to yourself as DJ is to himself. I understand what the end of your other life was like. We all get to view the memories and feelings of guys who become family sooner or later. I've seen the worst of the streets through the eyes of kids who have been there. You know it first hand; do you have the guts to use that knowledge to help human kids?"

Danny smiled rather grimly and sat back in his seat crossing his arms. "You definitely don't know me all that well." He stated toward the ceiling.

"Yeah, in a way I don't. But in a way I do too." Alec stated. "You just had a major change in your life; I've been there myself quite recently. Just because you used to do something a certain way does not mean you are going to be the same way now that your life has changed. Stop and think for a minute; what do you do now that you would not have done the same way before you tried to kill yourself?"

"Well," Danny began. "For starters, not wake up in an alley after being beaten into unconsciousness the night before for the small amount of change in my pocket." Danny stated coldly. "Or maybe after being cornered and raped in broad daylight, not having the cop who responded to the emergency call laugh and agree that the man did NO wrong simply based on the fact that I'm not a human being. That won't happen any more." Danny said with frustration in his voice. "Those things won't happen any more..." He stated as he stood up and faced the door. "...simply because I was given a way to fight back. Not just for me but for anyone who has ever been in my shoes, or ever could be put on that same path." Danny turned and looked out the forward view port as he lowered his voice and pointed out toward the group on the beach. "They gave me that second chance. Each and every one of them. They probably don't know it, but they have."

Alec walked over and put his arm around Danny's waist. "That is what I mean bro. I wanted to hear you say it out loud; that way I'm sure that you realize it. It hurts, I know that. You're being put in a spot with a lot of pressure dude; you've got to BE Cory when Cory's not here. I wasn't getting on your case just because of the attempt at suicide; I was getting on your case to help you realize that now you have a responsibility not only to yourself but also everyone here and every kid throughout the universe. Cory's killing himself trying to do it all. You need to be strong enough to step up and force him to let go. BUT you need to be able to handle it too. Do you see where I'm coming from?"

Danny watched as Aaron got carried to the ocean by Sean and Cory, squirming and fighting the entire way. "I kinda knew where you were coming from the whole time Alec." He replied with a smile as they both watched Aaron get tossed into the water, and giggled as they watched the two high five each other on their way back up the beach. "Honestly, in your position, I would have been just as critical. You have my word, for what it's worth as long as I am able, I will stand at their side. I believe in them and this family." He said as he turned his head to meet with Alec's gaze. "For the first time in such a long time, I believe in someone, and have the power to stand up for them... All of them."

Alec pulled Danny into a hug. "Thanks for thinking it through bro; don't forget that you have all of us to help you. I was serious about seeing Dan and talking to him though; he needs to know about your past so if you have a problem he can help you. He's the one who brought Cory out of his memory loss and saved Kyle's sanity; you won't regret it bro."

"Ok, I'll talk to him. I guess it would be nice to just get some of it off my chest. Might even help to kinda put it in the past forever." Danny said as he wiped at his eyes to make sure they were dry and then motioned towards the door. "Wanna go join the gang?"

Alec smiled. "Yeah, you might wanna slip into the house and wash your face first though; no need to worry Marc with tear stains on your cheeks."

"Good Point, I'll catch up with you then." Danny replied as he stopped and looked back at Alec. "Thanks bro. You know, for everything."

Alec smiled. "Anytime bro; welcome to the family."

"You ok bro?" Marc asked as Danny slid the door open and stepped out on the deck.

"Huh? Oh yeah, I'm fine. How are you guys feeling?" He asked as he sat down at the table with Marc Austin and Joey.

"Better." Marc answered with a smile getting a nod from Austin. "I think after we eat and rest a bit more we'll both be able to get around a little better."

"Yeah, I don't know about you guys but I wanna go sit down with the rest of the group." Austin said with a grin as Joey looked up from his lap and smiled up at his big brother.

"Eday gunna pway meusik fow ush?" Joey asked as they all stood and slowly made their way down the stairs.

"Oh yeah little man." Austin replied ruffling the little android's hair. "From what I heard earlier, this is gonna be sweet too."

Danny decided to hang back at the steps watching as all three slowly made their way out to the group when his attention was diverted to Kyle, running up to him at full speed. "Danny! Danny!" Kyle shouted as he literally came to a screeching halt.

"Whoa dude, easy. What's wrong?" Danny asked watching Kyle pull what looked like a folded up notebook out of the waistband of his shorts.

"You can read drum tab, cant'cha?" Kyle asked holding the book out for Danny.

"Yeah, but I thought Aaron and Alec had drums. What happened?" Danny asked standing on his toes to see if anyone was missing from the stage area.

"Well, Aaron and Alec were talkin an they thought it would be fun if you sat in on Aaron's set. Aaron was plannin on singin and even playin some keyboards today. Meanin if we wanna get the drums really kickin like we always do, we need a second drummer." Kyle said with a smile.

"Me? Really?" Danny asked with a smile creeping into his expression. "Oh, you know I'm up for that. Let them know I'm in." Danny continued flipping the notebook open and thumbing through it. "Oh, I can definitely handle this." He continued with a giggle. "Um, you gonna tell them bro?"

"I just did!" Kyle answered with a laugh as the two slowly started for the beach. "You got the first set to read up, Then Aaron's set is yours." Kyle relayed with a smile.

"That is gonna take quite a bit of getting used to." Danny said getting a concerned look from Kyle. "You know, that telepathy thing you do."

"Aaahh." Kyle replied. "I don't always mean to use it. I mean it's faster sometimes, but other times it's like I can't help it. Like I just hear thoughts, even when I try not to." Kyle said looking up to Danny. "It's like plugging your ears. Sometimes it blocks out all the sounds, sometimes it only blocks most of them."

As the two reached the gathering crowd, Danny took a seat and began memorizing the music he would be playing. While Kyle stood and watched for a bit. "You in my head?" Danny asked closing the book snapping Kyle back to reality.

"Yeah sorry. You just think different. It's so cool. I mean people have a way of thinking and androids have a way of thinking, you're like both and neither at the same time. I can't explain it but it's awesome to watch." Kyle answered as his attention was diverted by CD waving to come over. "We'll talk later, I gotta see what's up." Kyle said as he turned and ran.

'If you were an android, you may burn something out running at the speed you do.' Danny thought with a smile causing Kyle to freeze in his tracks, turn back and stick his tongue out at Danny, getting a laugh from both.

Just as he was just about finished reading, the sound of someone tapping on an open mic grabbed his attention and he looked up just in time to hear Aaron begin. "Don't be too hard on me guys; Kev has been trying to teach me these things, so I'm gonna give it a shot!"

"This is for Cory." Sean stated as he signaled for Aaron to start.

Don't go changin'
To try and please me;
You never let me down before;
mmm hmm mmm mm mmm
I don't imagine,
You're too familiar,
and I don't see you anymoreee.
I would not leave you
when times are troubled

Jeff P.

We never could have come this far

mm hmm mm

I took the good times,

I'll take the bad times;

I'll take you just the way you areeeeeee

* * *

I need to know that you will always be,

the same old someone that I knew.

Ahhh What will it take 'til you believe in me

The way that I believe in you?

III said I Love You,

thats forever

and this I promise from the heart

mm hmm mmm mm mm

I couldn't love you

any better ..

I love you just the way you arrrrrrrrrrrrrrrre ... Right!

* * *

IIIIII don't want clever

cooconversation

I never want to work that hard.

Mmm hmm mmm

I just want someone

that I can talk to

I want you just the way you arrrrrrreeeeee

(Billy Joel – Just The Way You Are. From the CD "The Stranger" © 1977-1998 Sony Records)

As CD finished out the song with a sax solo, Cory wiped the tears from his eyes. Jon squeezed Cory's hand. "He really does love you, son. I could see it in the way he was singing."

They were distracted by Aaron. "Hey Danny! Get your skinny butt over here bro! Kyle gave you the notes; you ain't getting out of it!"

"Watch it Aaron; I'm gonna make YOU swim!" Danny giggled as he ran to the area of beach designated as a stage. As he was getting seated, CD retrieved his bass and handed 'Bastian an acoustic guitar. Once everyone was set, CD nodded to Alec and Danny. The three of them hit the first notes right on cue; once the twins kicked in with their guitars Sean grabbed the mic off of it's stand and started wandering the stage.

Why are you in so much hurry?

Is it really worth the worry?

Look around, then slow down.

What's it like inside the bubble?

Does your head ever give you trouble?

It's no sin, trade it in.

The rest of the boys on stage kicked in for the chorus.

Hang on, help is on its way,

I'll be there as fast as I can,

"Hang on", a tiny voice did say,

From somewhere deep inside the inner man.

* * *

Are you always in confusion?

Surrounded by illusion?

Sort it out, you'll make out.

Seem to make a good beginning,

Jeff P.

Someone else ends up winning,

Don't seem fair, don't you care?

* * *

Hang on, help is on its way,

I'll be there as fast as I can,

"Hang on", a tiny voice did say,

From somewhere deep inside the inner man.

Don't you forget who'll take care of you,

It don't matter what you do,

Form a duet, let him sing melody, you'll provide the harmony.

Cory ran up onto the makeshift stage and joined Sean;

Why are you in so much hurry?

Is it really worth the worry?

Look around, then slow down.

What's it like inside the bubble?

Does your head ever give you trouble?

It's no sin, trade it in.

Hang on, help is on its way,

I'll be there as fast as I can,

"Hang on", a tiny voice did say,

From somewhere deep inside the inner man.

Hang on, help is on its way,

I'll be there as fast as I can,

"Hang on", a tiny voice did say,

From somewhere deep inside the inner man.

* * *

Help is on it's way

Help is on it's way

(Help Is On It's Way © Little River Band)

Cory was all smiles as he looked over his shoulder. "Danny!! Try to keep up bro! 'Bas, grab the Gibson; I wanna rattle some windows! Aaron, get up here and back us up bro! "It's My Life" and "We're Not Gonna Take It"; Alec count it off when everyone's ready."

The boys had just finished the second song when a police cruiser came carefully down the beach and stopped on the other side of the shuttle. Jon jogged up with Cory and Sean not too far behind. "Can I help you Officer?" He asked.

"Yes Sir; we've been getting complaints from your neighbors. It seems they are having trouble hearing the music and want the sound turned up." The Officer replied with an expressionless face.

Jon stared at the officer in shock, until the giggles from behind him made him realize he'd been had. Cory stepped up to the car. "Hey Will; glad you could make it! Will, this is my Dad, Jon Owens. Dad, this is Corporal Will Jackson. C'mon, y'all come on out of the car so I can introduce everyone!"

Once everyone was out of the car, Cory finished the introductions. "Dad, this is Judge Donald Legette, his wife Margret, and their son JR."

Jon smiled as he shook Donald's hand. "It's an honor to meet yourself and your family Judge."

"Just call me Donald. Considering how the boys are dressed, I see no reason to be formal. You've got a pair of exceptional boys here."

Jon smiled. "I'm just learning that myself; they '*adopted*' me as their '*Dad*' just a little bit ago. Let's go find a seat and we can compare notes while the boys show JR around."

Cory tilted his head and asked "Will? How did you get in here? Security didn't call me."

Will chuckled. "One of your security men, I think he said his name was Matt, actually did complain about not hearing the music playing. He said to tell you '*that's what you get for holding a concert without him*'."

Cory grinned. "I'm gonna get him for that! Danny's gotta set up a security team yet, so my guys are spread kinda thin. We're gonna go introduce JR to the guys Dad; if you wouldn't mind I'll come with you long enough to introduce everyone to Marc and Austin, then Marc can help you fill everyone in on how all of this happened."

Jon rustled Cory's hair. "Sure thing, kiddo. You need to spend some time with the rest of the guys anyways. You've had a rough day, go have some fun."

Cory gave Jon a quick hug. "Thanks Dad. You're the BEST!"

They went over and introduced everyone to Marc. When Marc asked how they had met, Cory giggled and replied "It's a long story bro; wait until Danny gets here and he'll fill in the blanks for ya'."

Once everyone was settled in, Cory turned to JR. "Did you remember your CD's dude?"

"Right here!" JR replied as he lifted the bag he was carrying. "Where is the stereo?"

Sean giggled. "Follow me; I'll show ya' where to put them!"

"He'll be busy for a while." Jon said as they took a seat.

"So..." Will started. "You guys are having issues getting security set up?" he asked Marc with a smile.

"Yeah Kinda. I mean we have security from Clan Headquarters right now, but that's only temporary." Marc stated with a grin. "I hope Danny has some ideas cause I never thought we'd ever need security here."

Donald looked as if he was deep in thought before turning to Will; "You're in charge of the local youth cadet program Will, you have any A listers that might be interested in placement?"

Will smiled and nodded his head. "A few come to mind. As soon as I have a chance to discuss the possibilities with your division head and current head of security. Let me make a few phone calls."

"Really? Awesome. That would be a huge help." Marc relayed with a smile. "You don't think we'd have any problems getting Federation approval do you?"

"Son," Donald said with a smile. "Our youth program is fully licensed as a Federation Preparatory Facility. Will here is licensed through the UFP as an official trainer. I see no problems at all with beginning a co-op. Some of his students are definitely ready for it." The judge stated sitting back in his chair. "Maybe with some luck your organization will find a few worthy of permanent placement to work under the main security within your headquarters."

"That would be sweet." Marc replied. "I'll make sure to get Matt and Danny to sit down with you Will. I know they will both be very interested." He got out as he communicator chirped. "Duty calls." Marc said with a grin as he flipped the unit open. "Marc Here."

"How are you feeling sweetie?" Teri's voice came from the speaker causing Marc to blush.

"I'm ok Mom." He replied smiling at the entire group. "I actually feel a lot better now that I've had some rest."

"Well, take it slow and easy, that's a direct order from headquarters." She said with a laugh in her voice brightening Marc's blush. "Lunch will be ready in about 20 minutes so if you and your group would like to head over on time, make sure not to get TOO involved with work."

"I won't Mom, I promise. See you at lunch. Marc out." He said as he closed his communicator and looked at it with a smile before clipping it back inside his pocket.

Margret smiled at Marc and then directed Donald's attention toward him. "See, all Mom's have that ability." She said getting a laugh from the entire group.

A few minutes later, Jon was in deep conversation with JR's parents and Will regarding the events of the last 24 hours when Jon noticed the boys standing there patiently and smiled. "I see you found Danny! You didn't abandon JR did you Cory?"

Cory giggled. "No way Dad; we left him with Aaron and Sean. He's almost recovered enough that he can form sentences again!"

Jon grinned and shook his head. "I heard that he was a bigger Aaron Carter fan than Jerry. If Jerry is any indication, that was just evil Cory."

"Yeah, but it was sure fun to watch!" Cory giggled. "I think he's planning on hanging every piece of clothing he's wearing on the wall as soon as he gets home! I know he said that none of it's getting washed!"

Donald couldn't hold back his chuckles. "Thank you Cory! JR was scared that he wouldn't fit in out here; obviously if you pulled off a prank like this on him he has nothing to worry about. Watch out though; give him a few days to get comfortable and he'll start plotting ways to get even with you. Who is that you have with you?"

Cory smiled. "If that's the case, he'll fit right in! This is Danny Page, he is Director of Operations of Clan Short Artificial Intelligence Division. He is your main Clan contact here in Charleston; if he's not around then Marc is in charge. Danny, this is Superior Court Judge Donald Legette; next to him is his wife Margret. On the other side of Margret is Corporal Will Jackson, Charleston Police Department."

"Judge Legette, Mrs. Legette, Corporal Jackson; it is an honor to meet you." Danny replied as he shook hands with each of them.

"Likewise." Donald replied. "No need to be formal though, Danny; from what Marc has told me about you I have no problem with treating you as an equal. If you wouldn't mind, we would love to have you join us for a little bit to fill us in on some of the things that Marc here missed."

Danny smiled. "I probably better; I'm not sure I want you to hear the version some of these other guys will tell you!"

Jon pulled a chair over for Danny to sit in then turned to Cory. "Thanks kiddo. Go on and have some fun; Marc just talked to your Mom and the food should be ready soon. I'll take care of introducing all of the adults to each other for you when we go up there. Mary is setting up the tables now with Eli's help; make sure all of your boys sit with us at our table once it's ready."

Cory's face glowed with joy when he heard Jon's invite. "SWEEEEET! No problem Dad; they'll all be there!" He turned and almost bounced with joy as he ran back to rejoin Sean.

Will smiled as he watched as the pair ran off toward the beach, then redirected his attention to Danny. "Director Page, If I may be so bold I have a business proposition for your team to consider. That is if you have a few moments to discuss official business."

"Yeah bro, Will has a really cool idea." Marc added breaking Will's serious expression as he excitedly explained what had been discussed before he arrived.

Danny sat and nodded his head as he pulled his communicator out and opened it. "Well, we definitely need to approach the idea with our current head of security. I mean temporary fixes are great, but they are temporary for a reason." Danny said with a smile as he set the frequency and looked back up at the group. "Excuse me for a moment." he said with a grin. "Page to Security."

"Matt here Danny, what can I do for you?"

"Perfect, just the man I needed to speak with. Mr. Barnes, at your earliest convenience I would like to set up a meeting between yourself and Corporal Will Jackson of the Charleston Police Department. He has a very interesting and generous proposition for us regarding permanent security for our division that I believe you will be very interested to hear." Danny said with a smile.

"Really? Definitely tell Corporal Jackson I am at his disposal whenever he's ready."

"Thanks Matt, maybe sometime after lunch we can touch on the subject with Cory, Sean and Marc present as well. See you at lunch, Danny out." "All set Will." Danny said with a smile closing his communicator.

Will stared at Danny and then smiled. "Well, you definitely don't waste any time."

Marc looked at Danny and then stood up from his seat. "If you don't waste it, you have more time to enjoy it." He said as he turned to join the group, now getting ready to head for the tables.

"He's a wise one." Donald said getting nods from the group.

"Wait till you get to know more of these guys. If that impressed you, prepare yourself to be totally blown away." Danny added with a smile as they watched the group wander toward the Owen's residence. "Shall we?" Danny asked standing up and motioning for the group to follow.

The boys were just finishing off the last of the food and friendly conversation between them set the background when Cory stood up and got everyone's attention. "If anyone starts snoring, I'll have Eli dump ya in the ocean! I gotta say a few things while y'all are sittin' down; stuff I guess I really shoulda said long ago. Kyle, you wired up to the other two Musketeers?"

Kyle nodded his head. "Yeah, they wanna know how you'll handle it if they fall asleep?"

Cory smiled. "They won't; they're gonna be too busy making sure the rest of the Clan gets the broadcast. All of you know I've had a rough day today; in a way I brought it on myself. Whenever Sean and I are not off having quiet time, I've been keeping myself occupied trying to make sure all of y'all were okay. I can't remember the last time I just did something by myself. I used to go jogging in the mornings to relax back at the Home; can anyone tell me the last time they saw me do that?"

Cory paused, and the silence became deafening.

"Guys, I shoulda been okay when I got hit by the memory earlier, Sean and I have worked on a lot of little surprises that we didn't worry y'all about. I guess what I'm tryin' to say is I screwed up bad guys, and I gave y'all a bad example while I was doin' it. I got told today that all of y'all look at Sean and me like dads. That scares me guys; I'm learning to be a dad without having any memory of what a dad is like. I think that's why I crashed. When Jon called us all family then smiled like my old dad at me, it broke the wall protecting me from that old memory. I wasn't ready for it, and I woulda totally crashed if he had not responded like a real dad would. Nothing against you, Mom, but sometimes guys need a Dad to hold them. When Mikey was alive, he kinda filled that spot for us. Dan's my shrink, he can't do it, he knows too much. All the rest of the adults are more like friends or uncles; I feel okay talkin to them but they don't fit as *'Dads'* for me. Jerry's dad Jon is different; he kinda let me know I needed to relax and be a kid again without actually telling me. I can't do anything about y'all lookin up to me, but until today I really did not know who to look up to to learn about being a dad. I know now, and I'm callin' him Dad from now on." Cory paused and looked around at the group whose attention he was holding firmly. "I saw something today while I was relaxing. All y'all are doing the same thing I've been doing, even Timmy and Ricky. All of y'all are acting like young adults even when you are playing; nobody argues if they don't agree with how something is done, they just go along with the rest of the group. That looks good to adults' guys; but it's not us. I know some of y'all got hurt by doing that before we all got together, so why are we all doing it now?"

JJ stood up and interrupted. "Cory, hold it right there! You want argument up front you're gonna get it. You might be seeing a lot, but you ain't seeing all of it bro. Do you honestly believe we don't see it when you are pushing too hard? Bro, there have been nights when none of us have got any sleep because we're trying to find a way to help you and Sean have free time. You were right; you needed a dad; but not just to give you hugs. You need someone who'll get on your butt to take time off. There's a lot of crap going on all the time since we became a Clan; more crap than one person can deal with. A lot of that you get stuck with; you pass it off to whoever can handle it but you still have to deal with it first. That's why you don't see us argue; you don't need it. All of the telepaths, even the munchkins, work with us so that we argue in private and settle it without an audible word. You know what it's sounding like to all of us right now? It's sounding like you have decided we'd be better off if you quit. I've got news for both you and Sean; if EITHER one of you ever CONSIDERS quitting because you *'are not good enough'*, I'm the first in a VERY long line that is gonna kick your sorry ass across every continent on this planet. Yeah, you fuck up occasionally; so do I and so do the rest of the guys. You know something? Not a single one of us worries about it; we admit our mistake and move on. YOU taught us that, dipshit. If one of us is down, one of the others takes time to find out what is wrong; YOU taught us that too. Your boys love you because you ARE a good dad; not because you saved them. I've got a family now because after watching you I learned how to be a parent and still be a kid. Speaking of family; if you had not asked Jon to be your dad we were gonna do it. You were not the one who put up that wall around your memory of your original dad; Mikey did it to protect you from yourself. He knew that unless you had an adult you trusted and respected there it would break you down. Not only did you break down the wall when that person finally arrived, you managed to block both Ty

and Kyle from your head completely; in fact you are STILL blocking your little brother. You wanna jog in the mornings? Say something; one of us will cover for ya. Don't be surprised if one or two of us join you though; you are not the only one who could use a relaxing run. A few months ago I stood in a shower and swore to stand by two guys I had just met and my new little brother. You know something? That was only the second time I followed my heart; the first was when I asked Dad to adopt Kyle. I got a news flash for you Cory; to this day I consider those two decisions the best ones I have ever made. I'll always have your back bro, until the day I die. You got a Dad finally, now relax and let all of us help you like you help us." JJ looked around the tables. "All of you need to think about what your priorities are now and what they should be; that includes all of you AI guys and you too JR. Once Cory gets back from the trip he's got to go on later, I'M calling a Clan-wide meeting at Headquarters. Everyone WILL be there, understood? Yes, you too JR, you're one of us now."

JJ took his seat, and gave Cory a look that all but dared him to countermand the final order.

Cory gulped. "Ummm ... okay, I guess we're having a meeting. Adam, I think you need to take JJ off for some private time; he's getting cranky." Cory had to duck to avoid the various objects being thrown at him by the suddenly blushing pair. Once they were out of ammo, Cory stood back up and continued. "You made your point JJ; now I know how Kyle felt in the courtroom. Don't worry, I'm not quitting. I guess I just didn't see that you guys were trying to watch out for me too. I was going to suggest a meeting too, since we are getting so spread out we kinda need to work out a better way to do stuff when someone needs help. JJ, you proved that when you set up the AI division. You did the right thing as soon as you saw it; you just forgot to tell me about it! I didn't have anything to do with it; that was all you bro. I know it sounds weird, but I don't think I could live without you guys anymore; as far as I'm concerned the day we see that we are not wanted or not needed all of us with our families are gonna find a nice quiet planet and escape this rat race. I love all of you and would go through all of this all over again to save just one of you."

Jon stood up and pulled Cory into a hug. "You did great kiddo; you've got a great support group with you. Listen to them and let them help, things will get a lot easier. You don't have to fight all of the battles yourself anymore; take on the big ones and let the other guys handle the little ones, okay?"

Cory squeezed Jon tightly. "Okay Dad. Will you come to Orlando with the rest of the guys for the meeting please? I don't know how to set it up right, and I don't want it to become like the ground-side military."

"I'd be honored kiddo; a good leader knows when to ask for help, and you just did. All I ask is if you don't understand or like a suggestion I make let me know so that we can sort it out and find the best solution. You guys have a lot in common with my job at the DNR; you need structure but everyone needs to be able to react without asking first."

Cory smiled as he broke the hug. "Thanks Dad, that sounds perfect!"

As a hush settled over the group, Danny stood up and cleared his throat. "JJ, count on the entire AI division being present." He said with a smile. "Guys, if I can have the floor for a few, I kinda think it's my turn to not leave Cory out on a limb. You all have been together much longer than I have even been conscious in this time period. The past 24 hours has been absolutely amazing. I mean I know exactly where my new found brothers stand on my list of priorities, so I can just imagine the lists of those of you who have a stronger history together."

“STRONGER HISTORY? That don't make...” JJ started to get out before Danny shook his head causing him to stop.

“Here him out bonehead, he's tryin to get through this thought and it ain't easy.” Kyle interjected.

“Thanks sport.” Danny said smiling at Kyle. “That's kinda what I'm getting at right there. I mean you guys look out for each other, protect each other, work with each other and no matter what the cost, dedicate your time to others who need that same kinda support. I mean, circumstances led you to our front door, and in roughly one day's time, you became a part of our family. It wasn't sought out, it wasn't asked for, it just happened and became the strongest family bond I have ever seen in all my years. You all have so much to be proud of, and so much more to protect.” Danny paused as he looked into the eyes of each person, stopping once he reached Alec and smiled. “I was forced to address my list of priorities earlier today by someone who will forever hold my admiration. That person forced me to look at a few mistakes I made in my life. Mistakes that would severely harm a common bond we all hold dear. Thanks to a little implanted info from a certain brain leech.” Danny said grinning at Kyle; “...that common bond is one we need to support and protect at all costs.” Danny finished his sentence staring directly at Sean and Cory. “You guys are one in a million, maybe those odds are even greater than that considering the family as a whole, a family that is a direct result of you both sharing the love you have with all those around you. We all know it, we all feel it. Whether you have been a member of the family for a few months or a few minutes. You love without discrimination, and you give your all to protect all that you love. Something that I now feel strongly, right along with each and every one of you. I can speak for myself and Marc by the look on his face that our division will do anything we possibly can to make sure this family is never threatened. By outside forces or just from simply being overwhelmed. We all owe you two so much in so many different ways. I love you guys, right along with each and every member of this family. It's an honor to be a part of it, and I will forever fight to protect it. That's my personal promise to you both.” Danny got out before sitting back in his seat, leaving the table dead silent until Kyle spoke up.

“Dan, whadaya mean I planted stuff in yur head? I never did.” He asked scratching his head.

“Hey, while you're in there your mind is a source of information my processor can extract from. Seems fair I think.” Danny said with a giggle as Kyle tilted his head and grinned.

“That's cheating!” Kyle shouted in mock anger earning a round of laughter from everyone at the table.

“Beaten at your own game, finally!” Aaron added thrusting his fist in the air.

Cory pulled Sean into a hug and turned to the group that had gathered around them. “Hey guys; we got a little time before we gotta run; lets make some noise!”

As the boys began to get up and move towards the bandstand, Kyle came up alongside Danny. “Danny?”

“Yeah Leech?” Danny giggled.

Kyle giggled back. “You know, that names gonna stick now don't ya? How much did you find out when you were in my head?”

Danny stopped, turned, and pulled Kyle into a hug. "Enough to know that you understand what I went through in the last months before I tried to kill myself, little buddy. You need to let it out soon; when you are ready I'm here for you little brother. It helps to talk to someone who has been there. You got a lot of hugs coming; hugs you are long overdue for."

Kyle turned his face up toward Danny, and with teary eyes asked "You don't hate me? Even after all of that?"

Danny squeezed Kyle tighter. "No I don't hate you. I respect you even more; you're a lot stronger than I was to make it through all of that. I love ya kiddo; your secret is safe with me until you are ready to talk. How much do your friends at headquarters know about your life?"

"All of it." Kyle muttered.

"Don't worry then, lil bro. What are their names, you know the ones you are always wired into?" Danny asked softly.

"Jamie and Jacob. Why?"

Danny gave a small smile. "Because it's time to settle that part of your life. Relax and enjoy yourself bro; I'm going to get things rolling to take care of some old business. You keep Cory occupied; I'm gonna handle this one."

Kyle nodded his head. "Okay, I guess. What's gonna happen?"

"Nothing. I just have a favor to ask of them." Danny stated ruffling Kyle's hair. "Go on bro; I'll be right there." he added in a softer tone.

Kyle nodded and turned to walk off. He waited until he was a few feet away before commenting "Nice try bro; I understand though."

'Just keep it to yourself.' Danny thought to himself getting a nod from Kyle, who clearly got the message.

As Kyle wandered back to be with the rest of the clan, Danny headed up onto the deck for some privacy. Once there, he retrieved his communicator from his belt. 'Here we go.' Danny thought to himself as he opened it and keyed in the command to dial headquarters. "Headquarters, this is Director Page."

"This is headquarters, Justy speaking. What's up Danny?"

"Justy, this may be outside of normal protocol but I kinda need to ask a huge favor." Danny said as quietly as he possibly could while peeking inside the open door to insure the conversation wasn't being overheard.

"Dude, you are head of AI Division; you SET protocol. What do ya' need done? We're having a special this week; two perverts vaporized for one price!" Justy responded with a giggle.

Danny rolled his eyes and sat down as he redirected his gaze toward the unnaturally innocent looking Kyle. 'Touche, twerp.' he thought with a giggle. "I'm guessing you already have an idea why I'm calling."

Justy giggled. "Yeah, Kylegrams are great! I don't know all of the details; for some reason my little brothers refuse to tell me what happened in Kyle's past. All I know right now is they had me put Intelligence at Condition Yellow and told me to await your orders; they said they'll give what info is needed and nothing more. You wanna fill me in?"

Danny sighed before answering. "Sorry man, I don't have the right to provide the details, but your little brothers have the lead on what I need to ask. Condition Yellow stands. I need to ask that we actively seek out the biological father of the the minor Kyle Richardson. This an official request. According to information I have come across, he is a threat that is on the loose and needs to be dealt with."

"Acknowledged, Director Page. Is this a Priority Action?" Justy replied, all traces of humor gone from his voice. "Don't worry about the details; the twins just informed me that if JJ knew he would personally skin Kyle's father alive, literally. If it's that bad I don't wanna know unless I have to."

"Thank you Justy." Danny said with a sigh. "This is to be handled Priority 1, but for the same reason we are maintaining silence regarding the details, I also would like to be the main contact until we locate that piece of trash. At which point BOTH divisions will be fully involved. Trust me, there is a growing line of people who would love to get hold of him." He replied trying as hard as he could to purposely keep Kyle out of his head as he added, "I'm no exception."

"Ummm; my little brothers just offered to hand you the knives. I don't want to know. This is an AI project until you call in reinforcements; you've got Priority One. I owe Kyle a few favors, so I'm going to oversee this one myself. Talk to ya as soon as we got something bro."

"Acknowledged and agreed Justy. Consider the call for reinforcements made the second the announcement that he's been located has been placed. No one is going to want to waste one second apprehending him. I just don't want to stress anyone locally over reactivating the issue, if you get my meaning." Danny replied as he spotted Alec waving his arms attempting to gain his attention.

"Gotcha bro; Blondie and his mount are to be kept in the dark! Go clear your head, I've got it now. HQ out."

After almost dropping his communicator from laughing too hard, Danny ended the call and ran back out toward the stage area to see what Alec needed. On the way by, he tapped Kyle on the back and thought 'Thank your brothers for me, ok?'

'*Sure thing Danny, Thanks!*' Kyle thought back. 'Oh yeah; Giddyup!' he added with an audible giggle.

"I am soooo not touching that one...LEECH!" Danny replied with a laugh.

"Joey's in bed. He's not happy about it but he's finally charging back up." Jerry said as he rejoined the group.

"He gave you a hard time?" Caleb asked with a grin. "I mean he was totally exhausted but so excited during the concert."

"He was kinda wound up still." Jerry replied with a grin. "I can't blame him, it was awesome."

Cory looked around at his expanded family and smiled. "I hate to say it, but we've gotta load up guys. Timmy, where is your raccoon?"

Timmy giggled. "He ain't mine Daddy! He's comin', he hadta make sure all da extra food was cleaned up!"

Cory giggled. "Okay Kiddo. Listen up guys; some of us get to take a break in Australia. Anyone not going along help pick up before ya beam out. We got two shuttles; split up between them. Here's the list of who's going; Kyle, tell the twins to have anyone back at headquarters that I list ready for Matt to pick up on his way."

Once Cory was sure everyone was listening, he started listing names. "Mom, John; not you Dad, another John, Dan, Matt, me, Sean, Gavin, Adam, JJ, Timmy, Ricky, their zoo, Kyle, Ty, Airboy, David, 'Roo, Brad, Alec, Harley, CD, Calen, Gabe, Trav, Tommy, Kelly, and Danny. Deej, Tanner; Justy called me and asked for you guys to help him with some project. He won't tell me what; but he needs you guys from the sound of it."

"Cory? I'm going?" Danny asked with his voice beginning to squeak.

Alec put a hand on Danny's shoulder and responded before Cory could. "Yeah, you're going bro. Remember what we talked about? Marc will be okay here; Justy's gonna keep in touch, if he needs help it's only a call away. You're needed there bro; Kyle helped me pick out what you needed to pack and we got it loaded already. Marc had Caleb set up a terminal for you on Cory's shuttle to use if you need it."

"Ok bro." Danny replied. "You guys will keep an eye on Marc tonight?" He asked toward Noah and Caleb.

"Dude, I'm already back to 68%. In a few hours I'm outta the woods. Stop worrying, will you?" Marc said as he gave his brother a hug. "I couldn't be in better hands, really."

"I'm in." Danny said smiling at Marc. Danny pulled Marc into a long hug. "Take care bro; I'll be back as soon as I can." Danny then turned to face Alec. "A little warning would have been nice though." he said playfully, punching Alec in the arm.

Alec rubbed his arm. "Get used to it Danny!" He then lowered his voice and added "Take care of Cory for us bro."

The boys made the rounds, saying goodbye to everyone that was staying behind. Danny caught up with JR just as he was finishing his rounds. "Hey JR; take care of Marc for me, okay? Next trip I'll talk to your Dad and get it so you can come along."

JR grinned. "Sweet! Don't worry Danny; I'll make sure Dad and Will know it if he needs anything. Have fun; bring me back a tee-shirt!"

"No problem!" Danny replied as he turned and followed the last of the boys into the shuttle and the hatch was closed.

As the group began to break up, Alec began to assemble his crew to break down the equipment as the rest began folding up the chairs and cleaning up the mess from lunch. Marc and Austin were busying themselves cleaning off the tables when a shout made them jump out of their skin. "WHAT do you two think you are doing?!?"

Marc, after recovering from nearly having a heart attack turned and saw Alec, Caleb and Noah rushing up to the table, and not looking very happy.

"What?" Marc asked knowing he was about to get his butt chewed. "We're taking it slow."

"On your butts, both of you." Caleb said with a grin as the three ushered them back toward the rear deck.

"Busted, Huh?" Jerry giggled as he and Eli Jogged into the house.

"Rub it in clown!" Marc shouted as they all sat down at the table on the deck.

"Dad, you think I can take a look around tomorrow?" Austin asked as he looked around the beach. "This looks like a really cool area."

"It really is, I've always loved it out here. I'll take you for a walk on the beach as long as these guys let us." Marc grinned at the three as they scowled and turned to head back out to the beach being stopped in their tracks by screams coming from within the house.

"MARC!!!" Jerry screamed as he literally slammed into the sliding glass door. "Marc! Joey's on fire I think." he shouted as he gasped for air. "The computer he's on is smokin and there's smoke coming out of his access port!"

"What?!?" Marc replied and stood up quick.

"Caleb!!! Noah!!! Help!!!" Marc shouted.

Notes from the Author:

HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY!!!

Yes, after a nice long holiday weekend, while you all were resting up we were hard at work finishing something you have all been **patiently** waiting for. Hehehe! The last couple of days, ACFan and I have worked from sun-up to sun-down in an attempt to bring you the most recent chapters in the cross over between the Clan's Headquarters and newly formed AI Division. For us, it was an emotionally draining

weekend in general. We got a chance to bring you back to some "Old Skool" Memories, with the return of a portion of Cory's lost past and a little "Old Skool" Sentenced to Life, with a slight touch on the events prior to Danny's attempted suicide so many years ago. Two events that just seemed to push themselves to the surface on their own. (as this clan often does. LOL!)

I can't tell you all what an emotional roller coaster this chapter has been overall for both ACFan and I. It's taken literally months to get the results we were hoping for and hours of collaboration to keep in step with each other. It's been quite an honor for me and my characters to have become a part of the family. One that I will continue to work hard at and one my characters definitely don't take lightly. There are many more adventures just waiting to be told. Some new and some in retrospect. Special bonds have been forged and a new future presents itself with each and every typed word. This chapter of STL and Chapter 5 of Memories Part 2 are simply a turning point to what lays ahead of our gang. It's gonna be a challenge to say the least, but it's a challenge that our Clan seems to be grabbing by the horns. (Dragging their authors on behind them in an attempt to keep up. Hehehe!)

Once again, gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "Memories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read it! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to check out "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> to follow what's going on while Danny's away ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from the Editing Team:

Our Pups are still kinda off-line. I did a careful read through for now but, know readability would be much better with their help. We'll hang on and wait til' they return :) "Missin you guys!"

Notes from ACFan:

After literally MONTHS of hard work, this finally has came together into what we wanted to see. Danny has came full circle; now it's time for him to use his previous life as a basis to start a new life. Many thanks to JeffP for allowing me to be a part of this. I've been a fan of M.A.R.C. from way back; not only do I feel honored in being a part of seeing his life continue, but to be included in the story of how the one android who made Marc possible comes back to life is something I could only dream about.

This has been a lot of work to get together; the seamless result we ended up with blows my mind! I look forward to seeing where things go from here!
A million thanks JeffP; have a pot of coffee on me!

ACFan

Notes from our Special Guest Clan Archivist:

Well it looks like the some of the Clan's stay in South Carolina is about to end and the invasion of Australia is in the works. God help the Aussie's. I am continually amazed at the seamless integration of the two separate stories. The fact alone that all of the characters continue to grow and expand while remaining true to their original origins is astounding. ACFan and JeffP have done a remarkable job on this collaboration; I eagerly look forward to seeing where these stories are going. Seeing that Cory and Sean from "Memories" as well as their new brothers Danny and Marc of "Sentenced to Life", can remain human and sane with everything they have done and everything that continues to happen around them, is a tribute to the love of family. With love and a true family like theirs and The Clan, miracles can and do happen.

All I can say is thanks for involving me in this grand adventure that shows no sign of ending soon.

TSL

"Chapter 9 - Hit the Ground Running"
Co-Written By: ACFan & Boudreaux

Without giving anyone a chance to 'Help' him, Marc broke out in a run for the basement with Jerry leading the way. Marc stopped for a second as Jerry opened the door and a small cloud of smoke billowed out into the hallway. "Stay here!" Marc almost shouted as he pushed Jerry away from the door and hurriedly made his way to the bottom of the stairs with Noah and Alec right behind him. Just as Jerry described, smoke was literally pouring out of the computer Joey was connected to. A smaller amount of smoke was visibly coming out of the open access port on the back of Joey's head and his body seemed to be involuntarily convulsing as the power seemed to be arcing within the terminal. With one swift kick, Marc was able to break the connection, as well as the computer it was attached to.

"What happened?" Eli asked as he cautiously crept his way to the bottom of the stairs with Benji right behind him. "He's not really on fire is he?"

"No." Marc replied as he waved at the smoke in a futile attempt to clear it away. "I should have come down here with him when he hooked Joey in for his nap."

"Benji, could you start opening some of the windows to help clear some of this smoke while I help Marc?" Eli asked as he and Marc rolled Joey on his side and attempted to unlatch the connector while Noah disconnected the computer's AC cord.

"No problem." Benji replied running for the windows, flipping each open.

"It's melted too badly." Marc snapped as he continued to try to get a grip on the molten plastic clips holding the connector in place, only being able to touch it briefly before jerking his hand away in pain. "OW! Leave it til it cools off."

"Is it safe to come down?" Austin shouted from the top of the stairwell.

"Yeah." Marc answered as he and Eli laid Joey back down and then simply stood and looked at Joey's twitching little face.

"Is he in pain?" Noah asked after trying to feel Joey's forehead and jumping back as Joey broke into another fit of convulsions.

"I hope not." Marc replied as Jerry and Austin reached the bottom of the stairwell followed by Alec, Mary, Jon and JR.

"What did I do?" Jerry cried as he reached the side of the table, his voice seeming to calm the convulsions, if only a little.

"You didn't do anything wrong." Marc said as he opened the medical kit on the workbench and pulled out the tricorder, switching it on and approaching the table. "I think it was that old computer. It looks like the power supply fried." He said as he continued to try to figure out how the tricorder worked. "Noah? Do you know how to work this thing? I need to scan for brain activity."

Noah took the unit from Marc and started the scan. "I don't understand these readings but this might help." He said as he handed it back to Marc.

"Oh man... There's so much damage." Marc almost sighed and shook his head in disbelief. "It was his power supply that failed, not the computer's." Marc added showing it to Noah.

"Dah... dahd..." Came a sound from the table.

"Oh my god!" Marc choked out. "He's regaining consciousness."

"I'm here Joey. I'm right here, can you see me?" Jerry asked with a snuffle as he grabbed Joey's hand.

"Ih... Ih id sweepee ahn id ho... hod im hewe..." Joey managed to get out before his small body convulsed once again.

"Marc we gotta shut him down." Jerry cried out as a loud crackling sound could be heard from within Joey's head.

"Dad! What's his manual override command? We can isolate his brain from the failed power supply." Austin said quickly as he stared at Marc intently waiting for his answer.

"He doesn't have one." Marc replied looking Austin in the eyes. "His build is Cynthetilife. Standard commands won't operate the same in his case. The connection can't be cut off."

Austin exhaled loudly as he watched Joey's eyes open once again. "Aouw... Aushim? We... ware ish dahdee?" Joey managed to get out with a trembling voice.

"I'm right here, I'm not leaving." Jerry answered in as soothing a voice as he could manage.

"Ih cannow she eauh... Ih sweepee." Joey got out, but stopped suddenly as he could here Jerry sniffing. "Id oday Dahddee. Isa gunna sweep ahn be oday."

“Yeah.” Jerry coughed out. “Go to sleep little guy. I'll be right here.” He said as he watched Joey relax and close his eyes.

Everyone froze as they watched Joey twitch one last time, and then take one final deep breath before becoming completely still. Jerry's eyes widened as he realized Joey wasn't breathing and he silently stood up from the table. Tears now streaming down his cheeks, he leaned over and kissed Joey on the forehead before turning and running to his father and burying his face in his chest. “He's gone!” Jerry sobbed into his father's shirt as Jon hugged his son.

“What just happened?” Austin asked as he redirected his gaze toward Marc. “Dad, what just happened?”

“Total systems failure.” Marc replied closing the tricorder and handing it to Noah.

“What caused it?” Austin asked again watching Marc slowly sit down in a nearby chair.

“His power supply was unstable apparently.” Marc answered, nodding to Jon and Mary as they motioned that they were bringing Jerry back upstairs.

“Then replace it.” Austin almost demanded with tears welling up in his own eyes.

“I can't. The power surge destroyed large sections of his positronic matrix. The damage isn't reversible.” Marc said resting his elbows on his knees and leaning his face into his hands.

“That can't happen!” Austin exclaimed. “Normal protocol in the event of a power supply malfunction with THEM is to sever all fuseable links to the brain. He just needs a new power cell and those links replaced, right?”

“No.” Marc replied sitting upright once again. “He doesn't have a Cynthetilife brain. It's one of ours. Those links needed to be bypassed to include a power inverter so his power supply would be compatible with his brain. When his power cell failed, It overloaded the inverter and blasted his matrix with a surge that completely destroyed a few large portions of his systems.” Marc answered as he sat back and looked Austin in the eyes. “He's probably better off now, in that body, he would never have matured right.”

“BULLSHIT!” Austin shouted as he swept Joey's mussed hair off of his forehead. “He should have been built right in the first place. Whose idea was it to put him in this junk anyway?”

Marc looked at the floor before clearing his throat and answering; “It was mine. The equipment was in good working order when he was assembled. It's impossible to tell the condition of the power cell until it's in practical use.”

“Oh.” Austin replied before sniffing and gently stroking his fallen brother's head. “What can we do for him now?”

“If anything, we may have to start over. Meaning a new personality upload into a new brain in another body.” Marc answered watching Austin's eyes open wider with each word.

“Won't you lose the real Joey that way?” Alec asked putting his hand on Marc's shoulder.

“Yeah. He'd lose all that he became since his activation.” Marc answered as he watched Austin attempt to hold back the tears. “We can bring him back, but it will be a new activation and there's no promising that this could never happen again.”

“Unless we do it the RIGHT way!” Austin barked. “You don't know that he's not recoverable! We could at least try to recover him.” He got out before the flood walls broke. “He's my little brother... he can't be gone... I wanna try!”

Marc slowly approached the table and opened his arms. “We'll try.” he managed to get out before Austin turned and buried his face in his father's shoulder. “Give Jerry some time to decide what he wants done.”

“Done about what?” Jerry asked as he slowly walked back down the stairs with Antonio and Byron close behind. His face still tear stained and puffy.

Noah met Jerry at the bottom of the stairs and gave him a hug before answering; “Jerry's older brother wants to try to help him if he can.”

“His brain isn't ruined?” Jerry asked with a snuffle.

“It is, but we don't know how badly yet.” Eli answered as the group gathered around the table. “We can all help, I mean I don't know anything about this stuff, but I can learn.”

“Me too.” Benji added while wrapping his arm around Eli's waist. “The little guy deserves to have us try at least.”

“You know we'll help.” Antonio added with Byron nodding in agreement as they both rubbed Jerry's shoulders.

“Marc, why don't you give Danny a call and let him know what happened. We'll discuss what we can do down here and see if we can't come up with a plan, ok?” Noah stated as everyone around the table looked up at him. “Alec, you guys are gonna be leaving soon, why don't you go up with Marc, let everyone know the situation down here is under control.” Noah added motioning to Marc to go ahead upstairs. “Could you send Caleb down? We may need a few more hands.”

“Ok, let me know what you guys come up with.” Marc said before heading up the stairs pulling out his communicator and heading for the back deck. Once he was seated and Alec ran off to help with the cleanup, he took a deep breath and initiated the call. “Marc to Danny.”

“Danny here, you miss me already Bro? It's been what 20 minutes, if that?”

“Yeah.” Marc said with a forced laugh. “I called to report an incident bro.”

“A what? What happened?”

“There was an instability in Joey's power supply. His brain suffered total system failure about 10 minutes ago.”

“Oh no. Is Jerry ok? Oh my god, is Austin alright?”

“Everyone's fine, just shook up. Noah, Austin and Jerry have a team on it now. We need to assess the damage before going any further.” Marc said, his eyes welling up with tears again. “I should have never suggested that body.” Marc got out with a snuffle.

“Easy little brother. You didn't know what Jerry's biomechanical knowledge was at the time. You made the right decision to let him do it himself.”

Marc inhaled deeply and swallowed hard before answering; “But that decision cost Joey his life.” He got out as Caleb slowly approached the stairs to the deck.

“Don't think that way. Worst case we start over, he'll lose a little of his past but will still be Joey. Let the guys work on the issue. You rest up, and make sure Austin does too.”

Marc smiled weakly at Caleb as he pulled him into a half hug while he continued his conversation.

“There's no way I can pull him off this project, he was so upset.”

“Then don't sweat it. Jerry and Noah won't let him over do it. You've got a good team on it. Let them work some magic for you. You need to keep your head straight so you'll be there for them when they need you.”

“He's right you know.” Caleb whispered into Marc's ear.

“Ok bro. We should have a definite answer for you by the time you come home.” Marc said wiping his eyes. “Thanks by the way.”

“Thanks? For what?”

“For reminding me I'm not alone anymore. Coping with issues like this has always been just me alone, and it can be so hard sometimes. I guess I kinda forgot that these guys are just as capable.” Marc said as he leaned into Caleb's hug.

“No prob. If I hadn't reminded ya, they sure as hell would have. *Giggle* I'm a quick call away if ya need me, ok?”

Marc smiled and sniffled as he answered; “Ok, thanks for the kick in the butt bro. Love ya.”

“Anytime! Love you too. Danny out.”

Marc closed his communicator, wrapped his arms around Caleb and let out a sigh. “Thank god you guys are here.”

“I will. You may wanna Thank Mikey and Davie too.” Caleb said with a giggle as he broke the hug. “Gotta get downstairs; you need anything, just yell.”

"I will, thanks." Marc replied with a smile as he watched the team finish cleaning up from lunch. "Hey Doc!" He shouted as he noticed Doc Austin carrying some boxes toward the Owens' house.

"Hey Marc. How are you feeling?"

"I'm ok. Um... Can I ask a question?" Marc hesitantly asked.

"Always." Doc answered setting the boxes on the steps and sat down with Marc. "What's on your mind?"

"Well, we just had a problem and I'm not sure how to handle it." Marc explained shrugging his shoulders. "We... um... Jerry's son just suffered a total system failure."

"Oh no. What can I do to help?" The doctor asked placing his hand on Marc's.

"Well, I have a team working to find out if an imprint extraction is possible. We don't know if his personality was lost yet." Marc said beginning to tear up again. "We have all the materials needed to activate a new body but, we don't have the equipment. The Panda is in use still and the Biobed has already been dedicated to activating the implants for Eli." Marc got out with a snuffle. "Is there any way we can borrow a second Biobed? I mean this accident is hurting Jerry and his family as well as Austin and I don't want to see them hurt any more for any longer."

"Give me a second." Doc said as he pulled out his communicator. "Doctor Michaels to Doctor Herron."

"Herron here. What can I do for ya Austin?"

"Chris, can I get an update with the Naval Hospital setup." Doc asked smiling at Marc.

"Not even a full 24 hours and you're already getting pushy. Some things never change. Hehehe."

"You have no idea. Our AI Division has had an emergency and I need to assess what resources we have available, if any. Give me good news, we need it." Doc asked sitting back in his chair.

"You're not joking, are you?"

"Not this time, no." Doc Austin replied winking at Marc earning a grin.

"Ok, then I have some good news for you. Structurally the hospital checked out for the most part. The power is sub-standard for what we're going to need but, we have the new ER up at about 70% functional with equipment still arriving. I'll be brave and say 90% by day's end. Level 1 and level 6 transporter rooms are still nonfunctional but in the process of being set up. Levels 2,3,4 and 5 are undergoing a total remodeling and are not usable yet, all Levels above those haven't even been approached yet. Correction, level 10 cargo transporter is being installed but also won't be functioning for quite some time."

"Chris, we need access to at least a couple of Bio-beds and possibly an OR with AI capabilities. Is that possible?" Doc asked, tapping his fingers on the table.

“Absolutely. I'll have a team set up OR-1 for you and we can have 2 portable beds with AI upgrades available immediately if needed. Will that work for you?”

“Marc? Does that sound ok?” Doc asked with a smile as he watched Marc's mouth hang open in amazement.

“Um.. Oh god yeah!” Marc replied with a huge smile. “We just need time to get everything together.”

“Chris, I'll arrange a site to site transport through Terra Main for the equipment and Dr. Furst's team. I don't think they'll need assistance to get set up but I'd appreciate it if you could remain available for them, if that's at all possible.” Doc Austin said with a smile.

“Consider it done Austin. Have Dr. Furst notify me when he's ready to send his equipment. I'll see to the setup personally.”

“Thanks Chris, I owe you one.” Doc replied.

“You owe me a few. Hahaha! Herron out.”

“You guys didn't waste any time.” Marc said with a grin.

“Nope. The plan was to get you guys as functional as possible in the best time we could manage. Now if we have the materials needed to begin work on Joey, we'll just transport him, whatever equipment you need and your team directly to the hospital. I'd plan to leave security in place here and a small team to continue with the local set up. That will give you all the time you need, as well as continue development on site here.” Doc said with a smile. “Does that help a little?”

“Are you kidding?” Marc said as he jumped up from his seat and almost tackled Doc with a hug. “That's just amazing. I don't know how to thank you.”

“Bring Jerry his son back. That'll be thanks enough for me.” He replied as he stood up and picked the boxes back up. “I'll notify Terra Main that you will require medical transport so they will be expecting your call when you are ready.” He added, smiling when Marc's communicator chirped. “I'll see you before we leave.”

“Ok. Thanks again.” Marc replied as he opened his communicator. “Marc Here.”

“Marc, this is Alec. You're needed at the security shack as soon as possible.”

“Something wrong?” Marc asked as he began to walk off the deck to go out front.

“No, your new security team needs to check in.”

“New security team? Already?” Marc asked in shock. “Is Will with them?”

“Yup, he says he's in no real rush if you're busy.”

“Oh, ok. I'll be there in an hour or so then.” Marc said with a giggle as he turned the corner and waved at them.

“Exactly one hour, in ANDROID time.” Alec quipped with a laugh once Marc reached the group.

“Marc, I'd like to introduce you to Junior Cadet Lieutenant Edward Fraser. He'll be reporting to you directly.” Will said as the teenager stood at attention.

“Reporting for duty sir.” The Cadet announced and saluted.

“Um... At ease lieutenant?” Marc almost questioned looking to Will for direction, who simply smiled and nodded.

“Eddie, This is Doctor Marc Furst, He is the Clan's AI Division Medical Director, Acting Division head at this time.” Will said and turned to Marc. “Marc, I'd like you to meet one of our finest. Junior Cadet Lieutenant Fraser has been in our program for two years, has successfully completed his primary training and is currently one of the few Cadets we have who have completed courses through Starfleet Academy as well as be authorized to handle firearms while on duty.”

“Wow, sounds like you've been working hard.” Marc said with a smile.

“Yes sir. This is my first real assignment.” Eddie said proudly. “I've acted as secondary security for our local law enforcement, am listed as on reserve with Starfleet and have even completed my primary defense training through the Academy. I can provide you with transcripts from all courses if you require them.”

“That won't be necessary Mr. Fraser. I'm sure Will must have quite a bit of confidence in your abilities to have placed you in charge.” Marc said as he turned to Alec. “Alec, do you think you could give Eddie a run down on the policies JJ and Matt put in place? Maybe give him a tour of the property and let him meet a few of the guys before the rest of you head for home.”

“No prob Marc.” Alec replied as he grabbed Eddie's arm. “C'mon! Everyone's out at the beach.”

As Will and Marc watched Alec practically drag Eddie around the side of the house, Will put his hand on Marc's shoulder. “He requested this assignment.”

Marc tilted his head in question and motioned toward the steps to sit down. “Anything I should know about him then?” Marc asked as they took a seat.

“Well for one, out of all our Cadets, he really is one of the most dedicated I have seen in quite some time. After his parents divorced, he joined our summer program and since then has buried himself in his training.” Will said leaning back and resting on his elbows. “Between his training, school and working part time for his father, I have no idea when he's had a chance to just be a kid. This placement is actually a blessing in disguise.”

Marc looked at Will with a puzzled expression. “How? This will just give him more work. Won't it?”

Will chuckled and sat forward. "Yup, but it will be one thing to focus on. He spreads himself too thin." He said as he stood back up. "Let him concentrate on this position and hand off some of his other work. I've seen how you guys interact with each other. He may take your lead and break down and be himself now and then."

"Ahhh. I gotcha." Marc replied as he walked Will back to his patrol car. "You think he's up for some 'Clan' training?"

"I hope so." Will replied with a chuckle. "If not I think he's in for a pretty wild ride." He continued as he got in and started the car. "I'll be bringing 4 Cadets out in about 3 hours. Eddie will handle them once he is situated. He'll handle scheduling shifts as well as reporting directly to you, Danny and Matt as required." He added as he put the car into gear. "I think you'll be impressed with his performance."

"If he can get situated in under 3 hours, I think I will be." Marc said with a laugh as Will nodded and pulled out of the driveway.

"Nonono! We really need to make that decision now." Austin was saying as Marc wandered down the stairs.

"Report Mr. Short!" Marc barked out with a giggle, earning laughs from the entire group.

"Me?" Austin asked with a confused look on his face as he looked up from the computer screen.

"Who else would I be talking to?" Marc said with a smile. "It is legally Short now you know. Your last name I mean."

"Sorry Dad." Austin replied with a smile. "It's just gonna take some getting used to."

Marc smiled as he looked at the computer screen Austin was working on. "Is that what I think it is?" He asked in amazement as he pointed at the screen and looked his son in the eyes. "You got it!?"

Austin's smile widened as Jerry turned the corner with an arm load of parts, followed by Noah who was carrying an entire upper torso. "ALL of him!" Jerry exclaimed with a bounce in his step. "I couldn't believe it either!" He continued as he placed the parts he was carrying into a box next to the table Joey's lifeless body was still occupying.

"Awesome job guys!" Marc almost shouted as he giggled watching Noah fumble with the torso before setting it next to the box.

"You could build an army with the parts you have in there." Noah said as he walked over to an empty chair and plopped down. "Worse than a squirrel storing nuts for the winter." He added with a giggle.

"Hey, don't pick on my nuts!" Marc said bursting out in laughter. "They came in handy tonight, didn't they?"

“Your nuts came in handy? Whatever Squirrel boy!” Noah half laughed out. “I'd keep that to yourself if I were you.”

“Has everyone beamed out?” Caleb asked as he wandered out of the store room carrying a set of youth legs.

“Yeah, a few minutes ago.” Marc replied as he looked into the doorway of the storeroom and saw Eli levitating and moving large cartons of parts around the room as Benji pointed at the items he wanted. “That's how you got this stuff so fast?”

“Yup.” Jerry answered as he looked at Austin. “I don't know what to decide on.” He said as if continuing a previous conversation.

“What are you deciding?” Marc asked as he grabbed a chair and sat next to Austin.

“He needs to decide on the primary DNA string so we can assemble the body and begin the activation as soon as the Biobed is free.” Austin answered redirecting his stare toward Jerry. “He can't make up his mind though.”

“What are your thoughts Doctor? Maybe we can help.” Marc suggested with a smile.

Jerry wrinkled his nose in deep thought before looking at Joey's body. “I want him to be Joey. I mean similar to this.” He said gesturing toward the table. “I know I want to do a DNA cross for his family heritage, but I don't know how to get a sample from one of the most important people.”

“You lost me.” Marc said as he sat back in his chair.

“Ok. I want his DNA to include mine, but be crossed with his brothers and his uncle.” Jerry said as he watched Marc nod his head. “Mine is no problem to get, Austin and Timmy are already crossed so a sample from Austin will biologically make Timmy his half brother, but he was designed to look more like Davie. I can't choose Davie's dominant characteristics if I can't get a DNA sample from him. I kinda wanted his DNA to be predominant” Jerry said as if in defeat.

“Maybe your parents have a clipping of baby hair or something you can use.” Caleb suggested.

“No, all Davie's baby pictures and stuff like that were lost years ago.” Jerry replied.

“The police may have a sample.” Marc said causing Jerry to shrug his shoulders.

“That could take months to get though, if they even filed his DNA.” Jerry argued.

“*Did you oil it yet?*” A voice seemed to come from where Noah was sitting.

“Huh?” Jerry asked looking toward Noah as Davie's form materialized in the chair next to him, causing Austin to gasp.

“My glove. You forgot didn't you?” Davie asked with a smile and a shrug of his shoulders as Jerry ran over and tackled him with a hug.

“Yeah, sorry. I've been really busy.” Jerry answered as he plopped himself in his brother's lap.

“I noticed that.” Davie answered as he winked at Marc. “Just make sure before you oil it, you clean that blood stain out of the inside palm. You remember when I cut myself climbing the park fence to chase that WILD PITCH of yours.” Davie said with a laugh. “I never did get around to cleaning it out.”

“Yeah, I remember that. You were trying to teach me how to pitch.” Jerry said with a giggle as he looked over at Marc and Austin and smiled. “I was awful. Threw it way over his head and he had to hop the fence to go get it. Cut the palm of his hand pretty bad on the top of the fence but kept playin... Wait a minute!”

Davie laughed as his brother jumped up out of his lap. “And he's supposed to be the smart one.” He said pointing at Jerry, earning laughs from everyone in the room.

“We got your DNA!!!” Jerry literally shouted, hopping around like he was about to burst. “I gotta go get it! We need that to Map Joey's DNA structure. We can extract it with the Medical Tricorder!” He continued to ramble as he ran for the stairs and then turned as if he forgot something. Running full speed back toward Davie, he shouted “Thanks Dork!” as he gave his brother a bear hug and then ran full speed up the stairs.

“Has he always been that excitable?” Caleb asked with a giggle.

“No, but it's good to see.” Davie said as he began to fade. “Tell Booger Brain I still want it oiled.” He said as he disappeared.

As the boys all giggled, Austin simply sat and stared at the now empty chair. “That was Jerry's brother?” He asked looking over at Marc. “Is he a ghost?”

“Angel.” Caleb said with a smile. “You do believe in angels, don't you?”

“Well... yeah. But I never planned on having proof.” Austin answered tilting his head in disbelief.

“Wait til you meet your Uncle Mikey.” Marc said as he stood up from his seat. “Once Jerry gets back, we need to get this stuff ready for transport.”

“Transport?” Antonio asked as he looked up from the biobed's control panel. “To where?”

“Well we have a ton of work to do.” Marc started. “We have Eli's prosthetics to work with, Joey's activation to handle and Kevin getting ready to come online. None of the new systems are functional yet and we don't have the equipment we need to get it all done here. Not to mention the house doesn't have the power to run all of the equipment we'll need.”

“So where are we transporting all this stuff too then?” Byron asked as all the boys looked at Marc.

Marc smiled as he began to slide the boxes closer to the biobed with Caleb and Noah helping. “Doc Austin arranged it so we have some medical capabilities at the new hospital.”

“Already?!?” Noah asked with a gasp. “Wow they aren't messing around!” He continued as Jerry bounded down the stairs with his brother's baseball glove in his hand.

“Not at all. We'll have the equipment we need to get all of this up and running there, as well as an operating room when we're ready for Eli's implants.” Marc said as the boys continued to load up boxes and roll equipment over next to the biobed.

“That reminds me.” Jerry said as he grabbed Antonio and whispered into his ear before both ran into the store room.

“They're up to something.” Austin said with a giggle as everyone watched the doorway until they both returned, Jerry hiding something behind his back.

“Benji, Marc... Can we talk to you both?” Antonio asked as Jerry began to grin.

“We're in trouble.” Marc said to Benji with a grin. “What's up guys?”

“Well, we was workin on getting the stuff ready for Eli when we had an idea.” Antonio started. “Benji, give Jerry your left hand.” He said with a grin.

“What are you two up to?” Benji asked as he held out his hand toward Jerry.

“We didn't think it was fair to do all this work for Eli and never ask you if you would want one too.” Jerry said as he took a modified section of an android's hand and held it in place so Benji could see it. “So we kinda made one for you, if you want it, I mean.”

Benji looked at his hand while Jerry smiled wide and continued to hold the part in place. “You didn't have to make me one, Eli needs them, I don't.” Benji said as he pulled his hand back. “Just make sure Eli is ok, I don't really need it.”

Marc watched as Jerry and Antonio's smiles quickly faded; and walked over to the boys. “Benji, your brother is gonna be fine. This surgery has been done before and has a huge success rate. I can do this for both of you since the boys designed the part for you.”

“But it'd be better if you worry about just him. That's what I want.” Benji said softly as he looked over his injured hand. “I've learned to live with it this way.”

“I've learned to live with this bro.” Eli added in from across the room as he quickly unstrapped his leg and held it up.

“That's different.” Benji got out before Eli got up and joined the group.

“No it's not.” Eli quipped. “I can live without a working leg and arm. I have been living without them just fine. I just think it's really nice that they all came up with a way to be more whole.” He said as his brother rolled his eyes. “I think it was really nice that they thought of you too.”

“We'll keep it in case you change your mind Ben.” Antonio said as he and Jerry both looked more at the floor than at anyone else. “We didn't mean to make anyone upset, it was just a thought.”

“Benji?!” Eli said as he levitated the part out of Jerry's hand and used it to tap on Benji's shoulder. “You can go through therapy an stuff with me if we do it at the same time. You should do it, and you should say thanks cause they thought about you and put all that work into it.”

“It would be easier to train you both with the new parts at the same time.” Marc said as he smiled at Benji. “Not to mention your brother won't have to go through it alone.”

"AHEM!" Sammy cleared his throat from in the doorway at the top of the stairs. "BENJAMIN! I thought we settled this at the hospital! We heard what the guys offered you, don't go being a dork and turning it down just because you feel responsible for Eli getting hurt! You ain't gonna pull that again; these guys might not know better but I do. Do I gotta call Mikey in to straighten you out?" Sammy got out on his way down the stairs as the rest of the gang stood back and watched.

“That's not what I meant.” Benji snapped back quickly. “I just want them to worry about him first.”

Sammy tapped the side of his head. "Bullcrap. You know you can't fool me; and there ain't no way I'm letting my boyfriend try to pull off a stunt like that on these guys. I'll love you forever Benji; but that does not mean I'll let you pass up something just because you can't get it through your thick head that none of this was your fault. You saying you are 'used to it' is BS too; I still have to suffer through watching you get frustrated because you use the wrong hand to try to do something. Jerry and Tonio busted their butts to try to surprise you; get your head outta your butt, thank them, and get ready to join your brother in surgery."

The room got dead silent as Benji looked at the device, held it up to his hand and then out so he could look at it. “I'm sorry.” He said as he looked at Antonio and Jerry. “Sammy's right. This was really cool of you guys.” He said as the boys looked up at him. “Thanks.” Benji added with a smile.

“So two for surgery when they're ready?” Marc asked with a grin as he watched Sammy begin to smile.

“Is it gonna hurt?” Benji asked when the hand suddenly jumped up and poked him.

“Only when it does that!” Eli got out through his laughter. “This is gonna be sooo cool! You guys are awesome!” Eli said with excitement as he followed his leg over and gave both Antonio and Jerry hugs.

“Yeah, for both of us Marc.” Benji said as he looked at Sammy and squinted his eyes. “Ok?”

Sammy glanced over to where Byron was showing Sebastian the parts for Eli. He turned back to Benji and replied "Yeah; thats better. You need to be happy too, Babe; I owe it to you to make that happen." Sammy then reached over and pulled Benji into a hug.

“How soon will they be ready?” Sebastian asked as he carefully placed the arm back in it's container.

“Once the activation sequence has started, 36 hours before the surgery, 48 until they are stable enough to begin using.” Marc said with a smile. “So the sooner we get this stuff to the hospital and set up, the sooner we'll be able to get started.”

“We're not all going, are we?” Caleb asked.

“All those involved. We can use as many hands as we can get.” Marc replied.

“Permission to remain, Sir.” Caleb said as he stood at attention causing Marc to laugh.

“Um, okay... Granted I guess.” Marc answered with a giggle. “What's up?”

“Nothing major, just have a whole network to configure still.” Caleb answered with a grin.

“Oh yeah, do you need a team?” Marc asked as JR rushed over and stood at attention next to Caleb while obviously trying to contain a laugh.

“Sir! Request permission to... um... stay and do team stuff... and um... help.” JR barked out with a laugh.

“You're nuts.” Marc said with a laugh. “How many people do you need Cal?”

“Honestly, JR is all I need if you need everyone else. I gotta run the wires and stuff still. Danny and I got the systems in place already so it's just mainly gonna be configuration and programming at this point.” Caleb said as he turned and saw JR still standing at attention and elbowed him in the side with a laugh.

“Sounds good Caleb, I'll notify security and leave you in charge here, just yell if you need anyone else.” Marc said as he looked at the rest of the room full. “Everyone else can plan on taking a field trip. Noah, if you wanna stay behind with Caleb, It's ok.”

“Can't. I promised Danny I'd make sure you didn't overdo it.” Noah said as he gave Caleb a hug.

“I'm fine, really. Honestly with all the work we gotta do, we won't have much time for each other.” Caleb added with a wink.

“Well then, let's make our final preparations. Departure in one hour gang so we gotta shake a leg.” Marc said as he watched Byron pick up Eli's leg and begin to shake it in the air earning laughs from the whole gang. “Oh, this is gonna be fun.” He sarcastically added with a smirk as his communicator chirped; “Marc here.” He said after flipping it open and sitting back down at the desk.

“Marc, this is Edward. I have orders from Alec acting as security head at HQ to set condition Orange and prepare to increase security. Request permission to contact Corporal Jackson to ready all cadets who are field ready for possible maneuvers.”

Marc raised his eyebrows and looked at Noah who simply folded his arms, smiled and nodded.

“Permission granted Lieutenant.” Marc said with a grin. “Awesome call dude. I'm not used to these different alert status settings Eddie so I need your help here, we are scheduled to move operations to the old naval hospital in about an hour leaving a very small team here. Are we allowed to continue or do we need to put that move on hold?” Marc asked with a scowl.

“No sir, you are allowed to relocate operations. I will coordinate a security detail to arrive before you do to secure the premises.”

“God dude, he's on his game!” Noah said just above a whisper with a huge smile.

Marc smiled and nodded his head in agreement before replying; “Thank you Lieutenant. By the way Eddie, I feel very safe with you in charge out there. I'm really glad you requested this assignment.”

“Um... Thanks Marc. Um... Will told you I requested this position?”

“He did.” Marc replied with a grin. “He just neglected to inform me that you were so thorough and run such a tight operation. I just feel a lot more confident assuming my position with you manning the guns, so to speak.” Marc said winking at Noah.

“Thank you sir! I'll do my best to earn that compliment.”

“You already earned it dude.” Marc replied with a smile. “I will notify you prior to beam out. Marc out.” He stated as he closed his communicator. “Damn, we have a kick ass security head.” Marc said as he stood up.

“He's not divisional head...” Noah got out before Marc cut him off.

“Yet.” Marc said with a giggle getting a smile from Noah. “He keeps up what he just started and I can see him losing that Cadet title real fast.”

“No kidding. He sounds like a veteran.” Noah said as he watched the group in the room shuffling equipment. “You ever think this operation would be moved when you set it up?”

“No.” Marc replied as he picked up an empty carton and began filling it with notes and tools off of the desk. “I can't wait to see what our new facility is gonna look like.”

“Doc Austin planned it all. I'll bet it's gonna be sweet!” Noah said with a laugh as he started to help pack.

Decommissioned Naval Hospital: Charleston SC.

“Dr Furst?” The young looking man asked into the group once they materialized.

“Dr. Herron?” Marc stepped forward and extended his hand.

The doctor smiled and took his hand. “You can call me Chris if you like.” He said as he handed Marc the P.A.D.D. He was holding. “I have quite a bit of good news for you Doctor. It seems we are a bit further along than originally reported.”

“Marc.” Marc said as he looked at the display.

“Huh?” The doctor replied with a confused look on his face.

“Just call me Marc, Chris. Fair is fair.” He said with a grin before opening his eyes wide at what he was reading. “According to this we have 4 operational O.R.'s, 2 with A.I. Capabilities and more than half of the ward is operational!?!” Marc read in amazement before looking up. “Am I reading this wrong?”

“Nope, after I spoke with Austin, I pulled in a few favors and we had a full team setting up and configuring. I figured it best to get one step ahead just in case.” Chris replied with a smile.

“I can't wait to get a look at them.” Marc said with a smile as he scanned over the equipment listings. “This is so much more advanced than I have ever worked with.”

“Mostly Federation rated equipment with the alterations requested. By the time we are finished, your hospital will be somewhat of a hybrid. Each and every operating room, med-lab, outpatient and even therapy will be equipped to handle human, alien and android with no problems, as per your request.” Chris stated.

“My request?” Marc asked in somewhat of a stunned voice.

“Well, your headquarters gave us the requirements to meet. We just decided to use what we could to exceed those requirements. I know the main medical facility will be primarily Federation Youth Services Medical, but there's no harm in advancing capabilities to handle any crisis which may arise. The same stands for medical capabilities on your division's levels. I want to see you guys ready to handle anything, anywhere you need to when we are finished.” Chris said with a smile.

“I'm sooo beyond impressed right now.” Marc said as he looked back at the P.A.D.D. “Jerry, Antonio & Noah.” Marc shouted out silencing the group. “It's time to go to work. Get your teams together.” Marc said as the boys rushed and separated into three groups. “Chris, can I hold on to this so I don't get lost?” He asked with a giggle.

“Absolutely.” Chris replied as he grabbed another off the reception desk and brought up the layout. “Now, Your patient, Joseph Owens is in O.R. 1. My team received the equipment and materials you sent and should have everything set up for you.”

Marc nodded and looked up from his display. “Antonio, your team is in O.R. 1.” He said as he pointed down the nearby corridor.

“Ok guys, let's get moovin.” Antonio said and without wasting a moment of time rushed out of sight.

Chris watched in amazement before shaking his head and looking back at his P.A.D.D. “Um... Let me see... The materials for your two prosthetic recipients are in O.R. 4. I made sure it was equipped to handle two patients and have the equipment you will require to perform micro-surgery. We have post-op set up to handle neurological patients for now since the wing Neurology will be in is still being renovated. By the time you'll need it, we will have recovery rooms available. It will be another 48 hours before we have physical therapy equipped. Is that going to be soon enough?”

“Oh yeah, it'll be a few days before we'll be able to get started on P.T. That'll work out great.” Marc said with a smile before redirecting his attention back to the group. “Jerry, your team is in O.R. 4.”

“Let's go guys!” Jerry said as his group, followed by one lone leg practically ran down the corridor.

“These guys don't mess around, do they?” Chris asked with a smile.

“Not when it comes to work.” Marc replied with a smile. “Where did the Panda unit get set up?”

“That was a tricky one.” Chris replied. “It's actually in one of the larger treatment areas off of the new E.R. Near radiology.” Chris said shrugging his shoulders. “Meeting the power requirements for that older device was a challenge since the electrical capabilities of this building were beyond substandard.”

“That'll be fine, were there any problems getting it online?” Marc asked as he waved to Noah to follow as they began to walk down the corridor toward the E.R.

“You may want to give it a once over. None of my team has ever worked with a full sized Panda before. It's systems checked out and read normal by the book.” Chris said with a grin. “The book lies sometimes.”

Marc giggled as he looked down the hall they were walking down. “I wouldn't say lie, it's more like leaving out the unit's quirks and minor tweaks that get made up along the way. That unit has an issue with Carbon Dioxide build up.” Marc said with a shrug of his shoulders. “No good reason for it, other than it just likes Co2 I guess.” He finished with a giggle.

“Is that something an environment scan would pick up?” Chris asked with concern showing in his face.

“Normally, yeah. Sometimes you need to specifically scan Co2 levels for it to pick it up. If it's a little too high, a standard environment report simply states nominal, even if it's elevated.” Marc replied.

“Wouldn't the unit be in danger of building up Co2 during a shutdown and reactivation?” Chris asked as Marc looked at Noah then back down the hall.

“We better move!” Marc barked out as all three broke out in a run.

Decommissioned Naval Hospital: Charleston SC. (O.R. #1)

“Tonio, was this the torso that was picked?” Byron asked as he looked at another box with a second torso in it and scratched his head. “This is getting confusing.” He continued.

“Yeah, that one.” He said pointing out the different boxes. “An' that head, those arms an' that pelvic and leg set over there.” Antonio answered, further confusing his boyfriend.

“Let me help.” Benji said as he began to sort the boxes out while Byron laid them out on the bed for assembly.

“How do ya know what's what?” Byron asked with a giggle. “They all look the same.”

“Cause I'm good!” Benji said as he covered the writing on the box with his hand and giggled.

"It's written on the boxes!?! You cheater!" Byron shouted as Antonio shook his head and continued to set up the terminal and link it to the biobed.

"When you two are done clownin around, we gotta get the biobed online so I can have Jerry come in and do the final check and get the start up goin." Antonio said as Byron began making the connections and assembling Joey's new body.

"How many optical lines are in one harness 'Tonio?" Byron asked as he sealed the first connection.

"Bout a thousand or more I think. Depends on the harness size and what it's for I s'pose." Antonio answered grinning at Byron's shocked expression. "So ya gotta be careful how you attach them or else he'll think his feet are his hands an stuff." He added with a giggle causing Byron to freeze.

"That can happen?" Byron gasped.

"He's playin with ya." Benji added sticking out his tongue at Antonio. "If a connection is wrong, it won't fit. Jerry already told me that." He said with a smile as Byron sighed and seemed to relax. "You can't mess him up like that. This is just an assembly cause this body was already used. Anyone who is careful enough can do an assembly, the hard part is building one from scratch."

"Well unless you've done it before." Said Austin as he entered the operating room wheeling a computer cart piled with cables and tools.

"How's Jerry's team doin?" Antonio asked as he rushed to the cart and began grabbing the cables he needed.

"Great, they're already preparing for activations." Austin said as he grabbed the little androids head and walked over to the bed. "You ready to be a partial android Benji?"

"It'll be cool I guess." Benji replied as he continued to go over the connections in the legs.

"You're lucky Sammy isn't in here." Austin said as he pulled the connection harnesses that were neatly tucked into the neck section out and prepared them for connection. "He'd probably be on your case again."

"It's not that." Benji replied sliding the pelvic section up to meet with the torso. "I'm kinda nervous."

Austin looked at Benji and smiled. "You know you are gonna be cared for by some of the best in the field, don't you?"

"Yeah." Benji answered with a shrug as he continued to connect the harnesses.

"Not to mention people who would never let harm come to you." Austin added.

"It's the whole being put to sleep thing." Benji sighed out as he locked the two sections together. "It kinda scares me. I mean, I've heard of people dying on the operating table and stuff. It's dumb."

“No it's not.” Antonio said as he dragged the cable over to the biobed and connected it. “It's rare but has happened.”

“Would you rather stay awake?” Austin asked with concern. “This can be done while your awake you know. Neurological surgeries used to require the patient be awake during the procedure. It's not required anymore, but I can talk to Dad and see if he can do a local anesthetic if you want.”

“Can he do one on Eli?” He asked stopping his work and looking Austin in the eyes.

“Ah, I see what you're getting at now.” Austin replied. “Unfortunately, no. The work on Eli is way too extensive for him to stay awake for the procedure. I mean it would be painful for him to be awake for that long, not to mention agonizing to remain that still long enough.”

“Then I go to sleep too.” Benji stated nervously and continued to fumble with connections.

“Yur makin to big of a deal outa this ya know.” Byron said, causing Austin's eyes to open wide.

“Oh, am I?” Benji asked stopping his work and looking up with a scowl.

“Yeah, I mean if humans were doin the operation, I'd be scared an stuff. But it's gonna be Marc!” Byron said with a shrug of his shoulders. “You think he's gonna do anythin less than a perfect job on him?”

“Well, no. I mean sometimes things happen that can't be controlled. Human or not.” Benji replied as he continued once again.

“Worst thing that could happen is the procedure could be a total failure. Then what?” Byron asked as he sharply slid a box across the floor.

“Nothing gained?” Benji questioned softly.

“Right, so what's lost if you don't even try?” Byron asked as he watched Benji simply shrug his shoulders. “You lose the chance to ever gain anything!” He answered for him as he got up and made his way to the door. “You don't wanna scare Eli out of a chance like this, do ya?” He asked a quiet Benji as he opened the door and turned before stepping through it to see Benji freeze in thought. “Think about it!” He finished as he stepped out of the room and slammed the door.

“He's right.” Benji said as he looked up at Austin.

“I know he is.” Austin answered with a smile. “You just had to realize it for yourself.”

Decommissioned Naval Hospital: Charleston SC. (O.R. #4)

“Eli, stop playin with that arm!” Jerry said with a laugh. “If you don't leave it on the biobed I can't start the activation sequence, bonehead!”

"I know, but it's sooo cool!" Eli said with a smile as he placed the arm back on the table next to the leg. "I'll go play with the backup." Eli said with a grin as Jerry simply shook his head and sighed.

"S'ok Eli." Sammy said with a giggle. "You'll have lotsa time to play with it after the operation."

"Very funny." Sebastian said with a laugh. "Jerry, I think Benji's hand is ready, you wanna check it?"

"Great, thanks!" Jerry excitedly replied as he rushed over and checked the bed's display. "Awesome job Bastian!" Jerry said as he stood back up. "You sure you've never done work like this before?"

"No." Sebastian answered to a smirking Jerry. "What? I swear! Never!"

"Suuuure..." Jerry replied patting Bastian on the back with a smile as the door swung open and Byron stormed in.

"Eli, your brother is doin it again!" Byron said crossing his arms and tapping his foot.

"What's he done now?" Eli asked putting the skeletal backup arm he was playing around with back in it's box.

"Now he's afraid of you not wakin up after the surgery an stuff. He's just bein impossible!"

"Oh really?" Sammy asked as he walked over to Byron and then turned to Jerry. "Jer, is it ok if I go set him straight?"

"Never gonna happen." Eli said with a laugh. "Oh, you mean calm him down?" Eli added as the rest of the boys in the room rolled their eyes.

"Go ahead, just don't be angry with him." Jerry said as he completed activating the biobed the lone hand was on and stood up. "He's got real reasons to be worried, it's a surgery. There's always a chance something could go wrong," He continued; "It's just not likely."

Sammy looked at the floor before Byron opened the door and stepped out into the hall. "I know, I'll go easy." He answered before quietly letting the door close behind them.

"Is that generating already?" Bastian asked as he looked at the display Jerry was just working at.

"Yeah, why? Something wrong?" Jerry asked as he winked at Eli and they both began running through a checklist on the second bed.

"I did it right?" Bastian questioned with amazement as he scratched his head.

"You did perfect." Jerry answered keeping his back turned to hide his grin. "You thought I was kidding when I asked if you had done it before?"

"Well... yeah." Bastian replied crossing his arms and smiling. "Wow, that's so cool." He muttered to himself.

“Well, stop admiring it and get over here and do it again.” Jerry ordered through a giggle. “Eli can't wait much longer ya know.” Jerry said as Eli finally broke and laughed.

“What?” Bastian asked as he made his way to the other biobed.

“Nuthin, I just thought it sounded funny. Jerry wouldn't have you doin stuff he didn't think you could, ya know.” Eli said as he stopped laughing, only to laugh again at Bastian's scowl.

“How'd ya know I could do that stuff? I didn't even know.” He asked with his hands on his hips.

“I didn't.” Jerry replied. “I just explained it to you, and when you didn't stare back at me like I had 5 eyes, I figured you got it and let you get yur work done.” Jerry said with a smile and a giggle.

Decommissioned Naval Hospital: Charleston SC. (Radiology: Temp. PANDA Lab)

“Marc!” Jerry shouted as he and Austin turned the corner, causing Marc to jump and knock over a tray full of tools.

“Oh my god guys, you tryin to give me a heart attack?” Marc asked as he rubbed his eyes.

“Were you asleep Dad?” Austin asked as both boys started to giggle. “We've been slaving for hours and you're in here taking a nap?” Austin continued with a chuckle as Noah rounded the corner at the other end of the hall.

“Electricians report the power is as stable as it will ever be with this old wiring Marc.” Noah said as he approached the group. “They said they'll get a team together and run a new line in here just for this unit when they come back tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow? What time is it?” Marc said as he stretched and yawned.

“Not sure.” Noah answered looking at Jerry and Austin who simply shrugged their shoulders. “Gotta be somewhere between 1 and 3 in the morning I think.” Noah answered looking at the dust covered clock on the wall. “That says seven.” He said as a crumpled up ball of paper bounced off his head.

“It's said seven since we got here, dufus!” Marc said with a laugh. “Got a report for me guys?”

“Yup!” Jerry said with a smile. “O.R. #4 reports all systems activated and functioning perfectly. We are right on schedule despite Eli constantly playing with his new parts.” Jerry finished with a giggle.

“Great Job, hows it goin in O.R. #1 Austin?” Marc asked, still rubbing his eyes.

“We're ahead of schedule as well.” Austin answered with a smile. “We have fully assembled and tested out our new endoskeletal structure and components, mapped and integrated our DNA string plus all additional parameters required. Biological accelerated regeneration and startup sequence was completed about 15 minutes ago. We're standing by to upload Joey's personality imprint and estimate partial activation of systems in approximately 36 hours.”

“Those biobeds are amazing.” Marc said as he shot a dirty look at the Panda unit. “Sounds like Joey and Kevin will be coming online at about the same time as it stands now.”

“What? I thought he was closer than that.” Jerry said with his eyes open wide. “What happened?”

“Well, excluding the usual issues with environmental inconsistencies and issues with fluctuating power, we've learned the old unit doesn't like to be moved.” Marc replied shaking his head in defeat. “I'm thinking this is going to be it's last activation.”

“Will it be able to complete this one?” Jerry asked as he patted the unit's console.

“Provided we don't trip another leg. I don't know how many more times it's going to be able to recover from partial power loss and surges from being restored.” Marc said as he looked at the ceiling. “I'm guessing sub-standard power was one of the reasons this place was retired.”

“Trip a leg?” Austin asked scratching his head.

“Yeah, The Panda unit requires a three phase power supply and it needs to be stable. This area of the hospital was equipped with the right wiring but is proving to be more of a fire hazard than a help.” Marc said with a giggle as Noah patted the fire extinguisher; which appeared to have been used recently.

“It caught fire?!?” Jerry almost shouted while Austin simply stood with his mouth open.

“The unit? No.” Marc began. “The new connection, sub panel, transformer and my patience went up in flames a few times though.”

“The Panda survived all that?” Jerry asked while trying to suppress a laugh.

“Not well, but it's still stable enough to complete the epidermal layer. We're gonna to have to wait til Kevin is stable enough to move so we can complete his imprint transfer and final biological activations on a biobed though.”

“Epi.. epider...” Noah started to attempt to word.

“Epidermal. You know, skin.” Jerry cut in and said as Noah knocked on his own forehead.

“I must be really tired.” Noah replied with a grin as Marc's communicator chirped.

“Marc, this is Danny.” Marc heard as he opened the unit, which instantly brought a smile to his face.

“Marc here. What's up, bro?” He asked as he sat down and rubbed his eyes once again.

“Dude, we just ran into a M.A.R.C. series android. It looks like he has had some sort of personality wipe or something. He says he doesn't have a name and his Primary Function is to serve. Cory and I believe he is being used as a slave laborer. Is there any way to restore his personality imprint?”

Marc squinted his eyes before shaking his head and continuing; "A M.A.R.C. series? There weren't too many in that area that I know of. Whether we can save his personality is dependent on whether there's still a personality to save. Did Caleb install that uplink in the shuttle for you?"

"Yeah, but I don't think the shuttle's onboard systems could handle a personality imprint manipulation though."

"No, I was thinking use it to access him directly, but don't even try until we identify him. I need you to get me his I.D. from below his uplink port so I can look him up in the system. Then we'll know if it's safe to do a direct connect." Marc said as he watched Noah pull Jerry and Austin aside and begin talking to them.

"We should have access to him shortly Marc." Marc heard Cory cut in.

"Ok, I'll get access to the old database and wait for you to call back. Marc out." Marc said as he quickly stood up and grabbed his P.A.D.D.

"Thanks bro. Talk to you in a few. Danny out." Danny's voice got out before Marc flipped his communicator shut.

"Guy's, I think it would be a good idea if you all make use of those cots in the ER. Noah, if anything goes wrong with the Panda, it will sound it's alarm again. I want you to contact security and have them station a man here while you get some sleep." Marc rushed to say as he practically ran around the room, appearing to be running through a checklist before putting his P.A.D.D. back down. "I'm going back home to get the info Danny needs, Noah, Until I get back, You're in charge." He added before flipping open his communicator. "Terra Main, This is Dr. Furst at Clan Short's new medical facility again."

"They must love us by now." Noah whispered to Austin before both started to giggle.

"Good Morning Doctor, How many to transport and to which coordinates?"

Marc laughed before finally asking; "Have I called *THAT* many times?"

"No sir, you need three more calls before it becomes *THAT* many times." The young man's voice on the other end replied before laughing himself.

"Great, a goal!" Marc said with a giggle. "Just one this time, current location to the Sullivan's Island Compound. I'll be returning but not sure when exactly."

"Great, that brings you down to two more calls before we're forced to offer you some sort of frequent materialization program or something."

After everyone recovered from laughing Marc finally composed himself enough to reply; "I'm glad you've been getting these calls. I've kinda been worried about becoming a pain in the butt. Anyone else might have gotten annoyed."

“Annoyed?” The voice replied in question. “No way, this is the most fun I’ve had covering the board in months.”

“It’s that dull?” Marc asked with a giggle.

“No, I just don’t normally work communications. I’m just covering tonight.”

“Ah, what position do you normally hold?” Marc asked as he scooped up the pile he intended to take home with him.

“Transporter Tech. I took communications at the academy so I can double. I’m actually aiming for a career in engineering primarily.”

“Awww, so that means I’m not gonna get to bug ya on a regular basis?” Marc asked sticking his lip out.

“Aren’t you guys gonna have transporters on site?”

Marc grinned and nodded his head. “Yeah, they’re being worked on now. I think we’re gonna have three on site and one at the compound.” Marc froze in his steps as his eyes opened wide with an idea. “Hey, our staff is gonna need training. Interested?”

“Me? I’m only one year out of the academy. You’ll be able to find someone with more practical experience with no trouble.”

“Oh, so you don’t really know what yur doin?” Marc asked with an evil grin as he winked at Noah. “You’ve dealt with us all night, I just thought it would be cool to get a chance to work with you. I mean it’s cool if you aren’t interested.”

“Oh no, I’m interested. From talking to you it actually sounds like fun. I just don’t know how I would get a position like that.”

“Well, I can talk to our Patriarch and see what he thinks. I’m sure the Federation would rather training of this nature to be based on their specs and meet their standards. We sure want to make that happen, I’ll just happen to mention I know this guy...” He trailed off as he began to giggle. “I just need to know who you are.”

“Oh... Um... Billy, well William actually. Lieutenant William J. O’Keefe. I’m stationed at Terra Main so I’d be easy for him to locate. You sure about this?”

Marc smiled as he said; “I am unless you aren’t.”

The voice on the other end was quiet for a minute before finally breaking his silence. “No Doctor, I would very much like to have the opportunity to work with your staff. You officially have my request sir.”

“Keep calling me sir and I may reconsider my decision Lieutenant.” Marc replied with a laugh. “Now about that transport?”

“Oh yeah, coordinates entered, standing by to energize.”

“Guys, I'll be back as soon as I can. Noah, contact me should you have any trouble.” He said getting a nod from Noah as Jerry and Austin each gave Marc a hug and turned to run back down the corridor they entered from. With a smile Marc turned his attention back to his communicator. “Energize Mr. O'Keefe.”

After watching Marc beam out, with an evil smirk on his face, Noah flipped open his own communicator. “Barnes to Headquarters.”

“Alec here Noah, wassup bro?”

“Alec, the A.I. Division is preparing to get transporter systems online. Our staff here is in need of Federation trained personnel and...” Noah continued as Alec cut him off.

“What are you scheming?”

“I'm not schemin nothin!” Noah exclaimed with a giggle.

“Yeah right.”

“Okay, tonight Marc found someone stationed at Terra Main who was really interested in filling that position. They really seem to get along great too. I just kinda thought it'd be cool if I help him get some of the planning done.” Noah replied as he sat down at the terminal that was set up just outside the old X-Ray labs. “I told Danny that I'd look out for him and I think this'd be a big help.”

“Have you contacted Admiral Morrow yet?”

“No way, I wanted to get instruction form Headquarters first. Chain of command dude, you know.”

“Well that chain started with Marc, bonehead.”

“Yup it did. He found the guy for the job, I'm gonna see if we can hook it up.” Noah said with a giggle.

“You are so full of it dude! Just call the Admiral and see if it's doable, you have the OK.”

“Thanks bro! I owe ya one.” Noah replied with a smile. “Barnes out.” He continued as he closed his communicator and began to initiate the call using the terminal.

“I'll be damned!” Marc said as he closed his communicator and set the terminal to standby.

“Wassap?” Caleb asked as he wandered into the lab rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, startling Marc.

“Oh god you scared me!” Marc exclaimed as he spun around in his seat. “I didn't wake you. Did I?”

“Nah, I was havin a hard time sleeping anyway.” Caleb replied as he leaned against the doorway.

“Not used to sleeping without Noah?” Marc asked as he stood up and motioned to Caleb to follow him out to the kitchen.

“That's part of it I guess.” Caleb said through a yawn. “JR talks in his sleep.”

“I'm gonna grab a coffee, you want something to drink bro?” Marc asked as he pushed Caleb into his seat.

“Just a glass of milk would be cool, thanks.”

“No problem.” Marc replied as he grabbed a glass and a coffee mug. “This the same coffee I made before we left?”

“Yeah, JR hates coffee and I've been drinking all your soda.” Caleb replied with a giggle.

Marc poured himself some coffee then grabbed the milk and poured a glass for Caleb before adding some to his cup, and giggling as he looked into his cup. “Oh, it's sooo burnt. Should keep me awake for a while.” He said as he slid Caleb's glass across the table and put the milk down on the table. “How'd it go here?”

“It went great. JR and I got all the rooms wired up and the systems ready to be configured. We still gotta run the new wiring to the second floor and get the lower lab ready to receive new equipment which will also be tied into the system.” Caleb said as he took a couple of gulps from his glass. “We'll probably get on the wiring in the basement first since Matt put in that request for a transporter on site.” He continued as he raised his glass again, half emptying it. “Why are you home anyway? Something go wrong at the hospital?”

“We had a few problems, but nothing major. I came home cause Danny called. The guys found an android in Australia that was reprogrammed to be nothing but free labor.” Marc said as he took a sip from his coffee, and almost choked on it. “God that's awful tasting!” He exclaimed while making gagging gestures toward the cup.

“Android Slave?” Caleb asked as he laughed at Marc's expression.

“Yup. Worst part is, I came here to identify him and it turns out I know him. I just hope it all turns out ok, he's a really nice guy.” Marc replied as he choked down some more of his coffee.

“What's his name?” Caleb asked as he rubbed his eyes and sat back in his chair.

“Zeke Thelander, he was a really early release M.A.R.C. Series, His original father died years ago and asked him to look after his family. That's what he's been doing for years now.” Marc said as he looked down at the table and shook his head. “I hope they make whoever is responsible for reprogramming him accountable for what he's done. It's just as bad as brainwashing a human.”

“They will. Cory will see to it, trust me on that one.” Caleb replied with a smirk. “I don't think he or Sean have ever looked at you guys as even close to being any different than we are. None of us do really. If this Zeke was brainwashed by someone just to make him a slave, he'll be on the hunted list. I'll guarantee it.” Caleb finished with an encouraging nod. “I should probably head back upstairs and try to

get some sleep. Tomorrow's gonna be busy, I think we have a federation team arriving early." He said as he stood up. "That reminds me, we got a grant."

"Huh?" Marc shook his head as he looked up.

"Yeah, you need to contact... Um... I think it was the CEO of a company called Dyson Industries. The message is stored in the system for you. I can't remember the name of the contact." Caleb said as he leaned on the chair after pushing it in. "I got the call a few hours ago. Sounds like they want to help with the medical facility."

"Hmmm." Marc replied as he looked at his coffee, scowled and pushed it away before reaching for Caleb's glass and refilling it. "Name sounds kinda familiar." He mumbled before taking a large gulp from the glass. "I'll have to contact them in the morning."

"You stayin here or goin back to the hospital?" Caleb asked as he watched Marc empty the glass, putting it back down with a large belch. "Good one!" He giggled out as Marc stood up and began clearing the table.

"I'd like to but I really need to head back. We had some problems with the Panda unit and I don't want to stay away too long. Kevin means a lot to Danny so I want to make sure I don't stay away from him too long. His activation has already been delayed by at least a couple of days already." Marc replied as he put the cups in the sink. "You want me to have Noah come home? I mean will you sleep better if he's here?"

"Nah, a night or two isn't gonna kill us. I got work to do and so does he. I just gotta get used to sleeping with clothes on." Caleb said as he pulled out the waist band of the shorts he was wearing and let it snap back to his stomach.

"You got dressed for bed? What's up with that?" Marc asked with a grin.

"I had too. You should have seen how red JR's face got when he saw what I was gonna wear to bed." Caleb said with a giggle. "Hope you don't mind that I borrowed these."

"Nah, I don't mind." Marc said with a laugh. "Those are Danny's."

Caleb laughed as he looked at the shorts. "Oh, in that case I may keep em then." He got out with an evil grin.

"JR got embarrassed? Wait til the gang comes home." Marc said with a laugh as he walked over to Caleb and gave him a hug. "Go get some sleep. We'll deal with seeing how red that kid can turn some other night."

"If he gets any redder than he was, he's gonna glow." Caleb said as he turned toward the hallway. "Night Bro."

"Night, oh and thanks! You're doing an awesome job here." Marc shouted after him as he pulled out his communicator.

“Thanks! Good luck over there!” Caleb shouted as he ran up the stairs.

“Terra Main, This is Dr. Furst at Clan Short's A.I. Division compound, ready for return transport.”

“Predetermined coordinates entered and awaiting your order sir.” A young female voice replied.

“Hey, what happened to Lieutenant O'Keefe. Did we finally burn him out?” Marc asked with a laugh.

“No sir. He's been reassigned.”

Marc looked a little disappointed as he stepped to the middle of the kitchen. “I hope it's a good assignment.” He said with a smile.

“I'm sure it was sir, awaiting your orders.”

“Oh sorry, Energize.” He got out as he immediately began to dematerialize.

“You were gone for a while, everything ok back home?” Noah asked as he stood up once he noticed Marc beam in.

“Everything's fine, I'll explain later.” Marc replied as he looked at the young man dressed in a federation uniform who was sitting next to Noah.

Noticing Marc's bewildered look, the officer stood from his seat and stood at attention. “Lieutenant O'Keefe reporting for duty sir.”

Noah laughed as he watched Marc's jaw drop wide open. “Billy?” Marc managed to get out before turning his gaze to Noah. “How?” He managed to get out.

“I've been reassigned.” Billy replied as Noah started to laugh.

“When did this happen?” Marc asked more toward Noah than Billy.

“Well, you wanted to find out if he could help, so I, um, made a few calls while you were out.” Noah replied with a giggle. “Turns out, Admiral Morrow thought it was a great idea and accepted your referral, he checked Bill's qualifications and then contacted him with the details. Lucky for us, he accepted this assignment.” Noah said as he smiled at Billy. “Isn't that great?”

“Um, yeah... Yeah it really is.” Marc said seeming to begin comprehending what was being said while still staring at the Lieutenant.

“I just called Dr. Herron. First thing in the morning he's going to place Billy in charge of the transporter installations, which will be a huge help to him and he'll also be heading up the team that will handle the unit being installed at the house.” Noah said noticing as Marc's expression remained glazed over. “You already proposed the idea, I just thought it was something that would help sooner than later.”

“Oh no...” Marc replied. “That's unreal, I mean that you handled that so quickly.” Marc said as Noah's accomplished smile made him grin. “Welcome aboard then Mr. O'Keefe!” Marc said with a smile as he

shook his hand and noticed an alert flashing on the terminal. "Is that something you guys were waiting for?" Marc asked as Billy seemed to gasp.

"Oh yeah, if you'll excuse me for a second. I have to report in." Billy said as he remained at attention.

"Of course." Marc said while watching Billy turn and practically run for the terminal as he grabbed Noah's shirt and dragged him further away. "How old is he?" Marc asked in a loud whisper.

"I don't know. Why, is something wrong?" Noah asked as he straightened his shirt back out.

"If he is who I think he is, we may have designed a unit for his family years ago. Same face, gray eyes, brown hair. It's just weird and took me by surprise I guess." Marc replied as Billy finished his report and set the terminal into standby.

"All set, looks like I'm all yours now." Billy said with a smile. "Your orders sir?"

Marc grinned and stood at attention, causing Billy to stiffen his stance. "Your orders Mr. O'Keefe are to stop calling me sir, get into your Clan uniform and prepare for a good nights rest." Marc said as Noah stifled a laugh.

"Clan Uniform?" Billy said as he looked at his clothes. "You guys are wearing civilian clothes."

"Yup, I hope you brought the appropriate attire." Marc said with a smile.

Billy tilted his head as he looked down towards his feet and then back at Marc. "I'm required to wear this while on duty."

Marc grinned as he walked over and brought the Panda's console up to check it. "You're on detached duty, civilian attire will be acceptable and preferable. There are sections of this building that have no climate control yet. Some sections are dirty, unused and just too hot to be in a formal uniform. Besides, our division has no set uniform." Marc said as he nodded at the display and placed it into standby. "Functioning normally."

"Aye sir. Permission to contact my family and arrange for transport of my personal belongings and clothing?" Billy requested, once again snapping to attention.

"Go for it. Communications are at your disposal. Once you're set, I think it would be a good idea if we all turned in for the night." Marc replied as Billy smiled and turned back toward the terminal to make his call. "How long do you think it will take him to lose the military attitude and actually relax?" He asked Noah once Billy was out of ear shot.

Noah laughed as he unclipped his communicator. "He may not, wait til you see his service record. To be honest, I'm surprised Admiral Morrow let him go."

"Good record?" Marc asked with a smile.

"Spotless record. His goal is to become a Chief Engineer someday and he is well on his way. Check it out when you have the time." Noah said as he opened his communicator. "Barnes to Doctor Herron."

“Herron here, what can I do for you Noah?”

“Chris, we're going to try to get some sleep. Could you send a man down to monitor the Panda unit like we talked about earlier.” Noah asked as he watched Marc cross his arms and watch Billy.

“Absolutely. I wouldn't want to take any chances. Someone will be there in about 5 minutes.”

“Great, Thanks Doc. We should be up around seven. I'll let you know once our engineering team is ready for the transporter units.” Noah paused as Marc turned and nodded in agreement. “See you in the morning, Noah out.” He said as he clipped his communicator back on his belt. “Sleep?”

Marc smiled and nodded as Billy terminated his call and stood from his seat. “Sleep sounds good. Tomorrow's gonna be a busy day.” He said as he began to lead the way out of the room.

“Marc! Marc!” Byron shouted as he bolted into the room.

“Wh.. What?” Marc replied rolling over and groaning at the alarm clock. “9:30?!? Why didn't you guys wake me up?” He asked as he stretched and put his feet on the floor.

“Noah said you needed the rest.” Byron answered with a smile. “But you gotta get up now, you gotta answer an urgent call from the compound.” Byron barely got out as Marc practically sprang to his feet and hurried to get dressed.

“Is any one hurt?” Marc said as he fumbled with his shorts.

“Nah, Jerry went home to change and he got a call. Says it's an emergency.” Byron answered.

“Ok, let's go!” Marc shouted as he ran for the door with his sneakers and socks in his hand. Once they reached the terminal in the radiology department, Marc punched up the call that was on hold and began putting on his socks. “Jerry, what's goin on bro?”

“That was quick, Byron said you were still sleeping.” Jerry replied as he appeared to be typing. “I'm bringing up the details of the situation so you can read it while I route the call.”

Marc quickly read through the transcript Jerry sent him before Jerry interrupted. “Marc, they are connecting. We'll be doing a three way with Mrs. Wiggins.” Jerry got out as a second window opened and a grainy image of an old woman appeared.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Wiggins, I am Marc Furst, medical director for Clan Short AI Division,” Marc stated as he watched the woman's shocked expression. “Don't let my youthful appearance fool you. I assure you I am exactly what I say I am as is Jerry whom you have already spoken with.”

“I am sorry, Dr. Furst,” the old woman finally managed to apologize. “You just remind me very much of someone I haven't seen in a very long time.”

“I hope the memories are pleasant,” Marc replied as politely as he could. “How may I help you?”

"I'll be as brief as I possibly can as we are racing the clock Doctor." The old woman began. "My great grandson, whom had been abducted as an infant has been found. The authorities here merely found out due to a brutal assault that has him in the hospital. The woman claiming to be his mother, attacked him with a knife." She managed to get out as she quickly began to wipe away her tears. "She cut his little body so bad he's gonna need skin grafts over thirty percent of his body. But the worst...the worst she did.... She took that knife and cut off his.... She castrated him." Once again she paused as she wiped away the tears that began to flow. "The doctor I spoke with says that Daniel is gay and has decided on his own authority that it would be best for the boy if he were to be made into a girl. Judge Legette gave me instructions to contact you. He said if anyone could help, you could." She said as the teenager who had been standing behind her listening, seemed to stumble backward and literally fall onto a bed that was in the room.

"I have to confess to you, Mrs. Wiggins, I am a little out of my range here," Marc replied after taking a deep breath. "You see, although we have established the Medical Center here at the old naval hospital, we haven't had the chance to fully staff or equip the building yet. Right now we are operating from my home. That in itself isn't a problem as much as the other confession I have to make. I am trained as a medical doctor, but my specialty is Artificial Intelligence. I have never had a human patient before."

The old woman appeared to squint her eyes as she responded. "Young man, I pride myself on being an excellent judge of human nature," Mrs. Amee began. "I believe you are the right person to help me for several reasons. First, there is the fact that you have the credentials necessary to remove my grandson from the nightmare those Arkansas idiots have planned for him. Secondly, you just told me that you are unsure of yourself. I have never trusted a doctor that claimed to know all the answers, and I never will. Will you help my boy?" She asked as the sound of Jerry sharply gasping grabbed Marc's attention.

"Marc, we have to act fast," Jerry interrupted with a panicked expression showing on his face. "While you were talking, I checked Dixon's files at the hospital in Monticello. He is being transferred to the Baptist Children's Hospital in Little Rock right now. They have the surgery team waiting for his arrival to immediately begin the sex change operation."

"No!" Cried the teen from behind the old woman.. "Mrs. Amee, you can't let that happen."

"No, she can't, and neither can I," Marc affirmed. "Jerry, contact the hospital in Little Rock. Tell them if they admit that boy, then they will be in violation of Interstellar law and the Safe Haven Act. I am placing Dixon under the protection of Clan Short as of this moment."

"Thank you so much, Doctor Furst," Mrs. Amee said, her voice breaking with emotion.

"Please call me Marc, Mrs. Wiggins," he told her with a smile.

"And I'm just Jerry," Jerry said as he continued to tap away at the terminal.

"Well, thank you Marc and Just Jerry," the old woman said with a mischievous grin gaining Jerry's full attention. "You boys can call me Mrs. Amee; all my friends do."

"It would be an honor," Marc said sincerely, as Jerry blushed profusely. "We'll handle things from here and I will get word to you when Dixon is here. Clan Short out." Marc got out as the call was terminated. "Jerry, give me a few minutes to get a couple of things taken care of here and we will be beaming

back to the house. Place that call to the hospital in the mean time. Marc Out!” Marc got out as Noah and Eli rounded the corner and saw the look on Marc's face.

“Oh my god, what's wrong bro. You look pissed!” Noah said as Marc fumbled with the antiquated phone system in the hospital trying to figure out the PA system.

“I'll explain in a minute, Get ready to move.” Marc replied as his shuffling suddenly got louder through the speakers in the ceiling. “Can I have everyone's attention! This is acting Director Marc Furst. At this time I require all clan members, Lieutenant O'Keefe and Doctor Herron to convene in the emergency room reception area immediately.” He got out and repeated one more time before hanging up the phone receiver. “Let's go!” He waved to Noah, Eli and Byron as they broke out in a run through the swinging doors leading to the area Marc mentioned.

“Transporter status Mr. O'Keefe.” Marc ordered as Dr. Herron rounded the corner and the gathering was complete. “If you plan to amaze and impress me, now is the time to do it.” He got out raising his eyebrows as Billy took a deep breath and stood at attention.

“Sir, first level transporters are functioning as is the cargo transporter on level 10. Teams are working on the two other units as we speak, but it seems there will be at least 24 hours before installation at the compound will be functional and a structural issue is holding up installation on level 6. I can't foresee installation for at least a week as crews repair damage to the flooring and structural supports.” Billy got out without so much as blinking his eyes.

“So we do have transporter capabilities?” Marc questioned.

“Aye sir.” Billy replied. “We are operating at about 50% at this point.”

“Ok then, I'm amazed and impressed Billy.” Marc said with a shocked expression. “And will you please stand at ease Mr. O'Keefe. Detached Duty, remember?” Marc added with a smile as Billy relaxed a bit. “Awesome work dude!” Marc said with a smile. “Chris, I require a man stationed in radiology again, preferably someone familiar with the operation of the Panda unit this time.”

“I'm sorry he woke you back up last night Marc. He wasn't aware the unit signaled for every environment cycle.” Chris said with a grin. “Besides, he was supposed to wake me up if there were any problems.”

“Maybe we can put him to work with the refit team instead.” Noah said as he took a seat next to Marc.

“Or, maybe he's been reassigned already.” Chris added with a grin. “I'll have a doctor stationed at the unit. When can we expect your return?”

Marc looked over the group and sighed before standing up and continuing. “Guys, it looks like our division is going to be handling a recovery. I'll give you all the details once we have contacted the hospital the adolescent is currently being held at. Billy, I would like you to man the transporters. Apparently we may need to relay a transport through Terra Main to receive one patient from Baptist Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. He's been badly injured and requires medical attention as soon as possible.” Marc stated as he began to pace. “Noah, you're coming with me. Byron, Antonio and Austin,

Prepare OR3 for possible surgery. The rest of you continue work with existing projects until you hear from me.” Marc got out as everyone in the room nodded and began to stand. “I’ll contact you once I have all the details. Let’s get to work guys.”

“When will you be beaming out Doctor?” Billy asked Marc as the group filtered out of the room.

“At your earliest convenience Mr. O’Keefe.” Marc replied as Billy pulled out his communicator.

“O’Keefe to transporter room 1.” He said with a smile as a male voice responded. “Prepare for immediate transport of two from this location to the Sullivan’s Island Compound. O’Keefe out!” He said as he flipped his communicator shut.

“You run a tight ship, huh?” Noah asked with a stunned look on his face as they began to walk.

“Have to if you want to amaze and impress the commanding officers.” Billy said with a grin.

“I was kidding Billy.” Marc said with a giggle.

“I’m not.” Billy replied with a serious expression as he led the way to the brand new transporter room. “Looks like hell but works like a charm now.” Billy said as he motioned to all the loose wiring and open access ports.

“I thought you said it was finished.” Marc said as he and Noah took their place on the pad and Billy took the controls.

“No, I said it was operational. You never asked if it was pretty.” Billy said as he confirmed the settings. “Coordinates entered, awaiting your command Marc.”

“You’re gonna fit right in.” Marc said with a nod and a grin. “Energize, Chief.” He barely got out with a wink as they began to dematerialize, almost instantly reappearing in the living room at the house. “Jerry!” Marc shouted.

“I’m in the lab.” Jerry shouted as he ran for the living room. “The hospital has me on hold while they get the doctor that was supposed to perform the surgery.”

“Ok, I’ll go wait for him to come on the line. Why don’t you guys run downstairs and get the medical kit. We’ll transport there to get him, and accompany him to our hospital.” Marc said as both boys nodded and ran for the basement.

After retrieving the supplies they needed, both boys dropped it all off in the living room before they heard Marc raise his voice in the lab. “Excuse Me!?!” his voice echoed as they both ran through the door and froze once entering the lab. “Prepped for surgery?!?” Marc nearly shouted at the viewer causing Noah and Jerry to take a step back and open their eyes wide. Marc visibly calmed himself down and became stone cold serious as he continued; “I’ll warn you just once doctor, not a hair on that boy’s head is to be touched. You will surrender custody of him to us upon our arrival or, you will face legal proceedings. I’m sure you don’t want to find yourself standing in front of a Vulcan council for punishment.” Marc said with a flat tone of voice. “Do I make myself clear, Doctor?”

"Go back to your sandbox kid!" the doctor replied with an obvious sneer. "You have no right to decide what is done with this boy; and if you show your pimple-laden face around here I'll have you arrested."

Jerry audibly gasped at the doctors comment as Marc turned an even brighter shade of red. "Oh really?" Marc replied calmly while clenching his fists tight enough to turn his knuckles white as Caleb and JR entered the room and froze just as Jerry and Noah had. "Then may I suggest you call whatever authorities you think will help you and expect my arrival. Furst out!"

Jerry grabbed Noah's arm as the four watched Marc literally slam the system into standby. "Doesn't he remind you of Cory when he's mad." Noah whispered receiving a slow nod from Caleb.

Marc took a deep breath and spun in his chair to look at the boys. "Where's Eddie?" He simply asked as he stood up.

"Um... He's out front at the security shack." Caleb answered to Marc who stood and began to leave the room with a determination none of the boys expected as he was talking. "Wait up!" Caleb shouted as he and the rest followed.

"Eddie!!! Eddie!!!" Marc ran out to the yard shouting with the rest closing in. "In an emergency where a child is in mortal danger, what would be the correct course of action from this division?"

Eddie thought for a moment and looked at Marc curiously. "You would request condition to be set to red and then advise HQ of the proposed course of action required, why?"

Marc's voice cracked as he took a deep breath and replied "Then... Um... Set condition red, Mr. Fraser. We need to go to work like, now..."

Eddie looked at Marc in shock for a second and scanned the faces of Caleb, Noah, Jerry and JR. After noticing all the serious expressions, he then flipped open his communicator. "Headquarters, this is Lt. Fraser. Set Security Condition Red on orders of Dr. Furst. This is not a drill; set Security Condition Red on order of Dr. Furst. Acknowledge."

"Understood and acknowledged Mr. Fraser. Condition red has been set per orders of Dr. Furst, AI Division. Relaying condition status, All Divisions!" Alec rushed to say before everyones communicator squealed "Condition Red; Condition Red - this is NOT a drill! All personnel contact AI division HQ for assignment." Repeating the announcement two more times before going silent.

"Your orders Dr. Furst?" Eddie asked in a professional tone as he drew his Phaser and set it's level.

"Mr. Fraser. We have to assemble a team to handle a rescue, possibly a forceful extractio..." Marc managed to get out before his communicator alerted him of an incoming message. "Jerry, could you give him the details while I take this?" Marc requested as he unclipped his communicator.

"Yes Sir!" Jerry snapped as Marc separated from the group. "Dr. Furst here." Marc answered.

Oceanic Division HQ:

Danny was sound asleep, cuddled up with Cory and Sean. A sudden noise brought him into a semi-awake state. At first he thought he was still dreaming, but then the message that was being announced got through the fog in his brain.

"... Condition RED, Condition RED! This is NOT a drill! All personnel contact AI Division Hq for assignment."

Danny and Cory both sat up and looked at each other.

"What the heck is that?" Danny asked.

Cory shook his head. "I don't know; but we're gonna find out!"

One of the boys had flipped on the lights in the room. Danny looked around, first seeing Skylan, the new Australian Oceanic Division Head, staring at them in shock as the rest of the group rubbed their eyes and sat up.

"Oh SHIT!" Danny exclaimed as he watched Timmy, Ricky, and Skylan's little brother Kane transform into full war paint. "Cory; there's trouble!"

Cory glanced at the boys. "Oh shit is right! Sky, we need a terminal NOW!"

Sky nodded his head and motioned for Cory and Danny to follow him. "Sean, wake Mom and Linda. I'm gonna find out what's up." Cory ordered.

As they walked out of the room, Cory flipped open his communicator. "Headquarters, this is Patriarch Short. Patch Doctor Furst into this call - Priority One!"

"This is Alec; I'm on it Cory. HQ reports ready for action."

"Good deal Alec; notify Terra Main I require transporters standing by for emergency transport. Condition Red confirmed." Cory continued.

Just then, Marc came on the line. "Dr. Furst here."

Before anyone could respond, Danny spoke up. "Marc, what's wrong?"

"Dude, I just finished a call with some prick in Arkansas claiming to be a doctor." Marc said with the stress in his voice showing through the professional tone he was attempting to maintain. "They have a child who was brutally assaulted and plan to make things worse, The bastard practically dared me to attempt to stop him."

"Report, Dr. Furst." Cory responded in an emotionless tone.

"Yessir." Marc replied, knowing he had Cory's full attention by his response. "Earlier today we received a distressed call from a Mrs. Ameer Wiggins regarding her previously missing great grandson,

Daniel K. Wiggins, IV of whom authorities recovered in an extremely battered condition. He is in medical custody as his mother, I should say abductor is being held as they dismiss the charges against her claiming it was self defense.” Marc paused taking a deep breath. “The woman who had abducted young Daniel when he was merely a toddler attacked him with a knife after learning he was gay. It is reported that out of self defense she slashed at his arms repeatedly, literally shredding his flesh and then proceeded to cut his shorts off of him and remove um...” Marc sniffled, not being able to continue without regrouping first.

"Alec; Intelligence and Security scramble - NOW!!" Cory announced with a steely tone to Alec, who was still monitoring the conversation. "Continue, Doctor."

Marc took a deep breath. "Dixon is in the process of being prepped for a sex change against his will. I have all but ordered them to halt their actions but they are refusing." Marc choked back what very well could have been a sob and continued. "I can help him Cory. They are treating this as if he deserves to be made into a girl, and laughing in my face because they plan to proceed to fix the... um... as they call him, The Little Queer!" He finished almost spitting out his final words. "Please, we gotta get him out of there."

"Alec, are the twins far enough in their training to work alone?" Cory growled.

Alec paused, then replied. "Yeah, I think so, but ..."

"Inform them to stand by for immediate transport. Marc needs telepaths; he's getting the best. If J.C. has any questions ..."

"Tell him to call me!" Teri growled from behind Cory.

Cory continued. "Marc; take a team, get that kid no matter what. Alec; any support Marc needs give it to him. If that so-called doctor touches that boy, castrate him - and I mean that literally. MOVE!"

"Team assembled and standing by sir." Caleb could be heard reporting to Marc. "We will have him here within the hour." He added.

"Thank you Cory." Marc replied to his communicator through an obvious snuffle. "I'll inform you when this operation is complete. Marc out." He said as strength built in his voice as he spoke and signed off.

Cory turned around and faced his mom. "This one's ours." he stated in a steely voice.

"Understood." Teri replied before turning to Skylan's mother Linda, whose white face clearly showed she was in shock. "Linda, this is what these boys are all about. They've got it under control; I don't know about you but I need a coffee about now."

Linda nodded weakly. "He wasn't serious about what they could do to that doctor, was he?"

"Dead serious; and perfectly within his rights." Teri replied grimly as they left the room.

Danny laid a hand on Cory's shoulder. "What now, bro?"

Cory pulled Danny and a still-shocked Sky into a three-way hug. "Now we hope Marc gets there in time. If not, there is one doctor who will be sitting down to take a leak for the rest of his life."

Sky finally spoke. "HOLY.... You were SERIOUS?!"

Cory nodded grimly. "When Marc made that call, the boy was put under our protection. Vulcan laws apply now; and if they screw up they'll find that out the hard way."

A.I. Division Compound:

"Report Mr. Fraser." Marc stated as he and Caleb rejoined the growing group on the front lawn as the rest of the boys from the hospital had already beamed back in.

"All units standing by, Terra Main reports the U.S.S. Lafayette ready for site to site transport. We are awaiting final arrivals." Eddie got out just in time for the twins to beam in. "Correction, team assembled and awaiting final orders sir." Eddie said nodding over to Jamie and Jacob.

"Ok then..." Marc stated nervously as he opened his communicator. "Lafayette, this is Dr. Marc Furst, acting Diplomatic Clan Short A.I. Division head, requesting Site to Site transport for 9 from current location to Baptist Children's Hospital in Little Rock Arkansas. We are operating under emergency status and will require relayed transport for ourselves plus one patient to Clan Short's new medical facility in Charleston, S. Carolina.

"Acknowledged, Doctor. Standing by for your order under clan issued Red Alert; you have full priority until further notice."

"Thank you." Marc replied, "Team, um... draw phasers and um... God help us." He ordered as best as he could. "Lafayette, energize."

Baptist Children's Hospital: Little Rock Arkansas

Moments later the team materialized all with phasers drawn in the middle of the hospital's ER.

"Secure all exits!" Eddie barked as he followed Marc to the nurses station, where the staff was cowering behind the counter.

"I'm Doctor Marc Furst; Clan Short of Vulcan. I require access to Daniel K. Wiggins immediately."

The head nurse scowled from her hiding spot. "Like you're really a doctor."

Eddie flipped out his identification as he pointed his phaser in her direction. "I regret to inform you that you are mistaken. I am Lt. Edward Fraser, Clan Short, A.I. Division, head of security. You are speaking with the acting head of Clan Short's South Carolina Division; and he is considered a Vulcan Dip-

lomat. I would suggest providing the information he requests if you wish to avoid an interplanetary incident."

The nurse's face went pale. "O.R. number three. They just started, so you can't ..."

"THEY WHAT!!!!!" Marc growled. "O.R. three - where's it at?"

Before the nurse could respond, Jamie shouted "GOT IT! Follow me!"

The entire group ran down the hall following Jamie as he swerved dodging nurses and equipment before screeching to a halt outside of a set of doors and pointed at them.

"Move in!" Marc shouted as Eddie kicked the doors open freezing the team surrounding the operating table.

"Back away from him!!!" Marc shouted as Jacob sneered at one of the doctors. "Which one dude?" Marc asked seeing the icy stare emanating from Jacob.

"Him, he's the one in charge here." Jacob stated as he squinted his eyes and continued; "He's already begun the procedure."

"He WHAT!?!?" Marc shouted as he ran up to the table and slapped the instrument he was using out of his hand. "You were ordered to cease this procedure you son of a bitch!" He growled as he wrapped his hand around the doctors throat, knocking him off balance and into the nearest wall.

"Marc, I have some info for you." Jacob announced with concern in his voice. "Can I put it in your head?"

"In my head?" Marc turned just barely enough to see Jacob without breaking his grip in the doctors throat. "That is what you said right?"

"Telepathic report Marc, it's faster and will give you instant access to the information he has for you." Jamie cut in.

"Oh. Ok. Yeah, go ahead Jacob." He said as his expression suddenly went blank before turning his gaze back toward the doctor, now even more infuriated.

"What's Dixon's status guys?" Marc asked through clenched teeth.

"Marc, we gotta move!" Jerry answered. "The initial incisions have been made already."

Marc used every ounce of strength in his body to slam the doctor against the wall one more time before releasing his grasp and backing over to the table. "You better pray he survives this or we'll be seeing each other again when you answer to charges of murder!" He said as he looked over the lifeless body in the bed. "Byron, this piece of trash is yours, you ok to assume command?" He asked as Byron nodded his head accepting command. "Antonio, Jerry, you're with me." He continued as he opened his communicator. "Lafayette This is Dr, Furst. 4 to transport directly to predetermined coordinates immediately."

“Acknowledged Doctor. Energizing now.” Marc's communicator announced as almost simultaneously the transport began to dematerialize the team.

Once the room was secure, Byron turned to Jamie. "Intelligence team, audible report."

Jamie scowled at the doctor before clearing his face of all emotion. "We have performed a telepathic scan of the subject. We found that he willingly disobeyed instruction to cease medical procedures on a ward of Clan Short. He also broke Terran laws by performing this procedure on a minor without written parental consent and release.” Jamie looked toward the floor before Jacob saw that his brother was having trouble continuing.

“Byron, he started cutting Dixon before the anesthesia took full affect. He enjoyed listening to him scream in pain. It was his way of punishing Dixon for being gay.” Jacob said as he put his arms around his brother. “He enjoyed it...” He repeated in disbelief. Jacob lifted his head and stared directly into Byron's eyes. "As stipulated in Vulcan law and instructed by Patriarch Short, this so-called 'doctor' is subject to punishment up to and including castration for his actions."

"That's a lie!" the doctor shouted as he started to charge towards the twins. His anger turned to shock as he suddenly found himself flying through the air and slamming into the wall hard enough to crack it.

"Your decision, Sir?" Eli growled as he unfastened his leg and sent it flying at maximum speed into the doctor's genital region.

Byron gave a small smile. "Thank you Jacob. Continue to hold him Eli." He said as his expression became a dead stare toward the doctor. "Doctor, you have violated your Oath as well as interplanetary statutes. As the victim in this matter is under the protection of Clan Short of Vulcan, it is my responsibility to met out justice in accordance with Vulcan laws. It is my decision that you shall suffer the fate of your intended victim both physically and mentally. As such, the Intelligence team will insert the undesirable emotional responses you have inflicted upon Dixon directly into your conscious mind and make them your own. In addition, as ordered by the Clan Patriarch, you are to be castrated on the spot."

Notes from the Author:

You know, with my work schedule as it has been lately, I thought I would never get this chapter completed. Ton's of pre-planning went into development for Chapter 9, including meeting the demands to clerify the situation with Joey. (God did I get a ton of hate mail and evil stares for that one ;) I even got chastized by Akeentia (A.K.A. - The Terminator) for leaving such a volitile subject hanging from the cliff in Chapter 8 ;) "Not that this cliffhanger is gonna be much better, at least we know Dixon is in better hands now even if the Doctor isn't." *Insert Maniacle Laugh Here*

At any rate, It was nice to see Danny make an appearance from Austrailia from the compound of what appears to be The Clan's newest division. Way to go Boi From Aus! I know Marc has become a bit more sure of himself and is beginning to make decisions with a bit more confidence with the help of one of the best support groups known to man (or android as the case may be), but I also know he can't wait for his brother to come home, just ask Noah ;)

Once again, gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories " are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Oh yeah, that means there's lots more to come. I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from the Clan Short Founder:

Remind me never to get Marc mad at me! I honestly think that if you got him and JJ mad at the same time humanity would need to go into hiding!! *** HEY!! What the ... ***

Hey y'all, this is Cory! Just wanted to let y'all know I'm really proud of Marc. He's really taking all of this well, and he is doing an awesome job filling in while Danny is with me. It's great knowing that I can count on the AI guys to back me up when things go nuts. I better get going; I've heard that HQ is having issues too, so I better make sure they got it handled.

Grabs keyboard back

Sorry about that; pushy kids!!! (Yeah, you blondie!!) Anyways, as I was saying JeffP is doing an awesome job with this, and I can't wait to see what happens next. AI Division is starting to prove it can stand on it's own feet, and is doing it with style!

Great chapter, I can't wait to see more!!

ACFan

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

Another awesome job Jeffp, ACFan, Akeentia and now Boudreaux, it seems the AI Division of The Clan isn't about to sit back on their heels while they get established. I am still amazed at the quality of the integrated stories and story lines. The continuing character development makes this a must read story. The additional story line and new characters open many new horizons for this wonderful story to explore.

TSL

"Chapter 10 - Ready or Not..."
Co-Written By: Boudreaux
Special Contribution By: Greybear

Decommissioned Naval Hospital: Charleston SC. (O.R. #1)

Several Hours Later...

"I want him kept unconscious overnight. The implants seem to have taken but he needs to remain absolutely still while the biobed works its magic Chris." Marc said as he dropped his gloves in the trash and began to strip off his scrubs.

"No problem Marc. We had medical personnel on hand already within the refit team. I will make sure this ward remains staffed for you." Dr. Herron replied, also dressing down from surgery. "I've never seen a procedure of that nature performed before, not to mention a surgeon go over 10 hours without once taking a break. What an unbelievable experience." Chris got out just as Jerry exited the OR and silently began to dress down.

"Jerry? You okay buddy?" Marc asked as he stood up only to have Jerry turn his back on him. "Jerry, come here." Marc continued with his arms open just in time for Jerry to turn and bury his face in Marc's chest and begin to cry. "Shhh... It's gonna be okay lil bro, Daniel's fine now... Shhh..."

"H-h-how could ANYONE do that! W-w-w-what kinda m-m-monster is she?!?" Jerry shouted out between sobs, muffled by Marc's shirt.

"I don't know, but I can tell you she will be punished for this." Marc said as he looked over at Chris. "All of this." He said with an expression that could crack stone. "Jerry, you're officially off duty." He said as he held Jerry out at arm's length and knelt down in front of him. "You did an awesome job working out the DNA structure to replicate. Because of that work, Daniel's body seems to be accepting the implant with no complications. Because of your work, he'll pretty much be whole when he wakes up. You know that, right?"

"Yeah." Jerry responded. "But what he's been through now..." Jerry managed to get out before Marc held his finger to Jerry's lips.

"What he's been through would have been a lot harder to handle if he had woken up a girl. You saved him from that." Marc said as Jerry tried to look at the floor, only to have Marc duck lower to meet his gaze. "If it weren't for the work you and Billy did replicating living bio-mechanical prosthetics, he would have suffered even more. Thanks to that work, we now have a procedure that could possibly make prosthetics like the ones you designed for Eli and Benji in hours rather than days." Marc said as he stood up and hugged Jerry before turning him toward the door. "Shower and sleep. That's a direct order Doctor Owens." Marc said with a grin as he ushered Jerry out the doors before turning back to Chris. "I'm going to check in with the compound before I turn in. Thanks for the assist." he said as he looked around the room. "I think this run down old place is gonna be one hell of a hospital." Marc added as he patted the door on the way out of the room.

“Yes it is.” Chris nodded and smiled as he sat and watched the nurses roll the portable biobed out of the OR, carrying the hospital's first patient in many years. “One of the best.” he added as he stood up and headed for the showers.

“Marc! I heard it worked!” Billy said as he jumped up from the terminal when he saw Marc enter the room.

“Mr. O'Keefe, You and Dr. Owens have a ton of explaining to do.” Marc said with a smile as he grabbed a folding chair and plopped down into it.

“Explaining Sir? I don't understand.” Billy responded.

“First of all, I want to know where you got the biological model for that prosthetic.” Marc demanded, still smirking.

“Oh, that.” Billy replied with a grin. “One of the technical directors at Baptist is also an Academy graduate. I just made a call and had him beam over what they had planned to discard. Did I overstep my bounds, sir?”

“Are you kidding me? That was brilliant! That poor kid would have been back in surgery 4 days from now to receive that prosthetic implant if it wasn't for that action.” Marc said with a smile before crossing his arms and becoming serious once again. “My only other question would be how you and Jerry came up with the idea so fast.”

“We talked about it this morning.” Billy replied.

“This morning? What brought up a subject like that?” Marc asked with a confused expression taking over his face.

“Well sir, we were discussing implementing the use of a replicator for replacement parts.” Billy began. “Just the mechanical components. Jerry had mentioned the use of them in most hospitals to replicate skin for grafts and blood for transfusions and stuff. During the discussion, we started talking theoretically and kinda started working up a proposal.” Billy continued as he picked up a P.A.D.D. and brought up the rough designs for a piece of equipment.

Marc slid his chair over and looked at its display while Billy began to point at the screen. “Awful big replicator, isn't it?”

“Nah, bigger have been designed.” Billy said as he brought up a second display. “This is what I was working on.” he said as he handed the P.A.D.D. to Marc.

“Tied in to the cargo transporter systems? Why?” Marc asked as he looked up.

“Well, if we were to implement the use of a larger replicator, the best way to get its model would be to use a copy directly stored within the transporter unit's buffer. It could replicate an entire endoskeletal structure in a couple of minutes. With the biological information either available or even present, the

replicated unit could be ready for activation as soon as its programming has been uploaded.” Billy said as he watched Marc's eyes get wide. “Jerry kinda joked about replicating complete units. He just wasn't aware it was possible.”

Marc stared at the display for almost a full minute before he finally cleared his throat and handed it back to Billy. “Neither was I.” Marc said as he sat back in his chair. “I mean I know about the medical uses and of how Starships are able to replicate replacement parts and stuff. I guess I just never put the two together.”

“Well, these plans are yours for when you bring in a Chief Engineer. I think a unit tied in to the system like this would help you guys out a lot. Especially since the Cargo Transporter is going to be right in your research and development level. You'll be able to scan and replicate right there on the cargo pad.” Billy said as he stood up from his seat. “Well, I guess it's time now. Permission to depart, sir.” He said flatly as he straightened his shirt.

“Excuse me?” Marc asked in surprise. “Depart?”

“Yes sir, My orders were to assist in getting your transporter system online and to train a member of your personnel on it's use and maintenance. I have completed both tasks sir. I'm expected back at Terra Main tomorrow morning to resume my position as transporter technician.”

“Denied.” Marc said flatly as he hopped from the steel folding chair to the computer terminal and brought it out of standby.

“Sir?” Billy asked as he tilted his head in question. “My orders were...”

“Your orders Mr. O'Keefe, are possibly about to change.” He said as he sat and waited for the computer to complete its connection.

“Alec here Marc. Dude, I just got the full report about the extraction. Awesome job rookie!” Alec said with a laugh. “Is Daniel going to be alright?”

“He still has a ton of healing to do. Not to mention how he's gonna handle finding out he was abducted, or what his abductor did to him after he passed out. It's not over yet.” He said as he looked at Billy then back at the screen. “Excuse me one second Alec.” He said before turning his attention back to Billy. “Can I help you any further Lieutenant?” He said in an expressionless tone.

“Um, No?” Billy half questioned.

“Good, you're dismissed. Prepare to possibly receive new orders tomorrow morning Mr. O'Keefe.” Marc said as he turned and smirked at the screen.

“Yes sir.” Billy said sounding just as confused as he looked. “Goodnight sir.” He continued receiving a nod from Marc before turning and leaving the room.

“What was that all about?” Alec asked with a giggle. “You goin all military on us dude?”

“Yeah right.” Marc answered with a laugh. “Alec, is it possible to request a Starfleet Officer for a position within the clan?” Marc asked as soon as he was sure no one was listening.

“Why? What are you thinkin?” Alec asked, raising an eyebrow. “You thinkin bout stealin that transporter technician?”

“He was partially responsible for the success of today's surgery Alec.” Marc stated. “That officer was a born Engineer. Tonight he handed me some plans to give to his replacement. They were designs for a replicator unit that I hadn't even dreamed of. The medicinal implications for a replicator make their use logical. The designs he handed me were above and beyond anything I would have dreamed up. His work could benefit both the clan and the medical staff here.” Marc said as he looked toward the door and whispered; “I want to keep him on board. Is it possible?”

“Well, I can arrange it with Admiral Morrow for him to remain stationed there since it is gonna be Federation Youth Services Medical. I can just tell him that we still need his assistance.” Alec said with a sigh. “I'm not so sure he'll agree that a brand new Lieutenant would be the perfect choice though. As far as anything more long term, we'll have to talk to the bosses when they find their way home.” Alec said with a smile.

“Which bosses?” came a voice from behind Alec, causing him to jump.

“Good thing you're a doctor!” Alec shouted. “I think I just had a heart attack!” he finished with a giggle. “How long have you been standing there?”

“Long enough to hear about Marc's latest hunting expedition.” Doc Austin said with a laugh. “I hear you bagged yourself an Engineer.”

“Well, kinda. I have a Starfleet trained technician on site who deserves to be a Chief Engineer.” Marc said with a grin.

“In your opinion?” Doc Austin asked as he sat down next to Alec.

“Yep! Based on his performance, attitude and knowledge in an area we are desperately lacking.” Marc answered. “Besides, Noah got a look at his service record. Evidently he's in his current position just because they have no place to put him yet.”

“You feel strongly about this placement then?” Doc asked with a grin.

“Are you kidding? I'd give my right arm to keep him here.” Marc said with a giggle.

“Easy for you, just make a new one and snap it on.” Alec got out through a fit of giggles.

“Snap it on?” Marc said while waving his hands in the air to exaggerate his reply. “I'm not made of Legos. God!”

“Marc, give me a few minutes. I have a call to make.” Doc Austin said with a wink. “You guys can play with your Legos later. HQ out.” He said and the screen went into standby.

“Legos!” Marc said with a laugh. “I’ll give him Legos.” He said as he heard a giggle from the open corridor leading back toward the ER. “OK, show yourself!” Marc demanded through a giggle. “Come out or I’m callin security.”

“It’s just me.” Came the squeaky response as Antonio hurried around the corner with his hands outstretched. “See, I got no weapons, honest.” He continued with a laugh.

“You eavesdropping on me?” Marc asked as he sat back in his chair.

“No way! I just wanted to talk to you, but I didn’t want to bust in on your call.” Antonio replied as he dragged over a chair and sat down.

“Okay, I’ll call off the tactical strike then.” Marc said with a laugh as he ruffled Antonio’s hair and sat back in his chair. “So, wassup?”

“Well, I was talkin to Doctor Herron and he said that the operation on Danny Wiggins was tha most incredible thing he ever saw.” Antonio said with a smile.

“He said that?” Marc asked with a giggle. “He better get used to it, this isn’t exactly a normal team.”

“No kiddin.” Antonio said with a laugh. “Is he gonna stay after the hospital’s done?”

“Never asked.” Marc replied sitting back in his chair. “I’d like to see him stay, we could definitely use a medical director on site, unless Doc Austin wants the position.”

“Not likely.” A voice came from the terminal, startling the boys and making them laugh. “I have my hands full already.” He continued with a chuckle. “Marc, remember how you were telling me how you always wanted a Chief Engineer for your birthday.”

“Um...” Marc replied with a giggle. “Yeah, something like that.”

“Well, happy birthday!” Doc Austin said with a grin. “You just have to get your Mr. O’Keefe back to Terra Main to accept his new orders as well as a promotion that’ll probably put him in shock.”

“That’s possible?” Marc asked in shock.

“More than possible, it’s done. Somehow news of the A.I. Division is spreading like wildfire. Admiral Morrow was impressed with the reports William submitted regarding the circumstances of your first assignment. Not to mention it’s execution in spite of the division’s readiness.” Doc Austin said with a smile. “He says anyone who can pull off a stunt like that and be 100% successful against all odds is worthy of the best he can offer.”

“Wow!” Antonio shouted while patting Marc on the shoulder. “Billy’s getting promoted cause of Marc?”

“Nope, Billy’s getting promoted because he deserves it. Marc just offered the Admiral a way to speed up the process.” Doc said as Alec took a seat beside him on the viewer. “Evidently, Marc was right. He really did stumble across a diamond in the rough.”

“A what?” Alec asked with a smirk.

“An officer who should have been much further along than he was in his rank, but unfortunately due to his age and experience was still waiting in line for a position to open. He would have a long wait if it weren't for this request.” Doc Austin said with a smile. “Marc, as for Doctor Herron.” He began with a smile. “I'll get back to you on that issue. Don't approach him about it though.” Doc said with an evil smile. “I owe him one. HQ Out.”

As the screen went into standby, Marc simply sat and stared at the screen in disbelief. “I guess we're off to a good start then, huh?”

“Admiral Morrow doesn't get impressed easy.” Antonio said as he stood up and stretched. “And I know Sean and Cory didn't twist his arm this time so if he gave you a compliment, it's for real dude.”

“Gave US a compliment.” Marc corrected with a smile. “Now get your little butt to bed. Tomorrow is gonna be just as busy as today was and I'm not accepting being tired as an excuse to slack off.” Marc said with a smile as he ushered Antonio out of the room.

“Okay, I'll come up with a better reason then.” Antonio said with a laugh as he started to leave the room.

“That's my boy.” Marc said with a smile as he turned toward the Panda unit. “I'll be there in a little while. If anyone's still awake, tell them their orders are to turn in.”

“Yes Sir!” Antonio replied sternly before laughing and running down the hall.

“He's cute.” Marc giggled as he began looking over the system readout, suddenly becoming annoyed. “I am soooo taking a hammer to this thing.” he said with a sigh as he pulled out his communicator. “Furst to Herron.”

“Chris here, what's up Marc? I figured you'd be in bed by now.”

Marc rubbed his eyes and took a deep breath before responding. “Chris, can you meet me in radiology. I have a situation brewing in here.”

“Is it serious?”

“Consider it a high priority.” Marc said as he shook his head. “Bring a sledge hammer with you, we may need it.”

“On my way. Herron out.”

Marc clipped his communicator back on to his belt before scratching his head and reading the system status over again. “God Kevin, I'm so sorry about this.” He half whispered as he walked around the side of the unit and looked inside.

A couple of minutes passed before Chris ran into the room with a dead serious look on his face. “What happened?” He asked as he attempted to straighten his mussed hair.

“Were you sleeping?” Marc asked opening his eyes wide. “I’m sorry, I thought you were still working with the crew.”

“Nah, It’s something I like to do.” He said with a grin. “You know, mess up my hair and run around the hospital in my boxers. You should try it sometime.”

“I’ll have to get some boxers then.” Marc said with a smirk. “Don’t wanna shock the crew.” He said as his smile began to fade. “Chris, we’ve lost Kevin.”

“WHAT? HOW?” Chris shouted as he rushed to the unit’s controls and read system report Marc left on the screen. “Oh no.” He said as he started frantically going over the system’s other reports. “How did this happen? When did this happen? What’s the degradation rate?” He began to rattle off.

“I don’t know Chris.” Marc replied as he leaned against the wall and slid to a sitting position on the floor. “Evidently that old body has some kind of a mechanical flaw. Maybe the design predates Danny’s final build or something. The damned Panda didn’t even catch it until it was too late.” He replied as he banged his head on the wall and closed his eyes. “Danny’s gonna be so upset.”

“Marc, am I reading this right?” Chris said as he continued to pound away at the unit’s console. “After his biological components became animated, they began to reject all mechanical aspects of his structure. Is that right?”

“Yup.” Marc simply answered.

“Is that correctable?” Chris asked looking toward Marc with his eyebrows raised.

“No, it isn’t.” Marc replied with a sigh. “That structure is incompatible with the real Kevin’s biological makeup. Even if we could get him to come on line, he would fail and die within a few days. His mechanical attributes and endoskeletal materials are acting as a toxin to his system. He’s rejecting anything not biological just like a human could reject an implant. The only way to correct the issue is to start over and discard everything that lies in that box.”

Chris stared at the unit for a moment before turning away. “Didn’t Billy come up with a method to replicate a fully activated android system?”

“It’s a theory so far. With what we have now, it’s possible but it’s an involved procedure that will require writing the real procedures as they are created. God only knows how long it will take, or even if a manual configuration to a buffer profile would take at all. I’ve never tried it nor has anyone else.” Marc said as Chris leaned against the wall next to him. “Something like that would involve choosing an android to be buffered as a model, then taking that buffered model and stripping everything that is biological replacing it with a biological profile of Kevin. The computer would need a DNA sample as well as an extremely detailed biomechanical template to begin with. I wouldn’t even know where to start honestly.”

“You just told me where you would need to start. I think you may need to look deeper into the events earlier today.” Chris said while folding his arms.

“Earlier today?” Marc asked as he looked up and scowled.

“You already have two staff members with practical experience.” Chris said with a grin. “Why does it have to be up to you alone to figure out how to make this happen? It may have been on a smaller scale, but they already have. Haven't they?” Chris continued as he began to leave the room. “I'll have the Panda unit removed and will have Kevin's body transported to the morgue in case you would like to research what happened or need to take any biological samples.”

“Thanks Chris.” Marc replied as he stood up and walked over to the Panda's console. “I would like to research what caused the failure. Do we have a way to put the body in cryostasis?”

“I'll send a team down immediately to handle it for you.” Chris said as he turned toward the hall. “What would you like us to do with the Panda?”

“Donate it to a museum or something. I don't ever want to see it in use again.” Marc said as he began shutting down the systems, causing the environmental locks to open with a hiss. “I'll talk to Billy in the morning about it.” Marc said as Chris turned to watch Marc open the unit and look inside. “He was gonna be real handsome.” He got out with a sniffle as he wiped at his eyes.

“Well, he still will be. Just not that body Marc. Your team will make it happen. I'd bet my career that this is going to be nothing but a small setback. Not to mention a learning experience for us all. Night Marc, make sure to get some sleep.” Chris said as he turned and left the room, not waiting for a reply.

“Thanks Dr. Strafford.” Marc mumbled as he lowered the lid. “I'm just glad you didn't do a half-assed job putting Danny together.” He said to the ceiling before three people Marc hadn't met before rolled a gurney with a body bag into the room. “You guys need anything?” Marc strained to ask while stifling his tears.

“No sir, it looks like it would be better if we handled it for you. We'll take it from here.” The man answered as he motioned toward the hallway.

“Thanks.” Marc managed to get out before the team got right to work. “Call if you need anything.”

“Understood sir, goodnight sir.” The man said as he rushed Marc from the room.

Marc walked down the hall and decided to head for the hospital's main entrance instead of turning in. Once outside the front doors, he crossed the pavement and leaned on the railing overlooking the fountain area.

“It works now you know.” Marc heard Austin's voice come from behind him.

Wiping away his tears, Marc cleared his throat and turned to see his son walk back inside the doorway and open a panel. Suddenly the fountain lighting came on and the water shot up from the corners and the center of the large fountain. Austin rushed back outside and leaned on the railing next to his dad. “It's beautiful.” Marc said as he stared at the water and let the sights and sounds relax him.

“I've been watching it for the last hour or so. You can really get lost in thought out here.” Austin said as he wrapped his arm around Marc and pulled him close. “You wanna talk about it?”

“Talk about what?” Marc replied still staring at the dancing water.

“Whatever it is that has you so upset.” Austin replied squeezing a bit harder. “You may be able to play off being hard as nails with those doctors and stuff, but that act won’t work with the people who love you.”

“Am I that obvious?” Marc asked with a sigh.

“Hey, I’m your kid. You’re not supposed to get anything past me.” Austin said with a grin. “Something go wrong with Daniel?”

Another tear escaped and trailed down Marc’s cheek. “No, It’s Kevin.”

“Another delay?” Austin asked in an attempt to get Marc to start talking.

“No.” Marc replied. “Acute biological rejection of internal mechanical components.” Marc replied flatly. “The Panda never caught it. There was no warning.” He said as another tear followed the path of those before it. “His biological systems stopped functioning sometime earlier tonight.”

“He died? Couldn’t we have used an immunosuppressant to stop it?” Austin asked.

“That would have just slowed the outcome. There was something wrong physically with that build. Maybe there was a reason it never got used.” Marc added. “Or maybe good ole Doc Strafford just got lucky when he created your Uncle Danny. I can’t believe I blindly trusted something that old fool created.”

“That old fool gave you an older brother and me an uncle.” Austin said as he broke the hug and leaned forward to look down into the water. “I’ve heard the man was dishonest, and I know Uncle Danny had to have gone through hell back then, but here and now, he’s got family who love him and he loves back. Accidental or not, I’m glad he gave us Danny.”

“Bad things sometimes happen without reason, sometimes good things happen without reason as well.” Marc said softly with a smile.

“Can’t we build Kevin a new body? I mean we have the profile to start over, don’t we?” Austin asked.

“Yeah.” Marc said with hope visibly returning to his expression. “A new one would be even better than the one we just lost.”

“Maybe Kevin was holding out for a better model.” Austin said with a smile as he hugged his father once again. “I’m gonna get some sleep. Are we starting on these tomorrow?” Austin asked running his fingers over the scars on his face. “I heard Doctor Herron mentioning clearing an operating room for cosmetic surgery soon.”

“We should. I think it’s just gonna take a couple of one hour sessions before I get you lookin like you just came off the assembly line.” Marc said with a wink.

“Just DON’T lose my freckles. I don’t wanna go back to original, I just don’t wanna look all beat up any more.” Austin said with a thoughtful expression. “You can do it without a DNA reintroduction, right?”

"I didn't plan on taking the easy way out. Your DNA stays just as it is right now. I promise." Marc said with a giggle. "I kinda like the freckles too." He admitted.

"It's kinda neat to actually have a heritage, a family tie. You know, something that will always be with me. I never knew what that felt like before I met Timmy, found my real dad, got a real family. I don't wanna lose none of it, except for the scars." Austin said with a smile. "That's the only thing I really want to put out of my life now."

"Tomorrow at nine then?" Marc said with a smile.

"Cool!" Austin replied with a grin. "Will you need my help with Kevin tomorrow at all? I can help if you need me too."

Marc looked thoughtful for a moment before a smile crept across his face. "How do you feel about being Kevin's endoskeletal and systems model?"

"Me? Really?" Austin answered with a smile. "That'd be sweet! What do I have to do?"

"I'll talk to Billy in the morning. I think all it will take is a few seconds on a transporter pad." Marc said.

"I'm there then, just let me know when." Austin said as he began to walk back toward the main entrance. "Night Dad! I love you!"

"Love you too, sweet dreams." Marc got out as he watched Austin happily walk back into the building.

"That yur kid?" A voice from behind made Marc jump and spin around.

"Oh my god! You scared the hell out of me." Marc said as he looked over the railing at a man standing on the scaffolding just above the water of the fountain. "What are you doing down there anyway?"

"Gotta take down the old Naval Hospital lettering. She aint gonna be that no more, is she?" The old man said with a smile. "What'er ya'll gonna name tha new one?"

"Haven't really put any thought into it yet. I know it's going to be Federation Youth Services Medical primarily." Marc said not knowing how much the old man knew.

"Yur gonna be helpin tha little ones in this building?" The old man asked as he worked away.

"Yup, hopefully we'll do some real good in there in the future." Marc said with a smile.

"Good. We need a real guardian angel to watch over tha little ones. Not enough folks willin ta do that ya know." He replied as he set another of the brass letters down on the floor of the scaffold. "Ya know..." he continued; "...if'n you come up with a name fur her, I'd be happy to make tha new letterin fur ya."

"You can do that?" Marc asked getting a chuckle from the tired looking old man in response.

“Sure can. Was my family that made this one.” The old man paused and appeared to be deep in thought. “I don't know how many years ago. Heck, I'll melt down tha old one an an use it ta make tha new one if ya'll like.” He said as he fished through his pockets before pulling out a card and handing it to Marc. “Ya'll jus let me know watcha reckon yur gonna do an I'll even put it up fur ya at a good price.” He said as he removed another letter. “Damn city folk probly charge ya double what it's worth.” He continued in what sounded like a practiced rant. “Yur helpin out tha little ones. Reckon if'n yur plannin on doin tha work of angels, folk oaghta be lookin out fur you.” He said looking satisfied with his comment. “Heck, ya'll be keepin me in mind if'n ya'll be needin signs inside. That's what I do.”

“Thank you very much... Um...” Marc said as he read the name on the card. “...Mr. Johnston.” Marc said with a smile. “When a decision is made, I'll make sure you have the job!”

“Ya'll just be callin me Charles or Gramps. None of this Mr. Johnston nonsense.” he said with a smile.

“Which do you like better?” Marc asked as he put the card in his pocket.

“All my friends call me Gramps.” The old man replied, not once pausing in his work. “Most are gone now, it'd be nice to hear it again.”

“Thanks Gramps, I'm Marc by the way. Marc Furst. I'll be working here once the building is ready.” Marc said with a smile.

“Sure are startin em young these days.” The old man said with a laugh. “An that was yur boy you was talkin to?”

“Yeah, it's a long story.” Marc replied with a smile.

“I'll be here a while.” Gramps replied with a chuckle.

“Can I come down and help? I actually would love the diversion.” Marc asked with a smile.

“Oh sure. Ya'll come on down and around and you be watchin yur step ya hear!” He shouted as Marc ran around to the side of the fountain and climbed up onto the scaffolding.

“How do they come off?” Marc asked with a smile.

“You just be watchin me an I'll show ya tha propper way to takin these down.” The old man said as he proceeded to carefully unscrew and pry off the large brass T from the word hospital. Then using a wire brush, he cleaned the debris away from years of getting trapped behind the lettering.

The two talked away most of the night. About family, friends and anything else that just happen to cross their minds. Mentally Marc began to make up a list of things that Gramps could be hired for, mostly just so he'd be around more. By the time the sun rose, the two had removed anything on the exterior that identified the old building as a Naval Hospital.

“I reckon I bess be goin home Marcus.” The old man said as a sleepy Noah walked outside, obviously looking for Marc. “This another of yur boys?”

“More Family.” Marc said with a smile. “Gramps, this is Noah.”

“Ahhh, Marcus tole me about you an yur family comin ta help make this happen. Ya'll oughta be proud of what ur doin.”

“Oh, we are sir.” Noah said with a smile. “Marc did you get any sleep?”

“Nope, I couldn't sleep anyway so I came out and gave Gramps a hand. What time is it anyway?” Marc said with a grin.

“Seven. We were worried cause your cot hadn't been slept in, and radiology was empty.” Noah said with his arms crossed. “We've been searching the whole building for you.”

“Sorry bout that bro. We had some problems last night and I just needed a breather.” Marc said as Gramps scratched his head.

“You came out here an worked for a break. That's not healthy fur a boy yur age ya know. Ya'll skedad-dle an get a nap.” The old man said as he began to walk toward his truck. “You be callin me Marcus if'n you need anythin at all. Ya hear?”

“Yes sir.” Marc replied as the boys watched him wave and drive the old pick up off the property.

“Marcus?” Noah asked with a giggle. “I thought you hated being called Marcus.”

“I do, but from him I don't mind it as much for some reason.” Marc said with a smile.

“And no sleep is bad for a boy your age? Marcus, does he know you're an android?” Noah asked with a giggle as he placed his hands on his hips..

“Yeah, I told him but I don't think he gets it.” Marc replied before dummy slapping Noah in the back of the head. “That's for calling me Marcus.” Marc said with a laugh as he led the way to the doors. “We should send someone out for breakfast and coffee.”

“No need.” Noah said with a grin as he rubbed the back of his head. “Jerry's Mom and Dad beamed in two hours ago and took over the kitchen.”

“Mary's making breakfast? Sweet!” Marc said with a smile. “Where are we eating?”

“The staff cafeteria.” Noah said with a smile as Marc responded with a confused look. “You know, in the basement?” Noah added getting a simple shrug from Marc. “You really should explore this old place a little. It's huge!”

“I will when I have the time.” Marc replied as they walked toward the elevators. “These work now?” Marc asked in surprise.

“Yeah, you missed a few meetings.” Noah said with a giggle. “Wait til you see Mary in the kitchen. I swear she's in love with the place.”

“Really?” Marc asked as the elevator doors opened. “Wow, they did a nice job cleaning these up.”

“Basement.” Marc said once they stepped inside causing Noah to giggle as he reached across and pressed the B button.

“You always make a habit of talking to machines?” Noah said with a laugh.

“No, I thought they were installing turbolifts.” Marc replied.

“They are dude, but for now they just got us an elevator working. Beats climbing the stairs.” Noah got out as the elevator slowed and stopped.

“Lower level sir.” Noah said with a fake English accent before they both laughed and stepped into the hall. “God that smells good.” he added as their noses led them to the cafeteria.

“Marc!” Jerry shouted as the two entered the doors. “Where were you? Where's Kevin. What's...” he got out before Noah raised his hand and shook his head.

“Not now Jerry, he's had a rough night.” Noah said as Marc walked over to the kitchen and out of ear shot. “Kevin's body died last night.” he added as he sat down at the table with Jerry, Billy, Antonio and Caleb. “Glad you and JR made it for breakfast.” he said to Caleb with a hug.

“What? You thought I was gonna pass this up for cereal? Not happening!” Caleb said as he slid a tray in front of Noah. “It's still hot.”

Noah smiled and began to dig in to his breakfast. “How'r things goin at the house?” he said after swallowing his mouth full of scrambled eggs.

“Great, except I found something strange on the main terminal. You think after breakfast you can beam back with me and check it out?” Caleb asked as he stuffed his mouth once again.

“You trying to trick me into going back to the house with you... Alone?” Noah said with a smile getting giggles from the others. “I'm sooo there.”

“Pervert.” Caleb laughed out as he playfully slapped Noah's arm and smiled. “Maybe later, I really need you to look at this. I don't know what it is and it wasn't there yesterday.”

Noah nodded his head as he picked up his orange juice and took a large gulp from it. “What's it look like?”

Caleb shrugged his shoulders and put his fork down. “It's some sort of information packet, not like anything I've seen before though.” Caleb said with a serious look.

“You think it may be the result of an attempted security breach?” Billy asked with his eyebrows raised. “Maybe you guys need an IT team to check it out.”

“We are the IT team.” Noah said through a mouthful of pancakes.

“Oh, cool.” Billy replied with his eyebrows raised. “I hope I get to stick around here for a while, working with you guys is just amazing sometimes.” Billy said with a smile.

“You aren't staying?” Antonio asked putting his forkful back down. “I thought you and Jerry were gonna build that replicator thing.”

Billy shrugged his shoulders and smiled at Antonio. “No clue buddy. I was supposed to depart last night but Marc ordered me to belay my original orders to return.” He said as he took a sip from his coffee. “I tried to contact Admiral Morrow earlier and he blew me off.”

“Blew you off?” Noah said with a laugh. “You mean like he refused to give you any info at all?”

“Yeah, told me to resume duties here until I am contacted.” Billy said setting his mug down. “I hope I didn't do anything wrong.”

All the boys began to giggle before Noah and Caleb exchanged nods and grinned. “I wouldn't worry about it.” Noah said with an encouraging smile. “I'd be willing to bet he blew you off cause he's scheming something.”

“Yeah.” Antonio added with a knowing smile. “Maybe yur stayin.”

“That would be cool, but it would mess up my original plans.” Billy said with a nod. “Some day I want to be Chief Engineer on a starship.”

“Cool!” Jerry said with a smile. “Someday when your on a starship, maybe we can come visit you. I've always wanted to see a federation starship.”

“Well, I wouldn't pack your bags yet.” Billy said tilting his head. “Every assignment I've ever received has been earth bound. It'll probably be years before I get to see the inside of a Starship's Engineering Room.”

“If you want it bad enough, it'll happen.” Caleb said with a smile, “Jerry's right though. Your first assignment, we will be expecting a tour.” he got out with a giggle.

“I'll let you know.” Billy said with a smile. “Maybe your patriarch can set something up with the Admiral. I'll definitely tell him I'm up for taking a diplomatic group on a starship tour.”

“Cool.” Jerry said with a smile.

In the kitchen, Marc stood in the corner with a plate in his hand and ate while he watched as Mary buzzed around preparing another wave of food. After about 15 minutes of being watched, Mary finally stopped and glared at Marc. “Do you plan on eating your breakfast standing in the corner?” She asked as she put down her spatula and walked over toward Marc. “Why don't you go sit down with the boys?”

“I dunno.” Marc answered. “I was just watching you work, and I kinda got lost in thought.”

Mary grabbed a folding chair and slid it over to Marc. "At least sit down." She said as she pointed to one of her helpers toward the griddle she was working at. "Everything okay?" She asked as she leaned against the wall next to him.

"Pretty much." he replied, putting his plate down on the sink next to him. "I wasn't thinking about problems really." Marc continued with a grin. "Mary, you really like this kitchen. Don't you?"

Mary smiled and looked around the open area. "No, I hate it." She said crossing her arms.

"No, seriously." Marc said with a giggle.

"I am serious." She replied with a stern look. "It has real potential, but whoever designed the equipment layout probably never worked in a kitchen one day in their life." Mary said nodding her head.

"You could make it better?" Marc asked with a grin.

"I would seriously rearrange the equipment, probably replace some of this old junk. You guys have old refrigeration that doesn't even work right. Those ovens were state of the art when my great grandmother was still playing with dolls. Not to mention that if it was fully staffed, people would be tripping over each other to get anything done." Mary said with a smile. "This could be one hell of a kitchen with better planning."

"Do you want it?" Marc asked with a smile as he picked up his plate and took a large mouthful.

"Excuse me?" Mary said shaking her head.

"Well, I'm only guessing, but I'm sure having a bad kitchen setup won't help operations. This place is gonna have a ton of mouths to feed on a daily basis. Probably a lot of kids who haven't had real good food in a long time." Marc said without once looking at Mary while he picked up a slice of his toast and took a bite. "We're gonna need to find someone who would be willing to shape this place up. Someone who knows what this kitchen should be." He paused as he drank some of his orange juice. "Someone who will care that the kids in the hospital are well taken care of. I think a person like that would be hard to find, don't you?"

Mary simply squinted her eyes and stared at Marc.

"Do you want it?" He repeated looking up at her finally and smiling. "A real Mom's meal can sometimes be a blessing to some little kid who's either never had one or hasn't in a long time." He said as he looked at his plate and then looked at Mary and smiled. "I know it helped me."

"Are you offering me a job?" Mary said through a laugh.

"Nope, I'm offering you a department within the facility. If you are interested I mean. It just seems like you would have fun whipping this relic back into a kitchen. Besides, I know this breakfast brightened my morning. Imagine what it would do for some poor kid who is in a really bad situation." Marc said as he looked back at his plate and grabbed a piece of bacon. "You don't have to. I just thought this could be something you might be interested in."

“Are you kidding?” Mary replied with a smile. “What do you guys want for lunch?” She asked as she looked around the kitchen and smiled.

“Is that an acceptance?” Marc grinned as he shoveled what was left on his plate into his mouth.

“You think I'd pass up an opportunity like this?” She asked with a smile. “You got yourself a kitchen manager.” She added with a smile. “Someone has to make sure you guys are eating right.”

“Awesome!” Marc said as he put his plate in the big three bay sink. “I'll talk to Doc Austin about figuring out how we'll replace some of the broken down equipment and stuff if you'll make me up a wish list.”

“I'll do better than that.” Mary said with a smile. “I'll draw up my proposed plans, what equipment is needed, what equipment needs to be tossed in the scrap pile and even where we can get some of what we need.” Mary said with a smile that resembled a kid on Christmas morning. “This'll be fun.” She added causing Marc to giggle.

“It's yours then. I'll figure out what we have for resources and we'll take it from there.” Marc said as he turned for the door leading out into the cafeteria. “I vote pizza for lunch.” He said with a giggle.

“Vote again, the oven doesn't work.” Mary said with a laugh as Marc opened the door.

“Oh maaaaan.” Marc turned and said with a smirk. “I'll get back to you on replacements cause I really, really, really want pizza.” He said with a giggle as the door swung shut.

As the group began to break up, each team began to head back to their projects. Marc stood and watched as the few remaining cleared the tables and dropped the dishes in the kitchen.

“Billy!” Marc shouted as he chased after Billy.

“Yes Sir?” Billy replied, snapping to attention out of habit; instantly realizing it wasn't warranted by Marc's giggle. “Sorry, I mean what's up?”

“I spoke with Doc Austin last night. He had a conversation with Admiral Morrow on your behalf.” Marc began as the two started to walk toward the elevator. “The Admiral needs you to report to him at some point this morning.”

“Am I being reassigned?” Billy asked as he pressed the up button and the two waited for the elevator. “I mean if I can request to remain, I'll try it.”

“Don't worry about planning a proposal.” Marc said with a smile as the elevator doors opened. “Just report to the Admiral and let me know what happens.”

“I'll contact the Admiral and set up the meeting.” Billy said as they stepped in and pushed the first floor button. “I'll report to you as soon as I know when I'm expected at Terra Main.”

“Not needed man.” Marc said with a smile. “Contact him and you have permission to depart when needed. Once you return just report that you are back on duty.” Marc said with a grin. “Or that you have been reassigned, whatever happens.” He added, attempting to not let too much information slip.

“Understood, I'll contact you once I know what my assignment is.” Billy said getting a nod from Marc. “Wish me luck.” He added as the doors opened and he practically ran down the hall.

“You don't need luck.” Marc shouted after him with a smile. “You have us.” he finished with a giggle. “What more do you need.”

Billy laughed and left the room just as Austin and Jerry turned the corner and joined Marc. “I was just about to call you.” Jerry said with a smile. “We really should go check up on Daniel. That and Austin said that his treatments were gonna start today.”

“Yeah we have to get to work.” Marc said with a grin. “Austin, why don't you go check on Joey then peek in on Byron and see how Eli and Benji's prosthetics are coming along. Jerry and I will be in with Daniel Wiggins for a while. Once we are all set across the board, Billy should be back from Terra Main and we should be set to begin work on Kevin.”

“I thought we lost Kevin.” Jerry asked as he stopped walking. “Did I miss something?”

“Yup.” Austin said as he turned the corner and walked towards the OR without an explanation.

“Well?” Jerry asked Marc who simply began to giggle. “Aw come on! What are you two up to? What's goin on with Kevin?”

“Sorry, classified information.” Marc said with a laugh as they continued to walk towards Daniel's room.

“I'll give you classified.” Jerry grumbled as they reached the new nurses station.

“Good morning Doctor.” One of the nurses almost sang. “Dixon hasn't woken back up yet, our reports from last night are in his folder.” She continued as she seemed to happily gather up medical equipment that was still stored in boxes, placing it all on rolling carts and wheeling it off to storage closets.

“Wow, she seems really happy.” Jerry said with a smile. “Dixon?”

“Yeah, I've noticed that with a few of the medical personnel Chris brought in. Hopefully some of these people will like it here and consider accepting positions on staff.” Marc said with a smile as he began to flip through the report made by the nurses throughout the night. “Dixon is the only name he's ever known according to his file. We should probably get used to using it.”

“Okay, so did Dixon do okay last night?” Jerry asked as he grabbed two lab coats and began to put one on.

“Slept like a baby from what I read.” Marc said as he closed the folder and took the other coat. Let's go check on him.” He said as they went to his room and quietly opened the door.

After checking the equipment and reading the notes made on his chart, Marc pulled back the covers and inspected his work. "Did you bring in a tricorder?"

"Yeah, it's in your pocket." Jerry replied as he gathered clean gauze and tape for Marc to replace the dressing. "I thought you didn't know how to use one though." Jerry said as Marc pulled it out of his pocket and smiled while handing it to Jerry.

"I don't yet, haven't had time to download it's specifications and integrate them. I'll take care of that tonight." Marc added with a smile. "I have a ton of files I need to upload."

Jerry flipped the tricorder open and removed the hand held sensor. After performing a sweep of Dixon's prosthetics and surrounding area, he read the results out loud. "No sign of infection or rejection. He's healing at a really good rate. When he wakes up, he may be in a little pain though." He got out as Marc removed the old dressing, causing Jerry to hiss through his teeth. "Not that I'd expect him not to be." He added and then cleared his throat.

"Once this heals I think the scarring will be minimal." Marc said as he began to clean the area and then replace the bandaging. "We'll have to keep him on pain killers for a while though. I don't want him to hurt anymore than he has too." Marc said as he covered Dixon back up and made note of his inspection in Dixon's folder. "You wanna run this back out to the nurses station for the nurse on duty?" Marc asked as he handed Jerry the folder.

"Okay." Jerry said as he ran from the room and Marc began to look Dixon's chart over. Once he came back into the room, he craned his neck to read along with Marc.

"Where am I?" A hoarse sounding voice said, causing both to instantly look away from the chart. "Who are you guys?"

"Don't try to sit up just yet. You've been through a lot," Marc said softly. "You are in the what will soon be The Clan Short & Federation Youth Services Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina. At least when it's done it will be. My name is Marc, and this is Jerry," Marc said pointing toward Jerry.

"Where's Jesse? Where's my mom?" The boy began to ask frantically.

"She isn't here," Marc said in almost a whisper. "You're safe now, Dixon. Just relax."

"Where's Jesse?" Dixon repeated.

"Who's Jesse?" Jerry asked him.

"My boy...my friend," Dixon seemed to be trying to correct himself, albeit a bit too late. "Don't hurt me, please," he whimpered as he drew himself into a little ball in the bed to try to protect himself, probably expecting to be beaten. The movement had to have caused Dixon a great deal of pain, but his panicked condition must have been more intense.

"We're here to help you get better, not hurt you," Marc said as he raised his hands and kept some distance. "You've already been hurt more than enough."

“You need to lay still or you’ll hurt yourself though,” Jerry added. He reached up and rubbed Dixon’s arm reassuringly. “It’s okay. We’re your friends, Dixon.”

“Did you just say I’m in South Carolina? How did I get here? I live in Arkansas,” Dixon asked the boys beside him.

“That’s a really long story, and I promise you will hear all of it, but for right now, we have to make sure you’re getting better,” Marc said in an attempt to calm him a bit.

“What happened to me?” Dixon asked slowly. He looked toward his crotch, and started to reach for it, but his hand stopped. “Am I.... I mean did she.... Do I have...? Did they...?” He began to stutter.

“You were cut up pretty badly when they got you to the hospital in Arkansas,” Jerry told him. “Fortunately, you had been fingerprinted when you were little.”

“Fingerprinted? Am I going to jail?” Dixon asked in confusion.

“No, you’re not in trouble,” Marc assured him. “You had been fingerprinted for identification when you were a little kid. Two weeks after that, you were kidnapped.”

“What are you guys talking about?” Dixon continued to question. “I don’t remember being kidnapped.”

“You were only about a year and a half old when it happened,” Jerry supplied. “You wouldn’t remember this, unless you had a brain like this old guy,” he added with a smile; pointing at Marc.

“What do you mean? Who kidnapped me?” Dixon rambled as understanding seemed to gradually begin to dawn on him. “You mean she wasn’t really my Mom?”

“Jerry, I think we’re just confusing him worse,” Marc said sympathetically. “Dixon, you need to rest some more before we talk any more.”

“No, I want to know,” Dixon insisted. “Who am I, if I’m not Dixon Pickhinke?”

“Your real name is Daniel K. Wiggins, IV,” Marc answered. “Your real parents were Dan and Susan Wiggins from right here in Charleston.”

“What do you mean they were my parents?” Dixon asked with a sharp tone.

“Your father was killed in a car accident two years after you disappeared, and your mom died of cancer three years ago,” Marc told him. “I’m really sorry.”

“My mom wasn’t my mom, and my real parents are dead,” Dixon said flatly. “Any more great news to share? What about me? Am I okay ... down there? Am I girl now?”

“No, you’re not a girl, but” Marc began, but looked down and didn’t finish.

“That woman hurt you really bad,” Jerry said as a tear began to work its way down his cheek.

“The woman who claimed to be your mother cut off your....” Marc started to say, but he couldn’t finish either.

“She cut them off, didn’t she?” Dixon asked. He began crying as Marc and Jerry just nodded silently. Jerry began to cry almost as hard as Dixon, not being able to hold back any longer. Marc pulled Jerry into a hug and reached out to Dixon. “She cut everything off, Dixon,” he continued quietly. “Don’t worry though, that’s why you’re here. We’ve taken care of you.”

“What’s going to happen to me? Do I have to become a girl?” Dixon asked as he continued to sob.

“No, we’ve replaced what you’ve lost,” Marc said in as confident a tone as he could muster, having the affect he had hoped for as Dixon’s sobbing began to slow.

“How did you do that?” Dixon asked him.

“It wasn’t that hard, actually,” Jerry told him as he wiped away the tears and actually began to smile again. “First, Marc reattached your pe.... Well, you know.” He blushed incredibly red at that moment. “Your own... well, we couldn’t reattach yours, but we used a biological method to create replacement parts. Like what you would find on an android.”

“You created.... What did you do to me? What am I now, Frankenstein’s monster?” Dixon seemed to panic once again.

“Dixon, you have to try to remain calm,” Marc said quietly.

“Screw that!” Dixon yelled. “First, my mother attacks me, cutting off my... everything. Now you show up and tell me that she isn’t my mother. My real parents are dead. Then you top it off by telling me you put me back together with what, spare parts? Where the hell am I that you would have spare parts laying around for people’s bodies?”

“Not people bodies,” Jerry corrected. “Androids.” He said as Marc turned quickly and glared at him. “Sorry.” Jerry said as he looked toward his feet.

“Android parts!” Dixon bellowed. “I have android parts now?”

“They are based on your own biological components so they integrated quite well, actually,” Marc tried to assure him.

“What the hell am I now?” Dixon demanded. “I’m not a girl, but am I an android?”

“No, he’s the android,” Jerry pointed at Marc. “Oh, and there’s Kevin and Joey. They’re androids too, but you’ll meet them when they wake up. I bet Joey would think you just need a hug to get better. He’s really good at them, too. Of course, I’m a little prejudiced being his father.”

“You’re someone’s father?” Dixon asked. Jerry nodded. “You look about nine years old, how can you be anyone’s father? And didn’t you just say that he’s an android?”

Jerry just nodded again with a happy smile. "Marc, can you guys let me go back to sleep? I think I'm getting a headache."

"You do need to rest more," Marc agreed as he reached down and set the biobed to sedate. "I'll contact Mrs. Amee now that you're awake."

"Who's Mrs. Amee?" Dixon asked.

"She's your great grandmother," Jerry answered. "You'll be living with her when you leave here."

"I have a great grandmother," Dixon mused as he closed his eyes and peacefully drifted off to sleep.

"Poor kid." Marc said as he double checked the biobed's readout before turning for the door. "We need to learn more about him. He has ties that may help him recover emotionally."

"I'd start with his boyfriend. We should find out who he is." Jerry said as he stopped once they were both in the hall and turned toward Marc. "Do you need my help with Austin."

"No, I'm fine. If you can contact Mrs. Amee and then maybe arrange to find out who his boyfriend is through the local authorities that handled the assault, I'll handle the procedures here." Marc said with a smile. "Have Noah give you a hand. Just in case you may need to involve intelligence through HQ."

"Okay, give a yell if you need me." Jerry said as he broke out in a run toward the elevator.

"Will do." Marc replied as he flipped open his communicator. "Furst to Short."

"Austin here Dad."

Marc smiled and started to walk down the hall. "How are things in OR 1 & 4 goin'?"

"Everything looks great. Joey's almost ready to activate biological components and the prosthetics for Eli and Benji are coming along at about the same rate. We should be able to have Joey back online in about two days, at about the same time we should be ready to prep the guys for surgery."

"Sweet." Marc said with a smile. "I'm going to check in with security at the house, then I expect to see you in OR 3 so we can get started on you."

"Great! I'll be there. Austin out."

"Doctor Furst!" The voice of a young woman from behind Marc caused him to jump and almost drop his communicator.

"Yes Nurse?" Marc asked as he grasped at his chest exaggerating the fact that she had startled him.

"I'm sorry Doctor, I didn't mean to scare you." She said with a smile. "You have an incoming transmission from the AI Compound. You can take it in the consultation room if you like."

“That's perfect timing.” Marc replied smiling back. “Now about that consultation room. If I were to go in there, I would be where?” he continued with a giggle.

“I'll show you.” The nurse said with a grin as she motioned for him to follow.

Once in the room, Marc looked around and laughed. “This is definitely a temporary setup.” he muttered as he made his way through the boxes to the terminal that was setup in the far corner of the room; already displaying that a communication was standing by. “Sup Noah?” Marc asked with a smile as soon as Noah's image appeared.

“Marc, Caleb came across something on the main terminal I think you need to know about.” Noah said with a serious look on his face.

“Good or bad?” Marc asked as he put his feet up on one of the boxes on the floor.

“I'm not sure.” Noah replied shrugging his shoulders.

“Okay. I'm listening.” Marc said as Caleb came into view on the screen.

“Marc, before I beamed out for breakfast I found a pretty large file on the main terminal that wasn't there yesterday. Noah came back with me to take a look at it and I'm not sure we should proceed with investigating it on our own.” Caleb said as Noah rubbed his eyes.

“Is it hostile? I mean is someone trying to break into the system?” Marc asked scratching his head.

“No.” Noah answered. “It's unencrypted information and looks like it was intended for us to find.”

“Information for what?” Marc asked as he sat up. “Who would have access anyway?”

“The origin was this terminal.” Noah said as he began to tap away at the system's controls. “It was transmitted directly, source and exact time unknown.”

“It must be a joke though.” Caleb added. “I recognize some of the strings used here from school.”

“From school?” Marc asked with a smirk. “Are you guys playing jokes on each other or on me?”

“It's no joke dude.” Caleb replied. “I've seen parts of what I'm looking at from a project I did once before. It was the theoretical implications of the use of the Trinary Language.”

“Trinary?” Marc said with a laugh. “Now I know it's a joke. The Trinary Language is only a fantasy unless you decide to pick up fictional writing as a hobby.”

“See for yourself.” Noah said as a file transfer request popped up on the screen. “Look at it and tell me what you think. I think Cal is right on this one.”

After the file transfer completed Marc started to giggle. “If this is one of those joke files, you both are sooo dead.” he said as he opened the file and began to scan through the code that instantly began to fill

the screen. "Oh my god dude! Where the hell did this come from?" Marc asked as he continued to scroll. "This looks real."

"Told you." Caleb said as he folded his arms. "We have no way to test it but just from tracing the source, it looks very real."

"We have no clue how this got on the system at all?" Marc asked as he closed the file. "I mean, what I just saw would have taken years to compile working off of theory alone to appear that accurate."

"No kiddin." Caleb said.

"I can narrow it down to a transmission from a very close proximity sometime yesterday. Time indexes and source were purposely scrambled though. It's as if someone wanted us to have it but didn't want us to know who wrote it." Noah said as if he was thinking out loud.

"That wouldn't bother me if it wasn't for the fact that whoever it was had access to the terminal." Marc said with a sigh. "Billy was right. Guys, go ahead and analyze that file but I also want Eddie to investigate the possibility of a security breach. I find it hard to believe someone slipped in, planted this file and slipped out without being noticed."

"On it Marc." Noah replied. "We'll let you know what we find." he said before ending the transmission.

Marc continued to look the file over before locking it and setting the terminal into standby. "Trinary..." Marc mumbled as he made his way through the boxes toward the door. "I guess I can't complain about things being dull around here."

Transporter Room #1

"Whoah dude! What happened to you?" Billy said to Austin as he entered the transporter room followed by Jerry.

"Reconstructive surgery." Austin replied as he ran his hand over the bandages. "It's not as bad as it looks, really. I just need to keep it covered for a few hours after the procedures."

"That won't affect the image, will it Billy?" Jerry asked as he joined Billy at the transporter controls.

"Nope. We want what's inside for this model." Billy said with a laugh as Marc entered the room and nodded encouragingly at Austin.

"Oh, THAT sounds great when you put it that way." Austin said with a groan. "So what do I have to do?"

"Nothing really." Jerry said. "It's gonna be just like being transported."

"Just step up on the pad and we'll prepare the system." Billy said as he began to tap away at the controls.

“How does this work?” Austin asked as he took his position.

“You know that replicators and transporters are primarily the same in design. They just perform different functions.” Billy said as he and Jerry continued to work. “Transporters break down the molecular structure of the person or item being transported. It memorizes the exact pattern and then sends that matter to the receiving unit along with the map to reassemble the molecules. A replicator is programmed with the molecular structure of the item being created. It gathers matter and creates the item following the map of its proposed structure. Now if you combine the function of both, the instructions to reassemble you can be used as a map to be replicated. The same method also implies that that image can be altered just like you would create an item map within a replicator. There are unlimited uses when you think about it.”

“So you could make a duplicate me?” Austin asked, tilting his head.

“Yes and no.” Billy answered. “I could create a physical copy of you but even with all the components assembled, it can't copy the one thing that is truly you.” Billy said looking up from the control console. “Your personality or your soul isn't seen with any kind of scan.” He said as he completed preparing the system. “By nature that little flaw is the only thing that would keep people from making an army out of themselves.”

“That'd be creepy.” Marc said leaning against the wall near the door.

“And dangerous.” Billy added. “Okay Austin. When you're ready this will feel just like being transported. To you just a couple of seconds will pass. I am going to begin a transport; this will place you in the transporter's buffer, just like being transported. While you're in there, I will tell the system to save your image and then cancel the transport. You won't actually go anywhere.”

“Let's do this then.” Austin said crossing his arms.

“Energizing.” Billy said as the system came to life and Austin slowly vanished in a shimmering column of light. “He's being held in the buffers now. Jerry, maintain this power level while I prep his buffered image to be saved.”

“How long can he safely be held in the transporters buffers like that?” Marc asked, earning a warm smile from Billy.

“Don't worry Daddy, he's perfectly safe.” Billy said as he began his work. “Theoretically he can be held indefinitely without losing any information.”

“Oh, okay.” Marc answered as he simply watched.

“Jerry, I'm reading a clean molecular profile. What's our status?” Billy asked as he tapped away at a second console.

“System reads nominal. Looks good so far.” Jerry said with a smile. “Just let me know when you're ready to terminate.”

“Just one more minute.” Billy said as Marc wandered over and watched. “I’m performing a decontamination scan on him while he’s in there. It’s a very detailed scan that gives a replicator even more detailed information to work from.”

“Is it needed?” Marc asked looking a little lost.

“No, not really. It just gives a second source to draw from.” Billy said as he tapped a few more controls and then sat back and smiled. “Bring him home Jerry.”

“Aye sir.” Jerry said with a giggle as Austin’s image became visible on the pad once again.

“That was cool!” Austin said as he hopped off the pad. “It felt like I was getting tickled, even inside. I never noticed how intense that feeling was before.”

“That’s cause normally you wouldn’t have much more than a split second to experience it in a normal transport.” Billy said as he confirmed that the image was saved.

“How long was I in there?” Austin asked with a huge smile.

“Just a couple of minutes.” Jerry answered as he powered the system down. “System standing by Billy.”

“Great, thanks buddy.” Billy replied as he looked up from his display and smiled. “Marc, the ball is in your court now.” He said as he motioned toward the console. “Have you ever altered a replicator’s programmed molecular profile before?”

“You mean like programming a new item?” Marc asked as he sat down and began to look the controls over.

“That’s exactly what I mean.” Billy said as he brought up the stored profile.

“Guys, we have to get back to work.” Austin said as he and Jerry headed out the door. “Give a yell if you need us, okay?”

“No problem. Thanks guys.” Marc said as Billy smiled and nodded.

“Okay.” Billy continued once the boys left the room. “This system is configured to translate information much like a biobed does. This way you can design the biological aspects directly and create the molecular pattern the transporter would use to act as a replicator.” He continued once Marc looked up from the display. “You can incorporate information from tons of sources. Tricorder, biobed, stored information on other terminals and even be able to alter specific information to create the finished look of the replicated unit.”

“What if I make an alteration that isn’t compatible? Like maybe I decide hair color needs to be different. Normally that’s handled through internal programming.” Marc asked.

“Simple. Just like a replicator’s interface, you can run a simulated replication and have the computer analyze the finished unit. If it or you find errors or decide changes need to be made, you can program in

the corrections and re-simulate until you and the system are both happy with the finished profile.” Billy said as Marc sat back in his chair.

“I’ll have to get access to some more information on how all this works so I’ll know what I’m doing.” Marc said with a smile.

“I’ll get some reference material together for you. I made some alterations to this terminal so it’ll act a little differently than the documentation will suggest.” Billy replied with a grin. “By the way Marc, thanks.”

“After all this you’re thanking me. Why?” Marc asked with his eyes opened wide.

“I had just got back from my meeting with Admiral Morrow when we started here. He said you recommended me for a promotion.” He said as he pointed to the new pins on his collar. “Lieutenant Commander.” He announced with a smile.

“Awesome!” Marc said with a grin.

“The only thing that confuses me is he told me to report to you for assignment. Does that mean I’m sticking around for a while?” Billy asked.

“Well, as my new Chief Engineer it wouldn’t do me any good to ship you off somewhere else.” Marc said beginning to laugh as Billy’s face began to flush.

“As what?” Billy choked out.

“You seriously didn’t hear me?” Marc asked with a giggle. “Great, now we have to get your hearing checked.”

“I’m being assigned as your CHIEF Engineer? For real!?!” Billy almost shouted as he began to look like he was going to explode. “That... that’s unreal... I mean... Do you know what that would do for my career?”

“I know what it does for mine.” Marc said with a smile. “It makes it bearable.” He added as he patted the terminal and then stood up from his seat and held his hand out toward Billy. “Congratulations Chief, welcome aboard.” He said as he picked up a P.A.D.D. and brought up the schematics Billy had handed him the night before. “Now that the formalities are out of the way, I have a few suggestions regarding this unit I’d like your opinion on.” He said with a grin as Billy was obviously too deep in thought to function yet.

“What do you think Marc and Billy have been up to in there?” Jerry asked as he and Eli stood outside the door to transporter room 1. “They’ve been in there for hours.”

“I don’t know dude, but we need to interrupt them for this.” Eli replied as they entered the room to see Marc tapping away at the console with Billy leaning on the wall behind him. “Um Marc, we’ve found a problem. Got a minute?”

Marc looked up and rubbed his eyes for a second before waving the boys over. "Sure, I needed a break." Marc said with a weak smile. "What's up?"

"We've got a problem." Eli started as Jerry nodded his head in agreement.

Marc's eyebrows raised as he watched Eli's expression go from serious to stern. "Fill me in guys."

"Marc." Jerry said as he placed his hand on Eli's shoulder. "I made the call to the authorities that handled Dixon's case. It wasn't a good conversation.

"Yeah." Eli cut in. "If I ever run into that prick they call their Chief of Police..." He started as Marc stood up from his seat and held his hand up.

"Whoa, what happened?" Marc asked as he stepped out from behind the console.

Jerry took a deep breath and nodded his head. "I contacted the chief of police in Arkansas and identified myself. He was cool with that until I asked for information regarding the Pickhinke case. He refused to give me any information, wouldn't give out any information about Jesse or even his whereabouts. Eli took over the call and spent over an hour just to get nothing more than a last name out of him."

"That sonova..." Eli began to say before Jerry cut him off.

"He called Eli a few really nasty names and then hung up on him." Jerry said and then looked at the floor.

"Wished me luck on my 'Little Fag Hunt' before he hung up." Eli said as his face began to visibly redden.

"Unbelievable." Marc groaned. "So we have a last name, that's a start." Marc said as Jerry began to laugh.

"We have a kick ass intelligence team at HQ. Even better than a start." Eli said with an evil grin. "I can tell you his last name, middle name, current location. Hell I can tell you what size boxers he wears." he said as Jerry began to giggle at Eli's satisfied smirk.

"It gets worse from there though." Jerry stated as he began to read from a report on the P.A.D.D. he had been holding behind his back. "Jesse David Blankenship, 12 years old. He is currently placed in a foster home after authorities took his older brother into custody." Jerry got out before clearing his throat. "Jason Nathaniel Blankenship was incarcerated for inappropriate behavior with a minor following accusations set forth by Dixon's abductor. Jason had custody of Jesse and the brothers lived in an apartment on their own."

"Tell him why he had custody." Eli added.

Jerry shook his head before reading out loud; "Custody of Jesse Blankenship was awarded to his older brother following the brutal murders of both parents." Jerry said as he began nervously biting his lower

lip. "Both murders were in plain view of Jesse before the man turned his attention to Jesse and came close to successfully raping him." Jerry said as he began choking on his own words.

Eli reached over and grabbed the P.A.D.D. and continued; "Jason Blankenship wasn't charged with the murder of their parents assailant." He said as he looked up from the display. "He got home just in time to obtain a gun and shoot the man, killing him on the spot."

"Three people killed in front of this poor kid in one night. God I hope he's in a better home now." Marc said as both Jerry and Eli's faces lost all expression. "What?"

"We don't think he was in a bad home Marc." Eli said as Jerry nodded his head in agreement. "The woman who butchered Dixon was the one who turned authorities on Jesse's brother. The part about being gay and in the same household seems to be the only basis for the inappropriate behavior accusation from what we can tell."

"Actually." Jerry cut in. "There are nothing but good reports about the way Jason was caring for Jesse from the school he attended and local child protective services. Jesse's school guidance counselor noted in a report that even though Jesse seemed to be a bit withdrawn, he must have been receiving excellent support from his remaining family judging by Jesse's improved attitude in school since the loss of both of his parents."

"You think the charges against Jason Blankenship are bogus?" Marc asked as Eli rolled his eyes.

"Oh please. Bogus is putting it nicely." Eli said as he shook his head. "From the report filed shortly after Dixon's assault..." Eli said as he searched the data base the boys had compiled. "...here it is. 'Ms. Pickhinke has also informed us that the minor Jesse Blankenship has been exposed to acts of homosexuality by his caregiver which led to the unspeakable acts she witnessed prior to being attacked by her son. We have verified the sexual orientation of the male in question, and based on Arkansas state regulations regarding homosexuals as parents have determined that placement with this particular male has damaged the 12 year old boy and will require extensive therapy and a strong parental base to repair.'" Eli read out loud. "You wanna hear the best part?" Eli asked with a grin.

"There's a best part to all of this?" Billy asked as he leaned on the console in disbelief.

"This file was submitted by authorities to justify their actions and was supposed to be sealed." Eli said with a grin. "Justy said he was just skimming the the information in their system when he found it stored in what looked like the wrong place. Unencrypted even."

"Well, from what you read it doesn't sound like the officer that filed the report was all that bright to begin with." Marc said as he took a deep breath. "I don't want to take the chance of upsetting Dixon if we don't have to. I mean if we're wrong here we may be getting his hopes up just to let him down. We need to find out exactly what we're dealing with." Marc said as he looked back and forth between both boys and noted their shocked expressions. "I know what you're thinking guys. This whole situation stinks worse than the crap that report is filled with. I just want to know how big the pile is before we step in it."

"Do we know the location of the foster home Jesse was placed in?" Billy asked. "Maybe we could just visit him and see if we can get his side of the story." Billy said scanning everyone's expressions. "I

mean there's no harm dropping in on one of Dixon's friends. We ARE concerned that he's doing alright after what he went through.”

An evil smile crept across every face in the room as Eli read over the report once more. “I really would like to know he's okay.” He said with a low sarcastic undertone.

“Yeah.” Jerry chimed right in. “Dixon says they're friends. I'm sure he'd like to know his friend is gonna to be alright.” He said stifling a giggle. “If we should happen to find out we were fed bad information from those dirt bag cops...”

“Then we invoke the Safe Haven Act on the spot and fix the mess they made, before it's too late.” Marc cut in as all four nodded. “How about you two and Eddie beam out and pay a social visit to...” Marc said as he walked over and looked at the P.A.D.D. Still in Eli's hand. “...Reverend Malachi Smeltz? Oh wonderful. Southern religion taking in a minor who is gay.” Marc said as he rolled his eyes. “I know you guys want to see this through, and I'll allow it as long as Eddie goes with you as an escort.” Marc said as he unclipped his communicator and spoke as he watched Jerry and Eli hi-five each other. “Marc to Lieutenant Fraser.”

“Eddie here.”

“Eddie, I have two team members in need of a security escort to a foster home.” Marc said as he leaned against the wall.

“Should we go to security alert?”

“No, we have no reason to assume conditions on site are volatile.” Marc said with a grin. “Let's just call it a hunch that something is not right in the household.”

“A hunch? Do you have any details?”

“I uploaded this into the system, he has access to this report.” Jerry said as Eddie got silent on his end.

“I'm looking at it.”

All three waited and listened as Eddie cleared his throat a couple of times and sighed once before Marc finally broke the silence. “I'm sure you would agree that it would be a courtesy on our part to just drop in and let Jesse know that his friend Dixon is going to be okay.”

“Yeah, right.” Eddie said as the sound of a door opening could be heard. “That whole report has a bad smell to it. When would you like us to depart?”

“I had a feeling you'd smell the same thing we did.” Marc said with a nod. “Twenty minutes, full uniform and armed.”

“Understood, Fraser out.”

“Um Marc.” Eli said in almost a whisper.

“Yeah Eli?” Marc replied with a concerned glance.

“If I go and Benji isn't told...” he got out as Marc started to laugh.

“Say no more. Go get him and report back here.” Marc said as Jerry and Eli ran out the door.

“Phasers?” Billy asked. “Are you at least gonna send them armed?”

“Eddie will be armed. Jerry isn't trained yet and Eli and Benji are two walking weapons if they are ever crossed.” Marc replied with a giggle.

“Really?” Billy said with a laugh. “Now I wanna go and watch.”

“Not happnin. Someone's gotta be here to push the buttons.” Marc said with a laugh.

“Aw... That stinks.” Billy replied in his best imitation of a 4 year old's voice as he kicked the air in a mock pout while slowly walking around to the console to get ready.

“Clown.” Marc said with a smile. “Pull the location from that report and prepare to beam 4 Chief.”

“Aye, meanie.” Billy said with a laugh. “I'm really going to like this position.”

Fifteen minutes later, the boys had all brought up a map of the property and prepared a plan should the occupants decide to attempt to run when the sound of the transporter activating earned their attention.

“Hey Guys!” Eddie said with a smile. “You must be the new Chief engineer.” He said as he approached the console and held out his hand for him to shake.

“Head of security?” Billy asked with a smile.

“No sir, but I can dream.” Eddie said as Marc winked at Billy out of Eddie's view.

“Mr. Fraser, your team is assembled. They will brief you and we'll get this underway.” Marc said as he elbowed Billy in the side.

“Yes sir.” Eddie said and joined the other three.

“That hurt.” Billy said as he rubbed his side.

“Never talk about what the director has planned for another officer. Didn't they teach you anything at the academy?” Marc whispered with a giggle.

“I didn't know that's what you had planned.” Billy replied with a laugh.

“And you still don't.” Marc answered with a wink.

“We're ready.” Eddie said as all three approached the transporter pad. “Any last minute orders?”

“Set phaser to stun and keep an open com channel. The first sign of trouble I need you to take control and fast. Make sure not to provoke these people, but the second they provoke you or you see signs that the SHA should be implicated; take the appropriate steps.” Marc said as they all took their places on the pad.

“Stay safe.” Marc said as he turned toward Billy. “Energize Chief.”

The boys appeared two houses up the sidewalk from the Smeltz house. Eddie checked his phaser and opened a channel on his communicator. “Moving in.” He said softly as all four casually approached the house. “Remember, I will remain right behind you. If anyone makes any kind of a threatening move, hit the floor.”

“The floor?” Benji asked.

“Just stay out of the path of a phaser shot.” Eddie replied shaking his head as they turned up the walkway.

Once up on the porch, the boys nodded and Jerry stepped forward and knocked. After a few seconds, a teenage boy opened the door and scowled at the group.

“Can I help you?” The teenager asked as he remained inside the doorway.

“I hope so.” Jerry said in as pleasant a tone as he could manage. “My name is Jerry Owens, this is Eli and Benji Michaels and Edward Fraser. We are with Clan Short of Vulcan...”

“Okay, is there a reason you're here?” The teen cut him off and practically barked.

“Yes, we were hoping to speak with Jesse Blankenship. It's very important.” Jerry said as the teen scowled at him once again.

“What you need to talk to him for?” The teen asked with a snort.

“We would like to speak with Jesse regarding the happenings on the day of the attack.” Eli said in an emotionless tone.

“That and we thought he'd like to know that his friend Dixon is going to be alright.” Jerry added.

“He don't know nuthin about the attack. Nuthin that will help you.” The teen said as he took a step backwards. “As far as that little fairy at the hospital goes, he don't care how he is.” He said with an arrogant smile. “Said so himself.”

“Who is in charge here?” Jerry asked stiffening his back. “There is an adult on the premises, right?”

“My father is here, yeah.” The boy replied. “But he don't need to be bothered over all this. You should probably just leave.”

Eddie cleared his throat and made a production out of checking his phaser settings, gaining everyone's attention. "I suggest you get your father buddy." Eddie said as he looked up and half smiled. "I wouldn't want to have to use force."

"One second." The boy spat out as he closed the door.

"Nice kid." Benji said shaking his head.

"Yeah, maybe we can ask him to go out for pizza or something." Eli replied with a sarcastic grin.

A few minutes later a very angry looking man swung the door open, startling the boys. "What business do you have with the boy?" The man asked with an even angrier look than the teenager had.

"Sir, we are stationed at the facility Dixon Pickhinke is being cared for at. We wanted to let him know that his friend was doing well and had a few questions to ask him about the incident." Jerry said as the man laughed under his breath.

"I don't think so, no." The man said and went to slam the door, which to his surprise wouldn't move.

"Thanks Eli." Jerry said with a smile to Eli who simply grinned and released the door, causing the man to almost hit himself with it. "I'm afraid this isn't a request sir. We need to speak with Jesse."

"Demons!" The man shouted as he looked at the door and then stared Eli in the eyes. "You will not be allowed in my house! None of you!" The man said as he reached inside the door way and swiftly lifted a shotgun into view.

Just as Eddie was raising his Phaser, Eli raised his hand and slammed the shotgun into the doorway causing the reverend to fire the gun at the ceiling. "Let go of the gun sir, I can break your arm just as easily as I can hold it in place." Eli said as he noticed the man's son running up the stairs inside the house. "I got him, follow the kid!" Eli yelled as the man cried out and dropped the shotgun.

"Eddie!" Jerry shouted as he pointed to the stairwell. "Move in!"

"Y.. you don't have the right!" The man shouted through his yelps as Eli twisted his arm bringing him to his knees.

"Raising your firearm gave us the right, sir." Eddie said as he ran past the man with Benji and Jerry following.

At the top of the stairwell Eddie began checking each room until opening a door and waving the other two to approach. "Where is he." Eddie got out as Jerry and Benji appeared behind him in the doorway.

"I don't know." The teen said as he crossed his arms in defiance. "Go ahead and look, he's not in here." He continued with a sneer.

"Search the room." Jerry said as Eddie lowered his phaser and began to search with Benji.

“He's not in here.” Benji stated as he closed the closet door. “He's gotta be somewhere else in the house.”

“Let's start looking then, he's gotta be here somewhere.” Jerry said as he turned for the door and it suddenly slammed shut on it's own.

“Look in the closet.” A familiar voice seemed to come from nowhere in a whisper.

“Huh?” Jerry said as he quickly turned back and stared at Eddie, who shrugged his shoulders. “What did you say?”

“I didn't say anything.” Eddie said as he looked at Benji, getting a similar response.

“They can't hear me.” The voice whispered. *“Just you can, look in the closet again. Look close.”*

“Davie?” Jerry whispered as he looked around the room in time to see the closet door open seemingly on it's own.

“Yeah, it's me. Just look.” Davie's voice implored.

“In the closet.” Jerry said as he looked inside.

“We already looked in there.” Benji said as the teen sat back and snickered.

“I know.” Jerry said as he started tapping on the walls inside. “Something tells me we need to look closer.”

“That wall.” The voice whispered causing Jerry to look more closely at it.

“Davie,” Jerry whispered as he ducked deeper into the closet. “It's the backside of a stairwell.”

“Look at the bottom Booger Brain.” Davie replied. *“See! The corners of the sheet rock are cut away. Are you blind?”* Davie's voice impatiently continued as Jerry tapped on the center of the drywall panel. *“Bonehead! Stick your fingers into the crack on one side and pull it out.”*

Jerry squinted his eyes and looked closer at the wall before taking his brother's advice and squeezing his fingers into the opening and giving a gentle tug, causing the panel to become dislodged. “Oh my god.” Jerry gasped as the panel fell revealing a young boy tied up and gagged in the small area behind the false wall. “Guys!!!” Jerry yelled as he crawled into the small area. “He's in here, and not moving!!!”

Benji and Eddie rushed for the closet as the teen jumped up from the bed and ran for the door. After the boys pulled Jesse out of the hiding space, they carefully carried him to the bed; where they saw the boy tugging on the doorknob seemingly in a panic.

“Won't open?” Jerry asked as he turned to the boy.

“What's your rush kid?” Benji added. “You didn't know he was in there, remember?” Benji said in a low tone as he raised his hand forcing the boy against the door. “I think Mikey's here. I'm not holding the door.”

“Close.” Jerry replied with a grin.

“Ahhh...” Benji said with a grin as he opened his hand and threw it downward, throwing the teenager to the floor. “Who did this to the kid?” He demanded.

“I don't know.” The teen cried.

“He did. Just before you guys came up here.” Davie's voice seemed to echo in Jerry's ears.

“It was him.” Jerry said as he turned toward Eddie. “Is he alive?”

“Yeah, looks like our buddy over there knocked him out. Probably to keep him quiet.” Eddie replied as he pulled his communicator from it's holster. “Medical emergency! Request one to beam out immediately from these coordinates.”

“Energizing Mr. Fraser. Stand clear.” Billy's voice replied.

Just as Eddie stepped back from the bed, Jesse's lifeless body disappeared and Eddie focused his attention toward the teen. “Stand him up!” Eddie said through clenched teeth causing Jerry to jump out of surprise.

“Sure, my pleasure.” Benji replied with a sarcastic tone as he quickly raised his hand and the teen literally flew upright and right into the door with a slam.

“Who did this?” Eddie asked as he took a step forward getting no answer.

“Answer him.” Benji added as the teen seemed to be jerked away from the door and slammed back into it once again.

“P... pa.. Papa Did!” The teen shouted and began to cry.

“His dad did do some of the damage. They both took turns beating Jesse.” Jerry heard Davie's voice state. *“He beat and raped him though.”*

“He's lying guys.” Jerry said crossing his arms. “His father has beat Jesse, but he has done worse. They both need to be taken into custody.” Jerry said looking up at Eddie.

“How do you know all this?” Eddie asked with a confused look on his face.

“Divine intervention.” Benji said with a smile as he swung his arm causing the teen to be thrown into the opposing wall. “You can let it open Davie, I got him.” Benji said as the door seemed to drift open. “Thanks for the help bro.” He added causing Eddie to look even more confused.

"We'll explain later." Jerry said with a giggle as he watched Benji effortlessly toss the boy out into the hall and bounce him off every wall on the way toward the stairs where they all began to hear whimpering and crying from the first floor.

"Eli! You ok?" Benji shouted as he waved his hand and sent the boy tripping and stumbling all the way down to the first floor.

"Oh, I'm fine." Eli said as he looked up just in time to see the man's son land on the hard wood floor with a thump. "Hey, you must be Ezekiel." Eli said with a laugh. "Your Poppa has told me some really interesting stories about you."

"He tell you any about himself?" Jerry asked as he stepped over the crying ball at the bottom of the stairs.

"Awww... Have you been a bad Reverend; Reverend? What a shame, and we were just becoming best friends too." Eli said as he used his powers to force the Reverend's arm further up his back, causing him to scream out in pain. "Guess we can't be friends now." Eli said with a laugh as he looked back at the group and grinned. "What a dirt bag."

"No joke." Eddie replied. "Where are the rest of the occupants of this house?"

"My wi... wife is sho.. shopping..." The Reverend said between gasps before his son was tossed over to join him on the floor.

"Was the mother involved in all of this?" Benji asked Jerry.

After a moment Jerry replied; "Probably not. Davie said these two were the only ones he saw abusing Jesse." He said with a scowl as he pulled a small hand held out of his pocket. "Hold on one second guys." He said as he seemed to stare into an empty corner of the room and then started tapping away.

"What are you doing dude?" Benji asked as he watched Jerry sigh and pull out his communicator.

"These two need to be locked up." He said after clearing his throat. "Owens to Director Furst."

"Marc here Jerry. What's wrong?"

"I don't believe I have to do this." Jerry said as he rubbed his eyes. "Director, please log this transmission as it is to be immediately forwarded to Clan headquarters and Federation Youth Services."

"Understood Doctor, proceed."

Jerry cleared his throat and looked at Eli, who simply nodded his head as encouragement. "My name is Doctor Jerald Jonathan Owens, an officer of Clan Short of the family of Sarek of the house of Surak of the planet Vulcan, Artificial Intelligence Division. I am reporting my findings regarding the investigation of the minor Jesse David Blankenship in relation to recent legal interactions with local authorities and local Child Protection Services providing a fostering environment. We have found evidence of both physical and sexual abuse as provided by David William Owens, already on-site prior to our arrival." Jerry got out as his voice began to crack. With a sniffle he continued; "It is my duty to order pro-

tective custody to be immediately transferred to Clan Short, AI Division pending further investigation by Clan Short intelligence.”

“Doctor, please state the basis of your actions.”

“Yes Sir.” Jerry said as his hands began to shake. “Due to the evidence collected during this investigation, I am invoking the Safe Haven Act as there are clear violations of Article 11; sections 11.1, 11.2; substantiated under Article 68; section 68.1.a and pending Patriarch Short's investigation as required by Article 200, section 11.4.” Jerry said as he inhaled deeply. “Following telepathic investigation we will be required to further invoke Article 12; section 12.2 and possibly articles 13; section 13.1 and article 14 section 14.2.” He got out and for a moment the room fell completely silent. “Request permission to take Reverend Malachi Smeltz and his son Ezekiel Smeltz into immediate custody.”

“Permission Granted Jerry. Sounds like you have sufficient reason to invoke this act. We are standing by to transport your team and prisoners directly to the brig. I'll have a security team awaiting your arrival. Marc out.”

“We have a brig on-site?” Billy asked as Marc closed his communicator.

“Yeah.” He responded as he brought up the building's floor plan. “Under the guard shack on the east side of the building.” Marc said as he pointed to the section. “Beam them right into the processing room.” He added as Billy's communicator chirped.

“O'Keefe here.” Billy said as he positioned himself at the transporter's controls.

“Six to beam directly to the brig Chief.”

Billy nodded his head as he entered the coordinates. “On your command sir.”

“Energize.”

After completing the transport, Billy secured the controls and nodded to Marc. “Now, why are we arresting this guy and how do we have the power to just do it on our own?”

“You can't honestly tell me you haven't heard of what this Clan is capable of. I mean, they are a huge part of the reason there is a Safe Haven Act.” Marc replied as he turned for the door and motioned for Billy to follow. “Let's head down to the brig and make sure we'll actually be able to hold a prisoner until Cory gets back from Australia.”

“Right behind you.” Billy said as they turned into the hallway. “I thought Federation Youth Services created the SHA.” Billy said as they reached the elevator and Marc pressed the down button.

“Who is the director of Federation Youth Services?” Marc asked with a grin.

“Teri Sho... Oh...” Billy paused as he realized he had answered his own question. “I guess I never put one and one together.” Billy said as the doors opened and they stepped inside.

"I always figured it was just common knowledge that Clan Short all started out with Teri's sons." Marc said with a laugh. "I mean I was never involved with the Federation and I even knew that."

Once reaching the basement, the two continued the walk to the far east wing. "This corridor." Marc said tilting his head as he strained to open the big steel door. "This place has definitely been unused for a really long time." Marc said as they entered the long narrow corridor leading to the brig.

"I can't get it to power up!" Eli said as he saw Marc and Billy enter the room. "Good timing." He said smiling at Marc. "This stupid control panel doesn't work. We can't open the cell doors."

"Okay." Marc said as he walked into the control booth. "Somewhere in here there should be a key set, so we can lock and unlock them manually." He said as he began to look around the small room.

"Nope." Eli stated with his hands on his hips. "If it's in here, they hid it good."

"Wonderful." Marc stated as he exited the booth and walked into the detention area to join the others. "Hi guys." Marc said as he entered the room to see the two prisoners handcuffed to one of the cells while the group seemed to be searching the room. "The control booth is junk and the master key set wasn't left behind." He said as he pulled at one of the doors to see if it would open. "If we can get one to open, we might be able to chain the door or something."

Jerry nodded his head and grabbed one of the doors and gave it a tug. Just like the one Marc tried, it wouldn't budge. "Why are they all locked?"

"Default condition." Eddie said as he grabbed the door to a nearby cell and gasped as the door literally fell off its hinges and crashed to the floor. "Um..." He said as he brushed the dust off of his uniform. "Marc, this one's open." He said with a worried grin. "I hope they plan to renovate this section soon."

"We didn't actually plan to be holding prisoners Dude." Marc said as he tried another cell, and it actually opened. "Here we go." He said as he turned to the reverend and his son. "Room for two." He added in a sarcastic tone as Eddie rushed over and began to unshackle the teenager. "Where did you guys find the handcuffs? They look ancient."

"The Guards station. They were in the desk." Benji said as he assisted Eddie in releasing the two and getting them into the cell.

Once they were both inside, Benji swung the cell door closed and scowled when it bounced right back open, causing Reverend Smeltz to start laughing. "Nice plan. Maybe next time you boys want to play cops and robbers you'll stick to your back yard and not use people who will end up suing for wrongful prosecution." he chuckled out as Eddie wrapped the handcuffs around the bars and locked them in place.

"Oh yeah, I really trust this." Eddie said as he rattled the door.

"We'll keep an armed guard in here." Marc said as he raised an eyebrow when Jerry gave another tug and realized he could still open the door enough to stick his head through. "Maybe we can barricade the cell somehow." Marc got out as Eddie kicked at the bars, the reverend and his son laughing the entire time.

“Stand back.” Eddie said as he pulled out his phaser and set it to its highest setting. “Close your eyes guys.” he shouted as he fired at the door and fused it shut. “Laugh at that.” he said to the man and his son, who seemed to quiet down considerably.

“That works...” Eli said as he watched Benji blow at the smoke that was fuming from the door frame. “...but how are we gonna get them out?”

“Who cares.” Eddie said as he looked inside the cell, allowing an evil grin to spread across his face. “Cops and robbers is getting boring anyway. You guys wanna go hang out at the mall or something?” He laughed as he waved the group toward the processing room. “Let's leave these two alone.” He said as he nodded his head to one of the cadets that were assigned to the prisoners. “If they get out of hand, stun them.”

Once they were outside the detention area, Marc looked back inside the control booth. “We gotta get this mess to work if it's gonna be of any help to the clan.”

“I have an idea.” Eddie said as he pulled out his communicator. “Fraser to Corporal Jackson.”

“Hey Eddie. Reporting in?”

“Not exactly, we have a problem. Actually it's an oversight with the Naval Hospital renovation.” Eddie said as he watched Jerry waving to get Marc's attention.

“We gotta get back to work.” Jerry whispered as he rushed out the door with Eli and Benji behind him.

“What's the problem?”

“Sir, during the planning of the hospital's renovation no thought was put into the brig that's on-site. We had a situation that has us holding two diplomatic prisoners in an unsecured holding facility.” Eddie said as Marc sat on a nearby table and watched. “I'm worried about safety in the building. Should a prisoner escape holding, they could possibly become a danger to the hospital's occupants.”

“Is a renovation of that area budgeted?”

Eddie looked at Marc who simply shrugged his shoulders. “Doubtful. I know it's not considered in the plans I saw.”

“Is there anyway I can help?”

Eddie leaned against the wall and sighed. “Well, I have one cell secured with two prisoners inside. I'm going to need additional armed security to station in the brig while we are holding. If we're required to hold any more than that, do you think there would be any way to get mid-level security holding through the county?”

“It's possible. Let me see if I can pull a few strings to help out here. For now, if you are satisfied with the situation as it is; I'll simply up security personnel on-site as needed. Will that help?”

“Definitely. I'll let Marc know you're looking into possible options for him. I know he'll appreciate it. Thanks Will. Fraser out.” Eddie sighed and turned back toward Marc. “Maybe he can come up with something.”

“I hope so.” Marc said as he opened the door leading back into the building. “I have a few things to take care of. Let me know if he calls back, okay?”

“No problem. Don't worry about things down here. I'll make sure there is a set of eyes attached to a phaser on both of them at all times.” Eddie sad with a wink.

“I know you will.” Marc said as he walked through the doorway. “You're gonna be one hell of a security chief someday.” Marc added over his shoulder as the door swung shut and his communicator chirped. “Oh, what now?” He said rolling his eyes as he grabbed the unit and continued to walk. “Marc here.”

“Marc, it's Caleb. Are you busy?”

“Not really bro, wassap?” Marc said as he walked down the dusty corridor.

“I just wanted to say Sorry, you know, for not tellin you I knew the CEO at Dyson Industries. I just didn't want you to think I asked him or nuthin.”

Marc held his communicator out at arms length and glared at it for a second before replying; “Well, you should be ashamed of yourself.” Marc said containing a giggle as he reached the elevator. “So you were just waiting for them to tell me that you knew them. What, so I would think it wasn't like you called and asked or something?”

“Well kinda. I mean if you knew he was my uncle you may not have called. I knew he wanted to help, so I sorta just left that part out.”

Marc stepped into the elevator and pushed the first floor button before smiling. “So what makes you think I'm gonna call now?”

“You haven't called yet?”

“Nope.” Marc said and then put his hand over his mouth to keep from laughing.

“Omigod... You suck!”

“You wish!” Marc laughed back. “Seriously, I haven't had time to call yet.” He got out as the doors opened and he stepped out onto the first floor. “It's been busy as hell here.”

“I swear, I didn't ask him for money.”

“I wouldn't have accused you of it, honestly.” Marc said as he walked toward radiology and the active terminal. “So, you wanna give me a name now. I mean it would sound better if I at least knew who I was asking for.”

“Oh yeah, it's my uncle Jeff, you'll wanna ask for Jeff Dodds-Miller.”

“Thanks Cal.” Marc replied as he made a quick turn and arrived at the front desk where there was an active terminal. “Next time just let me know what's going on, ok? There's nothing wrong with family wanting to lend a hand.”

“You bet Marc. Sorry bout that. I promise it won't happen again.”

“Better not.” Marc said with a giggle. “Next time you'll be grounded and not allowed to play with Noah.”

“Noooo! Not that!” Caleb's voice playfully shouted with a laugh. “Caleb out.”

Marc walked around behind the reception desk and brought the system out of standby to place his call as he clipped his communicator back onto his belt.

“Dyson Industries, How may I direct your call?”

“Hi, may I speak to a Mister... um... Jeff Dodds-Miller please?”

“Who may I ask is calling, and for what purpose?” The older woman asked with a serious expression.

“My name is Marc Furst... well... Doctor Marc Furst. I'm currently acting as division head of the AI division of Clan Short. I'm returning his call ma'am.”

“One moment please Doctor.” The woman replied and the image disappeared.

“Dr. Furst, this is Jeff Dodds-Miller. I'm glad you returned my call.”

“Sorry it took so long Mr. Dodds-Miller. I did get your message yesterday but with our division head away and the Clan keeping us as busy as they have, I've been kinda swamped.” Marc said with a warm smile.

“That's quite all right, Dr. Furst, and please, call me Jeff.”

Marc smiled and nodded his head. “Thanks Jeff, you can call me Marc. I hate being all formal. So, you told Cal that you wanted to talk to me? What can we do for you?”

Jeff leaned forward, placing his elbows on the desk. “Marc, it has come to mine and my older brother's attention that your Division of the Clan has recently taken possession of the old Naval Hospital there in Charleston. Is that correct?”

“Yessir.” Marc said as he sat back in his chair. “Doc Austin...” Marc started to say before stopping himself short. “Um... You do know Doc Austin don't you?”

“Yes, we do,” Jeff said. “However, this information was brought to me by my nephews, Justy, Jamie, and Jacob.”

“Your nephews?” Marc said raising his eyebrows. “Cool!” He continued with a huge smile. “Anyway, Doc Austin realized that we were gonna need someplace to perform some of the medical and mechanical aspects of our duties to the Clan. He has actually handled all of the details so far.”

"That's good to know," Jeff replied. "Doc Austin had the boys contact me about possibly helping your Division out with a grant to refit and modernize the Hospital."

Marc nodded his head and sighed. “Really? That's really nice of you. We could use all the help we can get honestly. I mean the Federation has handled most of our setup for the Youth Services section and Ambassador Sarek has helped by deferring some of the cost with the planned equipment, but it leaves us scratching for some of it. I do have some government funding for the old company I still have control over, which helps a little.” He said curling up one side of his mouth. “Honestly, anything you have planned would be a huge help.”

“Well, what I was thinking of is setting up a Foundation that could endow your refit and modernization program for now,” Jeff replied. “And later on, it would help with your operating costs and possible future expansion.”

“Oh wow, that would be awesome.” Marc replied with a smile. “Would you like any details regarding the current project to get an idea of what areas you may wish to help with? I think I can get that information for you.”

“Yes, I would,” Jeff replied. “If you don't mind, I'd also like to bring my older brother in on this call, so that he can have some input on this as well.”

Marc nodded his head. “No problem, if I can have a minute, I'll contact HQ and have the financial details sent to you. Is it okay if I put this communication on hold for a moment Jeff?”

“That's fine, Marc,” Jeff said. “It will give me a chance to get my older brother on the line.”

“Sweet, I'll be right back.” Marc said as he put the conversation on hold and immediately opened a communication to HQ.

“Justy here Marc, What's up?”

“Hey Justy. I have your Uncle Jeff on hold from Dyson Industries.” Marc began. “Do you think it would be possible to send him a copy of the remodel plans Doc Austin had drawn up for the Naval Hospital? He could use it to get an idea of where he would like to help.”

“I have the file ready.” Justin replied. “It'll be on it's way the second we disconnect.”

“Wow, thanks bro. How'd you pull that off so fast?” Marc asked raising his eyebrows.

“Clan secret.” Justy replied with a laugh. “HQ out.” He said with a grin before the screen went blank again.

“They must practice being unbelievable, I swear.” Marc said as he resumed his other call. “The information should be on it's way Jeff.” Marc said with a smile.

"I've gotten it, Marc. I've also got my older brother, the drip, on the line with us," Jeff said, trying to keep from laughing out loud.

"Drip on the line?" Marc asked through a giggle when a second view popped up on his screen, with a displaying a dripping wet gentlemen.

"You're gonna be thinking 'drip' the next time I see you, little brother," The man said when Marc noticed a towel hanging around his neck. "I'll have you know that your brother-in-law will pay dearly for it."

"Marc, the 'drip' is my older brother, Chip, also known as Commander Charles Dodds of the USS Enterprise," Jeff said. "Standing slightly behind him is his husband, Josh, also known as JC from NSYNC."

"Oh wow." Marc said with a smile. "Nice to meet you guys!" He said while still stifling a giggle. "So is it some sort of twisted family tradition or something to go swimming fully dressed? There was a lot of that goin on when the boys visited too." He got out before finally laughing.

Chip laughed on the screen. "It does seem that way, doesn't it? It's a pleasure to meet you, Marc," he said. "I understand that the old Naval Hospital there is kinda run down and in need of a serious refit."

"Oh yeah. But it is really coming along faster than I thought it could. Biggest problem we're having right now is the fact the hospital has 10 floors, 4 are partially completed and three are already in use." Marc said sitting back in his chair once again. "We're just now learning what was planned for and what wasn't."

"I see," Chip said. "Well, Josh and I are going to donate \$25 Million of our own personal money to the new Foundation, and I'm gonna recommend to Jeff that Dyson Industries match our donation. That should help get you and your people started, shouldn't it?"

"Um..." Marc was able to force out. "Well I... Um... Oh my god..."

"Everything okay, Marc?" Jeff asked. "We didn't surprise you, did we?"

"Are you kidding?" Marc scowled and looked at the screen. "I didn't think... well... I didn't expect... You know." He got out as the two laughed, obviously having fun watching him stammer his way through the conversation. "Yeah, a little surprised."

"I've got an idea, Marc," Chip said. "How about if Jeff, his husband Chris, Josh and I come up there and take a look around? That way, I can get a better idea of what you have and what you need. At the same time, we can hand over to you the two donation checks."

"Sure that'd be cool. If you hold off for a couple of days, Danny, our division head should be back with the rest of the gang. I know he would definitely want to be here to thank you." Marc said with a smile. "If you're interested, I can even show you some of what we have planned so far."

"Sounds good to us," Jeff said. "Go ahead and send what you have already. I'll make sure that Chip gets copies of everything."

“Marc,” Chip said. “I was thinking of us coming up there the middle of next week. Will that be good for you and your people?”

“Should be.” Marc said with a smile. “By then this place should quiet down a little too.” He continued with a laugh. “It's been crazy so far.” He continued adding; “I'll have Danny touch base to confirm the time and date. Cool?”

“Works for us, Marc.” Jeff said.

“We'll probably be coming up there in a shuttlecraft from the Enterprise.” Chip said.

“No way! Jerry's gonna have a heart attack.” Marc said in awe.

“Don't tell him or any of the others,” Chip said. “Let it be a surprise, alright?”

“Are you kidding?” Marc answered with an evil grin. “My lips are sealed. Trust me.”

“Alright, Marc,” Jeff said, trying to contain his laughter. “We'll see you next week.”

“Definitely, I'll confirm with your office before then. Thanks for everything guys.” Marc said with a huge smile. “Marc Out.” He finished and set the system to standby.

Meanwhile at the house, Noah, Caleb and JR were all huddled around the terminal in the upper lab. “No dude.” Noah said as he looked over Caleb's shoulder. “Look at those parameters. I'm telling you this really could give you a trinary environment with the right hardware.”

“No way!” Caleb shot back with a scowl. “Look here, this is the base language. I still think this could be used to create the environment, not act as it.”

JR simply watched them toss their beliefs back and forth before clearing his throat and gaining both boys attention. “It's theoretic.” He meekly said as he pointed to thread being displayed on the screen. “There's no way to tell without designing a processor that could handle trinary input and simply trying to execute this.” He said as he stepped back and looked at Noah. “Either one of you could be right, but we have no way to even guess.”

“He's right.” Caleb said as he closed the file and turned in his seat. “But how could we even begin to design a tridimensional processor without a base to start from?”

“It's been done.” Noah said as he sat down in one of the folding chairs. “Cal, you already know how to do it.” he said with a grin.

“Oh, I do?” Caleb replied with sarcasm showing through in his voice.

“Yeah, duh.” Noah replied with a laugh. “Positronic programming. That uses a kind of tri-dimensional language.” He said with a smile. “If we were to redesign a standard positronic matrix to act as the processor in a standard terminal....” He got out before Caleb cut him off.

"You would fry the power supply." Caleb shot in. "To operate within a system, you would need to supply it; separate from the main system itself. It would need a three phase power supply and an inverter on both ends so it wouldn't cook the mother board or the positronic matrix. That wouldn't even make sense to build. Remember? I tried that idea in school and got a C, only because it was," He began with a snooty tone; "a creative approach but a bit too far fetched."

"It wouldn't make sense to design a unit that was capable of communicating with standard systems while at the same time operating with true AI?" JR asked as he plopped down in a seat of his own. "That's pretty much what we're talking about, right?"

"Yeah, kinda." Caleb answered as he rubbed his eyes.

"Wouldn't that be a more efficient system? I mean it would be able to do tons more than just call up and save information. It would be able to think for itself, act like a team member instead of just be a computer." JR said as both boys began nodding their heads in agreement. "Think about it, a terminal that would be just as smart as us, and learning all the time from all the sources it can draw from."

"Provided this is really a trinary language that is." Noah said as he crossed his arms. "We'll never know unless we put it to the test. Here's the plan." Noah continued. "I have to head back to the hospital; before you guys get back to wiring the new network; see if you can work up a theoretical report and we'll show it to Marc and Danny. Maybe they will even approve the project."

"Danny was trying to come up with an alternative interface. This really could be something we could work with him on." Caleb said to Noah before turning to JR and smiling. "You kinda have the basics down dude; maybe the three of us can work on it together since Danny's been so busy."

"Not me." Noah said with a frown. "I'm gonna be stuck at the hospital for a while getting the systems there online. This project is your baby." He said with a smile as he stood up. "Besides, if you can come up with a proposal that has a solid enough base we could be looking at upgrading some existing equipment. Just try to do better than a C this time." He laughed out as he ran for the door. "Cal, wanna beam me over to the hospital before Marc reports me as missing?" He said with a giggle as the terminal alerted there was an incoming call.

"Go ahead JR, you take that and I'll HANDLE Noah." Caleb said with an evil grin before chasing Noah out of the room, both laughing and shouting at each other all the way to the basement.

JR nervously cleared his throat as he accepted the incoming transmission. "Um... Clan Short, AI Division. This is JR." He got out as the image of his father appeared on the screen and gave him a smile. "Dad!!"

"Hey big guy! You working communications now?"

"Kinda." JR said with an accomplished grin. "We were just talking about a new computer system that we might get to design. I was right here when you called."

"So I take it you won't be home for dinner?" Judge Legette said with a smile.

"Um, is it ok if I stay. For a little while longer than we planned? Please?" JR almost begged.

"I suppose so." His father replied with a smile. "Hey, you wouldn't have any idea what the issue with their brig is would you?"

"Brig?" JR questioned. "No clue. Is that why you called?"

"Yeah. Corporal Jackson just called and informed me that Dr. Furst was in real need of assistance with the holding facility. I think I may be able to lend a hand in that department."

"Sweet!" JR replied with a smile. "If ya call the hospital, you should be able to talk to Marc."

"I'll do that then." His father said as he reached for his terminal's keyboard. "I'll talk to you soon. Be on your best behavior. Okay?"

"I will Dad." JR said with a blush. "Love you!"

"Love you too." His father said as the call ended.

"YES!" JR yelled as he turned and ran for the doorway, almost colliding with Caleb. "I can stay longer. My Dad said it was okay!" He shouted as Caleb raised his hand and they high fived each other.

"Awesome." Caleb said putting his arm over JR's shoulder. "I get to work your butt off then." He added with a smile as they both giggled and turned to head back down to the basement.

Three hours later: Medical Facility, Transporter Room #1

"Try it now." Noah said, beginning to get frustrated.

"Nope, still no uplink." Marc replied as he punched the controls on the transporter's console.

"Three friggin hours!" Noah said as he pulled apart the com cables again. "I think these computers just can't talk to each other."

"Sure they can." Billy said as he entered the room with a loop of cable in his hand. "They just weren't designed to." He said as he got down on the floor and crawled into the conduit chase alongside Noah. "Show me what you tried so far. This new harness might help."

"One terminal, the transporter system, a replicator base and one harness?" Noah asked as he scooted over and made room. "This is just insane."

"They all speak the same language Noah." Billy said as they began breaking down the rest of the connections to install the harness Billy had constructed. "Eventually we'll be able to design a unit to do this work, until then these three need to learn to play nice."

"If they refuse are we gonna make them stand in the corner or something?" Marc asked as he knelt down next to the opening in the wall with two sets of legs sticking out.

“That'll help. Thanks Marc.” Billy said with a laugh. “You better get moving on that profile. If we get this functional I'd like to be able to do a simulated replication. The sooner, the better.”

“Okay, okay... Slavedriver! I'm workin on it. Sheesh.” Marc replied with a grin as he dragged his feet all the way back and began tapping away on the keyboard.

“Isn't he like, your boss now?” Noah rolled over and looked at Billy with a grin.

“Yeah.” Billy said with a smile. “Until he gives me a deadline and makes it impossible to keep.” He replied with a grin before pointing to one end of the harness. “Can you make the connections to the replicator base while I get the transporter relays wired in?”

“Sure.” Noah replied as he rolled in the other direction and looked at the connectors. “Nice.” He said as the first one snapped right into place. “Beats how I was trying to connect it.”

“It's nothing, really.” Billy said as he pulled open the relay enclosure and started splicing in his connections. “The trick is to not just jump right in. A few minutes of planning can save hours of headache in the long run.”

“Good advice.” Noah said as he continued his work. “What about the extra interface for the transporter console?”

“Got it covered.” Billy replied as he waved another thick looking harness. “We're gonna network the AI capable terminal right above the transporter console. This way we can work on the image in buffer, test the replication under simulation and even use the uplink port to install the personality imprint on the new android once it's replicated.”

“There's gonna be a catch here I think.” Marc added from the terminal.

“What's wrong?” Billy asked continuing his work.

“It looks like the replicated unit is going to arrive fully offline.” He said with a sigh.

“Makes sense. He won't have an operating system yet.” Noah said as he slid out of the conduit.

“No, biological systems as well.” Marc said looking up at Noah, who was beginning to look confused. “Um... It means that we need to get his mechanical systems online and jump start biologics.”

“Um...” Noah muttered as he tilted his head. Obviously still not getting it.

“He's gonna arrive dead Noah.” Billy said as he also slid out of the opening in the wall and replaced the cover.

“Dead?” Noah almost choked out. “As in...”

“Circulatory and pulmonary systems not functioning.” Marc added to help clarify the comment. “We're gonna need a biobed in place. We'll have about 15 minutes to upload his personality imprint and operating environment, get that online and then defibrillate him.”

“What if we don't get him going in that amount of time?” Noah asked with a scowl.

“His biologics begin to die.” Marc said. “At that point to use the unit you would need to start all over again or; let the biologics die and then begin a manual start sequence.”

“Oh wow.” Noah mumbled. “That's not much time.”

“It's enough.” Marc said as he began tapping away once again. “Provided the imprint is ready to go. All configurations have to be completed ahead of time.”

“Simulation shows good, I think we can attempt a physical simulation Marc.” Billy stated as he brought the transporter console online. “Is the physical profile complete?”

“Yeah, load kevper01a.” Marc said as he continued working.

“Noah, grab a tricorder and be ready to scan a lifeform.” Billy said as the hum of the transporters systems signaled that it was ready.

“Ok.” Noah replied. “I'm ready.”

“Here we go.” Billy said as he adjusted the terminal's keyboard to be in better reach. “Loading profile into buffers.” Billy said as the hum loudened as if a transport were taking place. “System reading normal.” He said as he rushed his typing. “Buffer ready, preparing to execute replication.” He said as he stopped typing and nodded to Noah. “Here he comes.” He got out just as he boosted the transporters power and a form began to materialize on the transporter's pad.

“Oh my god.” Noah gasped as the transporter completed it's duties and the hum quieted down. “Wow.” He said as he stepped up onto the pad and looked down at the naked form of a teenager lying lifeless on the floor. “It's Kevin.”

“Not exactly, but if this worked that's what he's going to look like.” Marc said looking up from his screen. “Noah, do a detailed scan. Full spectrum.” Marc said as he got up and approached the pad. “Ten fingers, ten toes Chief.” Marc said with a grin as he knelt down next to the lifeless form. “Alterations took.” He said as he ran his fingers through his hair and began to open one eye and then the next. “Hazel eyes.” He said as he looked over to Noah who had just completed his scan. “Well?”

Noah shook his head and looked back at the tricorder's display. “He.. he's dead. I mean he's all there but not... I mean...”

Marc smiled and took the Tricorder. “Billy.” He said with a smile as he sat down and read the unit's reports. “All systems offline, positronic matrix checks out, biologics appear to be offline but reading readiness for full activation.” He ruffled the lifeless form's hair and stood up. “He's a unit ready to come online. Congratulations Chief!” He said as he walked over to the console and set the tricorder down. “Once we analyze his DNA and do a full systems check, we'll know for sure.” He said as Billy looked over at the transporter pad and his smile faded.

“Look.” Billy whispered causing Marc to quickly turn and watch as Noah sat and ran his fingers down the lifeless android's face. One single tear had worked itself down his cheek.

“Noah?” Marc said just above a whisper. “That's not Kevin.” He added as he stepped back up onto the pad and knelt down pulling Noah into a half hug.

“He looks so human and... alive.” Noah sniffled. “It almost looks like he's breathing.” He said with his voice beginning to break.

“Trust me, it's not.” Marc said as he rubbed Noah's back. “If this simulation was successful, the next one could be Kevin.” He said as he tightened his squeeze.

“I can't wait to meet him. You know, for real.” He said as he pulled back and wiped his eyes.

“Same here.” Marc said as he stood up and motioned for Noah to follow. “You gonna be ok?”

“Yeah.” Noah said with a laugh and a sniffle. “I guess I didn't expect him to look so alive.”

“Eerie, isn't it?” Billy said as the terminal began to beep. “We have a full spectral and chemical profile in the system now. Should I terminate the simulation?”

“Terminate?” Noah asked with a squeak in his voice.

“This was just a test.” Marc said as he nodded to Billy and the transporter began to power up.

“Oh yeah.” Noah said as he watched the transporter envelop the body with sparkles of light before it vanished from existence. “How soon?”

“Huh?” Marc asked with a confused smile.

“Before we get to meet Kevin I mean. How soon?” Noah asked.

“If everything checks out with the scans that were taken, possibly as soon as tomorrow.” Marc said with a smile. “Ok, Noah, I'm going to need you to team up with Jerry and get a biobed set up in here, right in front of the console. Have Antonio and Byron report to me, I'm going to have them go over the scans that we took. If anything is physically wrong with him, I'd be willing to bet they'll catch it.” Marc continued as he walked back over to the terminal and sat down. “Let Austin, Eli and Benji know what our progress is and that I will be ready tomorrow afternoon to begin Austin's final re-constructive surgery as well as prep the prosthetic replacements.” He rambled as he began to type away. “Billy, could you touch base with Dr. Herron? Let him know I'll need a team to assist with three prosthetic implants tomorrow. Then hook up with Jerry and get that neuro-microscope unit installed and powered up.”

“Aye sir, I'm on it.” Billy replied and headed out of the room with a huge smile.

“You gonna stay in here?” Noah asked.

“Yeah, I have to complete Kevin's personality imprint.” He said with a warm smile. “Get moving. I would like to see you guys turn in in a couple of hours. Tomorrow is gonna be a full day, big time.”

“You got it.” Noah said with a smile before he broke out in a run for the door.

Two hours passed before Noah and Jerry entered the transporter room with a portable biobed. “Marc?” Jerry said in surprise once he noticed Marc at the terminal with his head down on the desk; an uplink cable attached between him and the computer.

“Oh, hi guys.” Marc replied sleepily as he sat upright and stretched. “Musta overworked the system that time.” He said through a yawn as he disconnected the cable from the back of his head and closed his access port.

“Why were you attached?” Noah asked as they rolled the biobed into place and both hopped up onto it to sit for a while.

“I was creating a dream for Kevin.” He said with a grin.

“A dream?” Noah asked tilting his head.

“Yeah.” Marc replied as he sat back in his chair and put his feet up on the desk. “See, when an android is online and sleeping, they dream just like you do. For periods of time in an offline state, it's almost like being in a frozen consciousness. Time has no meaning as it will only appear as a few seconds pass; even though hours, days or even years may have actually gone by.”

“That's good, isn't it?” Noah asked scratching his head. “I mean if he's not aware how much time has passed.

“It's like someone steals that chunk of time, right Marc?” Jerry injected.

“That's right Jer. It's a little frightening for a consciousness to just 'loose' time. As a gift from all of us, I have been compiling memories of all the things that have happened since he was deactivated and stored.” Marc said with a smile as he reached for the keyboard and set it in his lap. “I plan to integrate it into his active memory as a dream. This way when he wakes up, not only will he have a real memory from his offline time, but he will also have in a way met everyone. Even if it will feel to him as he has only seen it all in a dream.”

“That's a really cool idea bro.” Noah said with a smile.

“Can we do that for Joey?” Jerry asked.

“We can, if you want to override the dreams he's having now.” Marc said with a grin. “I wouldn't be surprised if he was taking in all that he is hearing around him and dreaming about it already.”

“Really? You mean he can hear what's going on?” Jerry questioned.

“Once his personality imprint was uploaded, it was activated. Even if the rest of his systems had to remain offline.” Marc answered.

“So he's heard me talking to him? Me and Austin?” Jerry asked with a slight smile creeping into his expression.

"I'm sure he has." Marc said as he noticed the time on the computer. "You guys have everything set for tomorrow?"

"Yep." Noah said with a smile. "Just before we came in here, Antonio said they had just finished going over Kevin's scan and everything looks good. Real good the way he said it."

"Yeah, everyone is starting to head for bed." Jerry said as he hopped down off the biobed. "Like you should do soon." He added with Noah nodding in agreement.

"I'm done here, but I think I'm gonna take a walk to clear my head first." Marc said as he stood up and stretched. "Jerry, have you been keeping tabs on Dixon and Jesse?"

"Yeah, they are both sleeping right now. It's been a rough few days for them both." Jerry said with a frown. "Dr. Herron says he has a report prepared for you."

"Dixon doesn't know Jesse is here yet, does he?" Marc asked as he ushered the boys out into the hall.

"Dr. Herron said it might be too much for him to handle since Jesse hasn't even woken up yet." Noah said with a sigh.

"You sound like you don't agree." Marc said placing his hand on Noah's shoulder.

"He's gotta know Jesse is safe Marc." Noah said in a sort of pouting tone. "If anything were ever to separate me and Caleb..." He started before looking at the floor and taking a deep breath. "Not knowing would hurt worse than the hurt he's got already."

"I couldn't have said that better myself." Marc said with a warm smile. "Jerry, I'll check on him before I turn in. If he's awake, I'll tell him that Jesse is here and safe." He said as both boys eyes got wide and they smiled wide. "But..." Marc continued; "Until Dixon is stronger he is to get no details of what his boyfriend has gone through. He's not strong enough for that yet. Are we clear?"

"Yes sir." Both boys chimed before giving Marc a hug and heading in for bed.

"I need a break." Marc mumbled as he watched them turn the corner and disappear from sight. He smiled and turned in the opposite direction, heading for the main entrance to the building. Once reaching the doors, he saw a familiar form leaning on the railing watching the water fountain. "Him too." Marc said as he opened the door and slowly crossed the driveway.

"Hi Dad." Austin said as he turned and smiled. "Check it out." He continued as he pointed to the marks on his face. "They're almost gone."

"Lookin good." Marc said as he grabbed Austin's chin and turned his head to the left and right to inspect his work in the dimly lit area. "Out here you can hardly even notice."

"Yeah." Austin said with a smile as they both leaned on the railing and listened to the sounds from the fountain. "Joey's gonna be ready tomorrow." He said with a smile. "I heard you guys already tested the replicator and Kevin came out perfect."

“Well, news travels fast.” Marc said with a weak giggle. “Although perfect would be happy and awake. The model you created was a perfect base to work from. Kevin's gonna know you donated part of yourself for him you know.”

“He's Danny's real life nephew, right?” Austin questioned as he seemed to become lost in thought.

“More than that actually.” Marc replied. “Kevin chose Danny to be his uncle, there was never any blood between them.”

“That's even more special then.” Austin grinned. “I can't wait to meet him. From what I've heard he sounds like a really nice kid.” Austin got out before he turned to face his father. “Thanks for letting me help, you know.”

“I think I do.” Marc said meeting his son's gaze.

“It's weird to suddenly have a family.” Austin said as he turned back toward the water. “Just thinking back to the day before Timmy and the guys found me is like looking at a different life. Is that normal? With humans I mean.”

“To form a family bond so quickly?” Marc questioned.

“Yeah.”

“No, from the examples I've seen over the years, trust is something that takes a long time to establish. There's something seriously special about this group. It's almost like some higher power hand picked each and every one and said 'they belong to each other' and then just made it happen.”

“I've never seen anything like it.” Austin replied.

“I'm not complaining.” Marc said as he draped his arm across Austin's shoulders. “We were chosen too.”

“Me either.” Austin smiled. “I got dad's and pops and brothers and a grandmother and friends I never even dreamed possible.” He continued as his smile faded. “Dad?”

“Yes?” Marc responded.

“Would you be upset with me if I asked to live with Timmy and his family?” He asked, almost having to force the question out of his mouth.

“You've given this some thought?” Marc asked.

“Yeah, and it's not an easy decision.” Austin said with a sigh. “I mean I wanna be here with you and help Joey and stuff, but Timmy and his family...” He got out before Marc shushed him.

“We are all family. Sean and Cory legally are your guardians, so in that aspect you don't even have to choose.” Marc answered in a reassuring tone.

“But what about you? Joey? I mean everyone here too. I have family here.” Austin said, his shoulders beginning to droop under the weight he was obviously trying to carry alone. “What kind of a big brother would I be to Joey if I'm not even here?”

“You think you're leaving by going home?” Marc said with a smile. “You do realize it would take leaving the planet to separate this gang.” He got out with a laugh. “Even leaving the planet would make being close nothing more than a longer trip.”

“I guess so.” Austin half heartedly agreed. “I just don't want to hurt Joey's feelings, or yours.”

“You think you ever could?” Marc replied with a grin. “I can't speak for Joey, but I'm happy you are back in my life. Even happier that you are going to be safe, with a family that loves you.” He said pulling his son into a hug. “Here or there, you might as well be living right next door. Distance doesn't feel so far away when love keeps you connected.”

“That's nice.” Austin replied, tightening his hug. “Did you ever practice being a Dad?”

“Nope.” Marc said with a giggle. “Am I doin ok?”

“For a guy with no practice, ok I guess.” He got out before Marc started to poke his sides. “The Best! I mean the best! St.. Stop it... That... ACK... That TICKLES!” Austin shouted as he tried to jump and squirm out of Marc's grip, both eventually settling into a quiet hug. “Had to program me to be ticklish, didn't you?” Austin whispered with a laugh.

“Yup.” Marc giggled. “Had to keep the upper hand.”

“Cheater!” Austin jibed as he buried his face in Marc's neck. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Marc replied. “Now you should plan to get some rest. I want you at 100% before I get you on the table tomorrow. Once we're done, Timmy and Joey won't see any more hurt on you. I know that's kind of important to you.”

“I never said that.” Austin stood back and tilted his head.

“You felt it.” Marc replied with a smile. “Am I wrong?”

“No...” Austin shrugged. “You read my emotional response logs?”

“Nope, instinct.” Marc laughed. “Let's call it a father's intuition.”

“Right... You know, we gotta be the weirdest androids in the universe.” Austin said with a smirk.

“The rest should be so lucky.” Marc answered before pointing toward the doors. “Your bed is waiting. March, Mister Short. Oh, and no terminal connections tonight. I have about 15 years of schooling I need to upload and incorporate.”

“Okay, okay...” Austin said as he slipped out of the hug and threw his hands in the air. “See, that's the area you need to work on your 'Dad-ish-ness'. Bossing kids around like they we...”

“Move!” Marc cut him off and they both began to laugh. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

After Austin went back inside, Marc slowly followed in the same direction, turning off the water fountain and its lights on his way in.

“Good evening Dr. Furst.” A voice echoed from further down the hall.

“Hey Chris.” Marc replied with a tired grin.

Chris opened his eyes wide and crossed his arms. “Android or not, you’re getting run down Director Furst.” Chris said nodding his head. “Just to clarify something, while you are acting head of this division, would that make me your head physician?”

“I suppose.” Marc replied tilting his head. “You or maybe even Jerry, but he’s asleep.” Marc said scratching his head. “It really hasn’t been planned out yet. Why do you ask?”

“Because acting as your Head Physician, I wish to actively relieve you of duty for a period of no less than 8 hours.” Dr. Herron said with a serious glare. “Your health, or in your case your functionality will begin to deteriorate with the pace you’ve been maintaining.”

“But I was gonna go check on Dixon and Jesse first.” Marc whined.

“Already done Marc. I know you’ve been buried all day so I made myself available for Dixon and his family.” Chris said with a smile. “His Great Grandmother and Uncle are staying the night I believe. I didn’t protest since Dixon really seemed to take all the info she had for him well.”

“That’s good.” Marc said with a sigh of relief. “As soon as I’m free tomorrow I’ll do my best to meet with them. What about Jesse?”

Chris sighed before placing his hands on his hips and scowling at Marc. “Look, they are both medicated and sound asleep. Going over all of this right now will accomplish nothing.” Chris added with a grin. “Assuming your system would respond to a mild sedative, do we need to take the same action with you or will you go without protest?”

“You’re joking?” Marc asked, his eyes open wide.

“Marc, what good are you to these guys if you’re run down?” Chris asked as he draped his arm across Marc’s shoulder and began walking toward the team’s temporary bunk.

“But...”

“That’s right, none.” Chris cut him off. “The world will be right here to save in the morning, I promise.” He added before turning and walking off in the opposite direction. “I’ll turn in my report in the morning. Goodnight Marc.”

“Pushy Doctors...” Marc playfully grumbled. “Night Chris.” He added as he shook his head and as directed, finally turned in for the night.

“Are we ever gonna get to work on the wiring?” JR asked Caleb as he sat the laptop he was working on down and rubbed his eyes? “We've been at this fer hours.”

Caleb stretched his arms and spun his chair away from the terminal's display. “I kinda wanna have this ready for Danny when he gets back. What have you come up with so far?”

JR yawned and picked up the laptop again, with a sigh he began; “OK, I ran a comparison to the references you gave me. Looks like yer gonna need to rewrite some history.”

“Say what?” Caleb asked with a laugh. “What's history got to do with all of this?”

JR grinned and turned his screen toward Caleb so he could see the screen. “Look, what used to be known as 'Trin'ry-Theory' is actually the base fer what became a positronic executable envir'nment. Noah had the right idea but not in tha right way.” He got out as he grabbed his soda and took a large gulp. “This says that in no way a trin'ry based system would be able to talk to a bin'ry based environment. Even if ya could make a computer talk in trin'ry it'd overload and fry itself tryin ta figure out what tha hell tha other's talkin bout.”

“Um.” Caleb said with a grin. “That's a different approach.” He added with a laugh. “Here's what I got.” He said as he spun back toward the computer terminal. “Look, if we were able to execute this modified trinary environment within a computer that used a reworked positronic matrix as it's core processor, in theory it would be able to support something as complex as a personality imprint, while at the same time on it's own handle simple binary files.”

“I dun get it.” JR said with a yawn.

“It's what we have now, but in total reverse.” Caleb said with a grin. “Ok, you've seen Marc connect to a terminal. He can upload and download files a computer or his brain writes. The compatibility is already there. Trinary based files can be manipulated on a basic binary system, it simply can't support the entire personality cause it doesn't have the ability to really work beyond simple yes and no, on or off, 1 and 0; two dimensional programming. It can take fact and theorize the most logical mathematical outcome. That's how computers seem to 'Think', even though they really can't.”

“Ok, I think I understand so far.” JR said as he stepped closer.

“An android's brain is able to add that third dimension to processing. Yes and No become Yes, No and Maybe basically.” Caleb said with a smile. “If this was to work and we are really dealing with Trinary, then we could actually create a system that would function just like the brain in an android. It would be able to provide a real bridge between artificial intelligence and a normal operating system creating a terminal that could do everything that our current terminals do, at the same time it would be able to think for itself, make it's own decisions and even become self aware just like an android.”

“What good'd that be?” JR asked, still a little puzzled. “Androids can already connect to computers an' control them.”

“But not exist within one. They can control some of the computers functions, read streams of data and stuff like that. The computer is still dumb compared to the android connected to it and will only be able

to look at the 'Yes and No' answers, relying on the connected android to act like the human at the controls supplying the 'Maybe' answers. If this is what I think it is, we could create a computer platform that wouldn't just simulate intelligence, it would really be intelligent.”

“Sounds like sumthin from a fantasy book.” JR said with a scowl.

“It kinda is.” Caleb said as he opened a window on the terminal along side the one he already had opened, both seeming to be displaying similar information. “Look allot alike, don't they?”

“Yeah, what'r we lookin at?” JR asked scratching his head as he leaned in and looked.

“The one on the left is the file we've been analyzing.” Caleb said as he punched a few more commands causing some of the coding to be highlighted in red in both windows. “The one on the right is theoretical trinary. The red highlights show where the code is identical.”

“But, trin'ry doesn't work in real life Cal.” JR replied as he plopped back down in his seat.

“Right, cause they never got it right.” Caleb replied looking at the areas not highlighted. “Looking at this, someone: somehow may have figured out how to make it work. We gotta get them to let us try this, cause just from reading through this, it looks real.”

“Test it where?” JR asked now leaning his head back and closing his eyes.

“On this.” Caleb grinned as he brought up a file displaying the theoretical implications and the designs for a trinary-positronic hybrid computer.

“Wow!” Where'd ya find that?” JR asked getting back up from his seat and staring at the monitor.

“I wrote it.” Caleb replied with a wide smile. “The theory was already available, this is how I think it could work.” He said as they scrolled through the information. “Android in a box.” Caleb giggled. “I had the hardware figured out long ago, just could never come up with all the answers to program the operating environment. This file really looks like it has the answers I needed.”

“You got yur presentation then?” JR asked crossing his arms and grinning.

Caleb took a deep breath and nodded as he closed the files and set the system to standby. “Hopefully enough to let me build it.” He said as he stood up. “But before we can build the smart computer, we still gotta hook up all these dumb ones.” He said as they both started to laugh. “How tired are you?”

“Not tired enough to stop us from wir'n tha house.” JR said with a smile as they both stretched and decided to get to work.

“Marc...” Jerry half whispered as he shook Marc's arm. “Marc, wake up.”

Marc sleepily half opened one eye to see Jerry already fully dressed and all smiles. “Oh god... What time is it?”

“Seven.” Jerry said with a grin. “I gotta go to school today, my mom said so.”

“That's what you're all smiles about?” Marc asked as he tried to open his other eye, but closed them both instead.

“Noooo.” Jerry said almost bouncing. “It's Joey. The biobed just started final systems activation. He'll be online in a couple of hours.” He added balling his fists up and shaking them as he danced from one foot to the other. “He'll be awake by the time I get back.”

Marc shook his head as he swung his feet out from beneath the warm covers. “I woulda thought you'd be upset about not being here when he first wakes up.” He said as he stretched and disconnected himself from the terminal that was in the room.

“Well yeah, I am.” Jerry said with his grin never fading. “Austin says he's gonna do Joey's startup, which I'm never allowed to help with anyway.” He added squinting his eyes. “Then he's gotta tweak his personality controller cause it's still set up for the Cynthetilife body and it isn't completely compatible with his new systems.” He rattled out in one breath, his excitement somehow making his need to breathe a lot less important.

“Ahhh.” Marc replied widening his eyes with a smirk starting to make itself visible on his own face. “In other words, since you can't help you may as well go to school?”

“I guess.” Jerry answered with a smile and a shrug of his shoulders. “I gotta go, my mom is gonna drive me to school.” He said as he leaned in and gave Marc a quick hug. “Might look weird if I have Billy beam me in, huh?”

With a giggle Marc smiled and replied; “Maybe. Just think, soon we are going to have to get a car. Then you could have a 'KID' drive you in. Which would be weirder?”

“That'd be sweet!” Jerry said as he started to back his way toward the door. “Some of my friends would have a heart attack.” He said laughing to himself. “I'll see you later on!”

“Later Jerry!” Marc said with a wave as he watched Jerry literally bolt from the doorway into the hall.

Marc decided since he was up already, he may as well get dressed and begin the day. After throwing on a teeshirt and a pair of jeans, he grabbed his socks and sneakers and wandered out into the hall way.

“Hey Marc!” Noah shouted as he broke into a trot to catch up. “I got some news for ya!”

“Don't any of you ever sleep in?” Marc asked with a giggle as they continued down the hall to the elevator.

“You kiddin?” Noah replied with a laugh. “We have so much going on I couldn't hardly get to sleep last night.”

“I know what you mean.” Marc said as they both reached the elevator and Marc began to put his socks on while Noah pushed the down button. “Chris had to order me to bed last night.” Marc added with a laugh.

“Bout time someone did.” Noah got out as he stepped on to the elevator, turning back just in time to dodge the sneaker Marc playfully threw at him. “Hey! Watch it. You tryin to put me in the hospital?”

They both joked and clowned as Marc tried to get his shoes on before reaching the basement. The second the doors opened, the smell of fresh brewed coffee literally led Marc by the nose until both boys were seated in the empty open area at one of the tables in the staff cafeteria.

“We need to staff the kitchen.” Marc said as he watched Noah begin to tackle a small carton of milk and one of those variety pack sized boxes of cereal.

“Mary's workin on it.” Noah replied with a smile. “You awake enough for a report?” He asked before shoveling a spoonful of frosted flakes into his mouth.

“Yeah sure, watcha got?” Marc asked as he took a sip from his coffee and he stretched a bit.

Noah put his spoon down long enough to pull a P.A.D.D. out of his pocket and bring it to life. “Let's see.” He mumbled as he shoveled down another spoonful of cereal. “Byron and Antonio have been in the surgical ward all morning. They report ready for Eli and Benji's procedures as well as Austin's.” He got out as he tapped on the small unit's display while at the same time tackling his breakfast. “Austin is in OR 1 getting ready to activate Joey's personality imprint. He noted that he's expecting some problems with his old programming but this doesn't say why.”

“Don't worry. It's nothing we didn't expect.” Marc replied as he resumed nursing his coffee mug. “I may have to put his cosmetic procedure off until tomorrow, he won't have the time.”

“True.” Noah replied with his mouth full. “Dixon Wiggins woke up a few times throughout the night in pain. The acting head nurse gave him a sedative about an hour ago and reports that he is doing fine.”

“I'll have to run up there and check in on him. I don't expect him to be comfortable yet but I don't want him in any real pain.” Marc said in thought as he watched Noah overload his mouth, nearly emptying the rest of his bowl. “Anything on Jesse Blankenship? Chris was on call for him last night I believe.”

“Hasn't woken up yet.” Noah answered. “Looks like he was kinda restless for a while but Chris gave him something to help him sleep better.” Noah said as he put his spoon down. “His test results show that there is no evidence of trauma to the head, or any severe injuries.”

“Superficial scars and bruises, but the damage done mentally is gonna take a long time to heal.” Marc said with a sigh. “Is Dixon's family still onsite? I would really like to get a chance to meet them in person.”

“Nothing mentioned in here.” He said tilting his head to look before picking his bowl up and finishing the milk. “Mmmm...” He got out while he was swallowing. “Almost forgot. Caleb and JR will need to sit down with Danny when he gets back.”

“Oh?” Marc asked tilting his head. “Good or bad?”

“Good I think. Cal thinks he has that file kinda figured out. He filed a report on it sometime last night. This says he wants to bring up the possibilities of testing a theory he worked up regarding our network.” Noah said as he tapped on the screen and smiled to himself.

“The network at the house?” Marc asked beginning to sip at his coffee again.

“No.” Noah said, his smile growing wider. “Interdivisional. He thinks he has an idea that just might be able to act as the Clan Network Hub.”

Marc swallowed his coffee hard and set his cup down. “Serious?”

“One thing you'll learn about Caleb. If he gets an idea he'll hammer at it for as long as it takes until it happens or proves that it can't. He's stubborn like that.” Noah said with a sideways grin. “Actually, he's stubborn with everything.” He added with a giggle.

“It involves the network, he'll have Danny's full attention.” Marc said with a laugh.

“So we'll be playing cards or something tonight, unless we give them something else to occupy their time.” Noah got out with an evil grin as he raised his eyebrows.

Marc nervously looked around the empty room before shooting Noah a 'SHUT UP' glare. “Dude?!?”

“Well, I don't know about you but Caleb and I have been separated almost as long as you and Danny.” He said with a giggle. “Maybe tonight would be a good night to bring up a few... um... topics.”

“Right.” Marc said with a mock angry glare. “Maybe today would be a good day to test out the um... equipment in the intensive care unit.” He got out with an evil laugh. “I hear we have traction set up set up now.”

“Ouch.” Noah said with a laugh. “Too soon still?”

Just as Marc was about to answer, his communicator chirped. “Way too soon bone head.” Marc replied as he flipped the unit open and responded. “Marc here.”

“Morning Marc.”

“Oh hi Eddy.” Marc replied with a smile. “How are things at the insane asylum?”

“They were quiet until Mrs. Owens tried to bring Dr. Owens to school.”

“Oh, what's wrong?” Marc asked in concern.

“Well sir, we possibly have an issue with a Vulcan diplomatic representative attending public school without armed escort.”

“Say what?” Marc asked as he looked at Noah now with a confused expression.

“Marc, we can't insure Jerry's safety in that kind of environment. Mrs. Owens thinks we're overdoing it but, it's a real concern now.”

“That might be going a little over the edge I think.” Marc said as he sat back in his chair. “As soon as possible, we need to sit down with Will and Mary and see if we can come up with a permanent solution. Where are they now?”

“In route to the hospital. Mrs. Owens had work to do and I'm sure she's gonna want to talk to you about this. She was a little upset.”

Marc closed his eyes and shook his head. “That's understandable. Once Danny returns, we'll try to schedule a time to sit down and discuss the possibilities of alternate schooling or something.”

“Understood, thanks Marc.”

“No problem. I'll see if Will can attend. He may have some input on this as well. Good Job Eddie. We'll come up with a safer solution.” Marc said still rubbing his eyes. “Marc out.”

“I'm sure Jerry's all broken up about it.” Noah said with a sarcastic giggle.

“Actually, he may be.” Marc said standing up. “School would have helped him pass the day with everything going on. Now I gotta have him doing rounds just to keep him from climbing the walls and constantly bugging Austin.”

“Ahhh.” Noah said as he stood up and placed his empty bowl on the counter. “Well, unless you need me, I'm gonna go find Billy. He said he needed my help with the replication setup.”

“Cool, let him know I have the imprint set and ready to go for when he's ready to take the last step.” Marc said with a smile as they reached the elevator.

“Will do.” Noah said as the doors opened and he stepped into the elevator. “Yell if you need me bro.”

“I will, thanks.” Marc replied with a smile as he continued down the hall toward the brig. Once swinging the big steel door open, an unfamiliar face in a uniform snapped to attention. “Morning.” Marc said as he eyed the young man.

“Morning Sir.” The security officer barked. “Prisoners are secure, situation normal sir.” He continued causing Marc to giggle.

“You can relax, this isn't a military installation any more.” Marc said with a grin as he turned to step into the control room to use the terminal.

“Sir! Yes Sir!” The guard snapped and resumed his watch.

“Wow, Thank you drill sergeant.” Marc said under his breath with a giggle as he sat down at the terminal in the control room and contacted the Charleston Police Department.

“Charleston PD, This communication is being logged, how may I direct your call.” The uniformed officer on the screen asked.

“I'd like to speak with Corporal Jackson please. Could you inform him it's the acting head of Clan Short A.I. Division and that it's not an emergency.” Marc said with a smile as the officer grinned.

“No problem, give me one moment and I'll connect you.” He got out as the standby screen popped up almost instantly switching to the image of Will at his desk, hovering over a cup of coffee.

“Morning Marc.” Will said looking like he was in desperate need of some sleep.

“Hey Will. You ok? You um... look like you haven't slept in weeks.” Marc said with concern in his voice.

“Expense review day.” Will said as he shook his head. “I have to explain to the penny pincher's why we have one extra requisition for toilet paper this week.” He got out with a laugh. “Anyway, what can I do for you?”

“Well,” Marc began; “First I wanted to thank you for the extra security, even if I do think some of them have watched one too many episodes of Cops.” Marc got out with a giggle.

“Their placement there is being considered one step toward active duty. Trust me, you couldn't be in better hands right now.” Will said with a grin.

“I guess.” Marc said as he watched the security in the processing room rotate positions as if they were officers in the Royal Guard or something. “Second, we need to set up a meeting between you, Eddy, Mary Owens and Danny regarding a member of our staff attending public schooling.”

“Armed escort.” Will said in a 'matter of fact' kind of tone. “It can be arranged.”

“We need an alternative. An armed escort would raise a few issues, not to mention embarrass the hell out of Jerry.” Marc said with a grin.

“I got ya.” Will said as he up ended his cup and took a large gulp.

“I also need kind of a personal favor.” Marc said with a grin. “I need help buying a car.”

“You need help?” Will repeated with a laugh. “Your diplomatic status removes any restrictions you used to have.”

“I know, but I sorta need someone to suggest... well... I've never bought a car before.” Marc finally got out with an embarrassed grin.

“I see.” Will replied. “A car for you?”

“Myself and Danny.” Marc replied. “I kinda wanna surprise him, but I also want to get something that is going to be safe. You know, with the type of work we're doing.”

Will sat back in his chair and scratched his head for a moment before a wide grin crept into his expression. "Any preference to make and model?"

"Well, I'd like to look into a sports car. Danny owned a Camaro in the time before he was brought to life as a thirteen year old android. I know that car meant a lot to him." Marc said as he watched Will begin to smile wide. "Well, something that would be considered safe from a security standpoint as well."

"How would you feel about one of our newer unmarked units? They are already going to be equipped with onboard communications, automatic obstacle avoidance system and can even emit a low level force field. Can't get much more secure than that." Will said with a laugh as he began to rifle through the papers on his desk.

"True, but I was hoping for something... well..." Marc started to say as Will found the papers he was looking for and held it up.

"Black Camaro, already outfitted but over our budget." He said grinning. "Want it?"

Marc's jaw hit the floor as Will watched his expression and laughed. "Um... What would the cost of something like that be. I mean I have some money saved up, and this is for personal use."

"Marc, you are one of the heads of a Vulcan diplomatic clan. That alone would be government funded. We have three cars that haven't seen active duty and thanks to spending cutbacks probably never will. If you need one, all I need to do is submit the paperwork and we can transfer ownership right now. So, you want it?" Will said with a huge smile. "Just say yes Marc, you taking this off my hands right now will actually make my day a little easier. One less expense I have to answer for."

Marc's eyes opened wide as he watched Will pick up a pen and point to the papers with it. "Is that part of the reason you look like you're ready to loose it?"

"Those three cars are most of the reason we're getting an unannounced budget review, yes." Will said as he put the papers on his desk and readied his pen to sign them off. "Say yes Marc." He added with a laugh.

"It's really no trouble?" Marc asked beginning to giggle as Will sighed and shook his head.

"The second I sign you over as the reason it was obtained, it is paid for by the government Marc. I no longer have to answer for the expense." He said. "You sure you only need the one car? We have the Camaro and also have a 16 passenger van and a Mustang. All outfitted, all in black and all would be an excellent addition to your fleet." Will said with a grin.

"I don't know what to say, I mean..." Marc got out before being cut off.

"You say yes. I sign the papers. The Camaro will be in your driveway before the day is out and I submit the paper work for the other two for additional approval. They'll say yes, all three are in a place where they can be used, the expense disappears at my level and I'm on my way with a police escort to deliver your new car to you before going home and getting some sleep."

"If it helps you then I guess. I mean we could use them." Marc said scratching his head. "Will approval be hard to get?"

"God no." Will replied. "I can have Judge Legette stand in and submit that the addition of the federation medical facility, made possible by your clan division's location will be a huge benefit to our community. Three vehicles is nothing compared to what they actually could offer." Will said as he began to fill out the first form. "This is for Danny you said? His full name is Daniel Alexander Page right?"

"Um, yeah." Marc said as he watched Will smile wider as he began to fill out the form.

"Done." Will said with a grin. "Now about the van and the Mustang." He added with a laugh. "The van would be helpful with the size of your group, what name would make sense to be primary operator?"

"I have to choose one person?" Marc asked looking extremely confused.

"Well." Will began, setting down his pen. "They all need to be assigned to a primary operator in the case of a diplomatic registration. Any of your guys can operate them if needed, but we can't just list the organization as the individual primarily operating them. Not to mention the car's security systems recognize their primary operators and will only accept secondary operators at the request of the primary. They're police units."

"Oh." Marc said scratching his head. "Eddie should probably use the van, he's been moving security around in his car."

"Good idea." Will said as he picked up his pen and began to write while mumbling; "Edward Walter Fraser." before looking back at the screen and smiling. "Should I list you as primary for the Mustang?"

"Not me, no!" Marc snapped back. "I don't want to have to drive any of them."

"Having it in your name doesn't mean you have to drive it Marc. It just means you have to provide clearance for any secondary operators." Will said before sighing. "Ok, who would make sense then?"

"Well..." Marc trailed off, obviously deep in thought. "Our IT team could use it since they actually don't live in the area." He said as a smile crept across his face. "Yeah, that's what we'll do. It'll make getting back and forth easier." Marc smiled wide.

"Ok, gimme a name." Will said with a laugh.

"Noah Simon Barnes." Marc said with a giggle. "He'll have a heart attack."

"That's evil." Will laughed out as he wrote down the information he needed. "Well, I can have the Camaro dropped of in a few hours. If we get approval soon enough, the other two will be shipped as soon as the paperwork is final. You want them dropped of at the naval hospital or your Sullivan's Island location?"

"The house would be best. Eddie is still based from there and I'd like to be home when I hand out keys to a couple of really surprised guys." He replied with a giggle.

“Consider it done then. I'll let you know when the van and the Mustang are all set.” Will said with a grin.

“Why isn't there a wait on the Camaro?” Marc asked tilting his head.

“Oh, well that's because I approved having it outfitted for you a week ago.” He said with a wink.

“Our division didn't even exist... Oh... Ooooh yeah. A week ago, riiiiight. I gotcha.” Marc answered with an evil grin. “You are such a liar.” He added finally bursting out in laughter.

“It's not a lie.” Will said as he picked up the paperwork and pointed to the date he had added next to his signature. “Says so right there.”

“Thanks Will.” Marc said seriously. “This'll make my brother and a really cute couple very happy. Not to mention make our lives a little easier.”

“Not a problem.” Will said with a grin. “Any of these guys that need to learn how to drive you can run through Eddie. I'm sure he'd enjoy being your in house drivers education instructor.”

“Danny had a license before so that shouldn't be a problem. Noah and Caleb might need help though.” Marc said with a grin as the phone in the room rang.

“You get that, I'll talk to you later.” Will said with a smile as the screen suddenly went into standby.

“This is Marc.” Marc said into the receiver.

“Marc, there's a call for you on line one, it's the division head I believe.” Billy's voice said happily. “Should I pass it to you there?”

“Please. Thanks Billy.” Marc got out as he heard the connection switch over. “Marc here, wassap bro? You home?”

“Are you where nobody can hear you?” Danny replied seriously.

“Yes. What's wrong? You sound wiped out.” Marc answered with concern.

Marc could hear Danny sigh before continuing; “I'm fine, just a little wiped out. Unfortunately we've got a call to answer in Chicago and have to head right back out. Are you okay or do you need me to stay behind?”

Marc looked outside the room and looked at the security officer before grinning and replying; “You kidding? With the backup I've got right now and how things have gone the past day or so, it's like we can move mountains bro. We're fine, lose the worried tone.” Marc giggled. “What's up with using the landline; did Caleb cut the wrong wire again?”

Danny laughed out loud before answering. “No, he didn't, as far as I know. So, should I take that answer as a 'I'm not needed' then?”

"No, you'll take that as all is well at the AI division. You help our brothers if it's needed. You'll just owe me a nice dinner and a quiet sanity break when you get home, that's all." Marc said with a grin; knowing by then his little surprise would be parked at the house.

"Deal, I'll need the break too. I guess we're leavin right away and so you know we have Caleb and JR with us." He said before lowering his voice. "The landline thing is a long story; a certain organization is hunting Cory and his family. I'm being patched through to your phone; basically just in case they are trying to find Cory we set up a diversion by flying the shuttle here. All of us are going so that nobody is in danger. Keep everyone else at the hospital until I give you an 'all clear', okay?"

"You got it. No worries okay? We're doing fine; you look out for Cory and I'll stand guard here. I'll have a full report for ya when you get back." Marc said nodding his head.

"Great, just make sure to pick the place you want to go for dinner." Danny replied making Marc smile. "We'll handle the report after a full night of R&R."

"Sounds great. Love ya bro!" Marc said as he began to blush.

"Love you too, bro." Danny's voice softly replied as the call disconnected.

Marc sighed as he placed the receiver back in it's cradle and stood up from his seat causing security to snap back to attention. "Jeez guys, You'd think a friggin admiral had just entered the room." He said with a giggle which was cut short by their serious expressions. "Ok, I'll play along. Excellent work men, carry on." He barked with a salute as he left the room and began to laugh once he closed the door. "I should send these guys with them to Chicago, that'd keep them safe from, just about anything on the planet." He mumbled to himself as he slowly started for the elevator to start catching up on the insanity he was beginning to consider normal for this crew.

Special Extended Chapter Announcement!

This may be the end of Chapter 10, but before Chapter 11 actually begins and events in S. Carolina continue to unfold, ACFan and I am pleased to be able to give you the opportunity to accompany a portion of Clan Short on what we consider their "Dark Vacation"! Written exclusively for our family in "Comicality's Shack Out Back" to be featured on the new "Gone From Daylight: The Blood Bank" This is our chance to give you a way to follow where it is our division head disappears to as Clan Patriarch and his group disappears from sight for a little while.

Be sure to keep an eye on the Blood Bank for this special edition release. To find it look for "Dark Vacation" listed in the "Vampire Scriptures" section on the site. Make sure to give them a big thank you for giving us this unique opportunity!

Notes from the Author:

First of all, I really want to thank you all for all the inspiring emails and comments you have all sent me since the posting of chapter 9. I can tell you all now that quite a few of those emails were beginning to ask if I was even working on the new chapter because of the flood we had recently experienced from the Memories - Ark sections of the CSU. Meaning the more detailed they got (and they did get detailed, didn't they ;) the more I had to slow my progress and even hold up production on "Dear Diary" to keep us in line. (See, I told you I hadn't forgotten about the story. Those who asked in fun... *Sticks out tongue* Hehehe!)

I also want to send a big hug to "Boudreaux" since large portions involving "Dixon, the Wiggins Family and Jesse" had to be co-written, using nothing but email as our source of communication. That's not an easy way to write, but Boudreaux took it in stride and I am happy with the way both chapters came out, I hope you all are as well :)

Gotta remind you, before chapter 11 comes out don't forget to keep an eye on "Dark Vacation" featured on Comicality's "GFD: Blood Bank". Some really important events in that side story will lead you in to chapter 11.

Once again, gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories " are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

I am enthralled with the continuing evolution of the characters in this story. The Androids in this story have been infused with soul and character unlike any I have encountered before; Isaac watch your back. This story and the others in The CSU continue to point out how far we need to go as a species and society. Unfortunately for every step we take forward we seem to take three backwards. To all The CSU Authors please keep writing these wonderful visions of what life could and should be. An awesome job again Jeff and Boudreaux.

TSL

"Chapter 11 - Business as Usual?"

"Attention all Clan Short HQ and AI Division Personnel. Please report to the hospital main lobby immediately. All Medical and Security Support Staff, resume operations." Marc's voice bellowed over the all call.

After about 10 minutes, Marc looked over the small group that had formed and loudly cleared his throat while security took post at all the doorways. "Guys, I need your attention." Marc half shouted bringing the room into complete silence. "This would have taken way too long to cover one on one and we don't have a ton of time." He got out as he opened his communicator. "Marc to Lieutenant Myers, is the lobby secure?"

"Aye sir, we're holding posts."

"Thank you, Marc out." Marc said as he closed his communicator. "Okay, I just received orders from our AI Division Head, All personnel are to remain on site here at the hospital until further notice. No external communications are to be passed unless the acting division head gives the approval. There is a contained situation at the moment making it possibly unsafe outside of these walls right now. I don't have any specific information, but this request is coming directly from our Patriarch."

"Marc, Caleb and JR are at the house." Noah said with a worried look in his eyes.

"Easy bro, Caleb and JR are safe and with Cory and Danny. The house is empty right now with the exception of security." Marc said as he watched Noah nod his head, but the worried look wouldn't fade. "All scheduled activities will resume without interruption, this security issue is of a sensitive nature and no information is to leak outside of these walls, under any uncertain circumstances."

The group began to murmur a bit but, eventually returned complete attention to Marc. "We are not displaying an elevated security level but will be locked down until we receive an All Clear from higher up, clear?" Marc asked getting confirming nods from his group. "Okay, with that said, we have plans for today beginning with Austin."

"Sir?" Austin said as he stepped forward.

"Your duties today consist of nothing but Joey Owens. Do you need a support staff?" Marc asked.

"No, he'll be online within a half hour after we break this meeting. Then it's a matter of debugging and adjusting programming before he'll be functional again." Austin answered before tilting his head.

"Does this mean we are postponing my procedure?"

"Yes, we won't have the time today. First thing tomorrow morning, your butt is mine though." Marc said with a giggle.

Austin grinned as he craned his neck and looked at his butt. "But I like my butt." He said getting a few laughs from the group.

“Nuts.” Marc replied with a giggle before looking at a P.A.D.D. he had set out on the reception desk. “Antonio, Byron, Eli & Benji.” He said looking back up to confirm he had their attention. “Prosthetic replacements are completed and ready for... Um... installation. One hour following this meeting, I want the four of you to report to the OR and prep for the procedure. I will need Dr. Herron brought in to assist as well. Do not administer anesthesia until I arrive in the OR, I'd like to talk to all of you before we begin, Cool?”

“Ok Marc.” Antonio said with a smile as the other three nodded, Benji becoming white as a ghost and Eli elbowing his brother with an encouraging smile.

“Mrs. Owens, since we won't be able to leave the location do you think we can get the kitchen up to handle at least one full day of operation? We have a crew that will eventually get hungry.”

“Not a problem honey, is it ok if I make a few calls and bring in my crew?” Mary asked with a smile.

“You have a crew?” Marc almost coughed out in surprise.

“My catering staff, they are all hoping to remain involved.” Mary said with a grin.

“That's great!” Marc said with a huge smile. “Permission granted for outside communication then.” He got out looking back at his P.A.D.D. “Mr. O'Keefe.” Marc said as he looked up and saw Billy step forward and give his full attention. “I am about to give you a rather uncomfortable order. If you are unable to comply, I will understand but will be required to have you stand down until this situation is resolved.”

“I understand sir. Your orders?” Billy questioned as he stood at attention.

“Chief, as of this moment you are ordered to contain all information divulged from this meeting. Any direct reports you are required to submit to TerraMain are to be falsified maintaining the appearance that we are not running a heightened security level. Are you able to comply?”

“Billy's face became emotionless as he nodded his head. “Aye sir, It was my understanding that you are now my superior officer, meaning any and all reports filed by me go directly to you now. I will not have any further communications with TerraMain unless they purposely contact me. Then it will be with your authorization. Our current status will be handled as classified information. If I need to lie, I'll simply respond with a lack of knowledge.” He said with a grin. “As far as I know, everything is fine.”

“Thank you Billy.” Marc said with a smile gaining a respectful nod in response. “Since we won't be dealing with heavy traffic today, I would really like it if you could do any final testing and adjustment to the replication unit. If it's possible, I'd like to attempt Kevin's activation this evening once we finish up with Eli and Benji.”

“That should be fine. All current tests show we could possibly be ready within an hour if needed.” Billy responded.

“I want a minimum of 5 successful simulated replications before we attempt a final unit activation. I'm gonna need medical support standing by.” Marc said as he looked at the group. “Byron, you can assist

with Eli, but I'd like you to rest up when we move to Benji. You think you can handle an emergency resuscitation?"

"I get to help with Kevin?" Byron asked with a smile.

"I really will need the help, if you're up for it." Marc replied as he watched Byron nod his head excitedly while Antonio wrapped his arms around his waist and Noah patted the back of his head with a smile. "Noah, While I'm in surgery I need you to take command of operations. I will brief you following this meeting."

"Command?" Noah asked with his voice squeaking. "Oh... um... Okay." He stammered out as his face began to blush.

"Relax bro; I'm not leaving the building." Marc replied with a giggle. "Sammy, Sebastian." Marc said as he redirected his attention back to Eli and Benji, both gripped tightly by their boyfriends. "You guys stick to Eli and Benji until we begin. Keep em smiling, I know they're nervous."

"We ain't goin nowhere." Sammy said as he hugged Benji tighter.

"Marc, do we gotta leave tha room when ya'll get started?" Sebastian asked seriously.

"Would you rather stay in physical contact with them?" Marc asked, not knowing if their presence would help to keep Eli and Benji relaxed.

"If we can." Sammy replied. "We ain't gonna get sick or nuthin, I swear."

"You both can stay in the OR with your boyfriends. Antonio, Byron; That means during the procedure we'll use a curtain to isolate ourselves while we work.

"Thanks Marc." Benji said as some color began to return to his face.

Marc nodded as he placed the P.A.D.D. Down and smiled. "Ok, you have your orders. All but Noah are dismissed."

"What about me?" Jerry almost whined. "Don't I get to help?"

"Oh, sorry bro." Marc said with a giggle. "You are doing rounds today. You are our on call today. That means Dixon and Jesse are under your watch. Make sure Dixon's family is comfortable and the boys are well taken care of. You seem to hit it off well with Dixon, if he needs an ear he may look to you."

"Okay." Jerry said with a bit of a deflated look.

"Austin, make sure to inform Jerry when his son is ready for a visitor please." Marc said with a smile as he watched Jerry grin widely.

"No problem Dad." Austin said with a wink.

"If there's nothing else?" Marc asked as the room fell silent. "Ok then, Dismissed. Let's get some work done." He said as everyone filed back into the main hallway and Noah slowly walked over to the reception desk.

"Command? Dude???" Noah asked, just barely above a whisper. "I can't take command, that's insane. I'm not ready for something that big!"

"Are you kidding me? Who do you think has been holding me up this whole time?" Marc replied with a laugh as he hopped up and sat on the desk, motioning to Noah to join him. "I'm not sure how we need to handle this situation. I know all communications from HQ are dead right now meaning it's probably locked down just as tight or unmanned. Security was never elevated, meaning they are keeping this situation contained. We just need to follow suite and pray for the best." Marc said with a sigh.

"Do you know what happened?" Noah asked watching as Marc let down his tough act to show real concern.

"Not really. Danny mentioned something about someone hunting Cory and his family but he didn't have time to explain. I know if we were in danger, He would have had us evacuated. Instead, all I've got to go on is HQ's posture. Which is non existent right now. They became ultra silent, we're gonna do the same."

A tear began to well up in Noah's eye as he turned to look out the windows at the crowd of people wandering up and down the property. "Nobody's gotten hurt or anything, have they?"

"No, Danny said Caleb and JR are safe, he's with Cory so I have to assume the whole group that went to Australia is safe. Don't worry. If anyone had already been hurt, I'm sure he would have said something."

"True." Noah mumbled as Marc pulled him into a hug. "I just wish they were all home."

"I hear ya." Marc said as he tightened his squeeze. "Until we hear otherwise, assume all is ok and we continue on, business as usual."

"Ok, what do I need to do?" Noah asked with a snuffle.

"First, you gotta stop soaking my shirt down." Marc answered with a laugh, earning a tense giggle from Noah. "You are in command of the installation, meaning no communications come or go without your approval. If medical assistance is needed somewhere, you need to shuffle staff. If anyone from the Federation tries to contact us, we are bogged down with pre-planned medical activity and our status is normal, relaxed security. If anyone should question as to where Cory or Danny are, we haven't had any communication but did monitor a shuttle arriving at our compound. Give out no real information, just all is fine and going well." Marc said with a nod. "With everything so quiet, let's rely on the fact that everyone looks at our division being very new and inexperienced. We can appear to not know just because we aren't following any real structured procedures yet."

"They would have to be total fools to believe that." Noah said with a grin.

“We'll just have to rely on them being total fools then. Trust me; let them think we aren't organized. It'll keep them from digging too deep.”

Noah giggled at Marc's response before holding his hand out. “Ok bro, I'll do my best.”

Marc took Noah's hand and smiled. “I know you will, you have been right along. Now it's your turn to take some of the credit for what we're getting done here. You may not think you're ready...” Marc said as Noah rolled his eyes. “Stop that.” Marc said with a laugh as he slapped Noah playfully in the forehead. “I know you're ready, you've proven that already with the support you've given me. Believe it, cause I do.”

“Okay! Geesh... I didn't know I had to take abuse when I took this position.” Noah said as he rubbed his forehead, finally bursting out laughing.

Marc smiled as the two hopped off the desk and wrapped each other in a tight hug. “Thanks.” Marc said as they separated and Noah turned to leave the room, stopping him in his tracks.

“Thanks for what?” Noah asked turning back toward Marc.

“Thanks for sticking around. If you weren't here I seriously doubt I could have gotten this far without overloading. Honestly.” Marc smiled as he turned and walked out of the doors, heading for the security shack leaving a smiling Noah in the lobby.

“Good Morning Director Furst!” The stationed security guard shouted as he snapped to attention.

Marc smiled and nodded his head realizing he had better get used to the militant style of his new security force. “At ease Cadet. I need your assistance in the guard shack.”

“Yes Sir!” The officer snapped as he rushed to open the door. “How can I be of assistance?” The 16 or so year old said with a cold look on his face.

“Well first, you can relax. In public I guess a military stance is appropriate, but in private I prefer my subordinates to relax and be themselves. Do I make myself clear Cadet?”

The security guard stood still for a moment in shock before a grin crept into Marc's expression, finally relaxing the young officer. “Are you sure?” He carefully asked.

“Look, I respect you guys for what you have accomplished here. Hell I've never felt safer in my life since you guys got here. Fact is, this cold military attitude just bothers me. I mean you are what, 16 years old? That can't be your real attitude. I like to get to know my team by getting to know who they really are when at all possible, not who they are trained to be.” Marc said as he watched the teenager take one step back not once breaking eye contact. “This isn't boot camp. A smile every now and then wouldn't kill you or scar your record cadet.”

Finally the cadet began to smile and Marc realized he had just blasted this kid for no good reason.

“Scott.” The officer said, finally allowing a grin to creep into his expression. “You can call me Scott.” He continued holding out his hand for Marc to shake. “I'm sorry, no one told me you guys ran that casual, its not what we're training for.”

"I know." Marc replied finally smiling and shaking the boy's hand. "I didn't mean to rant like that. I guess I'm just too used to working one on one and kinda take the crisp military front as an obstruction to getting to really knowing my team. It was worth it for the shocked expression you had though."

"I wasn't expecting it. That's for sure." Scott said with a genuine smile. "You said you needed help?"

"Yeah." Marc said as he walked over to the desk in the shack and brought the terminal out of standby. "I need you to relay a message for me to Eddie Fraser at our compound. It needs to be sent encrypted and can't be stumbled across by the federation."

"Everything ok?" Scott said as he sat down and began to readjust the communications settings.

"Yes and no, we simply need to tighten our defense without alarming the federation. This is classified information, can I trust you or do I need to ask you to leave the room?" Marc asked looking down at his new friend.

"Take me out back and shoot me if I leak information." Scott said with a giggle.

"Fair enough." Marc said as Eddie's image popped up on the screen.

"Jr. Lieutenant Shannon, why are you using a secure encrypted channel?" Eddie asked squinting his eyes.

"Sir, this transmission is considered classified at the request of Director Furst. Is your end secure?" Scott asked in a relaxed but professional tone.

"It is. Is Marc there with you?" Eddie asked as Scott stood up and offered the chair to Marc.

"Eddie, we have an issue." Marc said before even getting fully seated.

"Marc, you still have a cadet in the room." Eddie said in a worried tone.

"He's in the loop and secured." Marc said as he sat back in his seat. "Look, by now you must already know you have a Federation Shuttle on the property but no longer have personnel on site."

"Yes, we were expecting Director Page's return but in doing our walk through, realized he somehow beamed out without being detected."

"Eddie, we have a very touchy situation here. I have no real details but know at the moment Patriarch Short is possibly in danger. We need to secure the compound and allow no one, including the federation to know that house is empty. Any external communications coming in need to be directed to this location. Anyone attempting to reach myself or any other member of our team needs to be intercepted and effectively stalled." Marc said as Eddie nodded his head. "Has Will shown up yet?"

"Yeah, do you need to speak with him?"

“No, just relay our situation. I want our condition to be an internal, undetectable condition yellow. Convey this condition verbally, in person, in a secure area. We aren't sure what we are dealing with yet, but we're gonna be ready if we need to be.”

“Consider the compound secure. We'll handle this end.” Eddie replied with a serious expression.

“It may be nothing, but I don't want to assume anything at this point.” Marc said as he looked over to Scott and then back at the screen. “Cadet Shannon will assist with coordinating your efforts between locations.”

“I will?” Scott spit out without even thinking first. Freezing and covering his mouth.

“Are you incapable Cadet?” Marc sounded, snapping Scott back into military mode.

“Sir, No Sir!” Scott almost shouted.

“Eddie, are you familiar with Jr. Lieutenant Shannon's record.” Marc asked with a grin.

“Yes, I am Marc.” Eddie replied.

“I would like to know if a field promotion to full Lieutenant would be acceptable for this officer. Consider it a temporary promotion pending the outcome of his performance. He has demonstrated a very efficient profile, professional attitude and honestly impressed me enough to earn my trust. Can we make it happen?” Marc asked with a grin.

“You're the boss.” Eddie said as Marc looked at the horrified look on Scott's face and laughed. “Congrats Lieutenant!” Eddie said with a smile. “I'll alter him in the system and will inform all security personnel of assignment to your location.”

“Thanks Eddie.” Marc said with a smile. “If you need anything from this end, Noah will be in active command while I'm in surgery. Marc out.” Marc said as he ended the call and turned to face Scott. “You ok?”

“Um... ah... oh, um... whew... Yes?” Scott replied as Marc pointed to his collar and tapped on his rank pins.

“I believe you are out of uniform Mr. Shannon.” Marc giggled patting his new officer on the shoulder before opening the door. “Welcome aboard.”

“Marc?” Scott asked finally snapping out of his daze. “This promotion isn't warranted.”

Marc stopped just outside of the door and turned to smile at him. “Really? By who's standards?”

“Um... Federation standards I guess.” Scott replied.

“This isn't a federation installation Scott. You are the first to finally relax and work with me instead of strictly for me. That's an attribute I'm looking for. You earned my respect, now it's time to earn my trust. You up for it?”

“Hell yeah!” Scott almost shouted with a smile before once again covering his mouth. “Sorry, I mean yes, thank you.”

“I liked Hell yeah better.” Marc said with a giggle before turning to leave. “You have your orders. Report our situation once we are at a silent condition yellow.”

“You got it!” Scott shouted as the door swung shut.

“HmMMM.” Austin mumbled as he began to look over the display on the biobed Joey was laying on. “Weird.” He added as he grabbed his communicator and flipped it open. “Austin to Noah.”

“Noah here dude, something wrong?”

“No. I mean, I'm not sure really. Has someone been tampering with the biobed profiles?” Austin asked scratching his head.

“Not that I'm aware of, why?”

Austin shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. “I was getting ready to terminate life support and initiate Joey's final start sequence when I found an alteration to the AI profile. One that makes no sense at all.”

“Do you want me to notify Marc bro?”

“No, this isn't that important. I'll talk to him about it when I see him. I was just wondering if you knew about someone experimenting with it or anything.” Austin said as he looked at the profile again. “Don't worry about it dude. I was just wondering.”

“Oh ok. Well just let me know if you need us to look any deeper into it.”

“Will do. Look just so you know, Joey should be awake in about 5 minutes. I won't be available for a while. This isn't exactly a normal activation.” Austin said as he began to shut down the biobed. “Most of all, keep Jerry away from OR #1. It'll be too rough for him to see Joey like this.”

“I don't plan on going there Austin.” Jerry's voice came over the communicator. “I was already ordered to stay away until you said it was ok for me to come down.”

Austin's eyes shot wide open as Noah's voice interrupted. “I probably should have told you I was with Jerry, huh?”

“It would have helped.” Austin said with laugh. “Wish us luck, Austin out.” As Austin closed his communicator, the biobed went through its final program termination and powered down life support. “Okay... Here we go.” He said as he typed in a few commands and he stood back to watch.

After about a minute, Joey's unchanged breathing became deeper and not as rhythmic as it was before. Austin watched as Joey attempted to swallow and move his head a bit. “Joey, It's time to wake up.”

Austin said softly as he swung the work light away from the bed and turned it off, dimming the room considerably. "Joey, I know you can hear me little guy." Austin whispered as he rested his elbows on the bed and watched Joey twitch his face and slowly start to attempt to move his fingers and toes. "There you go, now can you open your eyes?"

It took a few moments and five attempts before Joey was able to open his eyes before opening his mouth and breathing harder. "Ahh..." Joey coughed out.

"Take it slow, there's no rush." Austin said as he looked at the biobed's display and used its connection to begin correcting the conflicts that began to surface. "Your brain isn't used to this yet, so don't try too hard, okay."

"Awsh... Aw... Aws..." Joey got out appearing to be getting frustrated.

"Hold on a second." Austin said before returning to the control panel. "Close your eyes for a second and don't move." Austin tapped away before Joey's eyes popped back open, this time with a surprised look on his face. "Try now."

"Ausdin?" Joey questioned before attempting to move. "I feew funny." He got out as his expression got even more excited. "I sound funny."

"Relax little bro. There are gonna be a few changes you'll need to get used to." Austin said as he reached over and ruffled Joey's hair before getting back to work. "Just lie still, I need to verify your brain knows what to do with all this new hardware." He added with a grin.

"Hawdwawe?" Joey questioned wrinkling up his face. "Whad's dhad?"

"This." He said as he grabbed Joey's hand and lifted it to where he could see it. "In a few minutes, your brain will know this is yours. Actually, it knows it now. It just doesn't know what to do with it yet." Austin said with a giggle as Joey's eyes opened wide.

"I gedda bwain?" Joey asked.

"Nope, you got a whole new body just like mine." He managed to get out just as Joey's hand twitched.

"It dikewes." He said with a giggle just before wincing, as if he was in pain.

"Hang in there little guy. Some of these feelings you've never had before. It's nothing to be afraid of, ok?"

"I no afwaid." Joey said putting on the bravest expression he could. "Ausdin? I didn'd die, did I?"

Austin hopped up on the edge of the bed and ran his fingers down his little brother's cheek. With a smile he shook his head as he replied: "No, your old body did, it damaged parts of your old brain too. Luckily, your memory and logic center was still ok, so I took the units out of your damaged brain and put them in a new brain, with a newer, better body."

"Dhis no bedda. I can'd even move." Joey replied earning a laugh from Austin.

“It will be, just give it a few minutes. I went through the same thing the first time I ever woke up. It's gonna tickle, just to learn what tickling means now. It'll hurt and feel hot and then cold cause your brain has to learn new ways to feel that stuff now.” Austin said knowing he definitely just confused Joey even more. “Joey, do you know what your new body looks like yet?”

“No.” Joey almost whined as every limb in his body tensed and then relaxed again. “I no see id yed.”

Austin hopped off the bed and dug through the room as he continued to talk. “Well, that's what your brain is doing. It's looking at all the new stuff we gave you.” He said as he finally found a mirror and brought it over to the bed with a grin. “You wanna see too?”

“Yeah.” Joey replied excitedly. As Austin held the mirror out, he smiled just watching the shocked expression wash over Joey's face. “Wooooowww! I wook wike you an Daddy an Unkah Mawc an Unka Danny...” He got out before Austin stopped him from talking.

“Joey, say your name.” Austin said tilting his head.

“You know wad my name is.” He said before blinking his eyes and staring at Austin. “Joey.” He stated, more to hear himself say it than because he was asked to. “My name id Joey. J O E Y. I sed id wike you do. I dalk diffwend now.”

“Yeah, your speech has definitely improved. Not completely, but a lot better. Not bad kidoe.” He said, almost freezing as Joey tensed again and closed his eyes tight.

“Id's huwding me!” Joey almost shouted before suddenly relaxing and looking shocked again.

“Does it still hurt?” Austin asked as he watched Joey begin to open and close his hands. Almost as if he were testing them. “System says you are functional now, if it hurts now I need to know little guy.”

Joey looked deep in thought for a moment before raising his hand and looking at it. “No.” He said with a grin as he raised the other hand, rubbing them together. “Id feews weawy good.” He said as a wide smile took over his face. “Can I ged up? Pwease.”

“You can sit up, but you can't stand yet. I still have a diagnostic running so you have to stay connected.” Austin replied as Joey carefully sat upright. “Did that feel ok?”

Joey simply smiled and held his arms open. “I wanna hug.” He said with a giggle that almost suddenly turned into a pur as Austin leaned in and hugged his brother. “Id feews beddew dhan okay.” He said with a relieved smile. “Id feews... Id kinda wike... I dunno, bud id is good, I dthink.” He got out with a giggle.

“Just another hour and we'll get to try those legs out.” Austin said with a smile as he released Joey and looked him in the eyes. “I missed you little guy.”

“I'll take the call in here Billy, thanks.” Noah said as he closed his communicator and sat down at the terminal in the new admitting area just as the screen alerted of an incoming message. After accepting

the transmission, the image of an older gentleman appeared with the California Police Department seal in the lower left corner of the screen. "This is Noah Barnes, temporarily acting as Clan Short, AI Division Director. How can I help you?"

"Oh, uh... Hehehe. I'm sorry Mr. Barnes. I wasn't expecting someone so young." The man said with a nervous smile. "I meant no offense."

"None taken." Noah replied with a genuine smile. "It's something we have all just gotten used to."

"I can imagine." The man said with a smile. "Anyway, the reason I was asked to contact your organization is that we have come across a piece of equipment identified as property belonging to Vision Industries. If my information is correct, this equipment belongs to you."

Noah raised his eyebrows and tilted his head before answering. "Your information is correct, our medical director is solely in possession of the old Vision Industries and simply operates under a different banner now. Can I ask what kind of equipment it was that you came across, Um... sir?"

"Murphy." The man replied. "Lieutenant Richard Murphy, Special Crimes Division, Malibu PD. You can call me Rich." He replied with a smile. "To answer your question, we received a call at 5:32 this morning that a diver found a beaten Android Endoskeletal Structure about 100 feet from the shore in Malibu. We can't determine how long it has been there but, have identified it as one of your companies units. Its registration was damaged and unreadable so we can't identify it."

"Oh wow." Noah replied opening his eyes wide. "Does it appear to have any damage that could have affected its positronic brain?"

"Nope." Rich replied with a smile. "That's why we wanted to see about returning it as soon as possible. From what our ballistics team reported, its head and upper torso are intact. It does appear as though its neck was broken severing the spinal column and the encased harness. From the damage our team assessed that it had been hit bluntly at the base of the skull and then run through the propeller of a boat or something. Since there is no biological material remaining, we have to assume that he has been down there for quite some time." Rich sighed and then continued. "Noah, I still own one of these units. He's been in my family since I was a kid. If this unit's brain is still functional, it may be able to tell us what happened. Maybe even lead us to whomever it is that did this to him. If it wasn't an accident I mean. If this does turn out to be foul play, we are prepared to pursue this matter." Rich said with a serious expression.

"Rich." Noah started seeming to be deep in thought. "I agree with you, we really should look deeper into this. I'm going to have our Chief Engineer contact you regarding having all materials transported to our facility for assessment. I'll speak with our division head and explain the situation and the importance of your inquiry." Noah said with a grin. "If we find out this was foul play like you said, I'm sure there are a few Androids on site who would love to be at your side when you make whoever could have been responsible answer for their actions."

"Really? You have Androids working for you?" Rich asked with a widening smile.

"No." Noah replied with a giggle. "I work for them. I'm only temporarily in charge right now. The head of our division and Medical Directors are both Androids."

“Oh wow, that's great.” Rich said before quickly adding; “That they are doing so well, not that you aren't in charge, I mean...”

“Don't worry. I know what you meant.” Noah cut him off. “Honestly, I don't think of them as any different from me or anyone else really. None of us do.”

“That's awesome.” Rich replied with a grin. “I'll have to tell John about you guys. He'd love to hear that there actually is a place where humans and androids work together like that.”

Noah tilted his head and grinned. “John?”

“Oh, sorry. John is my, um... my android's name.”

“Oh cool, well if you ever make it out this way you gotta bring him with you then.” Noah replied with a smile. “Seriously. I bet he'd love to meet all these guys. Android or human, I bet even he would have a hard time telling who was who.” Noah said giving them both a laugh. “Consider that an open invitation. I'll have Mr. O'Keefe contact you regarding transporting the android you found to our location and I'll make sure you are kept up to date with our progress.” Noah replied with a smile.

“Thank you Noah. I'll keep my fingers crossed it goes well. I'll await your Chief's call.” Rich said with a sigh of relief. “I'll tell John about your invitation, I'm sure he'd love to visit.”

“Well you are both welcomed to. Maybe if we're lucky enough, you can make plans to come out and meet him.” Noah said with an encouraging nod.

“That sounds like a plan. I'll talk to you soon.” Rich said as he terminated the call.

Once the screen went blank, Noah got up from his seat and began to walk while flipping open his communicator. “Barnes to O'Keefe.”

“Go ahead Noah.”

“Billy.” Noah said as he began to jog in the direction of the elevator. “Reconnect to Lieutenant Murphy and arrange to transport some equipment in. Handle it as high priority dude and hold it in Transporter Room 1 until we have a chance to go over it..” Noah said as he nearly ran right into Jerry in the hall. Waving to get him to follow, they both screeched around the corner as Noah continued to speak; “This is related to an investigation so we need to get right on it. I'll have security meet us there.” He got out just in time for both boys to reach the hall leading to the main entrance.

“Understood Noah. Billy Out!”

“What's going on?” Jerry asked with concern as Noah whipped out a P.A.D.D. And began frantically tapping on it.

“Dude, Special Crimes Unit in California found an android who might have been terminated and dumped in the ocean. I need you to run out to the guard station and find lieutenant... Um... damn it, what's his name.” Noah said tapping even faster on the handheld. “Shannon! That's it. Lieutenant Shannon. I need him to have his position covered and to meet us in transporter room 1. After you do

that, go to OR #1 and let Austin know that I'm going to need his help as soon as he feels Joey is stable enough."

"Okay Noah!" Jerry half shouted as he turned to run out the doors.

"Jerry!" Noah shouted. "Give Joey a hug for me when you see him." He said with a smile as Jerry gave a thumbs up, turned and thrust his fist in the air with an excited yell and ran full speed toward the guard shack.

About 5 minutes later Noah and Billy's discussion was interrupted by a uniformed teen entering the room. "Lieutenant Scott Shannon, reporting as ordered sir." The comment being followed up with a crisp salute, raising the eyebrows of both Noah and Billy.

"New here?" Noah asked with a grin as the officer gave him a questioning glance. "Unless someone from outside of the clan is present, we normally don't salute each other dude. We aren't military, at least not that kind of military."

"It takes some getting used to but, it's no less professional than traditional assignments, trust me on that one." Billy added.

"Oh, ok." Scott said with an uncomfortable expression, not really knowing what to do or how to present himself now.

"Scott, come here. We have something we need to discuss before we initiate this transport." Noah said waving him over to join them behind the console. "Ok, the equipment we are beaming in is part of an investigation started by the Special Crimes Unit out in California. It is a police matter they are asking us for help with. They found a badly damaged android under water and were simply going to return the android to its parent company." Noah said with a pause before looking directly at Scott. "The parent company was called Vision Industries. Marc Furst was still operating it before it combined with the Clan forming this AI division." He stated getting an appreciative smile from Scott. "Anyway, after talking with Lieutenant Murphy, we believe it would be a good idea to attempt to restore this unit to consciousness and see if it can fill us in on whatever it knows. Possibly return it to its family when we close this case up." Noah said as he verified the transporter settings. "Billy, is the replication setup you've been working on functional yet?"

"Yeah." Billy replied with a grin. "I was actually preparing to replicate the Kevin profile tonight when you called."

"Great." Noah said with a smile. "I'm going to team Austin with you since Marc, Byron and Antonio are busy with Eli and Benji. We need to be able to replicate a body and put it directly onto life support. Then we need to remove the replicated brain and hopefully if it's existing brain checks out, install it in the new body." Noah said as he looked up and saw Billy nod his head with a grin and Scott watch on with a completely blank stare on his face. "You're lost, aren't you?" Noah asked with a grin.

"You could say that." Scott replied opening his eyes wide. "How do I fit into all of this?"

Noah smiled as he leaned against the console. "This is a police matter and we are assisting. According to Marc's reports, you are the ranking Security Officer on site. For as long as this unit is part of their investigation, we need to have our best on him." Noah continued as he leaned closer and lowered his

voice. "Besides, according to his report the only thing you're lacking is practical experience. This will help with that."

"Noah, Malibu is reporting ready for transport." Billy said interrupting the conversation.

"Ok Mr. O'Keefe, energize when ready." Noah replied turning his attention back toward Scott. "Just relax and do what you feel is right. We're all here with you if you need help." Noah said as he leaned in just as the hum of the transporter system began to signal it was almost ready. With a whisper Noah said; "We all started somewhere, and we all did it as a team."

"Thanks Noah, I'm going to stand post just outside the door to make sure you aren't disturbed." Scott said just above a whisper getting a nod from Noah as a metal case began to materialize on the transporter pad.

"Transport complete, I am transferring the buffered copy into the replication control terminal so we can extrapolate physical attributes, DNA info and regeneration data we will need to create a working model for it's new body." Billy said as he powered the transporter down and signaled Malibu of transport completion.

"Billy, I'm gonna go talk to Austin. Can you get started working out the profile while I'm gone?" Noah asked as Billy seemed buried in what he was doing. "Scott will be remaining so make sure he has access to the terminal to check in with his team."

Billy simply nodded his head while Scott stepped up onto the transporter pad and approached the metal box. "There's an android in here?" He asked Noah as he walked in a circle inspecting the container from all sides.

"Most of one." Noah replied. "Rich said they recovered its head and upper torso."

"That explains why it's so small then." He stated as he looked up at Noah and smiled. "I've never seen one before."

"An android?" Noah asked through a giggle. "Dude, you've been working with them."

"I mean..." Scott said as he motioned towards the box. "...in this condition."

Noah simply smiled and nodded his head before turning back toward the door. "Stick around; you'll get to see more than that soon."

"Noah, if you can give me about an hour, I have an idea that could eliminate the need for surgery." Billy spoke up as he continued to tap away at the keyboard. "I wanna run it by Austin first though."

As Noah stepped into the hallway, he turned and grinned. "You got it. If you get the chance make sure to log your findings into the system so Marc can go over them once he's out of surgery." He got out just before the door closed.

“Is dad good?” Joey asked Austin as he stood on one foot and then switched to the other.

“That's great.” Austin replied with a grin. “Now stay on that foot and pat your head.”

“Wike dhis?” Joey asked as he did as he was asked.

“Yup, that's perfect.” Austin got out stifling a giggle. “Now rub a circle on your tummy at the same time.”

Joey scowled at his older brother but did as he was asked. “Oday?”

“Awesome, we're almost done.” He said with a smile, still trying to contain a laugh. “Now keep doing that, but I want you to hop up and down and say Rubber Baby Buggy Bumper and keep repeating it.”

“Oday.” Joey grumbled with a sigh, pausing everything he was doing already. “Wubbew Baby Buggy Bumpew, Wubbew Baby Buggy Bumpew...” Joey chanted as the door opened and Noah rushed in, freezing in his tracks.

“Austin, what are you doing to the poor kid?” Noah asked with a smirk.

“Motor skills testing.” Austin said with a giggle finally escaping. “That and he looks funny doing that.”

“AUSDIN!!!” Joey shouted causing both Noah and Austin to break out in a fit of giggles. “Dad nod funny.” Joey said with a pout, stopping the exercise.

“Well maybe not from your point of view.” Austin said with a giggle. “One last test.” Austin said with a smirk.

“I nod sayin nudhin widh bumpews any mowe.” Joey said crossing his arms and glaring at his brother.

“Nope, no bumpers.” Austin replied. “You gotta run as fast as you can over to Noah and give him a big hug.” He continued with a smile. “That'll be the last test.”

“I can do dhad.” Joey said with a smile as he nearly dove into a hug. “Hi Noah. Whewe's Caweb?”

Noah smiled and rubbed the back of Joey's head for a moment before answering. “Caleb's with your uncle Danny on a mission. They'll be home soon and I bet they can't wait to see you.” He said kneeling down and looking Joey in the eyes. “You look awesome dude!”

“Weawy?” Joey said with a blush. “I feew kinda funny bud id's geddin beddew.” He got out just in time for a rumble to come from his belly. Joey froze and looked at his mid section before looking back at Noah with fear beginning to creep into his expression. “I bwoke.”

“No your not.” Noah said with a comforting smile. “You're hungry, twirp. Didn't Austin get you something to eat yet?”

“No.” Joey replied sticking out his bottom lip.

“Think he's ready for a walk down to the cafeteria big brother?” Noah asked with a grin.

“Yup. As a matter of fact, that was the plan.” Austin replied motioning toward the door.

“Change of plans.” Noah spoke up, freezing Austin in mid step. “You're needed in Transporter Room One. We have another android in need of your help.” Noah said with a shrug.

“Kevin?” Austin questioned. “I thought he was going to wait for Dad to get out of surgery.”

“Unkah Mawc geddin suwgewied?” Joey asked with concern clearly displayed on his face.

“No little guy.” Noah said ruffling Joey's hair. “Today's the day your uncle Marc fixes Eli and Benji's Owies, remember?”

“Doday???” Joey almost shouted bouncing up and down. “I go see Ewi? Pwease!”

“Let's get some food in your tummy first, then we'll see when we can visit. It may not be until sometime tomorrow though, think you can wait that long.”

“I guess.” Joey replied with a deflated expression. “Benji's geddin suwgewied doo?”

“Yup.” Noah said as he draped his arm across the little android's shoulders and led him into the hallway, nodding to Austin as they turned. “Your Daddy and Byron came up with the idea. They're fixing Benji's left hand while they fix Eli's Right arm and leg. When they're done, both of em are gonna be whole, just like you and me.”

“Dad's coow!” Joey almost shouted. “Bud Ewi won'd have his weg wunnin afdew him anymowe.” He said with a pouty expression as they got to the elevator and pressed the down button.

“No way dude! They won't throw out his pet leg. Come on!” Noah said with a giggle as he poked Joey's side and made him squirm. “If they do, what's he gonna chase you guys around with?”

Joey got really silent as they entered the elevator but, finally looked up at Noah as they reached the basement. “Noah?” He asked as they stepped into the hallway.

“What's up?” Noah asked, kneeling down and grabbing Joey's hand.

“Whew's my Daddy?” He asked with a tears welling up in his eyes. “I wanna see my Daddy.”

“I think that can be done.” Noah said as he pulled out his communicator and flipped it open. “Barnes to Dr. Owens.”

“Jerry here. What's up Noah?”

“Dr. Owens, I need you to report to the cafeteria as soon as possible.” Noah said as seriously as he could while putting his fingers to his lips, letting Joey in on his game.

“Is something wrong?” Jerry asked, concern beginning to surface in his tone.

“There's a former patient that needs your attention, doctor.” Noah said just barely stifling his giggle. “Would you care to speak with him?”

“Um... Sure.” Jerry responded.

“Go ahead, say hi.” Noah said handing his communicator to Joey.

“Daddy?” Joey meekly said into the device. “Daddy, you gotta come down an ged some food an I wanna see you.” He excitedly began to ramble.

“Joey? Omigod! JOEY!” Jerry shouted. “I'm on my way! Omigod! I gotta go...” Jerry trailed off as the communication simply ended.

“Daddy?” Joey asked the device with a confused look. “Whew'd he go?”

“If I have to guess, I'd say he's running down a hallway, knocking down people and equipment on his way.” Noah said with a laugh as he took his communicator back and led Joey into the cafeteria.

“Excuse me?” Noah said as the two reached the counter.

“Yes?” The unfamiliar woman replied. “What can I get you hun?”

“Is Mrs. Owens still here?” Noah asked as Joey simply watched on.

“She sure is. I'll go get her for you.” The woman replied and turned to walk out of sight into the kitchen.

“She seems nice.” Noah said to Joey with a smile.

“Noah?” Mary asked as she reached the service counter, almost doing a double take when she spotted Joey. “Is that? That's not Joey is it?” She asked with a smile taking over her expression.

“Gwama?” Joey said with a huge smile. “Ausdin gave me a new body!” He shouted as Mary literally ripped her apron off and rushed to the side door.

“Come here little one!” Mary tearily said as Joey almost jumped into her embrace. “It is so good to see you!”

“Daddy is comin doo. Gwama, can we ged somedin do ead? I'm weawy hungwy. My dummy made a funny sound an Noah said id was cause I'm hungwy.” Joey began to ramble once again.

“He did?” Mary almost sang as she wrapped her arms around him. “Well then, the second your Daddy gets here, you need to fill that tummy. How does a Grilled Cheese Sandwich and French Fries sound?”

“Dhad sounds gwead gwama! Can I have a coke doo?” Joey said with a grin as Mary stood up and smiled.

"I think we can handle that." She replied looking over to Noah. "His Dad loves those too." She grinned. "What would you like?"

"Actually, that sounds great." He said almost jumping as the doors to the cafeteria flew open with a slam.

"JOEY!" Jerry shouted as he broke out in a run in their direction.

"Daddy!" Joey yelled back and ran, meeting up in the center of the cafeteria in more of a tackle than a hug.

Mary watched with a smile before turning into the kitchen.

"Good as new Doctor!" Noah said as all three sat down at the nearest table.

"You're not kidding!" Jerry said as he wrapped his arm around Joey's shoulders and squeezed. "How do you feel, I mean do you feel different or anything?"

Joey scrunched up his face in thought before nodding his head. "Yup. Ausdin says I'm geddin used do id dthough."

"Your speech is a little diffrent." Jerry said tilting his head. "Its better, and you look awesome!"

"Bud my dummy is empy. Gwama says she's gonna make us gwiwwed cheese and fwench fwies. I even can have a coke!" Joey said almost bouncing in his seat.

"He's ready to eat?" Jerry asked Noah with his eyes wide open.

"Austin says it's cool dude." Noah replied as his communicator chirped. "Oh no, not now." He groaned as he pulled it out and flipped it open. "Noah here."

"Noah, it's Billy. When is Marc expected out of surgery?"

"Not for quite a few hours still. Is something wrong?" Noah asked letting his shoulders slump.

"No not really. I need him to give us permission to attempt something Austin and I just came up with."

"How technical is this idea?" Noah asked shrugging his shoulders and smiling when he noticed Joey staring at him.

"That depends. This brain appears to be functional, we have a full DNA reconstruct in process by the computer. That should be done in about 15 minutes. Austin just came up with the idea of replacing the replicated matrix with the real one instead of doing surgery after his activation. I don't see any reason not to, the system already knows what to do with it."

Noah sat back in his seat and scratched his head. "You're going to replicate it's body around the existing brain? Could that damage it?"

“His body.”

“His?” Noah asked in surprise.

“Yup, it's a boy.” Billy's voice said with a laugh. “Noah, if you can join us for a few, I can explain the procedure while the system continues to reconstruct his body.”

“Okay.” Noah said with a sigh. “I'm on my way. Noah out.” He said just as he flipped his communicator shut. “Sorry guys. Looks like I have to pass on lunch.” He said as he reached over and ruffled Joey's hair.

“Ok Unka Noah.” Joey said with a toothy smile. “I'w save you some fwench fwies, oday?”

“Nope, you fill that tummy little man.” Noah said with a grin as he looked at Jerry. “Good luck, he's never really tasted food before dude.”

“Oh man, you're right.” Jerry said with a giggle. “This could be fun.”

“...and I'm gonna miss it.” Noah half grumbled on his way toward the door.

A few minutes later, still disappointed to be missing Joey's first meal he entered Transporter room 1.

“Dude, I'm so sorry.” Austin said the second he saw the deflated look on Noah's face. “I know exactly what you're feeling.”

“Yeah, I know.” Noah replied with a half hearted grin to match Austin's. “At least Jerry's with him.”

“Well this may make up for it gentlemen.” Billy said thrusting his fist in the air. “Come see what our new friend is going to look like.” He said rolling his chair away from the monitor and grinning from ear to ear. “Standard M.A.R.C. Unit. Stock 13 year old boy, dirty blond hair, Bluish-Gray eyes, average height and weight.”

Noah and Austin looked at the computer generated image on the screen for a minute or so before Austin cleared his throat. “And the 'in-place' implant?”

“We have to explain the procedure to Noah first.” Billy said motioning toward the other chair.

“To me?”

“You are the one in charge at the moment last time I checked the roster.” Billy said with a laugh. “Relax dude. It's not as complicated as you may think.”

“Ok, but I'll have to make you wait for Marc if I don't understand it.” Noah said as Billy began tapping at the keyboard. “I'll explain this as basic as I can. Honestly it is a very basic idea anyway.”

Noah rolled his eyes and laughed nervously. “Sure it is.”

“Look.” Billy said pointing at the screen. “Here is a representation of his mechanical systems.” He continued as he tapped a few keys and zoomed in on the images head. “Each system is just as separate as they are with the finished android. As basic as I can put this would be to tell the computer not to replicate the brain. Instead, we place the brain we wish to activate on the pad, before loading the profile into the buffer, we hold his brain in the buffer and have the system analyze it. Then we incorporate the profile and have the transporter implant the brain before materializing both as one unit. It already has all the connections mapped out and can create the brain in place. All we're going to do is tell it to use this one instead.” Billy said sighing as he looked at Noah's lost expression.

“Noah.” Austin said with a grin. “Look at it this way. We're going to transport this brain into his new body just as its being replicated. When he materializes, his old brain will already be in place and connected meaning we just need to get his biologics running and reactivate him. The whole process would take a few minutes; and would have him awake in fifteen minutes to a half hour.”

“Ok.” Noah said crossing his arms. “What's the danger to his brain? I mean couldn't we destroy him if something goes wrong?”

“It's no more dangerous than a routine transport.” Billy said with a smile.

“Fortunately, even if the computer were to mess up any of the connections, the worst that would happen would be that his biological systems would fail to come online. In that event, all we would have for power is his internal memory, which has been recharging since we connected it to the system. It takes his biological system to supply the real power so; we can't even cause any damage with an overload.” Austin said putting his hand on Noah's shoulder. “I swear, this is even safer than trying to keep his body alive while we manually install it.”

Noah nodded his head and stared at the screen, obviously deep in thought until he cleared his throat. “So he'll be up and walking in a half hour?”

“Not exactly.” Austin said with a giggle. “He's a M.A.R.C. Series Android. This newer system is a little different than his programming is used to. He'll have to go through some program reworking to get used to it. Almost like Joey is now.”

“That officer needs answers. The sooner we get them to him, the sooner he finds out if there's anything that can be done for him, or if he needs to start looking for the person responsible.” Billy added.

“Ok.” Noah almost whispered. “How can I help?”

Austin and Billy High Fived before getting serious again. “I'm programming the new parameters; Austin will place the existing brain on the pad. Once the replication is complete, just be ready to quickly move him to the biobed and we'll do the rest.”

“Brain is in place.” Austin said as he and Noah stood at the transporter pad and waited. “This isn't a gamble Noah.” Austin said looking at the worried look on Noah's face.

“It's not that. I trust you guys.” Noah said as he heard the transporter begin to hum. “I guess seeing Kevin's body earlier weirded me out a little.”

"I can understand. But this time you will see him take his first breath. Maybe even open his eyes for the first time." Austin said with a smile as Billy interrupted.

"Initiating transport." He got out as the hum grew louder and the brain dematerialized. "Holding in buffer and scanning." He said as Noah and Austin turned and watched Billy rush between the computer console and the transporter's controls. "Integration sequence programmed, Loading physical profile." He said as the hum evened out but remained just as loud as a transport in progress. "Physical Profile loaded. Stand by." Billy said with a smile growing on his face as he frantically tapped away. "Increasing power for final Molecular Scan." Billy said just as the hum slowly began to get louder.

"You ok?" Austin asked as he noticed Noah's hands begin to nervously shake a bit.

"I will be when this is done." Noah replied as he heard Billy clap his hands, obviously happy with the computer's results causing Noah to jump.

"Completing replication, be ready to move." He said as the transporter began to hum louder and all three watched as the naked form of a teenage boy began to materialize. The second the hum began to quiet down Billy shouted one last time, causing Noah to nearly jump out of his skin. "Completed, Move him!"

Noah and Austin rushed up onto the pad, scooped up the lifeless form off of the transporter's floor and rushed him to the waiting biobed. It took seconds to get him in place and connect his uplink port to the system to quickly scan him.

"All systems check out, awesome job Billy." Austin said as he began to tap at the biobed's controls. "Stand back Noah, preparing to defibrillate, twenty percent power, now." He said just as the body flinched and deeply took its first breath. "We have a rhythm and respiration." Austin said with a smile. "Blood pressure rising." He read from the display mechanically. "We have brain activity!" He shouted and all three finally released a breath they weren't even aware they were holding.

Just as the boy's breathing evened out, Noah walked over and looked carefully at his face. "I wonder what his name is." He said as Austin looked up from the controls and smiled.

"He'll be able to tell us as soon as his brain's power level normalizes." He said with a smile just as Noah saw the android's face twitch.

"Is that normal?" Noah asked as it twitched again, followed by his arms and his legs.

"Not this soon." Austin said standing up and looking the boy over. "There's no way he's at 100% already." He managed to get out as the body began to shake and twitch, almost violently. "Oh shit! Billy get over here and help us restrain him before he hurts himself!" He shouted as all three boys wrestled to lock the androids thrashing limbs down to the bed, Noah catching the android's foot in the eye accidentally.

"Oh my god, you ok dude?" Billy asked as they took a step back from the bed and Noah cradled the right side of his face.

"I'm fine! I'm fine! What's wrong with him!?" Noah almost demanded.

"I... I don't know! He checked out!" Austin almost shouted returning to the control panel. "I'm giving him a mild sedative to try and calm him down." He said just as the android seemed to freeze and his eyes literally shot open.

The boy suddenly began to gasp for air and choke while he thrashed his head back and forth. After a few seconds of what appeared to be a full blown panic attack, he began to calm down; still taking extremely deep breaths as he periodically squeezed his eyes shut and opened them wide repeatedly.

"Is he awake?" Noah asked as he carefully stepped closer, freezing the second the android's head turned in his direction and locked his gaze on him. "Take it easy dude; we're trying to help you." Noah said as the boy's expression seemed to calm a bit. "That's better." Noah said with a smile.

"Ahh..." The android tried to speak, but instead took another deep breath and seemed to swallow really hard. "Wh...whh... ahhh..." He stuttered.

"It's too soon." Noah said softly as he watched Austin begin to tap away.

"He's confused." Austin said quietly. "Confused and frightened. Noah, keep talking to him. The little bit you said actually brought his heart rate down a little."

"Gna..." The android managed to choke out before gasping for air once again.

"Easy." Noah said finally inching his way over to the side of the bed. "No one here is going to hurt you, I promise." He nearly whispered as he reached his hand over and carefully placed an experimental touch on the boy's head, seeming to further relax him. "There you go." Noah calmly whispered as he began gently running his fingers through the frightened boy's hair. "See, I only want to help."

"Hel... el..." The boy tried to say much more calmly than his last attempt. "He... Help." He repeated.

"That's better." Noah said softly.

"Help... pl.. please help." The boy finally choked out and tears literally began to stream down both cheeks. "Please... Help me." He got out as he began to cry. "Oh god... please help me." He repeated over and over.

"Release the restraints." Noah said causing Austin to jump.

"Are you su..." Austin got out.

"Jesus dude, he's awake. Unlock them." He almost shouted as Austin released the biobed's security restraints and the android's hands went right to his face and he began to cry harder. Noah jumped up on the side of the bed, causing the android to cling on to him as if his life depended on it. "Shhhhh... It's ok. You're safe." Noah whispered as he slowly rocked the boy.

"I co...couldn't sw.. swim." The boy said between gasps. "I tried... my legs and... my arms wouldn't work... I tried..." He cried now seeming to calm down a bit. "I... I can't see right."

"It's gonna take some time for your brain to recover." Austin said softly enough to not startle the boy. "Your sight may be blurry, your sense of feel will be a little out of whack for a little while, but it will all pass in a few minutes. Just ignore any strange readings and try to relax buddy, ok?"

"Ok." The android replied, tightening his hug on Noah, who continued to hold and rock him.

"Just take slow deep breaths and relax. You're safe now." Noah whispered into the boy's ear.

"All systems still check out." Austin said returning to the computer and directing Billy's attention to the screen. "I've never seen an android activate so violently."

"Ha... have you ever activated one after he'd drown?" The boy sniffled and asked before rubbing his eyes and trying to focus.

"Well, no." Austin replied. "Is that what happened to you?"

"Yeah." the boy replied bringing the room into total silence. "It was an accident." He continued before resting his forehead on Noah's shoulder, now breathing much easier. "Where am I?"

"This is a newly formed hospital, being redesigned for Clan Short of Vulcan. We're part of its A.I. Division." Noah replied softly.

"Oh." The android said as he looked back at Noah. "You might want to contact my normal doctor and let him know I'm here."

"We can do that for you." Noah said with a smile. "What's his name and where can we find him?"

"His name is Marc um..." He said as if trying to remember. "Actually, I don't know his last name. If you contact Vision Industries in South Carolina, they'll know who Marc is."

"Sure thing." Noah said as his face began to pale. "Austin, come with me." Noah said as he helped the boy lay back before hopped off the bed and pointing toward the door. "Billy, we'll just be a second." Noah said as Austin shrugged his shoulders and left the room with Noah practically pushing him through the doorway. "Did you guys ever determine how long that kid was unconscious?"

"No." Austin replied. "We just knew it was important to get him back as soon as possible."

Noah sighed before pulling out his communicator and flipping it open. "I hope he can answer." He said with a shrug. "Noah to Marc."

"Marc here, what's up bro?"

"Marc, we have a potential situation." He said with a sigh. "Can you break away for a few minutes?"

"You're timing couldn't be better. Eli's on his way to recovery right now and Benji is being prepped. Dude, everything went awesome! I was actually taking a break anyway."

“Thank god.” Noah said with a smile. “I believe an old friend of yours would like to see you. He's in transporter room 1 with Billy right now.”

“Keep talking, I'm on my way now. Who is it?”

“The short version would be a M.A.R.C. Unit recovered in California after a drowning. His structure was totally destroyed but his brain was still ok. He's awake now and is asking for you.” Noah said with a sigh. “By name.”

“I'll be there in a second.” Marc said, sounding as if he had just begun to run. “Marc out.”

“What do we do?” Austin asked Noah with a shrug.

“I keep talking to him and you try to determine how long he was under water.” He replied as the two turned and went back into the transporter room.

“Did you call my doctor?” The boy asked as Noah hopped back up on the biobed.

“Yup, he's on his way.” Noah replied with a grin. “I'm Noah by the way. That's Billy and that's Austin.” He continued pointing to each as he named them.

The android smiled and nodded to each before looking back at Noah. “I'm Kenny; well my friends call me KC.” He said with a smile. “Um... can I ask you a question?”

“Shoot.” Noah answered.

“I'm getting really weird sensory readings and it's still kinda hard to breathe. How bad did I mess myself up?” He barely got out before the door opened and Marc stepped in.

“KC?!? Oh my god dude!” Marc said as he rushed to the side of the bed and pulled him into a hug.

“Hey doctor fix it!” KC said weakly into Marc's shoulder. “I swear it wasn't my fault.” He continued with a weak giggle.

“Never is. So what did you break this time superman?” Marc asked with a laugh.

“If I had to guess, I'd say my neck.” KC answered scratching his head. “But there was more than that wrong and now everything feels wrong.”

“You look good.” Marc said looking at Austin who silently pointed to a metal box in the corner. Marc took a step closer and peeked into the open box with a gasp. “No way!”

“That was how he was found.” Austin said in just over a whisper.

Marc looked at the mangled contents of the box for a moment before looking at KC and then back at Austin. “He was recovered earlier today?”

“We obtained him today.” Austin said noticing Marc tapping his foot. “His brain was still sealed and tested out so we...” He trailed off before Billy jumped in.

“We replicated a new body using stored information recovered from his brain.” Billy said with a weak smile.

“Where's his original brain?” Marc asked with his eyes widening.

“Active.” Billy replied pointing toward KC. “We did the implantation during the replication process. I'll fill you in on the procedures we wrote during the process and what changes I want to make to the plans I originally drew up now that we've had a test run.”

“Test run?” KC asked as Noah hopped back up on the biobed giving him someone to lean on again. “I was a test run?”

“Not entirely.” Marc said scowling at Billy. “We have performed a successful system replication and have a unit planned. You are the first to be brought online.” Marc said looking back at Billy. “We'll just have to work with our Chief here and see if we can develop some kind of a bedside manner.”

Billy's mouth dropped open when he finally realized what he had said. “Oh dude, I'm so sorry. I didn't even think before I said that. I did 4 replications before you arrived; I knew this would work, honestly.”

“It's ok.” KC said before straining to sit upright on his own. “I won't hold it against you if stuff starts working right.” He said as his arms shook while straining to hold himself upright.

“Fair enough.” Billy said with grin as Austin walked around the console.

“Dad, do we have a room available for KC? He could really use some rest and a real bed.” Austin asked as he approached the biobed and disconnected KC from the terminal.

“Sure, that whole side of the building near Dixon and Jesse's room is completed on the second floor. You can bring him right up.” Marc said as he stepped back over to the biobed. “I'm glad to see you, I really am but...” Marc trailed off.

“But?” KC said in question before resting his head on Noah's shoulder.

“Kenny, do you know how long you've been gone?” Marc asked as he hopped up on the biobed facing the other two.

“Um...” KC replied, closing his eyes. “System time restarted at 3:47pm August 18, 1976, I was conscious for three days on the bottom before internal power failed.” He continued opening his eyes. “How long was I gone?”

Marc took a deep breath before looking anywhere but at KC. “About 28 years.” He said softly as he slowly brought his gaze upward and shook his head at Noah's shocked look. “Your dad...” He began.

“Omigod, Dad!” KC cut him off and almost shouted with his tears once again forcing themselves to the surface. “Is he ok?”

Marc took a deep breath and slowly shook his head. "He looked for you for years. He thought someone might have kidnapped you or something." Marc said looking into KC's teary eyes. "I'm sorry..." Was all he could get out before KC openly began to cry. "He passed away about ten years ago."

"Oh n... n... no!" KC turned and buried his face into Noah's shoulder. "Daddy... Oh my god..."

"I'm so sorry." Noah whispered while rubbing KC's back. "Marc, we need to get something for him to put on and I'll handle getting him up to his room."

"Don't leave!" KC yelled with a snuffle. "Please."

"I won't bro. I promise." Noah replied. "We're all here with you."

"I have to get back to surgery. KC, Tomorrow morning I'll dig out the stuff Stew left for you. It was all kept in VI's storage." Marc said as he hopped off the bed and rubbed the back of KC's head.

"Stew?" Noah asked.

"My dad." KC replied before turning to look at Marc. "Thanks." He said with a forced smile.

"I can have someone go up tonight and do the digging for you Marc. Everything is still in crates on the 10th floor." Billy said approaching the biobed with a hospital gown and slippers in his hand.

"That would help." Marc said with a nod. "They're gonna have to look for two sealed containers with the name S. McKensie printed on the sides."

"You got it." Billy said as he handed the clothing to Noah, pausing to put his hand on KC's back and whispering; "I'm so sorry." Before quietly returning to the console.

"Dad?" Austin asked with a look of surprise on his face. "Can I ask a question?"

"Yeah, shoot." Marc replied getting KC's attention.

"Dad?" KC asked wiping his eyes.

"Yeah, I found out not too long ago." Austin answered with a grin. "I just ran Kenny's name through the VI data base. He comes up as project 'Marc 2'. Is this right?"

"Yup." Marc said with a grin. "I guess you could say KC is your older brother in quite a few ways."

"Mach II. I like Mach II better." KC replied with a snuffle as he wrestled with his gown trying to put it on. "We're all brothers kinda."

"True." Marc said. "KC was my first attempt to make us more human like. The Marc 2 project was my first step toward your programming Austin."

"Cool." KC said finally putting his arms into the gown. "I always wanted a little brother." He said with a giggle and a snuffle.

“Oh, you're getting a lot more than that then.” Austin said with a laugh. “Can I go up with you guys? I'd like to get to know my brother a little better.” Austin said before opening his eyes wide. “Can KC share a room with Joey?”

Marc smiled and turned to leave the room. “That's perfect. Yeah, unless he doesn't want to share a room with his other little brother.”

“Other?” KC asked as Noah started to tie up the back of his gown. “How many brothers do I have?”

“Not really sure at this point. Once we figure it out we'll give you some sort of roster.” Austin said with a giggle. “He's really cool and just got a body upgrade like you did this morning. Wait til you meet him, he's soooo cute.” Austin boasted.

“You guys get him settled in, I've got to get back to the OR. I'll be in surgery for at least another 4 or 5 hours. Then I'll take a walk up and see if we can't find some time to talk.” Marc said as he gave KC a hug and left the room.

“Noah, do we have any wheelchairs yet?” Austin asked, stopping Noah in his tracks.

“I can walk.” KC stiffened up and announced as he worked his way to the edge of the biobed.

Noah rushed over and wrapped his arms around KC's midsection just in time for KC to realize just how weak and unstable his legs really were. “Austin, Scott is still posted outside the room, could you ask him to give me a hand getting him upstairs?”

“I can help.” Austin said as Noah shook his head no.

“You meet us up there once Billy's ready to do Kevin's replication.” Noah said with a smile as he watched Austin agree and head for the door.

“Sorry Billy. I was so excited I almost forgot this system has to be ready to do it again.” Austin said as the door slid open. “Scott, could you give Noah a hand walking a new patient to his room?”

“Aye sir.” Came the response as Scott turned the corner and froze once he got his first look at KC. “Is he the person I am standing watch over?” He asked as his face began to blush.

“Yup.” Noah replied with a grin. “Think you can lend a shoulder? He's way to weak to walk on his own yet.”

“Oh... Um... Yeah. Sure.” Scott stammered out as he looked at Austin and noticed he was staring at him. “What?” He asked taking KC's other arm and gently placing it on his shoulder while carefully wrapping his free arm around his waist.

“Nothing.” Austin replied with a giggle as the three slowly made their way through the door. “I'll be up as soon as I can KC!” He shouted receiving a short wave as the door slid shut.

“I think someone thinks your big brother is cute.” Billy said with a laugh as he tapped away at the transporter controls.

“You noticed that too?” Austin chuckled. “At least we know the new guy has good taste.” He said folding his arms and smiling.

“Oh god, I can actually see your head swelling.” Billy said with a laugh as Austin looked at the crotch of his pants and shrugged his shoulders. “The other one! Oh my god you're gross.”

“Eh, you'll see what you're missing if I have any sisters out there.” Austin said playfully punching Billy's arm. “Let's get to work. I want to go spend some time with my family.”

“Owens, Short, Wagner, Furst and McKensie...” KC said as he was helped up on to his bed by Noah and Scott. “How do you keep track?”

“Dunno.” Noah said with a grin. “I just can.”

“Don't feel bad, I'm confused too.” Scott said as he looked at Noah. “Should I stay stationed outside the room until you contact the officer in charge of this investigation?”

“Does he have to? I mean he can hang out in here can't he?” KC almost whined. “I mean, if you want to.” He quickly added.

“Security is covered, right Scott?” Noah asked standing up and pulling out his P.A.D.D.

“Yup. Doubled at the entrances and in the brig. They have been filing detailed reports and know to alert me and you with any issues.” Scott smiled.

“Sweet.” Noah said with a smile. “I'll give Jerry a yell and tell him Joey is set up with his new brother in this room. I'll notify the on call that we have two new patients in this room and to expect Eli and Benji.”

“More androids?” KC asked, tilting his head.

“Noooo.” Noah answered with a grin. “But they are real family.” He said as he opened the door. “Scott, KC is in your hands. The hospital is secure so if you need to leave the room, it's ok. Just let the nurse know if you do.” He got out as the door closed, leaving the boys alone.

“KC huh?” Scott asked staring at the floor next to the bed while nervously swinging his feet off the side.

“Yeah. It's short For Keneth Casey.” KC said with a smile. “I like Kenny or KC.” He continued. “What about you?”

“I like KC.” Scott said not once looking up from the floor.

“I meant your name. Scott, right?” KC asked with a grin.

“Oh yeah.” Scott blushed a deep red and finally glanced over to see KC looking at him. “Lieutenant Scott Allen Shannon.”

“Can I call you Scott, or do I have to call you Lieutenant?” KC asked with a giggle.

“Scott. I mean unless you want to call me Lieutenant.” Scott replied looking back at the floor.

“What for?” KC asked as he rested his head back into his pillow.

“Um... I dunno.” Scott replied, beginning to fidget with something in his pocket.

“Do androids make you nervous Scott?” KC asked folding his arms. “Or is it just me?”

“Nervous?” Scott asked “No, androids are no different than other people.”

“So, it's just me then?” KC asked squinting his eyes, his grin never fading.

“Yeah... I mean NO! I mean...” Scott tried to choke out being stopped by KC's giggling. “I don't know what I mean.”

“That much is obvious.” KC replied reaching over and grabbing Scott's arm. “Look, I'm not trying to be mean or nothing. It's just hard to get to know you if you're too busy trying to memorize the pattern on the floor.” He continued finally getting Scott to smile. “Will you relax? I'm starting to think I smell funny or something. Since this body is brand new, if it stinks I may have to trade it in for something that smells better. Maybe even cuter or something.”

“Nah, you're already cute.” Scott replied, instantly turning bright red and literally slapping his hands over his mouth.

KC grinned as he watched Scott hold his mouth and hold his breath. “Awww thanks.” KC replied with a smile. “You should look in a mirror though. Maybe we could have some sort of competition or something. Actually...” KC said sitting up. “You sure you're human?”

“Yeah, I'm sure. Why?” Scott asked, still not looking back up from the floor.

“Cause, people try real hard to make units that look like you.” KC said with a smile. “I guess there's no comparing real cute to emulated cute.”

After staring at the floor in silence for a few moments, Scott looked at KC, face still red, and in just over a whisper said; “Real cute can't be faked.” He got out before trying to force a smile. “It's genetics isn't it?”

“You mean with androids?” KC asked tilting his head.

“Yeah.” Scott said with a smile. “Androids and People, even their looks are determined by their host DNA makeup. So that means your looks are just as real as mine, doesn't it?”

“True.” KC said. “But ours can be altered.”

“So can a humans under the right circumstances.” Scott replied turning to finally face KC. “So how is your cute any less cute than my cute?” He got out before freezing once again, clenching his eyes shut.

KC giggled before reaching over and rubbing Scott's cheek. “Cause anyone who can even get a sentence like that out, even by accident is still one up on the cute scale.”

“Can we change the subject?” Scott asked once he was able to breathe again.

“We can talk about anything you want.” KC replied with a smile as he made himself more comfortable. “Wanna lie down? There's plenty of room you know.”

“Nah, I'm fine.” Scott replied folding his hands in his lap.

“Right.” KC responded. “You look like you're sitting on a thumb tack and pretending it isn't there.” He said with a laugh. “I don't want to be all comfortable here while you practically slip off the edge of the bed. I swear I won't bite or nothing.”

Scott let his head drop a little and he started to smile, still not looking back in KC's direction. “I'm sorry.” He said as he kicked his shoes off and shuffled up to lay next to his new friend. “I guess I'm just being stupid.”

“Don't worry about it.” KC said with a sigh. “I guess I just need someone to talk to and even if you're all hung up on the cute thing you're stuck listening.” KC continued. “Even if I have to force you to.”

“You don't have to force me to listen.” Scott said finally allowing his guard down. “I guess I should tell you that I'm... Um... Well...”

“Gay?” KC asked with a smirk.

“Well, yeah.” Scott replied looking up at the ceiling.

“Oh my god! I never would have guessed that.” KC said with a laugh. “Have you ever told anyone? I mean that straight act is really working for you.” He continued with a giggle.

“Shutup!” Scott said with a laugh. “I don't normally get all girlie and stuff. You just... I don't know... There's just something about you that kinda shocked me or something. I can't explain it.”

“Then don't.” KC said with a smile. “I know what you're saying. I even feel the same. I just have so much running through my head right now.” He said turning and noticing the smile on Scott's face fade. “When I feel better, you think it would be cool to go out or something? You know, someplace we can actually have some fun doing something other than trying to explain why we want to?”

“I'd like that.” Scott replied as the door to the room swung open, causing Scott to shoot upright in panic.

“Someplace where you might relax would be nice too.” KC said with a sarcastic laugh.

“Sorry guys. Austin didn't say Joey was sharing a room.” Jerry said as he led Joey to the bed near the window and helped him up on to it.

“Daddy?” Joey asked looking up at his father and smiling. “Who awe dhe odhew boys?”

“Good question.” Jerry asked kicking off his sneakers and hopping up on the bed with Joey. “Lieutenant Shannon, right?” Jerry asked with a smile.

“Yeah, how'd you guess?” Scott asked as KC pulled him back to a lying position.

“Marc told me about you.” Jerry said with a smile. “I'm Jerry, this is my son Joey.” Jerry said as Joey waved his hand.

“Is he youw boyfwiend?” Joey asked innocently causing Scott to blush once again.

“Not yet, but he's trying.” KC said with a laugh. “I'm KC by the way.”

“Are you the android that transported in earlier?” Jerry asked.

“Yeah, that was me.” KC replied nodding his head.

“I heard you were in pretty bad shape.” Jerry said as he made sure Joey was tucked in. “If you need anything at all dude, just yell. Ok?”

“Me doo!” Joey added with a smile. “I'ww ged you sduff an hewp doo fix you if you need id!” Joey said with a satisfied smile.

“Thanks guys.” KC said sitting up and resting his arms on Scott's stomach, feeling him tremble slightly at his touch. “But I heard you just got a new body today too.”

“Yeah! My Bwodhew and my Daddy and Unca Mawc gave me a body bud id was bwoke so dhey made me a new one.” Joey rambled excitedly. “Did dhey make youw new body? Does id feew funny? Cause mine feews funny and id's now weawwy wowkin wighd.”

KC smiled and and nodded his head before squinting his eyes and looking Joey over more closely. “Oh cool! They gave you two different colored eyes! That's sweet!”

Joey smiled proudly before a rumble in his tummy caused him to open his eyes wide. “Daddy, I dthink I'm hungwy again.”

“But you just ate half the cafeteria squirt, you can't still be hungry.” Jerry said with a giggle.

“Bud Daddy! My dummy sed I'm hungwy.” Joey scowled and said before another rumble was heard by Jerry this time. “See!”

“His digestive system is probably just waking up.” KC said with a grin. “You're not hungry this time little guy, but you may start...” KC managed to get out before a loud “Ppppprrrrraaaapppppp” cut him

off. "...passing gas." KC said as all three busted out laughing, leaving Joey to look under the covers to figure out where the noise just came from.

"I fawded? Wike Unca Cowy?" Joey asked with a grin.

"Actually." Jerry said as he grabbed his nose and began waving his free hand while he bolted off of the bed. "Yeah, just like your Uncle Cory!"

"Oh my god!" Scott said as the draft carried the smell across the other bed. "Dude? What did you feed him?"

"Gwamma said I eaded a howse!" Joey said with a giggle as KC started to laugh uncontrollably.

"She said you ate LIKE a horse." Jerry said as he stumbled to put his shoes on, Scott following suite. Both of them laughing and choking.

"I'm gonna go check on security." Scott said as he wiped the tears from his eyes.

"Yeah, I gotta go check in with the Nurse and see if the other patients are doing ok." Jerry quickly chimed in as both almost fell over each other running for the door.

"Jerry!" KC shouted.

"Yeah dude?" Jerry replied still taking small steps backward toward the door.

"If you two are gonna leave me in here, could you ask the nurse to get me something to eat?" KC said with a laugh. "Same thing Joey had. I at least want to be able to fight back." He said with a cough as Jerry nodded in agreement and bolted for the door.

"Id smewws weawwy bad." Joey said with a shocked look on his face. "Unca Cowy's in dwoubwe when he comes home!" Joey got out before letting another loud one rip.

"Oh my god!" KC said through his pained laughter as he began repeatedly pressing the call button, hoping to get a nurse to instantly appear. "I think we're all in trouble."

"Ok who in here thinks the call button is a controller for a video game?" The nurse said as she walked into the room. "Oh good lord." She said as she began to wave her hand looking at Joey's smiling face and then seeing KC with the covers over his head. "I'm guessing you need me to open a window?"

"Or bust the wall open." KC shouted with a laugh.

"I fawded wike Unca Cowy." Joey said proudly.

"Oh you sure did that honey." The nurse said as she opened both windows wide. "I don't know who your Uncle Cory is sweetie but he may need to get looked at by a doctor if he makes a room smell this bad normally." The nurse said ruffling Joey's hair. "KC, Doctor Owens asked me to order two grilled cheese sandwiches, french fries and a coke. Do you need anything else Hon?"

“Nose plugs, an oxygen mask... Maybe just knock me out or something.” KC replied through fits of giggles.

“Oh honey, your little brother can't help it. It'll pass as soon as his system settles.” The nurse said lovingly as she left the room.

“Widdwe Bwodhew?” Joey asked causing KC to peek out from beneath his covers.

“Um, yeah.” KC said raising his head and smiling weakly. “I was hoping Austin would be in here when you found out.”

“Ausdin nevw said I had mowe bwodhews.” Joey stated.

“He didn't know.” KC replied. “I never even knew about him before today. Your Uncle Marc created him the same way he created me. Since I was first, that makes me Austin's big brother, and since you are his little brother...” KC got out before Joey started to smile.

“I ged dwo big bwodhews?” Joey cut him off in question.

“If that's ok, I'd like to be your big brother too.” KC said with a smile.

“Yeah!” Joey said with an ear to ear smile. “Casey, can I come ovej do youw bed?”

“Sure, if you can leave your butt over there.” KC said with a giggle once Joey craned his neck to look at his backside.

“Id don'd come off!” Joey said squinting his eyes. “You'we siwwy!” He said with a laugh as he started to climb off of his bed.

“Be careful little guy.” KC said leaning in Joey's direction.

“I can wawk ok.” Joey said as he slid off the bed, letting another one fly just as his bare feet hit the floor. “Sowwy.” He said with a giggle.

“Hey, if you don't let it out you'll explode.” KC said with a laugh.

“I wiww?” Joey said as he rushed to KC's bed.

“No.” KC said as he helped Joey shuffle up onto the bed. “I'm just kidding little dude.”

Joey smiled and shuffled himself under the covers, cuddling up next to his new big brother just as the nurse rolled a cart with a tray of food on it. “At least the air cleared in here.” She said before she approached the bed. “Ok, I though it had.” She added with a laugh.

“Stay a while, pretty soon your nose goes dead and it isn't so bad.” KC said with a giggle.

“Oh, I don't think so.” The nurse said with a laugh. “There are two pieces of chocolate cake on there your Granma sent up. She said they were for her special boys.” The nurse said as she turned for the door.

“Granma?” KC asked.

“Yeah, Gwamma. You didn'd meed hewe yed?” Joey asked as he sat up and eyed the two large slabs of cake.

KC saw Joey's eyes open wide and giggled. “Dig in dude!” He said as he picked up one of his sandwiches, waving it at Joey. “...and prepare for war!”

* * *

“Malibu Police Department, Special Crimes Division. This communication is being logged. How can I direct your call?”

“I'd like to speak with Lieutenant Murphy please.” Noah replied to the uniformed woman on the screen.

“May I tell him who is calling?”

“Noah Barnes, Acting Division Head, Clan Short AI division. This is regarding...” Noah said as he scanned the folder that had arrived with KC. “John Doe, File number 45016 Alpha.”

“Thank you sir, one moment please.” The woman said as the screen flashed into standby. About one minute later, a familiar face appeared on the screen. “Noah! I didn't expect to hear back from you so soon. Is there a problem?”

“God no.” Noah said with a smile. “Are you ready to be rid of one more John Doe?”

“No way, already?”

“Yes sir, If you are still logging, I can read off the info you'll need to begin closing out this case.” Noah said with a smile.

“Please, that would be helpful.” Rich said as he tapped a few keys. “Please stand by Mr. Barnes. This communication is to be entered into the official investigation records for case Identified as John Doe, file number 45016 Alpha. Investigation update, source Vision Industries, Inc...” Rich got out before Noah interrupted.

“Clan Short of Vulcan of the House of Sarek of the Family of Surak, AI Division. Formerly known as Vision Industries, Inc.” Noah injected. “Sorry, your information is a little outdated.”

“Noted.” Rich said with a smile. “Please continue Mr. Barnes by identifying yourself for the records and those involved.”

“My name is Noah Simon Barnes, temporarily acting head of this division and personally involved with the ballistics recovery of identification of one M.A.R.C. unit discovered by your department. Due to the destruction of the identification which would normally be used in situations similar to these, a full reconstruction and reactivation was required and successfully performed today. Those involved were Austin Short and Lieutenant William James O’Keefe. Following activation, The unit identified himself as Keneth Casey McKensie, who your records will show was reported missing on August 15, 1976 by his Father Stewart Joshua McKensie who is formerly an employee of the former Vision Industries, Inc. Our investigation has uncovered that this unit and Missing Person, File Number 15370915-17-Charlie opened August 16, 1976 are in fact the same individual. Pending interrogation by an official officer of your department, I am prepared to state officially that both cases mentioned require closing. Additionally, acting as Division Head for Clan Short of the House of Sarek of the Family of Surak, AI Division; as required by the Federation Safe Haven Act, Article 203; Sections 203.2, 203.3 and Article 135; Section 135.2, Custody is being awarded to Marcus John Furst as the biological father to said individual as per requirements placed on Clan Short directly by the Vulcan Embassy in such matters. It is our recommendation that your department, once satisfied with these findings allow said placement to ensure a suitable home and further ensure proper medical and psychiatric evaluation and treatments are obtained. This concludes my preliminary report.” Noah said with a sigh.

“Enter into record; Lieutenant Richard M. Murphy, Badge number 1904; currently assigned as director to the Malibu Police Department – Special Crimes Division. After careful consideration following the review of all forensics materials and ballistics investigations performed by Clan Short of Vulcan on our behalf, it is my determination that the cases listed as John Doe, file number 45016 Alpha and Missing Person, File Number 15370915-17-Charlie are to be closed as there is sufficient evidence provided. Our department will interview Keneth Casey McKensie at our earliest opportunity to confirm this conclusion and officially close these files. End logged communication.” Rich said with a smile as he tapped a few keys and nodded his head in approval. “Nice Job Noah, you sure you aren't interested in a position in law enforcement?”

Noah giggled as he sat back in his chair. “No way. This job is way more fun.” He continued with an evil grin. “So, when are you and John coming to see KC?”

“Well, I'll have to get back to you on that. I didn't expect your guys to bust this open in under 24 hours.”

“Cool, just give a yell and I'll take you on the V.I.P. Tour.” Noah said with a smile.

“Oh nice.” Rich replied. “I'll let John know he has to dress nice.”

“Poor kid.” Noah laughed. “Tell him to dress normal. With this group you may want to do the same. Just trust me on that one.”

“Ok.” Rich laughed. “Talk to you soon Noah. Please thank your team for me and let them know what they did today put an entire precinct to shame. But they are all grateful.”

“Will do. Talk to you soon.” Noah replied as he set the system into standby.

"If your doctor catches you boys out of your room, he's gonna have me strap you to your beds." The head nurse laughed.

"But we're bored." KC whined. "Besides, the room needs time to air out."

"Ok, but stay on this floor and promise me if you start to feel tired you'll get right back in your beds."

"Oday." Joey beamed with an ear to ear smile. "C'mon Casey. I wanna wawk." Joey said grabbing KC's hand.

Passing one of the rooms, Joey heard the sounds of someone sniffing coming from inside. Being curious, he tiptoed over and peeked in the open doorway. "Casey. Dhewe's a boy in hewe and he cwyin." Joey whispered as he began to enter the room.

"Joey! No!" KC whispered loudly as Joey walked right into the room.

"Awe you ok?" Joey asked softly as the boy looked up and forced a smile.

"Yeah, I guess so." The boy replied. "How long have you been out there?"

"Not long, we were just walking by." KC replied as he entered the room. "Sorry, He took off before I could stop him." KC added.

"It's no problem." The boy said, still trying his best to fake a smile. "Who are you guys?"

"I'm KC and this is my little brother Joey." KC said and Joey's face lit right up when he heard him say little brother.

"I'm Dixon." The boy replied somberly.

"Awe you sick?" Joey asked slowly walking over to the bed. "Cause my Daddy can hewp make id beddew."

"Who's your Daddy?" Dixon asked tilting his head.

"Dr. Owens." KC answered for Joey.

"Oh." Dixon said as he looked across the room out the window. "Yeah, I met him. He seems real nice."

"How come you wewe cwyin?" Joey asked as he finally reached the bed and carefully touched Dixon's hand.

"Cause I'm scared for someone." He replied looking at the small hand covering his own now. "A friend of mine."

"Is youw fwiend in dhe hospidaw doo?" Joey asked opening his eyes wide.

“I don't know where he is, if he's ok or anything.” Dixon said as Joey climbed up onto the bed and wrapped his arms around his new friend, tears beginning to well up in his own eyes.

“How come you're cryin? You don't even know who I'm talkin bout. If you did, you may not even want to talk to me no more.” Dixon replied with a confused expression.

“Cause you wewe cwyin. When peopwe cwy id means somedhing huwds.” Joey sniffled and hugged tightly into Dixon's chest.

“But I'm not hurting right now.” Dixon replied wrapping his arm around Joey and looking at KC, still a little confused.

“Not on the outside.” KC stated as he sat on the foot of the bed. “Joey's had a rough few days I think. Today is a happier day for him and I think seeing someone sad on his happy day just doesn't seem right to him.” He continued with a warm smile. “Your friend, is he someone our family can help with maybe?”

“I don't know.” Dixon replied, his eyes filling up once again. “I'm scared to even ask.”

“Is he youw boyfwiend?” Joey asked innocently, causing Dixon to inhale sharply.

“If he is dude, it's cool.” KC said still smiling.

“Yeah. But you gotta swear not to tell anyone.” Dixon quickly said looking toward the open door. “No one knows about Jesse and I think it might cause trouble or somethin.”

“Dwoubwe? How can wovin someone cause dwoubwe?” Joey asked as he reached up and wiped a stray tear off Dixon's cheek.

“Cause my Mom...” Dixon froze in mid sentence. “...the woman who called herself my Mom hurt me for it. I don't want him getting hurt like that.”

“I can't promise anything.” KC said patting Dixon's foot through the blankets. “Our family is really good at helping from what I've seen here.”

“I wanna meed youw boyfwiend someday.” Joey said with a smile.

“You can see it really doesn't make a difference, gay or not I mean.” KC said with a smile. “If you tell us who he is, maybe we can talk to our family and find out if we can help.”

“Dhen you can smiwe!” Joey said with a squeeze.

“Hard to smile when you're confined to a bed.” Dixon replied. “But I'll try.”

“Dhink of somedhing fun. Dhad'ww make you smiwe.” Joey grinned.

“Yeah. If I ever have a bad day I just jump on my board and ride til I'm in a better mood.” KC said with a grin. “If it's raining, I think of new tricks I wanna try. I can't actually ride but, for a little while I imagine I'm on my deck and it does the same thing for me.”

“I'd kill to be able to get on a skateboard right now. It sounds like fun.” Dixon replied closing his eyes and finally smiling, having his smile rapidly fade. “I don't even own one anymore.”

“We'll have to buy you a new one then.” An older woman said as she entered the room.

“Hi Mamie.” Dixon said as he opened his eyes and smiling at her expression when he once again called her something she had to have assumed she would never hear again. “Guys, this is my Great Grandmother.”

“Hi Ma'am.” KC said as he stood up. “I'm KC and that's my little brother up on the bed with Dixon.”

“I'm Joey!” Joey said finally releasing Dixon and smiling. “Dixon wooked wike he needed fwriends so we came in and sdawded dawkin.” Joey said as the old woman walked around the bed and after placing kisses on Dixon and his little companion's foreheads, sat down in the chair near the nightstand.

“That was very nice of you young man.” She said looking at Joey more carefully. “Well I'll be!” She exclaimed with a laugh. “One blue eye and one green.” She smiled and sat back. “That's something you don't often see.”

“I dthink id's coow.” Joey said with a grin.

“It sure is that.” The woman smiled and replied. “Little D, Your Uncle Mel will be up shortly. He had to fuel up the car and since you were sleeping, decided now was as good a time as any.” The old woman stated.

“Casey, I'm geddin diwed.” Joey almost whined as he hugged Dixon one more time and carefully slid off of the bed.

“Dixon, we're in the next room if you need company. Cool?” KC said as he smiled and waved. “Remember, think of something fun.” He smiled and said. “It was nice meeting you Ma'am.”

“Mrs. Amee.” The older woman said with a smile. “You boys be sure to come back and visit, ok?”

“We will.” KC said with a smile as the two waved and stepped into the hall, nearly colliding with Jerry and Scott.

“What are you two doing out here?” Jerry asked with his jaw left hanging open.

“Daddy, we wend fow a widdwe wawk and med a boy named Dixon and his Gwamma!” Joey said with a smile as he began to yawn. “Bud I'm kinda diwed now.”

“Come on; let's get you back into bed.” Jerry said as he ushered Joey toward his room.

"We'll be right there." KC said grabbing Scott's shirt, freezing him in mid step. "Dude, I need a huge favor." KC whispered as he waited until Jerry and Joey were out of sight.

"What's wrong?" Scott asked as he nervously looked around the empty hallway.

"Can you get me up to the 10th floor?" KC asked.

"I shouldn't. Especially since you aren't even supposed to be out of your room yet." Scott answered but sighed as KC stuck out his bottom lip. "No. I can't." He whispered.

"Pleeeeeease." KC whined.

"No."

"Oh Puh-lee-ee-ease..." KC cried again, breaking down Scott's resistance.

"What for?" Scott asked with his eyes closed.

"Cause my stuff is up there and I really need to get something from it." KC said with a whimper. "It's seriously important dude or else I wouldn't ask, I swear."

"Fine. But I swear if we get caught..." Scott threatened before KC grabbed his shirt and practically dragged him to the door.

"I'll be your slave until they say I can get out of bed." KC said with a laugh.

"Shutup!" Scott said with a giggle as they rushed out, heading for the elevator.

About 45 minutes later, the elevator doors opened on the second floor and from it emerged a smiling KC and a very annoyed looking Scott. "A skateboard!?!?" Scott huffed. "I can't believe you risked getting in trouble for a skateboard. Is your brain functioning right?"

"You're cute when you're mad; anyone ever tell you that?" KC said with an evil grin as he led him to Dixon's door. "Come with me and see why it was so important." He said as he hid the board behind his back and tapped on the open door frame. "Sorry, I didn't mean to bother you." KC said just above a whisper as Dixon, his Great Grandmother and who he guessed was the uncle that had been mentioned earlier all looked up at him and Scott.

"Oh, come on in sweetie." Mrs. Ameer said with a wide smile. "And who's this handsome young man with you?"

"I'm with security Ma'am." Scott replied. "Lieutenant Scott Shannon. I'm actually in charge right now."

"Cool." Dixon said as he looked at KC and smiled. "You got friends high up, huh?"

"I got friends all over." KC said as he carefully walked over to the side of the bed. "Including right here." He continued with a smile as he took his skateboard and placed it next to Dixon. "I want you to have this."

Dixon looked at the skateboard and then quickly up at KC. "No way, I can't take that. I mean we only just met... You don't have to do that, really." Dixon sputtered.

"I want you to have it. It's still in good shape. I stopped riding it when I built my other one." KC said with a smile. "It's been good to me, so I know it'll be good to you." KC said with a smile. "Look, no cracks or chips or nuthin." KC said with a laugh. "Trust me, there should be too with what I put this board through. It's definitely broken in."

"Wow, I don't even know what to say." Dixon said as he looked at the deck and ran his fingers across it.

"Say when we're both better you'll ride with me once, Ok?" KC said with a smile.

Dixon looked at his Great Grandmother, who nodded her head with a huge smile before he looked back at KC. "Thanks KC, Yeah, that'd be so cool."

"Sweet." KC said as he looked around the room. "Now I gotta get back to bed before they get the rest of security after me." He got out with a giggle. "C'mon Warden." He laughed as he led Scott back out of the room. "See you all later."

"That was nice." Scott said. "Sorry, I didn't mean to be angry earlier."

"I know." KC said with a grin as they walked to the next room. "I owe you one."

"Yeah you do." Scott said with a giggle when KC playfully punched him in the arm just as they turned to enter the room.

"You look like you just went a week with no sleep." Marc said as Chris began to dress down and wash up closely followed by an equally exhausted Antonio.

"Androids." Chris said to his little shadow shrugging his shoulders and chuckling.

"Yeah." Antonio yawned. "You'd think his hamster would fall off the wheel once in a while or sumthin." He added with a giggle as he dragged a stool over to the sink and began to wash up as well.

"Nope, hamster is an android too." Marc said with a grin as he sat in the corner of the room and stretched. "You guys did awesome."

"We all did." Chris said smiling back at Marc. "Judging by the readings after both procedures were completed, Benji should be up and about tomorrow. Eli may be a little sore but, in about 48 hours he should be good to begin therapy."

"I'd like to keep them both on the same schedule." Marc yawned. "Benji will be ready sooner but, if we wait for Eli they can work together."

“That's true.” Chris said as two nurses rolled a still sleeping Benji out of the OR with Sammy smiling wide trailing on behind them. “Slip him right in with his brother. I want them both kept sedated until they are examined. They are not to be moved until myself or Doctor Furst gives the ok.” Chris said to the nurse.

“Yes Doctor.” One of the nurses said as they continued through the swinging doors.

“Hey Sammy.” Antonio said as he jumped off the stool. “We may as well get some sleep now so we can be awake when they are.” He said getting a pouting expression from Benji's boyfriend. “Come on. Sebastian is probably already asleep.” Antonio said with a smile as he hugged both Chris and Marc before dragging Sammy along behind him.

“I'm following his lead unless you need me Marc.” Chris said with a weak grin.

“Oh no, go for it.” Marc replied as he stood up. “I think I'm gonna go relieve Noah, then go check on KC. I'll see you in the morning.” Marc said as Chris left the room and he followed, turning in the opposite direction as he pulled out his communicator. “Marc to Noah.”

“Noah here, how's it goin bro?”

“Just finished up and everything went as well as I could have hoped for.” Marc said, his voice relaying his content smile. “Wanna meet me in the caf for a coffee?”

“Sure, you mind if Billy and Austin tag along? I think they have some news for you.”

“Good news?” Marc asked as he reached the elevator.

“They don't look happy, so I'm guessing probably not.”

“Where are you now?” Marc said as he pressed the down button and hear yells to hold the door come from the hallway.

“On our way to the caf.” Noah said with a laugh as all three jogged to the elevator.

“Should I start?” Austin asked Billy who simply shrugged his shoulders.

“No one starts until I get a coffee.” Marc said with a giggle as the doors slid open and they wandered right into the almost abandoned cafeteria. Once seated at a table Marc took his first sip and sighed out loud. “Ok, what's on your mind?” Marc asked Austin.

“We can't replicate Kevin tonight.” Austin said with a depressed look.

“Aye.” Billy said as he took a sip from his mug. “Bloody renovation team should be shot.” He added with a snort.

“What happened?” Marc asked looking at Noah.

“We need to leave the building tomorrow.” Noah replied cowering a little.

“What? We can't! We haven't even got the ok from HQ yet to leave the premises.” Marc replied with a sigh. “We have four patients on site that aren't exactly ready to move, two brand new activations that can't be certified stable yet, two prisoners that we have no good way to move and we're still under orders to stay put. Who's asking us to vacate and why?” Marc almost demanded.

“Marc.” Billy jumped in. “They rushed the remodel. During an inspection about an hour ago they realized that this building was never cleared of old insulation on the pipes and lining the foundation. They need to bring in a team to clean the building and we can't be here when they do.”

“Asbestos?” Marc asked letting his head fall limply forward when all three nodded. “Just wonderful.” Marc sputtered as he took another sip from his cup.

“In preparation, I already arranged to have our prisoners cut out of their cell. Lieutenant Shannon already contacted Corporal Jackson and we arranged to have them shipped to the local holding for as long as we need. All equipment not already installed is being stored on the 10th floor.” Noah reported. “The occupied floors have all passed inspections and are clean, floors 7 through 9 are possibly contaminated as is the brig and power plant. They can't do anything about it with anyone occupying any part of the building.” He continued.

“But until we are able to clear the building, is there any immediate danger to personnel and patients?” Marc asked.

“No, not until they start removing it.” Noah answered.

Marc began to tap his fingers on the table as he took a sip from his coffee. “Mr. O'Keefe.” Marc broke the silence. “Please report to all contractors to halt all renovation activities and clear non-essential personnel until further notified. Find out who is in charge of the actual hazardous material removal and explain to them we are awaiting clearance to move patients and personnel. I will notify them when we receive the all clear to move out.”

“Consider it done Marc.” Billy said as he hopped up out of his seat and rushed for the door.

“Austin.” Marc continued looking to be deep in thought. “I want you to make the rounds with our gang and let them know what's up. Make sure all personal belongings are prepped to be transported back to the house so if we can clear the building, we'll be able to on a moments notice.”

“Ok dad.” Austin said grabbing the can of soda he had just opened and jogged for the doors.

“One step forward, two steps back.” Marc said while shaking his head to Noah. “You realize if they want to push us out of the building they can and will.”

“It's for our own safety though.” Noah replied resting his elbows on the table.

“We need that all clear call.” Marc sighed. “Worst case, we'll need to establish some way of transporting Eli and Benji back to the compound. I wouldn't trust site to site unless they were conscious and no longer dependent on the biobeds.”

"Maybe Will can help out?" Noah said, shrugging his shoulders. "An ambulance with a Police Escort should be ok."

Marc just nodded his head in agreement as he stood up. "We'll deal with that when we have to. For now they just need to wait." He got out as he motioned toward the door. "I'm gonna go check on Joey and KC, wanna tag along?"

"I'm in." Noah said getting up and following Marc through the doors. "Before I turn in tonight, you think it would be a good idea to at least try to contact CIC?"

"Not over open channels." Marc replied as they reached the elevator. "This sucks. I'm not even sure how silent we have to remain." He continued as the elevator door opened and they entered. "Like I said, they're gonna have to wait for us to be able to vacate."

"Most of these teams are Federation. We're gonna have to play it off based only on the fact that we already have patients that can't be moved." Noah said as the elevator slowly came to a stop on the second floor.

"I'll talk to Chris. Maybe he can vouch for us on it." Marc got out as the doors opened and they turned toward the nurses station to find a young woman sitting at the counter watching a small television.

"Evening Dr. Furst, Mr. Barnes." The woman smiled. "Things are very quiet, for once." She continued with a laugh as Marc grabbed KC's file off the counter, overhearing the news broadcast on the television.

"Could you turn that up a little?" Marc asked as both boys walked around to see.

"...thank you Lois. Up next, Local law enforcement officers speak out against the states budget cuts and how it is affecting public safety, Gas prices reach an all time high and leave commuters wondering how much worse it could possibly get and Montana's court ruling of Not Guilty in charges brought against Sgt. Mike Reynolds, a law enforcement officer of Campbell County for kidnapping and the alleged sexual misconduct with several minors in his care, have members of a local church protesting in the streets. More when we return..."

"Unbelievable." Marc said as he shook his head and opened the file.

"I've been trying to keep an eye on that one." The nurse said as she lowered the volume. "That case almost destroyed that poor family's life for no good reason, not to mention the damage it's doing to their CPS department."

"What's it about?" Noah asked resting his elbows on the counter.

"That man's son almost lost his life trying to save some poor kid in a wheelchair who was about to be raped by a group of kids." The nurse spat out. "The news said the same boy jumped in and helped another kid who was being held hostage earlier the same day. His father was accused of placing the boy in danger. To make it worse, the boy's father offered to care for both the boys and even was involved in a third situation where a man had severely beaten his two young sons. He acted on it and had the father arrested for abuse. Next thing you know, he's being investigated for endangering the minors in his care and even for possibly being sexually abusive."

“Do you think he is?” Noah asked looking back at the television.

“No, and neither did the court.” The nurse said with a smile. “Religious activists are making a stink over it. Earlier today they reported that he had been brought up on charges a few years ago, it was all B.S. Then too.”

“I think I saw that one when it happened.” Marc said closing the folder. “It was all about nudity in the home and stuff. I think the kids he was accused of being inappropriate with were like toddlers or something.”

“Yup.” The nurse injected. “He was present with two little boys who didn't want to put their clothes on after a bath. I remember it too.”

“God, they'd have a blast if they ever saw how many bare butts run around in our home.” Noah said with a giggle.

“More than likely.” Marc replied walking around the counter. “It'll get to the point where some of those people will demand clothing in showers if an adult is assisting. Related or not.” Marc said as the nurse frowned and shook her head.

“Still, that man has helped a few kids and his son is a hero by anyone's definition. They should just leave that poor family alone.” The nurse said earning understanding nods from Marc and Noah.

“We'll let you get back to it... Um...” Marc said as he flipped open the folder once again and read the name on the report. “...Nurse Winslow.”

“Nurse Patty.” The young woman smiled. “Nurse Winslow makes me sound like I should be walking around handing out happy pills to the residents.” She giggled. “I'm a Pediatric Nurse, Nurse Patty just kinda stuck.”

“Gotcha. Actually, I like that. More comfortable to use for the kids but informal at the same time.” Marc said with a smile. “I'll return this after we check on the boys Nurse Patty.” He continued waving the folder and smiling.

Turning the corner, a small form standing in the doorway made Marc stop and tilt his head. “Unca Mawc!” The small shadowed form cried out and broke out into a run, almost causing them both to go crashing to the floor.

“Hey little man.” Marc laughed before looking into Joey's eyes. “Are you crying?”

Joey nodded as more tears fell. “Daddy and Scodd is dwyin do wake Casey up. He's havin bad dweams and he won'd wake up!”

“Oh boy.” Marc said as he handed Joey off to Noah and nearly flew through the doorway.

“Oh thank god.” Jerry said seeing Marc come crashing in. “He's been screaming and crying for his father.” Jerry said as he put his communicator back in his pocket, obviously just about to call for help.

Marc looked at the bed and heard KC crying “No...” and “I’m home, where are you?” Before shouting “Daddy!”

“He just started doing that a few minutes ago.” Scott said with a concerned look. “We tried waking him up but, it’s like he can’t even hear us.”

“He’s having a nightmare alright.” Marc said as he reached the side of the bed. “He’s not responding to his name?”

“No, nothing at all.” Jerry said with a pleading look.

“Hold on.” Marc said as he put the folder down. “KC?” He called out to no response. “Kenny?” He tried again. “KC?” he tried one last time before placing a hand on KC’s chest. Marc cleared his throat and loudly shouted; “Keneth Casey!” Causing the boy’s eyes to shoot open, soon to be filled with tears.

“How the hell?” Jerry said as Marc sat down and pulled KC into a hug.

“It’s a trigger.” Marc said just above a whisper as KC cried into his shoulder. “I’ll explain in a minute.” He said directing his attention back to KC. “Shhhhh.... It’s ok.”

“My Dad....” KC cried. “Oh my god... What did I do?” He cried.

“It was an accident.” Marc whispered as he rubbed small circles on his back. “It wasn’t your fault, I’m sure he knew that.”

“But...” KC got out with a snuffle. “All those years.” He cried.

“Not once did he ever stop loving you.” Marc whispered as KC just let it all pour out.

“Casey?” Joey almost whispered as he reached up and touched his brother’s arm.

Marc broke the hug long enough to lift Joey up onto the bed and set him down next to KC. “I think someone’s worried about his big brother.” Marc said with a warm smile as he watched KC pull Joey into a tight hug.

“You scawed me.” Joey cried as he buried his face in KC’s chest. “You wewe havin bad dweams and cwysin and yewwin. Dhen Daddy dwied do wake you up and we dhoughd you wewe bwoken...” He began to ramble.

“I’m sorry squirt.” KC sniffled as he hugged the little boy tighter. “I just miss my Dad a lot and had a bad dream about him.”

“Bud you can shawe my Daddy ow Ausdin’s Daddy.” Joey cried.

“I guess I do kinda share Austin’s Daddy already, in a way so do you.” KC said wiping his eyes. “But just like you, I had another Daddy who loved me too and...” He got out as tears began to resurface. “He must have been so worried...” He managed to say before the two hugged tighter.

“He was.” A voice from the other side of the room said softly, startling everyone.

“Oh my go...” Scott managed to get out before tripping and falling backwards on Joey's empty bed.

“Davie!” Jerry shouted as he ran and pounced the glowing form of his brother.

“Hey Booger Brain.” Davie said with a giggle as he approached KC's bed and sat down.

“Who...” KC got out as Joey smiled and crawled out of his hug.

“Unca Davie?” Joey asked, tilting his head.

“How'd you know he was your uncle little guy?” Jerry asked with a surprised expression.

“I dawked do him when I was sweepin.” Joey stated as he crawled into Davie's open arms.

“And it's soooo good to finally see you awake.” Davie smiled.

“I god anodhew bwodhew now, and he's huwdin in his heawd.” Joey sniffled.

“I know little guy.” Davie said looking directly into KC's eyes. “You're Dad knows.”

“Huh?” KC replied, still in a little bit of shock at what he was seeing.

“He's an awesome man and still watches over you.” Davie said looking past KC and smiling. “He's been with you since the day he left this world and plans to never leave you.”

“He's here?” KC asked looking desperately around the room.

“Yup. You wanna see him?” Davie asked patting Joey's head and shuffling to sit next to KC.

“Can I?” KC sniffled.

“If Mikey was here, he could help to allow him to be seen. I'm not as strong as him, but this should work.” Davie said as he covered KC's eyes with his hands. “Open your eyes.” He whispered.

“But you're covering them.” KC whispered.

“Look through my hands.” He said as KC suddenly gasped. “Can you see him?”

“Da...” KC's mouth dropped open. “Oh Daddy...” He cried but suddenly got quiet. After a few moments of silence, a warm smile crept across his face as he slowly nodded. “I love you too.” He whispered just before Davie lowered his hands.

“He was never gone.” Davie said gently as he sat back.

Tears streamed down KC's face as he looked into Davie's eyes. “You're an angel?”

"I'm family." He replied pulling KC into a tight hug, Joey bounding back over and diving into Davie's free arm. "I heard one of my nephews was hurting." Davie said looking over at Marc.

"Stew knows he's safe?" Marc asked.

"He's known right along. He was the one who led the diver to him." Davie smiled. "All I had to do was drop a few hints with the officer who to go to for help." He continued with a wink.

"You're too much." Marc said with a smile.

"No, too much would be the amount of times I dropped a phone number at Lieutenant Murphy's home, in his car, his computer, with his companion and even with the detectives he works with. He had no choice but to call you." Davie said with a laugh as he lifted Joey's face to meet with his gaze. "You gotta promise me something little guy. Think you can do that for me?"

"Uhhuh." Joey nodded with a smile.

"Your big brother needs lots of hugs. Think you can make sure he gets some of them?" Davie asked releasing them both and standing up.

"Wike den dimes?" Joey asked with a grin.

"Just ten?" Davie asked with a giggle while crossing his arms.

Joey giggled and looked like he was deep in thought all of a sudden. "Weww, den widdwe ones. Dhe wesd awe cuddwes." He stated matter of factly, earning laughs from everyone in the room.

"Yeah, that sounds like it'll work." Davie said placing a kiss on Joey's forehead. "KC, you're Dad doesn't want you to think anymore about what happened. You're safe now and with a family that is gonna love you and never leave your side. That makes him happier than anything else." Davie stated getting a nod and a smile from KC. "Marc, Noah. Your family is safe. Know that." He added, getting shocked looks followed by two meek nods. "Scott." Davie said turning around meeting with his wide open eyes and shocked expression.

"Ye... yeah?" Scott stuttered.

"That thought. Hold it tight to your heart." Davie said as Scott's eyes opened to what seemed to be impossibly wider than they already were. "Very soon it will all be clear even if it won't appear so." He continued redirecting his gaze to his little brother. "Jerry."

"Yeah?" Jerry said looking back at his brother.

"You're a dork." Davie said with a laugh.

"HEY!!!" Jerry shouted with a pouting expression, trying desperately to maintain a straight face. "That's just wrong." He said finally laughing and rushing to give his brother a hug. "Butt breath." He giggled into Davie's shoulder.

“Nice example for the kids.” Davie giggled. “Can you believe what he just called me?” He shrugged with a pained look on his face.

“Shaddap!” Jerry laughed and playfully slugged Davie in the arm as he began to slowly fade. “I love you bro!” He said as he stepped back.

“Love you too, all of you.” He got out before completely vanishing.

“Butt breath?” Marc giggled.

“Hey, he caught me off guard that time.” He replied as everyone started to laugh. Everyone except for Scott.

“You ok?” Jerry asked as he sat down and patted Scott on the shoulder.

“He was your brother?” Scott asked with confusion in his tone.

“He is my brother.” Jerry smiled. “Trust me, whatever he meant with what he said to you, he meant it.” He said earning a thoughtful smile from Scott. “So... what were you thinking?”

“Oh... Um... nothing...” Scott stuttered.

“Riiiiiggghhtttt.” Jerry said with a laugh as he watched Scott blush.

“Alright people, it's getting late. Those not sleeping in this room need to finish up anything they were doing and call it a night.” Marc said with a grin.

“Can I sweep with you?” Joey asked as he wrapped his arms around KC's chest.

“You kiddin?” KC replied smiling up at Marc. “If you don't sleep with me then I'll have no one to keep the bad dreams away.” He continued with a giggle before placing a kiss on the top of Joey's head.

After the round of kisses and hugs, Noah, Scott and Marc stepped back into the hall and quietly closed the door before walking up to the nurses station to return KC's records.

“So, maybe we can talk about what the other guy looks like now.” Marc said to Noah with a giggle.

“What other guy?” Noah asked and hissed loudly when Marc touched the right side of his face.

“Oh honey, has anyone looked at that yet?” Nurse Patty asked Noah while getting out of her seat.

“At what?” Noah asked looking at the other two boys.

“That black eye dude. It's turning into a good one.” Scott replied with a grin. “It's really starting to bruise up.”

“It shows that bad?” Noah whined as he gently touched the right side of his face and winced. “I knew it was still sore but...”

"I meant to ask you earlier but we were too busy." Marc said with a grin. "I just figured while you were in command you decided to go box the prisoners or something." Marc said earning a laugh from all three as the nurse returned with an ice pack.

"Keep this on it for a while to help bring the swelling down." She said in a motherly tone. "Take these." She added as she handed him a small cup with a couple of aspirins followed by a cup of water.

"Thanks Nurse Patty." Noah smiled.

"Don't mention it." She replied as she returned to the inventory she was working on.

"So, how'd it happen?" Scott asked as Noah downed the water.

"During KC's activation. He woke up panicked and accidentally kicked me in the face." Noah said as they walked toward the elevator, shrugging his shoulders. "If it looks that bad, Cal is gonna flip when he gets home."

"Don't worry." Scott said as Marc pressed the button to call the elevator. "We'll tell anyone who asks that you went three rounds with a Klingon; your honor will be safe." He finished as all three started to laugh just as Noah's communicator went off.

"Duty calls." He said as he flipped the device open. "Noah here."

"Noah, its Billy. Are you still in command or has Marc taken back over?"

Noah looked at Marc who simply replied by reaching for Noah's communicator. "Marc here Chief, is something wrong?"

"Subcontractors."

"I'm sorry?" Marc asked.

"The foreman in charge of the renovations for our office space is flipping out about us not being able to vacate. He's getting angry, bordering on violent."

"Let's go." Scott said stepping onto the elevator while checking his weapon.

"What's your location?" Marc asked as he followed Noah into the elevator.

"Fourth Floor on the East side of the building."

"On our way." Marc replied as he pushed the button and they were off.

"...and you can tell your division head this building wasn't ready. Vacant or not we have a schedule to keep!" The man yelled as all three rounded the corner.

“Excuse me.” Marc said politely as they approached.

“Not now kid!” The man shouted turning his attention back to Billy. “If he's not here in 5 minutes we're starting the removal, vacant building or not.”

“Excuse me.” Marc said once again, this time in a louder tone.

“Kid, can you see that I'm busy here or are you blind.” He barked as he rudely turned back toward Billy. “If he does decide to show his face, I'll tell him exactly what I think about the way he's just been forcing progress by simply moving in. That shit's not happening. Not with me in charge up here.”

“You just did.” Billy said motioning toward Marc. “Meet the acting head of Clan Short's AI division. Doctor Marc Furst.” Billy said with a snarl.

“Oh great, and he's even younger.” The man growled.

Marc stared at the man coldly before stepping right up to him. “Who hired you for this job?”

“I was contracted by the Federation.” The man answered sarcastically.

“And who is the Federation having this building renovated for?” Marc asked as if the man were two years old.

“The Vulcan Embassy.” The man replied crossing his arms.

“Very good, who specifically on Terra represents that embassy?” Marc asked once again.

“Some Patriarch.” He spat out. “Look kid, I really don't have time for this.”

“Oh, you have time.” Marc replied. “You have plenty of time since we have patients downstairs that we are unable to move. You have even more time because you were ordered to halt progress until the building was empty.”

“Look kid. This building wasn't ready to be used. Any idiot could have figured that out. You can't demand a 10 floor beast like this old dump to be finished in a couple of days time just because you said to. I'm not your Mommy, so coming up here and throwing a temper tantrum isn't gonna get you anywhere.”

“Oh really?” Marc smiled and asked as he stepped even closer. “It's unfortunate you clowns never inspected the building before you started. If you had, construction wouldn't have to be stopped midstream to handle an asbestos removal safely.” Marc said as the man began tapping his foot. “Since the OK was given to begin, we were to assume you did your job and inspected the place before you started, meaning the floors that were completed were available to be used. So, was I rushing in bringing medical emergencies into the completed sections of the building or, were you rushing to half-assed get your job done?”

The man's face turned red as he took a step closer to Marc, freezing as Scott loudly cleared his throat and slowly put his hand on his phaser. "I'd think about it long and hard first buddy." He said, with a dead stare.

"Oh, cute." The man said as he took a step back. "Look, we were given a time limit to complete this project and you're holding it up."

"No, you rushed and falsified that this structure was ready. If anyone is being held up, it's your own fault since now I have two post ops down stairs that can't be moved yet." Marc almost growled.

"An oversight." The man sneered.

"A pretty big one I think." Marc replied, not once moving. "We will have this building vacated as soon as humanly possible. Until then, nothing is to be touched, is that understood?"

"Oh, are you gonna stop me little boy?" The man chuckled as another man stepped forward.

"Ed, are you nuts? He's the head of a Vulcan installation." The second man said just over a whisper.

"Without me running this project, he doesn't have anything to be in charge of." The man growled.

"Now get your ass back to work, those walls come down now whether junior over there likes it or not!"

"Ed! That could spread this crap all over the building!" The man protested.

"Are you deaf?" He asked as he turned his back on Marc. "All of you? Get your asses back to work!"

"Anyone thinking about placing those children downstairs in danger, better consider the fact that we are authorized to use force if needed." Scott shouted into the room as he drew his weapon freezing the entire crew.

"You don't have the balls." The foreman growled.

"Let's test that theory." Scott replied as he began to move in the foreman's direction.

"Alright, this is getting out of hand." Marc half shouted as he placed his arm across Scott's chest, halting his advance. "Look, Doctor Herron up until now has been your link to us. He's been balancing construction against his medical duties. He's been in surgery for hours already today and I really don't want to have to ask him for more. Either you halt construction, and I mean right now; or I start filling up TerraMain's holding cells!" Marc shouted.

The man leaned against the nearby wall and began to laugh out loud. "You'll have us arrested? What charge do you plan on having us all locked up for? Not playing nice?"

"A few counts of endangering a minor for starters. Asbestos contamination is known to lead to deaths, we can add a few charges of attempted homicide, and that's just for starters." Marc said sternly. "There are kids down there. If anyone isn't gonna play nice, it'll be me!" Marc barked as he turned toward the construction crew. "Any of you have a problem with waiting for clearance now?" He asked loudly as workers began to set their tools down.

"I do." The foreman grumbled.

"Mister Shannon, call your team and show this man the way out." Marc said squinting his eyes. "Go quietly and don't return. Any resistance will be grounds to have you taken into custody. You could be facing a Federation Hearing or a Vulcan Sentencing for the charges I mentioned. You willing to risk your life for this supposed deadline?"

"Fine, I'm leaving." The man barked as he threw his tools down. "This isn't over. Your security isn't always gonna be there to save you, just remember that." He threatened as Scott took aim with his phaser.

"Is that supposed to be a threat?" Marc approached him without breaking eye contact.

"Just stating a fact." The man snarled as he stepped toward Marc once again. "Let's just say you caught me on a bad day."

"Shannon to Security Team C. Assistance needed, fourth floor, east wing. Phasers to stun." Scott said into his communicator before looking back at the man. "One more step and I promise your day will get a lot worse than you think it already is!"

"You do realize our services were acquired by Federation Development. They aren't going to be happy with your half thought out decision." The foreman said as he slowly turned to leave the room. "I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when they hear what I have to say about what happened here today." He said, stopping as he passed Marc.

"Oh, they'll be completely aware of the situation well before they hear from you." Marc replied as a security team rushed into the open area.

"Escort him off the property." Scott ordered. "He so much as stops to use the bathroom, stun him and take him into custody."

"Aye Lieutenant." One of the officers replied as two others motioned for him to follow. "This way sir."

Marc watched as the man silently shot each of them a dirty look, but did not resist. As soon as they were all on the elevator he looked at Noah and Scott with a relieved look on his face. "You know, by the time Danny gets back, I'm seriously gonna need a vacation." He said with a giggle. "Sir, can I have a word with you?" Marc asked the man who had been trying to stop the foreman earlier.

"Okay." The man meekly answered as he slowly nodded to his co-workers and walked over to the boys.

"I want to thank you for trying to assist. I think when your foreman was told that this installation needed to be rushed; he took it upon himself to make that request an 'at any cost' order. Make sure your crew knows this isn't going to be held against any of you if this should get ugly." Marc said with a weak smile.

"He'll probably lose his job." The man replied.

"I'm sorry. There was no need for him to go that far." Marc said shrugging his shoulders.

"Oh no, it's a good thing." The man said as a few members of his crew attempted to stifle laughs. "He self appointed himself as our foreman just because he's related to the owner of the company." He said with a chuckle. "A brother-in-law the owner was doing his wife a favor hiring and couldn't stand. He's been looking for a reason to fire him ever since his second day on the job."

"Yeah, he may come out here and kiss you kid." Another man said getting laughs from the rest of the crew.

"Oh." Marc laughed. "Well make sure to tell your boss if he needs any documentation about what happened, I'll be happy to provide it."

"Same here." Scott and Noah both added simultaneously.

"Will do." The man said turning back toward the crew. "Wrap it up guys, we'll pick up where we left off as soon as those kids are ready." He shouted as everyone began to work their way toward the elevators and he watched as Scott holstered his weapon. "Head of security, huh?"

"Yes he is." Marc quickly said as Scott had barely opened his mouth to reply. "Regardless of what he thinks." He added with a giggle.

"Um..." Scott managed to get out as Noah roughly patted him on the back.

"Smile and nod dude. Marc evaluates people like a kid evaluates rides in an amusement park." Noah got out as Marc shot him an 'up yours' glare. "You know..." He laughed. "I wanna ride that one no, that one no, that one..."

"You know, with TWO black eyes you'd look an awful lot like a raccoon." Marc threatened with a grin as he shook his fist.

"True, but just think of all the attention I'll get when Cal comes home and finds out how mean you've been to me." Noah laughed and quickly ran for the elevator.

"I love that kid." Marc said to Scott. "Remind me to dedicate the ICU to him since he's working so hard at being the first to use it." He almost shouted as Noah began to run even faster. "Running won't help, we have to call Admiral Morrow because of what happened here." Marc Shouted after him. "You, me, alone, with no witnesses. Oh yeah, the fun we'll have." Marc continued before finally bursting out in laughter.

"You guys are insane." Scott laughed.

"A little." Marc smiled. "Just wait, once you've had enough exposure you'll be just as insane."

"Sounds like fun." Scott said as they laughed and went to get in line to use the elevator.

"Maybe we should have begun with tearing the shafts for the turbolifts." The man Marc spoke with earlier said while motioning to the line and chuckled.

"Are you gonna be the new foreman?" Scott asked with a grin.

"I was in line for it." He replied with a thoughtful smile. "I guess that position is open now, huh?"

"So, who do I list as my 'go to' guy?" Marc asked with a grin.

"I'm sorry, with all the commotion..." The man laughed as he held out his hand. "Phil Johnson." He said as both boys shook his hand. "I'll let you know what the owner says when we get back."

"Sounds great." Marc said as he reached past two people in line and pulled, dragging Noah behind them in line. "No cutting." Marc laughed. "Besides, we have a date."

"Some date." Noah pouted, folding his arms and sticking out his bottom lip. "I better be getting dinner or something out of this." He continued with a laugh.

"I got a candy bar." Scott laughed. "You guys can split it, light a candle or something and make it special." Scott finished saying while motioning like he was playing a violin, being abruptly stopped when Marc and Noah started playfully hitting him. "Or not." He laughed as they finally got on the elevator.

"MARC!!!" Byron shouted as he ran down the hall to catch up. "Sorry, I overslept!" He continued, his mussed hair confirming his statement.

"Oh dude, I'm sorry." Marc said as he leaned against the wall. "We have to put him off again. Looks like the second Eli and Benji are ok to be moved, we need to clear the building."

"Why?" Byron whined. "He's been waiting... like forever!" He continued to protest.

"I know. I gotta pull his imprint again before we bring him online to update his dream before we start again." Marc said as he put his hand on Byron's shoulder and began to walk toward their sleeping quarters. "But I was kinda hoping Danny would be here for his activation, now it looks like he will be." He continued as they reached the door to the room. "I think Antonio is already in bed, go ahead and join him. I'll be in soon."

"Okay." Byron grinned. "Should we start packing in the morning?"

"Don't worry about it, we have time." Marc said as Byron opened the door. "Wanna help me tomorrow with Austin?"

"Sure!" Byron grinned. "How early?"

"I'll come get you, don't worry about it." Marc smiled as he began to head for the main entrance. "Night dude!"

"G'Night!" Byron smiled.

"What's going on out here?" Marc mumbled as he exited the building, seeing all the outside lights on and a scaffold set up extending beyond the entrance and surrounding windows on either side. "Hello?" Marc shouted as he opened the door.

"Marcus?" The familiar voice of the kind old man seemed to echo back. "I got yur surprise done." He continued as Marc climbed through the scaffold to the driveway to look up.

"What are you up to Gramps?" Marc giggled as he saw the letters 'UNITED FED' mounted on the building and a whole stack of what seemed to be letters scattered on the planks. "We didn't order any signage yet. We don't even have a name yet."

"You just be gettin up here and see what I got fer ya." Gramps laughed as Marc shrugged his shoulders and started to climb. "An I aint takin no fer an answer. I got a sweet deal on these preformed letters. Wait til you see the otha ones."

"There's a ton of them." Marc said in surprise after realizing that there were even more than he could see from the ground as he looked over the edge of the main part of the building and gasped. "Oh wow!" He managed to get out when he saw the big gold letters on the second level.

"Tole ya." Gramps said with a smile.

Marc just stared in awe as he read aloud; "Clan Short of Vulcan, Artificial Intelligence Division. That looks AWESOME!" He grinned as he looked at the smaller letters that were in the process of being mounted. "United Federation of Planets?" He questioned.

"Yup, follered by Youth Services." He grinned. "I got a real good deal fer tha bulk. I just called an found out what you would be needin." He said as he turned and pointed out over the water fountain. "Once you kids get ta namin tha place, I'll have the letters faster than a squirrel gatherin it's nuts on a short fall." He chuckled. "I got Memorial Hospital already, jus incase." He added with a smile. "Y'all have someone special to name her after?"

"We'll have to talk it over." Marc said as he looked at the building again and then further up into the sky, just in time to see a shooting star. "Gramps, quick! Look!" He said excitedly as they both watched the star cross the sky and disappear behind the building.

"Tellin ya, tha angels er watchin over y'all." He smiled before noticing the glazed over expression on Marc's face. "Marcus? He asked as he placed his hand on Marc's shoulder, snapping him out of his daze.

"I got an idea for the name." Marc said with a smile. "I just gotta talk to our Division Head, Patriarch and his Mother." He said with a smile.

Notes from the Author:

Looks like we made it through another day. I'm so happy to see Noah get a real chance to shine and prove to us all (as well as himself) that he definately does have what's needed to take charge if the

situation requires him to. I know he definately earned a ton of respect from Marc, not to mention the respect of his team mates and gratitude from KC and our new friends in Malibu. We're facing a little shake up with the news of contamination in the new building, thankfully it was caught when it was. It's great to see Joey up and around again. I was really starting to miss the little guy. (Special thanks to Akeentia for the creative help in the background with the programming that he put in involving his speech issues.) I know many of you have been eagerly awaiting a chance to finally get to meet Kevin in the flesh. Sorry we had to dissappoint you again. I guess what ever was meant to be...

Gotta remind you, while all this is going on in chapter 11, "Dark Vacation" featured on [Comicality's "GFD: Blood Bank"](#) is still keeping us up to date on the whereabouts of our own Danny and the rest of the team. Keep an eye on it.

As Always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

It is really great seeing the AI Division continue to develop and stand on its own. One of the great things about the stories in the Clan Short Universe is the fact that although they are interconnected they are very good stories in their own rights that can stand alone.

It is awesome seeing J.O.E.Y. back and seeing Noah continue to develop a sense of self confidence. All of the characters continue to acquire depth which allows us to understand and love them even more. Another great job by JeffP in answering several questions and not asking to many more. On a serious note I have notified the Cliffhanger Police!
TSL aka The Story Lover.

"Chapter 12 - *You heard him, you're in charge.*"
Portions Co-Written By: ACFan and Akeentia!

"Shhhh... They'll hear us." The older boy in the blue baseball cap said as he opened the side door to the hospital with a small screwdriver. "Looks clear Alex." He said as he rushed the small boy inside.

"Benny, why are we sneaking in here?" Alex nervously asked as he looked down the quiet corridor from the doorway. "We're gonna get arrested." He continued in protest.

"Dude! Just go. I'm telling you I saw kids goin in and outta here. We won't get in any trouble so stop being a baby." He replied as they gently closed the door behind themselves and carefully began to inch their way deeper into the old hospital.

"But Navy guys run this place. They could like, think we're burglars or something and... I dunno, maybe put us in jail!" Alex replied with a gulp.

"You are such a wuss!" Benny sighed. "Besides, this place has been abandoned since long before we moved here. The Navy wouldn't let kids run around the place. I just wanna see what's going on." He whispered as the boys heard voices and ducked into the first open door they could find.

"I don't like this Benny. C'mon, let's get outta here." Alex whined before realizing what was in the room with them. "Wow! Benny, looket that!"

"Dude!" Benny gasped as he took a few steps further into the room. "That's a transporter!" He said in amazement as both boys made their way toward the pad to get a closer look. "I could transport you into space with this!" The older boy teased.

"I wouldn't recommend it." Came a voice from the doorway, causing both boys to jump. "Now, unless we recruited you two, I'd be willing to guess that you don't belong here."

"Um... ah..." Benny stammered.

"He made me come in here!" Alex almost cried. "I didn't wanna, I swear! Please mister, don't put us in jail!"

"Rat!" Benny almost spit out. "We're sorry sir. We've lived near here for a couple of years and never seen no one go in and out. So when we saw kids we wanted to..." He managed to get out once he noticed four other security officers still standing in the hallway with their weapons drawn. "Oh shit! Please don't shoot us or nuthin. We weren't gonna steal anything, honest."

"You sure you aren't spies?" The teen asked as he crossed his arms, doing a pretty good job stifling a laugh when both boys shook their heads so hard he thought they would come right off of their shoulders. "Good, cause I hate spies." He replied before turning back to the officers in the hall. "It's cool, they aren't spies." He said almost letting his laugh surface when they all gave him a confused look. "I'll take it from here guys."

"Yes Lieutenant." One of the officers responded as they stepped back into the hall, shrugging their shoulders.

"Identify yourselves." The officer requested sternly.

"I'm Ben, this is my little brother Alex." Benny said with his eyes wide. "We live right down on Apache street, right next to your parking lot." He said as a boy looking to be about Ben's age entered the room. "See, I told you there were kids here." He whispered to his little brother.

"Report Mister Shannon." Noah said as he looked at both of the boys and then to Scott.

"Sir, we monitored an unauthorized entry through that old side door on the west side of the building. When my team and I came to investigate, we found these two intruders in this room attempting to use the transporter. They claim they *aren't* spies." Scott said with a subtle wink.

"Not spies, huh?" Noah repeated as he turned his attention back to the boys with a grin.

"We weren't gonna do nuthin!" Alex protested. "We was just lookin."

"According to the smaller one, he infiltrated the building under the orders of the older one. We could throw them in the brig sir." Scott said getting a gasp from Ben and confused looks from Alex.

"Benny, what's a brig?" Alex asked his older brother.

"Jail." Ben replied flatly as he looked back at Noah. "Seriously, we weren't gonna touch anything. We just saw kids and just wanted to see if they lived here or something. That's all, I swear."

"Please don't put us in jail mister!" Alex almost cried as he tightly wrapped his arms around his older brother who in turn pushed him off.

"We're not gonna put you in jail little guy." Noah said as he stepped a little closer. "You really shouldn't be sneaking into buildings without asking permission though."

"But that guy said he was gonna put us in jail." Alex said with a tear beginning to make his way down his cheek.

"We were messin with ya cause you both broke in." Noah said with a grin. "We really scared you, huh?"

"Yeah." Alex replied as Ben gave Scott a dirty look.

"We can't throw you in jail for something your brother made you do." Scott added with a nod to Noah.

"What I want to know, is why your older brother would make you sneak into a building like that." Noah said standing back up and looking at Ben. "He should know that's against the law and dangerous." Noah continued as Ben attempted to stare him down. "What kind of an older brother would purposely put their little brother in danger like that?"

"We just wanted to see! Jesus!" Ben growled. "Can we go now, or are you gonna keep messing with us?"

"No, I think were done messing around." Noah said backing away from Ben, who was obviously getting angry. "Take the older one into custody." Noah said to Scott in a professional tone. "Breaking and entering, Illegal trespass and placing a minor in danger. I'll take care of the little one, since he obviously won't." Noah got out as Scott waved to one of the security guards, still standing in the hallway.

"You heard him. Let's take him to the brig and process him." Scott said just as Ben attempted to run, but was caught by two security officers. "I'll be in the brig," Scott said as he ruffled Alex's hair and gave him a wink.

"What's gonna happen to Benny?" Alex asked as the group left.

"Nothing." Noah said as he knelt down in front of Alex. "They're gonna take him to our bri... um... jail and make him think he's in trouble."

"Why?" The small boy looked up and asked with wide eyes.

"Cause part of being a big brother is making sure the little brother is safe. I think he forgot that rule today, so we're gonna remind him." Noah said with a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, you guys aren't in any real trouble, ok?"

Alex nodded his head in response. "Big brothers have rules?" He asked, looking as if he was deep in thought.

"They sure do." Noah said standing back up. "Hey, are you hungry?"

"Kinda." Alex answered as Noah put his hand on his shoulder and lead him to the doorway.

"Good, cause I missed breakfast and it's almost lunchtime." He said turning to the last remaining security guard in the hall. "I want someone to remain stationed at that door until someone has a chance to fix the lock on it."

"Aye sir." The officer replied and started off down the hall to assume first watch.

"Are you guys some kinda kid army?" Alex asked as they made their way down the hall toward the elevator.

"I guess. We're part of a Vulcan Clan and hold rank with United Federation of Planets. That kinda makes us like an army." Noah said as they reached the elevator just in time to run into Jerry and Joey. "Hey, I want you to meet two of my friends." Noah said with a grin as Joey ran toward him and wrapped him in a tight hug.

"Unca Noah, who's dhe boy?" Joey asked turning his head and smiling.

"Joey, this is Alex. He lives really close to this hospital." Noah said with a grin.

"Your eyes are funny." Alex said with a giggle as Joey released Noah and smiled.

"Funny? My Daddy says dhey'we coow." Joey said crossing his arms.

"They are." Alex quickly replied. "One time my Mommy took me to a zoo and there was a wolf puppy that had a brown and a gray eye. I got to pet him and everything!" Alex said excitedly as all four entered the elevator.

"Oh wow! Daddy, can we go do dha zoo and ped dhe wowf puppy doo?" Joey bounced as he pulled on Jerry's shirt.

"That'd be fun." Jerry said looking back at Noah and smiling. "I'll ask your granma and grampa if we can go some weekend."

"Oday." Joey gleamed. "Can Awex come doo?"

"Maybe, he'd have to ask his parents first though." Jerry replied as the doors opened and the group started toward the cafeteria.

"He's your Daddy?" Alex whispered to Joey once Jerry and Noah started talking between themselves. "He's like, a kid."

"Daddy's don'd godda be owd ow nudhin. They juld godda wanna be youw Daddy." Joey replied, getting a confused look from Alex.

"Is your Mommy a kid too?" Alex asked, still really confused.

"I don'd god a Mommy." Joey answered with a smile. "Bud I god a bunch of bwodhews and uncwew and sduff."

"Cool." Alex said as they walked up to the counter.

"There he is." Jerry's mother said with a smile before noticing the new boy. "Ok, where did the cute little blondie come from?" She half laughed.

"Gwamma, he's my fwiend Awex." Joey said wrapping his arm around Alex's shoulder and smiling widely. "He pedded a wowf!"

"Oh he did?" She asked with a smile. "Well Alex, it's very nice to meet you."

"Thanks ma'am." Alex replied as Joey started looking around the room. "Watcha lookin for?"

"My bwodhew." Joey answered before looking up at Jerry. "Is Casey commin do wunch Daddy?"

"I think so." Jerry replied quickly before a smell from the kitchen redirected his attention. "Mom, do I smell pizza?"

"Is he part bloodhound?" Another woman in the kitchen chuckled and asked Jerry's mother.

"Nope, you'll learn there is no way to sneak pizza passed most of these boys." Mary replied.

"Pepperoni." Noah said with a giggle. "I definitely smell pepperoni."

"See." Mary laughed as she started putting slices on four plates and slid them across the counter to the boys. "There are sodas on ice at the end of the counter." She said before turning her attention to a couple of the off duty security officers that stepped up to the counter.

"Thanks Mom!" Jerry said as the other boys smiled and waved. Once grabbing their drinks and finding Marc and Byron at an open table they all sat down and tore into their lunches.

"Noah, you um... got an extra kid there. Not sure if you noticed." Marc said with a giggle.

"Umka Mawc, he's my fwiend Awex." Joey said with a laugh.

"Oh really?" Marc asked with a smile. "Nice to meet you Alex. I'm Marc and this is Byron."

"Hi." Alex meekly answered, sliding closer to Joey.

"Where did he come from?" Marc whispered to Noah before taking a large bite from his pizza.

"He lives over on Apache Street. We found him and his older brother after they snuck in to check the place out." Noah replied before taking a large gulp from his soda. "His brother is with Scott in the brig."

"In the brig?" Marc asked setting his slice back in his plate. "What are they doing in there?"

Noah smiled at Alex before nodding his head. "Cause some big brothers need to learn how to keep their little brothers out of danger."

"Okay." Marc replied with a confused expression. "Anyway, we got a call from CIC earlier." Marc said popping the last of his pizza in his mouth.

"Really? Is everyone alright?" Noah excitedly asked.

"I think so." Marc answered. "I didn't get much more than orders to stand down from silent yellow. Justy said that Cory and Danny would be able to fill in the details when they get back sometime tonight."

"That's weird." Noah said shrugging his shoulders. "At least we can start clearing the building now."

"Yup." Marc answered as Antonio approached the table with his lunch and sat next to Byron. "You're late." Marc giggled.

"Benji's awake." Antonio said with a smile. "I was checking on them and he kinda woke up." Antonio said with a grin. "He was whining cause he was hungry so I asked Mrs. Owens to send up something light for them both."

"Great." Marc said with a smile. "I'll take a run up and see them." Marc said with a grin as he picked up the last slice from his plate and tore into it.

"Oh Marc, I almost forgot. Billy needs to talk to you about a trip to Terra Main." Noah said before Joey let out a huge belch, causing everyone at the table to start laughing.

"Excuse me." Joey giggled. "Aww dhe widdwe bubbwes in my soda made one big one. I was gonna expwode!" He added with a grin.

"That had to be my little brother." KC said as he walked up to the table, barely having enough time to put his lunch on the table before Joey tackled him with a hug. "Did all that noise come from you punk?"

"Casey! I'm nod a punk!" Joey giggled as KC set Joey back in his seat and sat down.

"Sure your not." KC said with a mock look of concern on his face. "See, you're even recruiting a little punk army." He continued winking at Alex.

"Nice to see you wearing real clothes dude." Marc said to KC with a grin.

KC smiled before picking up a slice of pizza. "Yeah, I'm just glad this body isn't much different from my old one. All the stuff that was in storage still fits."

"Isn't it the same as your original one?" Noah asked, tilting his head.

"Sorta." KC replied before swallowing his first mouthful. "All my old scars and stuff are gone. Everything else looks right."

"You got a new body? People can do that?" Alex looked up from his plate and asked.

"Alex, KC's a special kind of person." Noah said with a smile.

"He's an andwoid. JUSD wike me!" Joey added with a giggle.

"Wow!" Alex replied with his bright blue eyes wide open. "I neva met an anroid before."

"You may meet a few around here and not even know it." Marc said as he downed the rest of his soda and stood up. "Noah, you wanna walk with me? We have some planning to do."

"Yeah, sure." Noah quickly replied before stuffing the rest of his last slice in his mouth and standing up. "Jerry, you're sticking with the boys, right?"

"Yeah, I'm clear for now unless you need me." Jerry replied.

"Nah, spend some time with your son. I just wanted to make sure you were ok with one extra." Noah said motioning to Alex.

"Nah dude, I'm staying with them. Nothing worse than being outnumbered by an army of little punks." KC said before Joey glared at him.

"We've nod punks! Daddy, deww him we've nod punks." Joey whined while grabbing Jerry's shirt sleeve.

"Yeah KC, they aren't punks!" Jerry said with a giggle. "Well that's their story anyway."

As the feud at the table began, Noah and Marc simply laughed and hurried away from the table. "Glad to see everyone is getting along." Marc said when they finally reached the door.

"Yeah, Joey's really taken with KC. He seems to be really good with him too." Noah said as they reached the elevator.

"That'll make Austin happy." Marc said with a smile as the elevator doors opened.

"Prisoner secured sir." A security officer reported to Scott before returning to his post.

"Thank you." Scott replied before walking over to the closed cell.

"Don't I get a phone call or a lawyer or sumthin?" Benny asked as he plopped down on the cot in the cell and crossed his arms.

"Maybe later." Scott replied as he dragged a chair near the cell.

"Can I at least have my hat back?" Benny asked looking at his sneakers, which now had no shoe laces in them. "When my Mom finds out what you guys did, she's gonna have you arrested." He continued to pout.

"Really?" Scott asked sitting forward in his chair. "Will that be after your younger brother calls to tell her that you broke into this building and put him in danger?"

"He's calling her?" Benny asked as the look of defiance in his expression became one of fear. "Oh come on! We just wanted to see who all the kids were. There aren't many kids around here."

"Did you ever think just once to come in the front door and ask?" Scott asked as he sat back and put his feet up on the bars. "What would you have done if we fired our weapons? What if Alex got hurt? Do you have any idea all the things that could have happened?"

"You wouldn't have shot us, we're just kids." Benny replied, with a tear now streaming down his cheek.

"You were an intruder that forced your way inside. If it was all military in this building, they could have come with guns firing." Scott said as he lowered his tone. "What would you have done then? You are Alex's big brother. He relies on you to keep him safe, all little brothers should be able to trust that their big brothers love them enough to not purposely put them in harms way."

"But it was safe. You guys didn't shoot at us or nuthin." Benny sobbed.

"You know that now." Scott said as he stood up from his chair. "I just hope you remember that the next time you get the urge to break into some other place not knowing who or what is on the inside."

"It'll never happen again." Benny said, wiping the tears out of his eyes as he watched Scott begin to walk back towards the entrance to the brig. "You're not gonna leave me in here, are you?"

"No." Scott said with a laugh. "Come on out."

"But I'm locked in here." Benny said with a snuffle.

"No you're not. That door doesn't lock." Scott said with a snicker as Ben tried the door and it swung open.

"You lied." Benny said as he stepped out of his cell.

"I never said it was locked." Scott said as he turned back toward the on duty officer. "Since the brig is now empty, report to the main guard shed. We'll be reducing staff on site once the premises has been evacuated. I'll brief your team as soon as I have more info."

"Aye Sir." The officer saluted and then left the room.

"So, um..." Benny began as he slowly stepped closer. "Am I in trouble?"

"Not this time, no." Scott replied as he opened the door and motioned to Benny to follow. "But I can guarantee if these guys find out you ever put your little brother in a dangerous situation like that again, they will do something about it."

"Yes sir." Benny replied, directing his gaze at the floor. "It won't happen again, honest." He got out as Scott turned to leave the room. "What about my stuff?" He asked quickly as he shook his loose fitting pants. "I can live without my hat, maybe even my shoe laces but I kinda need my belt." He said with a pleading look.

"That might be a good idea." Scott said with a snicker. "Over there on the table, then we'll go see if we can find the rest of the guys."

"Doctor Furst!" Nurse Patty said with a smile as Marc and Noah approached the nurses station. "Benjamin and Elijah are both awake." She said as she tossed two folders on the counter top.

"Don't let them hear you calling them that." Noah said with a giggle. "Eli and Benji." He added when the nurse tilted her head in question.

"That explains the dirty looks." She laughed as Marc opened the first folder and grinned.

"Have the Wiggins family already departed?" Marc asked, noticing the floor was deathly silent.

"Both boys have been signed out; I'm not sure if they left the building yet though." Nurse Patty replied. "Would you like me to page them to find out?"

"No, I was just curious if they went home or if the boys kidnapped them." Marc giggled as he put the folders down and waved to Noah. "Let's go see how they're doing."

"They're definitely awake." Noah said with a smile as he listened to the giggling on the other side of the door.

"Hey, no fair! I can't move to see it." Eli whined before noticing Noah and Marc stepping into the room.

"Can't see what?" Marc asked before a toy car slowly rolled out from beneath Benji's bed.

"We were racing." Benji said as another car rolled off of the window sill and fell to the floor. "We were kinda bored."

"I hear ya bro." Noah said as he plopped down in the chair between the two beds. "Can't he get out of bed Marc?"

Marc looked at Noah and then at Benji before looking at the display on Eli's bed. "Not until cell regeneration slows back down to almost normal again. Right now, something as simple as a good bump could cause damage." He continued before smiling down at Eli. "How are you feeling?"

"Ok, I guess." Eli replied, still looking to be a bit groggy. "I don't hurt."

"That's good." Marc replied with a smile. "I wish I could say that it's not going to but, after you are healed enough for your prosthetics to come online; there may be a little bit of discomfort." Marc continued as he began to remove the bandages wrapping Eli's right shoulder.

"How long before this stuff works?" Benji asked, watching Marc's every move intently.

"According to the rate of cell regeneration, we should be looking at about 24 hours for nervous system activation and motor function about 3 hours after that." Marc replied as he investigated Eli's incisions.

"You think for an android he could be a little more specific." Noah giggled as Marc looked at him and raised one eyebrow.

"Okay." Marc said as he looked at Eli and winked. "More specific he wants. According to these readings we have approximately 86,400 seconds until full nervous system activation and an additional 10,800 seconds for motor function. So in total, I estimate 97,200 seconds before these prosthetics will be usable." Marc said with a grin. "Does that work or would you like me to break it down to nanoseconds?"

"Um... No... I think that works." Noah said, to a now giggling Marc.

"It was the exact same answer, dufus" Marc shot back getting a laugh followed by a wince from Eli.

"Oh god! Don't make me laugh." Eli said closing his eyes tightly.

"I think you're goin swimming when we get out of here." Benji said, sympathetically patting Noah on the back.

"I can guarantee it bro." Eli said, laughing and grasping his shoulder again.

"Ok guys, it's way too soon to be stressing these implants." Marc said as he began to rewrap Eli's shoulder.

"We have a gift from the cafeteria." Nurse Patty almost sang as she rolled a cart into the room.

"FOOD!" Eli and Benji both said in unison as Patty handed Noah Benji's tray and she rolled a cart over to Eli.

"Mary." Marc said with a laugh as he watched the two boys uncover their heart shaped personal pizzas.

"That's so cool." Noah said as Marc began pushing him toward the door. "I want a heart shaped pizza." Noah whined as Benji began to laugh.

"Go down and show her your black eye, maybe she'll cut a piece of pepperoni into a heart or something." He said, causing Noah to grab his chest, as if he had just been shot.

"Yeah, then she can put it on that shiner." Eli added as Nurse Patty aided him with his lunch.

"That really hurts guys." Noah said before beginning to giggle. "I'm not done with you guys yet. I'll be back!"

"Oh yes you are." Marc said pushing Noah out into the hall. "Get some rest guys; I'll be back in a little while to check on you." He continued as Noah started to laugh.

"See you guys later" He managed to get out before the door closed. "97,000 seconds huh?" He asked as Marc slugged him in the shoulder.

"Actually, it's more like 108,842 seconds total, but who's counting." Marc said with a laugh as Noah started to scratch his head. "Dude, I think KC kicked you too hard." He laughed as his communicator chirped. "Marc here."

"Marc, it's Billy. I have an incoming transmission from Corporal Jackson, CPD. Are you near a terminal?"

"Um.... Yeah. Could you put it through to the nurses station on the second floor?" He asked as he rushed to get behind the counter.

"Redirecting transmission now, you'll have it in a second. O'Keefe out."

Just as Marc was clipping his communicator to his belt, the terminal alerted of the incoming message. "Hey Will." Marc said with a smile.

"Hi Marc." Will said with a grin. "Just wanted to let you know we have just checked your two guests in, your new car is in your driveway at home and the others should be there later on tonight. You also have a medical transport en route to your location." Will got out with one breath. "So um... would you like fries with that?" He chuckled when he saw Noah roll his eyes.

"Will, you are amazing. Anyone ever tell you that?" Marc said as he sat down in the chair in front of the terminal, Noah perching on the armrest.

"No, but you can say it again." Will chuckled. "If you have anyone who could benefit from a road safety course, let me know in about a week. We are getting ready to start training some of our cadets behind the wheel." Will said rolling his eyes. "How bout your buddy there. If he drives anything like he runs your division when you aren't around, I'm sure he could teach these kids a thing or two."

"Drive a car?" Noah said in shock. "Oh Marc, that'd be soooo sweet! Can I? Please?"

"We'll see." Marc said winking at Will. "The final call should come from Cory and Danny though."

"What do you think they'd say?" Noah hopped off the armrest and knelt down next to Marc's chair.

"I think they'd say one speed demon behind the wheel in the clan is more than enough but, that's their call." Marc said with a giggle as Noah's hopeful expression melted.

"Marc, you really should give some serious thought into this. Your status as a diplomatic clan does give your group abilities that normally you wouldn't have to deal with. Like being able to operate a motor vehicle. The class we are holding would benefit your group. Not to mention, insure they know how to handle their vehicles, especially on duty or interacting with local law enforcement." Will said as he watched Noah stare intently at Marc. "He does look interested."

"Gee thanks Will." Marc said with a giggle as he looked at Noah. "Fine, I'll talk to Danny about it. Okay?"

"Sweet! Thanks Bro!" Noah almost shouted as he quickly hugged Marc and ran toward the elevator.

"Has he ever driven a car before?" Will asked when Marc started to laugh.

"I doubt it." Marc said watching Noah bounce impatiently until the elevator doors opened. "He's already one of my choices. I just didn't want him to know yet." He said with a snicker.

"Oh, I didn't mean to blow your surprise." Will said with a laugh. "You are invited to speak with your superiors to see if there is anyone else in your organization who would benefit from offensive driving courses. I already have Eddie and a few of his trainees scheduled."

"Offensive Driving." Marc said as he sat back in his chair. "That's a scary thought with some of these guys."

"Just let me know." Will said as he looked at his watch. "I'll check back once I have the details."

"I will. Thanks Will." Marc replied as the terminal went into standby.

"Hey Dad." Austin said as he reached the nurses station, startling Marc.

"Hey, I was just going to come looking for you." Marc said as he looked at the bandages still covering his son's face from his final procedure earlier in the morning. "You have an appointment with a mirror."

"Cool, I just want to check in on Joey and KC first." Austin said looking toward the room the two boys were supposed to be in.

"If you can find them." Marc laughed. "Last I saw they were hanging out with one of our next door neighbors."

"Really?" Austin said as Marc led him back toward the elevator. "Are they doing ok? I mean are they moving around ok?"

"Stop worrying." Marc giggled as the doors opened and they stepped inside. "They are both looking healthy, acting normal and adjusting well." Marc said wrapping his arm around his son. "You really should be proud of what you did for them both."

"Yeah, well I did have help." Austin said as the elevator stopped and the doors opened. "Billy has some really awesome ideas for your new R&D setup. When you get a chance you really gotta go over some of his notes.

"I'll ask him." Marc said as they approached an examining room and entered it. "First thing I plan to do is see your new face." Marc giggled as he closed the door.

"Attention all medical and security personnel, please make final preparations to depart. This building is to be completely vacated in one hour. I repeat, Please make final preparations to depart. All AI Division staff; please assemble in the main lobby for briefing." Doctor Herron's voice boomed over the all call, echoing down the hallways that were bustling with the staff that had accumulated over the last couple of days.

"Wew've goin home?" Joey asked his father as they nearly got trampled by a security team that was rushing past.

"Hey! Watch it! We got a little one here!" KC shouted after the team who waved apologetically.

"Yeah, we're finally going home buddy." Jerry answered noticing Marc and Austin coming out of one of the small examination rooms. "Austin! You look great!"

"I do pretty good work." Marc giggled as Joey rushed and tackled his older brother in a hug.

"Ausdin. I didn'd know you had a big bwodhew doo." Joey said as KC crossed his arms and smiled.

"I didn't either squirt." Austin said as he returned the hug. "When we get home, I kinda wanna talk to you both about that."

"Sumthin wrong dude?" KC asked once he realized Austin now had a somewhat sad expression.

"Not really." Austin answered. "Do you plan on sticking around once you're back to 100% functionality?"

"Are you kidding?" KC asked with a grin. "Someone's gotta teach this little guy how to have fun." He said with a grin. "You guys work too much."

"Don't worry about it KC. Your little brother is just worrying himself to death over something that he thinks is going to be horrible." Marc said with a wink.

"Me?" Joey asked with his eyes now open wide.

"No punk, Austin." KC answered with a laugh.

"Bud I'm dhe widdwe bwodhew." Joey replied, getting a laugh from everyone.

"No, you're the baby brother." KC snickered.

"I'm nod a baby!" Joey stated with his hands on his hips. "You'we siwwy!"

"Yeah, well you're a punk." KC said, now placing his hands on his hips and mimicking Joey. "That makes you the little baby punk brother. So there."

"No I nod!" Joey shot back with a smile. "You'we a punk!" He continued with a giggle before loudly whispering. "Daddy. Whad's a punk?" Causing everyone to laugh when Joey shot KC a dirty look when he pointed to Joey and laughed.

"KC says you are buddy." Jerry said with a giggle as they turned the corner and entered the main lobby.

"Is dhad bad?" Joey asked with a confused look.

"No little man, I think you're my favorite punk." KC said as he picked up his little brother and gave him a hug.

"Oday Casey." Joey replied as they joined the small group and Marc met with Noah and Chris in the front of the room.

"Is everyone here?" Marc asked as Scott rushed into the room. "You too Scott. I know you're primarily security but you are Clan staff. You need to know what the plan is."

"That looks like everyone Marc; I'm going to relay this info to the medical staff you have listed." Chris said before turning to leave the room.

"Okay guys, listen up." Marc shouted to quiet the murmuring from the group. "As you all must know by now, we have received a communication from HQ. Cory's team is going to be returning sometime tonight and I will finally be able to step down as Division Head." Marc said before lowering his voice and turning toward Noah and whispered "Finally."; earning a giggle from Noah. "They are not fully

aware of the condition of this building yet, so we'll have a bit of explaining to do before the rest of you get to go home." Marc paused as he looked at the P.A.D.D. he had sitting on the reception desk. "The following people will be expected to report directly to Transporter Room 1 following this meeting. Jerry Owens, Joey Owens, KC McKensie, Antonio Barnes, Byron Tecumseh, Sammy Martin, Sebastian Martin, Austin Short and Noah Barnes. Noah will be in active command at our compound until either I arrive to relieve him or Daniel Page returns." Marc paused to get Noah's reaction, receiving an acknowledging nod from Noah. "All those remaining will be briefed as to what preparations will be needed to prepare the building for the work that will need to be done. Are there any questions?" Marc smiled when no one spoke up. "Noah, would you like to add anything?"

"Yeah." He replied and turned the P.A.D.D. so he could read from it before looking back at the group. "Of my team, Austin will be working with Byron and Antonio to prepare for Eli and Benji's arrival. They are already in transport to the compound. We will be clearing the upper lab to receive the two portable biobeds and a small amount of equipment. Jerry, KC and Joey will be going to the Owens residence. KC and Joey for rest, Jerry to fill in his father to expect some equipment for storage." Noah said with a pause. "Sammy and Bastian can help clearing the lab but they can spend the rest of their time with Eli and Benji." Noah said earning a wide smile from them both. "That's all really." He added before turning back to Marc.

"Take your team home then, I'll see you in a little while." Marc said before Noah turned to the group.

"Let's get to work guys." Noah said as he led his team, followed by Billy out of the room.

"Ok, the rest of us have a few things to accomplish before we can leave." Marc continued. "Mary, you and your team needs to make sure the kitchen is shut down. The crews will be installing the new equipment after the clean out so, if there is any food left in the building it will get tossed. We still have a group coming home tonight so if you have anyplace to store it at the house, set it up with Billy to have it beamed back." Marc said getting a confirming nod from Mary. "Lt. Shannon will be maintaining a security team for the hospital since we do have equipment being left behind. Scott, I expect you to report to Eddie on regular intervals. Maybe even rotate security between locations."

"Aye sir." Scott replied with a smile.

"Mr. O'Keefe will be manning the transporters and I will be securing whatever medical equipment that is not handled by our volunteer team before they depart. Let's do this and go home, I think we could all use a break." Marc said with a smile. "Dismissed." He said to the few remaining people before noticing that Alex and his brother Benny were still standing out in the hall. "Come here guys."

"I guess we gotta go home now." Alex said as he approached Marc with a sad expression on his face.

"Yeah, and I want you two to promise me you won't try sneaking into the building while the men are doing their work. The stuff they are going to be removing can make you real sick." He continued as he grabbed a piece of paper and wrote something on it. "Here." Marc said handing the paper to Alex.

"What's this?" Benny asked looking at the paper Alex was holding.

"Our phone number on Sullivan's Island. We'll be gone for more than a week but, if you want to come and visit you can give a call." Marc said beginning to smile when Alex lost his depressed expression.

"Is Joey gonna be there?" Alex asked excitedly.

"He sure will." Marc replied turning to walk the boys out the front door.

"Ya think maybe I can sleep over some night or something?" He continued as they stepped outside.

"That's between your parents and Joey's grand parents." Marc said ruffling his hair. "I don't see why not though."

"Cool!" Alex said before he grabbed Benny's hand and almost began dragging him back towards their house. "Thanks!" He shouted back as Benny tried to wave before they rounded the side of the building.

Marc watched as they vanished before going back into the building, stopping inside the doorway and looking around. "Next time is for real." He said, as if speaking to the building itself. "This place is gonna be great."

4 Hours Later - AI Division Compound

"How'd it go?" Noah asked as he powered down the transporter unit and Marc stepped down off the pad.

"Not bad." Marc replied looking around the basement. "Looks like they've been doing some redecorating." He said with a smile as he noticed all the new equipment in place but the older equipment still scattered about.

"Yeah. I guess a lot of this stuff will end up in our section of the hospital." Noah replied as Marc started up the stairs. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." Marc replied opening the door and stepping into the hallway. "Once I get something to drink."

"Mmmm. Me too." Noah said following him into the kitchen. "Eli and Benji are sleeping." Noah said as Marc stopped for a second and looked at the closed door to the upper lab. "It's quiet. Sammy and Bastian are taking a nap with them. Antonio and Byron ran next door to help Mary and Jerry put away all the supplies from the kitchen."

Marc smiled as he grabbed two glasses and went to the refrigerator. "Oh my god. You mean we're alone?" He asked with a laugh.

"Oh yeah." Noah said as he accepted the glass Marc offered him and smiled. "Peace and quiet. Can you believe it?"

"Well then, this meeting can go out on the back deck then." Marc giggled, putting the soda back in the fridge and lead the way back through the living room to the back deck. Once both boys decided to have a seat on the steps, Marc took a deep breath, closed his eyes and smiled. "Dude, if your question is work related, you think it can wait a while?"

"Well, it's sorta work related." Noah said before taking a sip from his glass. "Not totally though."

"Something wrong bro?" Marc asked, now turning to look at Noah. "We can talk work if you need to. I'm just happy to be home." He added with a smile.

"I've got a problem." Noah started. "I know Caleb feels the same way too."

"Ok." Marc said turning to completely face Noah with a smile. "Spit it out. What's buggin ya?"

"Are we all done here? Me and Caleb I mean." Noah asked looking back out over the ocean.

"Looking forward to going home?" Marc asked with a smile as he turned to look out over the water as well, wrapping an arm around him and squeezing. "I can understand that."

"That's not it." Noah replied quickly. "This is the kind of work Cal loves. Computers, networks and androids. It's like the past few days have been like a dream come true for him. For us both really."

"Oh?" Marc replied, somewhat surprised. "What about your Dad and Antonio?"

"Dad is the best." Noah said with a thoughtful smile. "Not that long ago Cal asked me to make the decision for us both to be his sons. He asked me to keep him safe. He trusted me to decide for him cause he was afraid to." He said before taking a deep breath. "I got lucky. Matt is the best Dad anyone could ever have. Both he and Antonio wanted us as family even after Caleb's family tossed us out. Now I have to make another decision, and it ain't easy."

Marc silently listened as Noah's voice began to break up a little.

"Caleb loves this place. I mean we've gotten to help out with some serious stuff after Dad adopted us but, here we can really help. I mean a lot." He said with a snuffle. "We both love Dad and Antonio lots but, the work we've been doing here is like... I dunno... It's like we were born for it. I've never seen Caleb happier." Noah got out as Antonio and Byron came running up giggling.

"Noah?" Antonio asked before letting Byron's hand go and pulling his brother into a hug. "What's wrong?"

"I don't know what to do." Noah managed to get out before hugging Antonio tighter and beginning to sob.

"What happened?" Byron asked as he sat down in front of Marc.

"I'm not really sure buddy." Marc replied before squeezing Noah's shoulder. "Tell you what. You and your brother talk a little before you make any final decisions. Byron and I are gonna go inside and check on Eli and Benji, maybe even get dinner started." Marc said standing up. "Sound cool?" He asked, tilting his head when Byron started shaking his head, followed by Antonio.

"We need him here." Antonio said with a pleading look.

"Gotcha." Marc said with a smile before turning back toward the house. "Yell if you guys need me." He said softly before closing the door.

"What happened?" Antonio repeated his question from earlier.

"Nothing happened little bro." Noah replied as Byron sat down and wrapped his arm around Noah.

"Right." Byron said, shaking his head in disbelief. "Y'all cry like that all the time. I get it."

"That's not it." Noah said, almost laughing through a snuffle. "We're almost done here."

"That what got you so sad?" Antonio asked, resting his head on Noah's shoulder.

"Makes sense." Byron said flatly. "Sounds like your hacker brothers may have just found their playground." He said with a smile.

"You wanna stay? That's what this is, isn't it?" Antonio asked, surprising Noah with a giggle. "Oh man. I was thinkin someone got hurt or sumthin."

"I've never seen Caleb so happy." Noah said wiping his nose on his sleeve. "I mean, not since the day you told Dad to adopt us."

"So?" Antonio fired back with a serious look. "You're thinkin that me an Daddy want you with us more than we want you to be happy?"

"No!" Noah replied quickly, opening his eyes wide. "That's not what I meant."

"Ok, yur thinkin that if you ask to stay here that I won't want you guys to be my brothers, or Daddy is gonna want his name back or sumthin?" Antonio got out, his expression getting more serious by the moment.

"No 'Tonio, I... I..." Noah got out before tears began to stream down his cheeks again. "I love you guys. I love Caleb. Back home we've done so much. But here we can do so much more." He managed to get out before Antonio wrapped his arms around his brother.

"You an Caleb got yur own rooms." Antonio said looking directly at Noah. "What's it matter if it's here or there? As long as you guys are never gonna stop bein my brothers. Then I want you to be doin what makes ya both happy. Daddy would say the same thing and you know that."

"You guys got transporters here." Byron added in. "Takes what? A few seconds to come home to visit?"

"Daddy already knows all that happened." Antonio said softly as he cuddled into Noah's chest. "You just saw how happy Caleb was, me an Byron got to see you both. I called him a little while ago and told him."

"You told him we wanna stay? I haven't even really talked to Caleb about it yet." Noah said in shock.

"I told him y'all was happy and workin hard. I told him bout all the medical stuff we been doin, about the computer stuff Caleb was workin with Danny and JR on, bout you bein in command of everythin." Antonio said as he almost shyly looked into Noah's once again tear filled blue eyes. "I told him you guys were happier than I ever seen you."

"He's so proud of you all." Byron said wrapping his arms around both boys. "You guys aren't done here. We all know that. Including your Dad."

"You don't think he'd be upset?" Noah asked, resting his cheek on Antonio's head.

"He might be." Antonio answered. "If he finds out you two found something you really wanted an didn't go after it."

"Besides." Antonio almost whispered. "Someone's gotta get it through to those short circuiting brothers that they make a cute couple." Antonio said with a laugh.

"No kiddin." Noah said as Antonio squeezed his brother and all three stood up. "Maybe me an Caleb can hack their brains an make em smarter or sumthin." He said wiping away the last of his tears.

"Someone's gotta." Byron chimed in as they all laughed and went inside the house.

"SURPRISE!" Cory yelled as the group appeared in the living room at the AI Compound.

"OMIGOD!" Noah said as he fumbled to catch the glass he was holding unsuccessfully, watching it shatter on the floor.

"Good god guys!" Marc said grasping at his chest. "How the hell did you do that?"

"We're goooooood!" Cory giggled as he polished his fingernails on his shirt.

"Good, you can help me clean up this mess then, dork!" Noah said with a laugh.

"I'll help you." Caleb said with a smile as he rushed over and hugged Noah tightly. "Did ya miss me?"

"Bigtime!" Noah said, resting his forehead on Caleb's shoulder releasing a sigh of relief.

"Broken glass!" Josiah said excitedly with a grin. Josiah tilted his head and giggled as the shards of glass quickly pulled back together to form a glass figurine that resembled a cat. "Okay well that's not what I was going for but it's not broken anymore."

Gavin smiled as he wrapped his arms around Josiah. "That's okay cutie; I think it's awesome, just like you."

"You want some more soda dude?" Danny said with a laugh as he grabbed the bottle off of the coffee table and motioning as if he was going to pour it on the cat.

"No thanks." Noah answered before looking back up in astonishment. "How the...?" He got out, tilting his head.

"Zero-point energy," said Josiah. "It's a giving and taking of energy kinda thing, but it lets me move, remake, blow up, reduce, and control just about anything. I kinda meant to put the glass back together but I wasn't paying enough attention to what it should be. It turned out to be what I was thinking instead, a cat."

Dmitry giggled, "Do you think about cats often?"

"No," replied Josiah. "I spend most of my time thinking about Gavin now. Before that I use to think about cats often, they're kinda cute."

"I guess that answers your question." Marc said with a giggle. "Looks like you guys had an interesting trip." He continued, turning toward Sean.

Sean nodded. "You might say that; when you hear about all of it you're gonna freak."

Just then, Joey came running into the room, followed by an out of breath KC. "Get back here Creep!" KC shouted before both came to a screeching halt in the living room.

"You've Home!" Joey shouted at the top of his lungs before rushing to the nearest person and tackling him, knocking Cory off balance and both tumbled to the floor.

After seeing the shocked expressions, Marc laughed and elbowed Noah in the side. "Looks like we have some competition on who had the most interesting couple of days."

"JOEY!!!!!!!!!" Timmy screamed as he pounced on top of Joey and Cory.

"Dimmy!" Joey squealed as he turned and hugged his brother tightly. "Dimmy! Wooked, I god a new body an Ausdin gave me fawds wike unka Cowy!"

"Awesome!" Timmy giggled. "You can make sure Unka Marc don' forget Daddy then! C'mon; we gotta new little brother; you gotta meet him!"

"Coow!" Joey replied before looking around the room.

"Looks like we're gonna have to take turns with intros." Marc said with a smile. "You wanna go first Cor?"

Cory shook his head. "You first; my list is longer than a line at Disney."

"Ok." Marc said before whispering something in Joey's ear.

"Oday Unka Mawc." Joey replied in excitement before he ran through the kitchen at top speed and out the front door.

"Well, That was obviously Joey. I'm sure you can guess he's doin better than ever in a REAL body." He got out as everyone giggled and nodded in agreement. "This guy over here is KC McKensie." Marc said as KC blushed a bit and waved. "KC was lost in an accident a few years back. We now have a new friend on the police force out in California because of him." Marc said with a grin. "I guess you could say KC is Austin's older brother. He was my first attempt to make us more human, but they canceled that project."

"Nice to meet you guys!" KC finally managed to get out before Joey came running back into the room with Austin in tow.

"I think you may remember this guy." Marc said toward Sean and Cory.

"Austin?" Cory managed to say before Austin found himself bowled over by Timmy. "Dude; you look awesome!" Cory added as he helped Austin back up.

Austin smiled as he pulled Cory into a hug. "Thanks Dad. Did my little brother miss me?"

As he returned the hug, Cory replied. "You better believe it. I think he was just as worried about you as he was Joey."

"This is Timmy?" KC asked when Joey slammed back into his side. "Joey's told me all about you little guy."

"Casey, dad boy has puppwe eyes." Joey said with a shy grin.

"And no one usually notices. My name is Tyne," grinned Tyne. "I have purple eyes because I'm a little different then everyone else, I'm a Founder. I'm probably the only purple eyed Founder you'll ever meet anymore, if you ever run across another Founder at all. You've got some pretty cool looking eyes too though."

Joey finally stepped out from behind KC and smiled. "You wike my eyes?" He asked, his smile growing wider. "My Daddy says dhey awe coow."

He added before stepping closer to Tyne and tilting his head. "Whad's a foundew?"

"Well Founders are a lot like humans in most ways only we're able to do a lot more with our minds," Tyne replied slowly trying to make sure he used words Joey would understand. "The main thing that we can do is see the future and some Founders can see further into the future then others. The futures we see, though, are just possible futures; they might not really happen if we change something. We also have some weak mind reading abilities as well as a very advanced ability to project things into other people's minds; making them see things that aren't really there. Years and years ago the only way that you used to be able to tell if someone was a Founder was because they had purple eyes. These days you have to know what to look for in their genetics. I bet you actually know another Founder and you'd probably never be able to guess that he is one."

"Na-ah." Joey laughed.

"Do you have an uncle named Kyle?" asked Tyne.

"Kywe!?! Kywe's nod a foundew." Joey giggled before quickly looking at Kyle. "Awe you Kywe?"

Kyle smiled. "I just found out too munchkin. Tyne is teachin' me how to handle the stuff I can do."

"Weawwy?" Joey replied with a shocked expression.

"So you guys might see what could happen and probably can do something to change it?" KC said with a smile, scratching his head. "That's pretty sweet when you think of it."

"It can be," said Tyne.

Just then Dmitry started to dance around in one spot, "I'm gonna introduce myself if ya don't mind. I'm Dmitry, okay now I'm gonna go use your bathroom before I pee myself." Dmitry then grabbed Dominic's hand and started towards the bathroom, "And this is Dominic and I'm taking him with me."

"Through the kitch..." Marc managed to get out before being cut off.

"Oh we know where it's at," Dominic said as he was pulled across the room. "We've been here before. Oh which reminds me; Caleb, if I EVER see you kill a cup of coffee again like you did last week then we're gonna have to have a talk."

"And Marc, just so you know your lab floor is very comfortable," Dmitry added as they disappeared.

"Been here before?" Marc asked shrugging his shoulders.

"There's nothing wrong with how I like my coffee!" Caleb shouted after the two boys with a giggle.

"Not if you are a diabetic cow." Danny laughed.

"Moooooooooooooooo!!!!!!" Timmy and Ricky both giggled in unison.

"I don't get it." Marc said, turning to Cory. "They didn't come in with you guys last time you were here."

Cory shrugged his shoulders. "How could ya' miss two hyper guys like that? You really need to take a break Marc."

"Sean, do something TO him, will you?" Marc said with a grin.

Sean started to reach down the back of Cory's pants, then suddenly pulled back hard with a hand full of underwear. "That work?" Sean giggled as Cory yelped and hopped around the room trying to clear his boxers from his butt crack.

"Yeah, I think so." Marc laughed as he watched Cory dance. "I still don't remember them being here though." He got out as the two boys returned.

"Okay, we're back," called Dmitry and he came back into the room still dragging Dominic. He stopped and eyed Cory hopping around, "So what did we miss?"

"The wedgie from hell, and Marc trying to figure out how you hid from him." Sean replied, still giggling.

"Oh if you didn't see us that's okay," Dmitry said with a grin. "We were just supposed to be watching you so Ark gave us cloaking things that made us invisible."

"We even managed to get a few slices of pizza and a few cups of coffee and you didn't even notice anything was missing," added Dominic.

"Told you I didn't eat all of that myself." Caleb said, sticking his tongue out at Noah.

"Yes you did!" Noah laughed. "I sat and watched you do it. Don't blame it on them." He finished with a giggle.

"Wait." Marc said, looking to be even more confused. "Who's Ark?"

Danny smiled and wrapped his arm around Marc's shoulder. "Not a who, a what. I can explain that one later. Bro, you will not believe this story."

Timmy started pulling on Marc's arm. "Unka Marc; are you old guys done talkin' yet? I got a present for Joey.

"I guess so." Marc said with an astonished laugh.

"That means the introductions are officially over I guess." Noah said with a laugh as Joey looked over at Timmy.

"A pweasend? Fow me?"

Timmy grinned. "Uh huh. I hadda make ya somethin special cuz' you're special." Timmy got the bag Kyle had been holding for him and pulled out a teddy bear. "Here ya go; I made him 'pecial just like you. He's even got eyes like yours!"

"Oh WOW!" Joey said as Timmy handed him the bear. "Wooked Misdew Dyne. He god eyes wike mine, see." Joey said as he turned the bear to face Tyne. "One bwue, and one gween!" He said turning it back to look him over. "Dhanks Dimmy! He's soooo coow. Whad's his name?"

"I dunno - you gotta name him!" Timmy giggled.

"Oh." Joey said looking the bear over. "Can I caww him Dimmybeaw?" He asked as he hugged the bear tight.

"KEWL!!" Timmy replied as he gave Joey a huge hug.

"Who's Hungry?" Jerry shouted as he came in the front door with his mother right behind him. "Mom made sandwiches and stuff!"

"Gwanma! Gwanma! Wookid whad Dimmy gave me!" Joey squealed.

"Oh, he's so sweet." Mary said with a smile as Jerry began tearing the foil off the platters they had carried in. "I hope you thanked him."

"Uh-huh!" Joey said with a huge smile. "Dimmy god one doo, see?"

"They're almost as cute as you two are." Mary said, giving both boys a hug. "I hope I brought enough." She said to everyone as they filtered into the kitchen.

After eating, most of the boys wandered outside, some to see the ocean for the very first time in their lives. The rest just to catch up with what had gone on in the past couple of days. After discussing Eli and Benji's condition, Marc and Antonio got up from the couch as Byron sat back and relaxed.

"You guys should go pack up; your group should be getting ready to leave soon." Danny said as he draped one arm over both Noah and Caleb's shoulders as they entered the room, Sean and Cory right behind them. "Need a hand??"

"Say something." Caleb whispered to Noah forcefully, freezing Danny and getting concerned looks from Sean and Cory. "Say something or I will." He added, lowering his voice a bit.

"You don't I will." Antonio said as he sat back down on the couch next to Byron.

Noah took a deep breath before stepping back from Danny, turning to face the entire group.

"Sir, may I have council with yourself and Director Page?" Noah asked as he stood rigidly in front of Cory.

"Um... Yeah dude." Cory replied half in shock as he looked at the mock innocent expressions plastered on the face of the remaining group, now retreating from the living room. "Okay, spill it guys. What's goin on here?" He continued as he watched Sean fumble with something he was concealing next to himself on the couch.

Caleb grabbed the tricorder off of his belt and set it to record before patting Danny's back and slipping out from his half hug to stand next to Noah. "Please enter this conversation into the logs to serve as an official request from myself and my partner Noah Barnes." He said as he placed the tricorder on the coffee table.

"Sir." Noah began facing a now confused Danny at full attention. "Permission to remain is being requested by myself and Caleb Barnes. We wish to be considered for permanent positions within the AI division to continue the work we have begun." He managed to get out before facing Cory, one silver tear making its way down his right cheek.

Cory turned to look at the lost expression on Danny's face and a nod from Sean before he faced the couple once again. "Why the tears bro?" He asked crossing his arms.

Noah quickly wiped the tear from his cheek before sniffing and once again returning to full attention. "Sir, Caleb and myself believe we have more to offer Clan Short by continuing our work with the materials and information available to us within this division." He managed to get out, constantly wiping

away the fresh tears that continued to replace the ones he wiped away. "It is our hope that this request..." Noah got out before choking back a sob.

"Turn off the tricorder." Cory turned and said to Sean.

"No prob bro." Sean replied and ended the session log. "Clear." He replied before sitting on the now empty couch.

"Noah, get yur butt over here." Cory turned and said, opening his arms wide just in time for Noah to fill them. "Now, this is off the record. What's with the tears?"

"Cor." Caleb said, digging his hands into his pockets. "Danny and Marc need help." He got out, looking more toward the floor than to the others in the room. "We have projects planned that are never gonna be completely done. This is our field. This is the kinda stuff Noah and I love. We're just... Well..."

"We want to stay on staff here to help. But we're scared that you guys will think we're bailing out on you." Noah said, burying his face into Cory's chest.

"Oh my god." Cory said, shaking his head and looking at Danny with a smirk. "How in tha hell is that bailing out on us. You guys are nuts." Cory said, finally beginning to giggle as he pushed Noah away and looked him in the eye. "Sit down guys." He said to Noah and then to Caleb as Danny sat on the love seat and Cory sat next to him. "Sit." He repeated when both boys just stood still with confused looks on their faces.

The moment they both sat down, they tightly grabbed each others hand and looked intently at Cory.

"Tonio!" Cory shouted toward the kitchen.

"Yeah Cory!" Antonio shouted back.

"You an Marc get ur butts back in here; please?" Cory shouted again, elbowing Danny in the side when he began to snicker.

"What?" Danny said while rubbing his side. "Get yur butts in here. PLEASE?" Danny said with another giggle. "It was just funny." He said as Marc and Antonio came in from the kitchen and looked on in question.

"Grab a seat guys, we have a family issue that directly involves you both." He got out as Antonio climbed in between his brothers and Marc sat on the arm rest next to Danny. "Almost a week ago our family got bigger." Cory stated as he sat forward and rested his elbows on his knees. "Last Friday started something Awesome that none of us would have ever guessed could happen. We got family at home, here, at the Ark compound and even in Australia now; not just coworkers, family." Cory said as he watched Antonio take one of each of his brothers hands. "Now we have a new issue that none of us even thought of." He said smiling at Noah. "Noah, by asking to stay with this division instead of coming back to CIC you think you are bailing out on us, as you put it." He said shaking his head as if in disbelief. "You guys do stuff with computers that make some of the Federation's IT Staff look like amateurs. Caleb, I bet Bill Gates still has your hand print on his butt." He added, getting an embarrassed blush and a giggle in response. "Tell these guys that story some day; I'm sure Marc could defi-

nately appreciate it." He said before getting serious again. "We've all seen what you guys can do, we all know what you guys are capable of and that this division of our FAMILY, not just our Clan; couldn't be any more tailored for your talents. Even if it had been planned."

"But Dad and Antonio..." Noah got out before Cory raised his hand and cut him off.

"If I remember correctly, the day your father agreed to adopt you both when he adopted Antonio it was to give you a chance to see where your feelings led you. Not just your feelings toward each other I'd bet." He said with a smile. "You've both worked so hard to help in every way that you could. Considering the technical aspect of this new addition we all know the work needed here screams both of your names, loud and clear. My reports have shown me that you both are putting your all into this division's integration. Noah, you held command while I was gone dude. That's huge! How can I not look at that and realize that I'd be limiting your capabilities and potential by taking you away from here?"

"Cor..." Noah tried again before Cory shushed him.

"Our entire family relies on each one of us doing what we do best. What you guys do best is right here; if Marc and Danny had no objections I was already prepared to speak with them about you both taking permanent positions right here." Cory said as he turned and smiled at Danny and Marc. "Antonio has already spoken with your father about all that has gone on. Even he feels this is something you just can't walk away from."

"But we don't want him to think we don't want to be his sons anymore by leaving." Caleb said with a snuffle.

"Why would I think that?" Matt's voice came from the hall as he stepped into the room, slightly out of breath.

"Took you long enough." Sean said with a grin as Noah, Caleb and Antonio rushed over and hugged their father.

"I got tied up." He replied as he kissed each of his boys before they regrouped on the couch, Antonio now in his father's lap with Noah and Caleb on each side. "By the way, thanks Sean." Matt said with a smile as he closed his communicator.

"You heard what we said?" Caleb asked in shock as Sean picked up his communicator off of the couch and closed it with an evil grin.

"I told your Dad that I would keep him in the loop." Sean said with a smile as Noah and Caleb sneered at him before beginning to giggle. "What, it's not like this was any surprise or nothin." He continued before turning to Matt. "All tied up huh? JJ and Adam's kids practicing knot tying again?"

"Not exactly." Matt replied with a chuckle before turning his attention to Noah. "Noah." He started, as he sat back on the couch, drawing Caleb and Noah tight to his sides. "I adopted you and your brothers because I wanted to give you the best chance I could for you to get exactly what you wanted from life. You all deserve the chance to chase your dreams and make them a reality. The day you and Caleb made your way to Teri's home, I offered to be your father. I also told you straight out that you deserved a chance, and that I was going to see that you got it. This is that chance for you both to make a difference. Danny and his division have the tools you both need to pursue that dream and make it more than

just a dream. If you both come here to live and do the work you love, then this is exactly that chance I wanted to give you, both of you. Because you are my sons and will be until the end of time. Maybe even a few days past that." Matt added with a smile as they hugged each other tighter. "Pass up this opportunity and I will have failed in my promise. Understand?" Matt said as Noah and Caleb nodded their heads.

"Should we try again Cor?" Sean asked as he raised the tricorder and smiled.

"Do it bro." Cory smiled as Sean set the tricorder to record and placed it back on the coffee table. "This recording is to be entered into the permanent duty records of both Noah Simon Barnes and Caleb Skye Barnes, currently holding positions within Clan Short of Vulcan, of the house of Sarek, of the family of Surak within both our Intelligence and IT departments. Effective today, October 21, 2004; in recognition of outstanding performance within our newly formed Artificial Intelligence division, I request approval from Daniel Alexander Page to consider positions within the division in which he holds command." Cory said, turning to look at Danny with a smile.

"Thank you Patriarch Short." Danny said with a smile as Marc put his hand on Danny's shoulder and squeezed. "On behalf of our team, we would consider it an honor and a privilege to add such talented officers to our team." He said as Marc whispered something in Danny's ear. "You think so?" He asked lowering his voice, receiving an enthusiastic nod from Marc. "Ok then." He continued standing up from his seat. "Caleb Barnes, step forward please."

"Huh?" Caleb replied in shock.

"Get over here bonehead." Danny giggled as Matt pushed his son to his feet. "Mr. Barnes, you have demonstrated to myself and my team a unique ability that we feel our Patriarch would benefit should that ability be further expanded upon and allowed to grow. I am offering you the position of head of our technological development team. Our tools and staff will be at your disposal. Will you consider this request?"

Caleb looked back at his family before turning and allowing a smile to form on his face when Matt nodded his approval. "Yes sir, I do."

"Thank you Mr. Barnes." Danny said with a smile. "I'm looking forward to working with you." He added with a nod before turning to Marc and tilting his head.

"Yes, don't ask me again." Marc said with a giggle answering Danny's unasked question.

"Okay." Danny said before motioning for Caleb to sit back down. "Noah Barnes, step forward please."

Noah nervously stepped forward before stiffening his back and responding. "Yes sir?"

"Mr. Barnes, it has been reported to me that in my absence you have supported Doctor Furst in every way you possibly could. Not only have you physically and emotionally offered support to Doctor Furst and our Medical Staff but, you have also acted on your own accord with the Federation, Law Enforcement and our Engineering Staff on this division's behalf. You have gone far above and beyond the expectations of our Acting Division Head, in turn exceeding my own expectations. You have been an in-

valuable member of this team. At this time I would like you to consider acting as my second in command of our Patriarch's Artificial Intelligence division."

"Say what?" Noah blurted out, snapping his head in Marc's direction. "Danny, Marc should hold that position. Not me."

Danny nodded his head and grinned at Cory before continuing; "A wise GUY once told me that it would be illogical for Marc to set aside the work he is performing to take another duty upon himself."

"Don't you mean wise MAN?" Cory giggled.

"Whatever." Danny snickered before ignoring the glare Cory was shooting in his direction and returned his attention to Noah. "Marc's work was hampered by having to act as head of this division. Had it not been for your actions, he feels he very well could have failed in that task. You strengthened each and every sign of weakness created by the situation by stepping in as you did. You not only supported him as your superior but also gave him the wealth of your own abilities freely, empowering us to succeed at a time in our development when it was the most crucial." Danny said, pausing to let his words sink in. "Please accept my request." He finished.

"There are better people..." Noah started to say before Danny tilted his head.

"Not in our eyes there aren't." Danny said as Noah looked at Marc, who simply smiled and nodded his approval.

Noah stood silent for a moment before looking back at the couch where Sean, Caleb, Antonio and Matt simply smiled back at him. Matt nodded his head and smiled wide, causing him to take a deep breath and turn back toward Danny. "I'm not sure what to say."

"Oh my god." Sean said sitting back and laughing. "You say yes dufus. You've already done the job." Sean said getting laughs from everyone in the room.

"Can I still work with Caleb on projects?" Noah asked with a pleading look in his eyes.

"When you aren't in active command, you can work with whatever department you feel needs you." Danny replied with a grin. "Does that mean you're accepting the position or do we have to torture you until you give in?"

"I accept." Noah replied with a laugh. "I'll do my best bro, I promise."

"That I never doubted." Danny answered giving Noah a quick hug before turning to Cory. "Do you have anything further Patriarch Short?"

"Yeah." Cory said as he stood up and stretched. "Put that bum back in charge so we can go outside with everyone else and have some fun before we gotta leave."

"As you wish Patriarch Short." Danny replied with a giggle. "You heard him, you're in charge."

"In charge of what exactly? There's nothing going on right now." Noah shot back with a laugh.

"That's what I think he was getting at." Danny said with a wink as the sliding glass door opened and Austin, KC and Joey walked in.

"You've gotta see what's going on out there." KC said to the group going outside while Joey ran over to the stairwell and grabbed the skateboard.

"Casey! Can you deach me do wide dhe skadeboawd?"

"Not right now creep." KC said, ruffling Joey's hair and then following Austin into the kitchen, the others wandering outside.

"Sit down bro." Austin said pulling out a chair and sitting at the table.

"What's up?" KC asked as Joey rolled into the kitchen, now sitting on KC's skateboard and pulling himself along with his feet.

"Casey! Wooked! I'm widin dha skadeboawd!" Joey said with a giggle, his new teddy bear tightly in his grip.

KC grinned, stood up and turned the board around before giving it a gentle shove with his foot. "Now yur ridin it punk." KC said as Joey rolled back out into the hall leading to the living room, squealing and giggling wildly all the way.

"You're really good with him." Austin said with a smile. "That's kinda what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Yur goin home tonight, right?" KC asked resting his elbows on the table.

"Yeah." Austin said with a weak smile as Joey pushed himself back into the room.

"Casey! I widin sdiww!"

KC gave the board another shove sending Joey squealing and laughing back toward the living room. "Punks skate that way!" He shouted after him.

"I feel kinda bad that we just got to be family and now we're separating." Austin said, smiling watching Joey roll into the living room.

"Why?" KC asked turning back to look Austin in the eye. "Yur not leavin anyone, yur just not gonna be right here."

"It's the same thing." Austin said before grinning and motioning to the doorway, where Joey was trying to quietly roll back into the kitchen unnoticed.

"Pay the toll!" KC said with a laugh, putting his foot out to stop the board.

"I don'd god money." Joey giggled.

"You and the bear gotta leave then." KC said as he pushed him back into the hallway, getting another round of squeals and giggles from him. "It's not the same thing." KC said looking back at his brother. "Having family split up into different houses isn't the same thing as not having family."

"Explain that to Joey." Austin replied as Joey slowly crept back into the kitchen, his giggling giving him away.

"C'mere creep." KC said patting his lap.

"Oday. Dimmybeaw is gonna wadch dhe skadeboawd dho." Joey said as he carefully stood up and set his bear on the board. "You sday wighd dhewe." He said before climbing up into KC's lap.

"Joey, Austin's sad." KC said looking down at his brother.

"Why awe you sad Ausdin?" Joey asked opening his eyes. "Did sumdhin bad happen?"

"He thinks cause he is gonna be going home with his Dad and Pop and Timmy that he's not bein a good brother." KC said before Austin was able to reply.

"Bud you godda be widh youw Daddy and Pop; and who's gonna be dhewe when Dimmy needs a big bwodhew?" Timmy asked innocently. "I wouwd go widh you bud, my Daddy needs me do be hewe widh him."

"Yeah, and what would I do without my Creepy Punk brother?" KC asked, getting a huff from Joey.

"I nod a cweepy punk. You'we siwwy!" Joey said with a giggle.

"So, is Austin being silly for thinking he's a bad brother?" KC asked before Joey slowly slid off of his lap and climbed into Austin's.

"Yeah, cause you awe dhe besd big bwodhew. You and Casey awe. So one of you godda sday hewe widh me and dhe odhew godda go widh Dimmy!" Joey answered in a matter of fact tone of voice.

"No worries." KC replied with a smile. "If I need help, I know who to call."

"Me doo!" Joey said with a giggle.

"You don't call anyone, punk. That's my job." KC said as all three stood up.

Joey scrunched up his face and put his hands on his hips. "I can caww. Id mightd be my job doo!"

"Ok, you win." KC said as he lifted Joey on to his shoulders and snatched his teddy bear, passing it up to his occupant. "Enough of the serious stuff. I think they're having fun out there without us. Grab your bear and let's go check it out."

"Sounds good." Austin replied, reaching up and poking Joey in the sides.

"Sdop id Ausdin! I awmosd dwopped dimmybeaw!" Joey squealed.

"Yeah." KC said turning and giving Austin a shove toward the door. "He almost dropped him, what were you thinking?"

Austin laughed. "I'm thinking both of my brothers are punks! Let's go before all of the sand gets trashed!"

As they opened the sliding glass doors, Austin and KC froze in shock as Joey gasped. "Wooked dhe casdwe! Coow, dhewe's a dwagon and ewewydhing!!!" He shouted excitedly as he wiggled to get down and grabbed his brothers by the hand, continuing to literally drag them off the deck.

"Dude!" KC said with a laugh. "That's the biggest sand castle I've ever seen!" He said as he stopped to watch Tyne run off to slay the sand dragon. "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes..." KC giggled as he shook his head.

"No kidding." Austin laughed. Let's go see what's up." He said as they listened to Rusty's shouts to be saved. "When did this happen?" He asked as he passed Danny and Kyle, who were sitting on the steps watching the excitement.

"Just now." Danny replied with a giggle as Joey dragged both of his brothers toward the beach.

"He's doin real good now." Kyle said motioning toward Joey, who managed to lead both his brothers while still tightly gripping his teddy bear. "You sad that you missed him come back?"

"Nah, I'm not sad. Where'd you get that idea from?" Danny asked leaning back on his elbows.

"I don't need to be in your head to see it on your face." Kyle laughed. "Sumthin's buggin ya."

"Just a little overwhelmed I guess. This past week has been insane." Danny grinned and answered as Kyle sat back like Danny was. "It's kinda like my life is a movie or something and midway through the script I get a new writer." Danny chuckled.

"Yeah, but is the new writer doin better?" Kyle asked with a grin.

"Oh yeah." Danny answered as he watched Joey tackle KC into the sand, starting a full out sand war on the beach. "Huge family, new friends, a new job and a place to call home." He continued with a sigh. "It's like someone up there finally decided I passed some test or something and this is my reward."

"I know what ya mean." Kyle replied grabbing Danny's arm and giving it a small hug. "Look, I'm not sure how you helped in all this, you know; with us goin to Chicago. I'm just guessing you had yer nose in it." He giggled as he gave a squeeze and let Danny's arm go so he could stand up.

"I was a little involved but, you really owe thanks to your family for this one." Danny replied as he stood up as well.

"Well, since yur part of the family, thanks. It means a lot to me and to Paul." Kyle said as the sounds of Tyne slaying the Sand Dragon could be heard over the rest of the commotion on the beach. "C'mon! We're missing out on all the fun!"

"Best idea I've heard all day." Danny laughed as he chased Kyle off the steps.

After a few hours of fun, Jerry stood next to Josiah and watched as he made sure no one was still inside the castle before he sighed and allowed it to collapse.

"It's too bad I made it that big," said Josiah. "If I wasn't worried about leaving something that large here on the beach I could have just turned the sand to glass."

"No way! You coulda done that?" Jerry asked in awe.

"Sure, it wouldn't have been that hard," replied Josiah. "I mean sand is really close to glass anyway, so it would just be a matter of adding more heat. Could have kept it there for a long time that way."

Jerry frantically dug around in his pocket, and pulled out a wrinkled picture. "Could you make one like that for me? A little version; that's the first castle Me, Marc, and Danny built."

Josiah looked at the picture and as he studied it the sand at his feet began to start forming. A few seconds later he looked down to find a smaller glass version of the sand castle from the picture as well as small figures around it that resembled Jerry, Marc, and Danny. Josiah smiled, "Will that work?"

"Oh my Gawd! Thats AWESOME!" Jerry exclaimed as he wrapped his arms around Josiah. "You're the GREATEST!"

"That's what Gavin keeps telling me," grinned Josiah. "I'm glad I could help."

Jerry glanced around until he spotted KC trying to avoid getting buried in the sand by Austin and Joey. "KC, Austin, Joey! Come here!" he yelled.

The three boys came running over; KC shaking sand out of his hair. "Wazzup Doc?" KC asked as they skidded to a stop.

Jerry pointed at the glass figurines and castle. "Josiah made that for me; it's just like the one that I made with Marc and Danny. Could you help me get it over to my house? I wanna surprise Marc and Danny with it later, and I don't want it to get broke."

"Dhad's awesome!" Joey said as he stared at the little model. "Id's pweddy!"

Josiah rustled Joey's hair, "Well anything that has your Daddy in it is gonna be pretty, don't ya think?"

"Uh huh; he's a cude Daddy!" Joey responded with a big smile.

"Hey Jerry; is that a sunburn or are you blushing?" Austin giggled. "C'mon KC; let's get this inside before Dad sees it!"

"Ok." Jerry replied before the boys flanked him to hide the small castle from view. "Thanks Josiah, this is soooo sweet!" He managed to get out as they began to rush toward his house.

"Oh those four are up to no good." Danny said to Cory as he watched the four boys rush to Jerry's house.

"Are they ever?" Cory asked with a laugh before Sean slowly walked up to them.

"We should start gettin the guys together and get ready to leave." Sean said with a saddened smile.

"Let's round em up then." Danny said as he patted Sean on the shoulder and smiled.

A few minutes later, all the boys gathered at the edge of the deck and started saying their goodbyes. Austin pulled Joey and KC under his arms. "Take care of our little bro KC; he's a pretty special little guy." Austin said as tears began running from his eyes.

Joey looked up at Austin. "Don'd cw y Ausdin. You can visid us an we'ww visid you doo."

Austin gave a small smile. "I know little guy. It's just that I love you two a lot."

"I wove you doo." Joey replied as he pulled in tightly to Austin.

"Make that a double." KC added as he returned the hug. "Now get over there and give Marc a hug before we haul your butt onto that shuttle ourselves."

Austin gave them both one more squeeze, then shuffled over to where Marc, Danny, Cory and Sean were standing. Marc took one look at Austin and pulled him into a hug. "What's wrong?"

"Why can't there be two of me Dad?" Austin whispered. "That way I could be with both of my families."

Marc giggled and squeezed a bit tighter. "Cause that would have been soooo much more work." He got out; earning the giggle he had hoped for. "Seriously though, you aren't really leaving, Austin. We're all just a call or a transport away. Cory and I were just talking about it; he agrees that you are welcome to go between both of your homes anytime you want. I'm sure KC and Joey can't wait to visit your house; Joey worships Timmy and will probably throw a fit if he don't get to visit both of you. You've got a lot of family you still need to get to know; don't worry about any of us forgetting about you while you are doing it."

Cory put a hand on Austin's shoulder. "Marc's right Austin; I'll bet you and Timmy will be visiting a lot. Why don't you tell Marc you'll see him later; I don't think goodbye fits here."

Sean joined the huddle. "Relax Austin. You'll be back. After you get done thanking Marc, why don't you round up your little brothers and get them on the shuttle?"

"Ok." Austin said with a snuffle before smiling and turning to the group of boys who were now huddled and watching the conversation. "It's time to get going guys."

Both Joey and Timmy looked at each other before tears began to well up in their eyes.

Cory and Sean both gave Marc and Danny hugs. "Thanks for all of your help." Cory said. "Marc, thanks a bunch for taking care of Austin, Eli, and Benji. I owe ya forever bro!"

"You guys leavin?" Marc asked as Josiah and Gavin waved to Dmitry and Dominic.

"Yeah, we want to go to Orlando before we head back to the Ark compound." Josiah replied as all four smiled and said their goodbyes.

"It was awesome to meet you guys." Noah said as Marc, Danny and Caleb nodded their heads. "We'll have to go visit or sumthin sometime soon.

"If you ever need a break, you're all more than welcome to come back." Marc said with a giggle. "The sand may even be ready to be worked over again." He added as they all turned and looked at the large pile and giggled.

"Sounds great." Josiah said with a smile. "This was a lot of fun."

"Yeah!" Dominic said as he looked at Caleb and giggled. "It's lots more fun when we get to be here without having to hide the whole time." He said getting a nod from Dominic.

"You guys ready?" Josiah asked to the three giggling boys, getting nods as his response. "Ok then; Ark, could you send us to the clan's headquarters?" He asked out loud; seconds before all four simply vanished with a wave.

"That is so weird how they can do that." Marc said as all four started to walk toward the house.

"You ain't seen nothin yet." Caleb said with a giggle as they started up the back steps.

After the four boys wandered back into the house, they all plopped down on the couch and sighed. "So, what's the plan?" Noah asked as Danny started to grin.

"Well." Danny said, putting his hands behind his head. "I was wondering if you and Cal wanted some time alone. You know, a nice quiet night." He said with a grin.

"God that sounds nice." Caleb said as he grabbed Noah's arm and snuggled up to him. "That what you and Marc have planned?" He continued with a giggle.

"Cute." Danny said with a scowl before he looked at Marc. "I owe my brother a night out." He said with a smile. "I made a couple of calls earlier and got a few things arranged."

"Sweet!" Noah said, just realizing that Danny just confirmed something for him. "We have the house? To ourselves?"

"With the exception of Eli, Benji, Sammy and Sebastian. You're pretty much alone." Danny said looking back at Marc. "What are the odds of us being able to like, rent a car or a limo or something?"

"Pretty good I think." Marc said with an evil smile before jumping off the couch and grabbing Danny's arm. "Tell me if this will work." He said as he dragged Danny toward the front door. Noah and Caleb curiously following.

"Whoah." Danny choked out in shock. "Who owns that?" He asked stepping off the porch and slowly approaching the black Camaro parked in the driveway. Noah slowly walking along behind Danny.

Marc and Caleb remained on the bottom steps, simply watching Danny and Noah literally drool over the car. "You like it?" Marc asked with a grin.

"Are you kidding?" Danny replied turning to face his brother. "She's beautiful." He said as Marc reached in his pocket and tossed a key to him.

"Then she's yours." He said, almost laughing out loud when Danny simply stood and stared at the key.

"Ohmigod dude! Start it up." Noah bounced up and down, nearly knocking Danny over.

"Ok, relax." Danny laughed as he walked around to the driver's side. "This must have cost a fortune bro." He said as he started looking around the door.

"Nope, this is compliments of the Charleston Police Department." Marc said as he and Caleb started to walk over to the other two.

"Ok, it's been a few years but..." Danny mindlessly said before stepping away from the car, scratching his head. "How do you unlock the door? I can't find the lock."

"DNA sensor?" Noah asked as he reached out and put his hand on the door handle.

ACCESS DENIED - STEP AWAY FROM THE VEHICLE A voice from the vehicle announced.

"No way!?" Danny laughed as Marc folded his arms and giggled. "Do all cars have that?"

"Newer law enforcement vehicles do. They started securing official vehicles with a small computer core." Caleb said with a smile. "It's not perfect but pretty effective in the field."

"Try it bro." Marc said with a grin. "Setting it up for you was easy. I already had your DNA on file and it was set up to acknowledge entry of a new primary operator. Will says you should be all set."

The second Danny grabbed the door handle, he heard the locks disengage. "Sweet." He said as he pulled the door open and carefully got in. "It looks like an aircraft cockpit in here." Danny giggled as he looked at the key Marc tossed him. After inspection, he realized it was more of a computer chip than a key with sensors embedded in both sides.

"Dude, that key in only your hand activates the internal systems. Try it out." Noah said in excitement as he ran around to the passenger side of the car and hopped in. "I've read about these cars. It has to be in YOUR hand or the car won't start. This car won't even let someone else jump in and put it in gear. Even if you leave it running with the doors wide open."

After looking around for a few more minutes Danny inserted the key and the instrument panel lit up. "How do I start it?" Danny asked searching around as if he had never been in a car before in his life.

"Turn the key." Noah said with a laugh. "It's the same as any other car, this one only starts for someone who is recognized as its user."

"Ahhh." Danny replied as he turned the key and the car roared to life. Displays began to light up and the seat suddenly adjusted itself for its driver. "That's unreal." He said as he watched information begin scrolling on a small display in the center of the dash board. "What's that?"

"They left all the cool stuff." Noah said as he watched the display. "You're tied into local and state police systems." He said as he tapped the screen and a display of surrounding roadways popped up. "See? That's a Sullivan's Island unit two streets over." He said smiling wide as Danny hit the accelerator and simply smiled. "You do remember how to drive, right? I mean, back in your time cars did move without horses attached to them, didn't they?" Noah said with a giggle.

Danny looked at Marc and grinned when he motioned his head out toward the road. "Close your door and let's find out." He said looking back at Marc and Caleb. "You two wanna go for a run around the block?"

"I'll pass, just don't take too long. I think all of us have some planning to do." Marc replied with a grin as Danny closed his door, strapped in and pulled the car slowly out onto the street. Coming to a complete stop after clearing the driveway, the blue and green flashing lights came on and the car roared as Danny must have jumped on the accelerator and quickly vanished from sight.

"Noah's gonna have a heart attack." Marc said getting a giggle from Caleb.

"No way." He replied walking back to the steps and sitting down. "He's one of the few people who enjoys Cory's driving."

Just as Marc turned to join Caleb on the steps, a car carrier pulled up in front of the house and stopped. "Ah, the other toys." Marc said as Caleb stood up and looked on the trailer.

"This is all from Will?" Caleb asked watching two large men climb out of the rig.

"Yup." Marc said as he held his hand out to the man approaching him.

"Is there a Doctor Furst here son?" The man asked as he accepted Marc's hand and shook it.

"That's me." He replied, laughing when the man looked at him as if in shock.

"Okay then." He said as he handed a small hand held computer over to Marc. "Just a thumb print Doctor." He said and smiled as the computer confirmed Marc wasn't lying. "We have two units here from a Corporal Will Jackson, Charleston Police Department. Right here in the driveway ok?"

"Please, that would be great." Marc replied as the man chuckled and returned to his truck.

"That's a real cruiser!?!?" Caleb said as he watched the truck begin to back into the driveway.

"It was already being outfitted for CPD when Will offered it to us. So we have one marked and one unmarked unit, outfitted to work in concert with police authorities. The van is a police transport. Eddie is gonna need that more than anyone." He added as Danny pulled up alongside the car carrier and killed the lights.

Just as he killed the engine, both boys hopped out with huge smiles on their faces. "That car is soooo sweet." Danny said as he watched a fully dressed Mustang patrol car roll off the carrier. "Marc?"

"They did an awesome job on it, didn't they?" Marc asked with a giggle as Noah stood near the Camaro with his jaw hanging wide open. "AI-01, AI-02 and AI-03." He said as he pointed at the patrol car's license plate. "He thought of everything." He continued as he saw whoever detailed the unit decided to use the official Clan Short crest on the doors, but overlaid the old Vision Industries logo adding the lettering 'AI' to the graphic.



Just as the men pulled the truck forward to unload the van, a CPD unit pulled up and parked behind the Camaro in the driveway. "Marc!" Will shouted as he walked over. "I see from the stretch marks in the street Danny liked his gift." He said with a chuckle.

"Will, I'm not sure what to say. This is way too much." Danny said as he looked at the key to the Camaro.

"I've already argued my position on this once. Just put them to good use." Will said patting Danny on the shoulder. "So, where is Noah Barnes?" He asked laughing when Noah's head popped up from the other side of the Mustang.

"That's me." Noah said looking as if he had just been caught with his hands in the cookie jar.

"He's the Mustang's primary, right?" Will asked Marc as he tore open an envelope and pulled out a similar key to the one that started the Camaro.

"Yup." Marc giggled when he heard Caleb gasp.

"Are you nuts?!?" Caleb loudly whispered as he grabbed Marc's shirt and tugged. "Noah's never driven a car before."

"Is he being signed up for training?" Will asked Marc as Noah slowly approached.

"I think Danny and Noah should. Danny's never handled this kind of equipment before." Marc said as he watched Danny nod his head in agreement. "When does the course start up?"

"Monday after next." Will said with a smile. "It's a three day course. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. 3 hours each day. Once they complete it and pass their exam and road test, they will be certified through S. Carolina to operate in conjunction with any law enforcement entities you guys may need to. Considering your diplomatic status, it isn't needed but the training will be well worth it. Eddie is already signed up so you guys should choose who else should go and have him take them all in the van. We're using our own vehicles for the driving portions." Will said as he inserted the key into a small hand held and approached Noah. "Put your finger in the opening." He said, holding out the unit.

IDENTITY ESTABLISHED - BARNES, NOAH S. - ASSIGNMENT UNIT: ADAM, IDA, ZERO, TWO. PRIMARY - EFFECTIVE: FOUR, NOVEMBER. SIXTEEN HUNDRED HOURS The unit announced followed by a chirp from the car, confirming the information had been received.

"What does that mean?" Noah asked as he watched Will pull the key out of the hand held and handed it to him.

"It means you will be set as this vehicles primary operator. You can assign secondary users as you need to. The only stipulation with what I just programmed is the fact that it won't go into effect until *AFTER* you go through your training." Will said, chuckling when Noah's excited expression literally melted. "You can activate the internal systems now, you just can't start the engine." He added and began laughing when Noah rushed Caleb to the car, and jumped up and down when it opened to his touch.

"Thanks Will." Marc said with a smile. "You gotta tell the guy who did the artwork for the door panel seals that we are totally amazed with them."

"Oh I will. He's one of our patrol officers. He actually does those graphics in his spare time at home, we pay him for the time he spends putting them on our patrol cars." Will said with a smile. "That's why our cars look so much better than state." Will snickered.

"Think he'd be interested in a little side work?" Marc asked, the gears turning in his head clearly visible in his expression.

"He might be." Will said looking at Danny. "You thinking about having the Camaro done up?"

"What? No way!" Danny protested with a panicked look on his face. "She looks sweet in all black!"

"Relax, I didn't mean your car." Marc laughed. "Will, I have a sign guy for the old Naval Hospital. He's doing up all the signage we need for the building's exterior. I was just thinking if I could get him the division seal for FYS and if he's ok with us using his artwork for our division crest, maybe we could put them on the building."

"I'll run it by him." Will said with a smile. "Well, I gotta run. Just wanted to get your second unit assigned for you." He said looking at Danny. "If you have any reason to run high speed, lights and siren, call it in. At least until after your training and you learn procedure. On public roadways, we have to keep coordinated."

"You got it." Danny said with a grin.

"I know you already stretched her legs. SPD is seriously confused now. Especially since they have no idea what flashing blue and green is yet. That designation won't be public knowledge until next Monday." Will said with a smile.

"Ok, sorry about that. Just wanted to see what she had." Danny replied, smiling.

"Don't be." Will said before getting into his patrol car. "Their cars wouldn't stand a chance up against what you have your hands on. Them being a little confused is nothing new, trust me." Will said with a laugh before hopping back into his car and driving off once the delivery truck pulled out.

"So, about this night out you mentioned." Marc stated as Danny sat on the steps and watched while Noah and Caleb investigated each piece of equipment in the Mustang. "You gonna fill me in on it?"

"Nope." Danny said with a laugh. "Just get dressed in something kinda nice and pack for an overnight stay. Dress warm, that's the only hint you're getting."

"Should I be scared?" Marc asked as Danny stood up and opened the door.

"Yup." Danny laughed and rushed into the house.

"Guys!" Marc shouted getting Noah and Caleb's attention. "You're gonna drain the car's power cell." He said with a giggle when Noah sighed and removed the key causing the unit power back down. "Come on inside, we have to figure out what's going on for the rest of the night."

Once back inside the house, Danny just directed Marc toward the living room and gave him a gentle push. "Go pack."

"Okay." Marc said as Noah followed along behind him.

"I'll give you a hand bro." Noah said as they both rushed for the stairs.

"What's your plan?" Caleb asked as they both sat down at the table.

"We're gonna be gone until late morning or early afternoon tomorrow." Danny said with a smile. "I have a couple of surprises for Marc. You have any ideas for you and Noah?"

"Yup." Caleb said as he began to blush. "I don't think you want to hear them though." He finished with a giggle.

"Make sure you lock up then." Danny said with a laugh. "Don't want Mary or one of the boys to walk in on you."

"Oh god." Caleb said, turning a brighter red. "It's not like we're planning on doing freaky stuff." He got out, covering his face.

"Relax, I'm joking." Danny said with a smile. "But you should lock up after we leave just so you guys will be left alone."

"We will." Caleb said with a grin. "Can we use your room?"

"Eeeewwww!" Danny said with a laugh.

"Yur sick." Caleb said shaking his head. "I meant to kinda, well... I was thinking about starting a fire and watching the ocean. Maybe put some music on and just cuddle up on the couch. Then we won't be bothering Eli and Benji."

"It's cool." Danny said with a smile. "I was just messing with you. That room would be nicer for you tonight. Go for it. Just keep an ear out for the other boys. Sammy and Sebastian have been glued to their boyfriends for a pretty long time."

"Sweet. Thanks Danny." Caleb said as Marc and Noah could be heard coming down the stairs. "Just forget about us tonight. You and Marc deserve to have some alone time too."

"That's a little different." Danny replied shaking his head.

"Sure it is." Caleb replied, busting out laughing as the other two entered the room.

"What's so funny?" Noah asked poking Caleb in the side and making him squirm.

"Nothing." Caleb giggled, finally quieting down when Noah hopped into his lap.

"You ready?" Danny asked turning toward Marc.

"I'd be more ready if I knew where we were going." Marc replied, pouting a little when Danny simply shrugged his shoulders and pointed toward the door. "No Fair!" Marc protested, smiling as he waved to Noah and Caleb and then turned to exit the house.

"Have fun guys. Call if you need us." Danny said as he picked up his bag and began to follow Marc.

"We won't." Noah shouted with a smile. "You guys have fun too." He added as Danny closed the door.

"That was awesome." Marc said as they got back in the car after a very large meal. "So, where to next?"

"Well, I was thinking it would be nice to just go somewhere and watch the stars." Danny said with a grin as he started the car up and pulled out of the restaurant parking lot.

"That sounds nice." Marc said resting his back and closing his eyes. "If we aren't going back home tonight, where do you plan on us going? We renting a room or something?"

"Yeah, something like that." Danny replied as they got back on Rt703, heading back toward home.

Not paying much attention, Marc's eyes opened wide when Danny pulled the car into the entrance of the boat yard Marc's original father had taken him to many times when he first started living with him. "Close to the bay?" Marc sighed and closed his eyes. "That's a nice idea."

"Yeah, the stars look so much clearer close to the water." Danny said with a grin as he parked the car and hopped out. "I'll be right back, just have to check in the office and make sure we can go out and sit on one of the docks." Danny said as he closed the door. Just in time to snicker a little.

"Good evening young man." The old weathered man behind the counter said as he stood up from his seat. "What can I do for ya?"

"Sir, my name is Daniel Page. I called earlier about renting a 30' Sail Boat." Danny said with a smile.

"You were serious?" He said with a bemused look on his face. "Son, did you bring an adult with you?"

"No sir." Danny got out as he dug for his wallet.

"He's with me Sam." Marc's voice came from the open doorway causing Danny's shoulders to slump.

"Marc! My goodness. It's been a long time." The man said with a smile. "You still living on the other end of Marshall Boulevard with your Dad?"

"Yeah. He's away right now testing out some new sub. I haven't seen it yet but from what he's told me it's huge." Marc answered with a smile. "I take it you met my brother?"

"You have a brother?" The old man asked with a smile. "I'll be damned. Didn't know your kind had brothers and sisters and the like." The man said with a smile as he extended his hand to Danny.

"Name's Sam Parker." He said as he shuffled the paperwork on the desk. "Just need ya to sign these, then ya can shove off son."

"Danny? What did you do?" Marc asked as Sam slid the paperwork toward Danny.

"Um... Surprise?" Danny meekly said with a poor attempt at a smile on his face.

"You didn't say I had to wait in the car." Marc replied with a grin.

"Not to worry my boy, your brother here has a nice little surprise for you." Sam offered. "You run along. I didn't know this was to be a surprise." He said with a wink as Danny pointed toward the door.

"I'm goin." Marc said, pretending to be disappointed as he left the office.

"Dock four; she's in the second slip." Sam said smiling at Danny. "Don't look so down. He knows yur renting something, he doesn't know what exactly. Trust me, he's still in for a surprise." The old man beamed. "It's gonna be a treat for him, I promise ya that."

"Thanks Mr. Parker." Danny replied as he signed the paperwork.

"That's Sam young man; and you are most welcome." He said giving Danny a smile.

"Ok Sam." Danny said as he put down his pen. "Sam, there's something else I wanted to talk to you about."

"I'm all ears." Sam replied as he organized the papers with a smile.

"Well, I rented the sail because it's similar to one Marc and his father used to own. Actually, Marc still has it."

"Ah, you lookin fer a place to dock? That'd be no trouble." Sam said, his smile growing wider.

"Eventually, yeah. But it's in pretty bad shape. I was wondering if you had an area to store it, maybe a place where we can start to restore it." Danny said with a hopeful gleam in his eye.

"I can do ya one better son." Sam replied as he turned to his computer and tapped away. "Jimmy has that boat stored on a trailer on some privately owned property."

"How do you know that?" Danny asked with a giggle.

"Cause we transported it for him a few years back." Sam replied with a chuckle. "It had it's own berth out of this boat yard for years after yur brother sold the house and moved away." He said tapping away a little more. "I can contact Jimmy and get her back to the property with no problems. I'll even get her set up in her old berth and have one of my grandsons begin restoring the hull. If memory serves, she has just a bit of dry rot in a few places, her main sail is torn, not to mention that mast needs replacin. After that work is done she'll not need much more than some polishin of the brass and a bit of lacquer and paint to get her ship shape again."

"That would be awesome!" Danny excitedly replied. "You sure contacting his Dad won't be a problem?"

"Not at all." Sam said as he sat back in his chair. "My son works with him. I'm sure he'll be happy that you want to have this done for Marc. I know that boat means an awful lot to him." He said as he began jotting down some notes. "What are ya willing to spend on tha poor old soul?"

"That's not a real worry, as long as it's restored to original condition. If you can estimate the cost, even as we go I don't think we'll have any problems." Danny said as he turned to the door. "Can you plan to have the repairs done, and maybe let us do the painting and polishing?"

"That I can do." Sam said with a nod. "Very special gift you know. I hope he appreciates how thoughtful yur bein."

"He doesn't know yet." Danny giggled. "I want to keep that as a surprise until we come back in our painting clothes."

"You get goin then. I'll have that boat on the property by sunset tomorrow and we'll get to work. My grandson has been itching for a project and this one just may put that boy's talents to some use. She's in good hands."

"Thanks Sam, just call me if you need anything. Make sure to talk to me though, I don't want Marc to catch on yet." Danny said as he opened the door.

"Will do. You both enjoy your trip tonight, and stay safe." Sam said as Danny nodded and closed the door.

"I'm sorry bro." Marc said as Danny walked over to the car where Marc was standing.

"Don't be. I probably would have had fun trying to convince him that he could rent to me without you walking in." Danny said with a smile as he opened the car and pulled out the bags. "You know where Dock 4 is?"

"Yup, that way." Marc pointed before he tried to grab one of the bags and Danny pulled away shaking his head no.

"Just lead the way; you've had a rough few days." Danny said with a smile.

"Oh, like your trip was a vacation." Marc said with a laugh.

"It could have been." Danny said as they reached the dock.

"Which slip?" Marc asked looking at the different boats.

"The second one Sam said." Danny said as he motioned to the 30' sloop. "Newer, but close." He continued as Marc simply stood frozen. "Think you can navigate it?"

"Are you kidding me?" Marc said as he approached the boat and looked it over. "Oh Danny... This is so... Oh wow." Marc said as he hopped over the side and on to its deck.

"You promised to take me sailing someday." Danny said with a smile as he tossed the bags on the deck and hopped on. "It's up to you to get us to where we're going though. I've never sailed before." Danny said as he opened the bags and pulled out two jackets. Tossing Marc his.

"So when did you come up with this idea?" Marc asked after putting his jacket on and they both went below to stow their bags.

"On the phone you told me I owed you a nice quiet dinner before we left for Chicago. I thought it was an awesome idea but, wanted to do something special." Danny replied as they went back above. "I thought getting out of the house for a night would be nice. You know, rent a room and stuff. This just sounded like it would be a little more relaxing for you."

"Man, you got that right. You want to go forward and untie us?" Marc asked as he pointed with a smile. "Just toss the rope back on to the dock." He continued as he started the motor and then walked back and untied the other line. Once Danny waved that they were free, Marc gave them a little push off and the boat drifted away from the dock. Once clear of the other vessels, Marc put the boat into a forward gear and they slowly began to head toward open water.

"No sails?" Danny asked as he joined Marc in the cockpit.

"Nah, let's clear the reef first, then we'll set sails and let her go." Marc said with a huge smile. "I can't believe you did this." He continued. A few minutes later, satisfied that they were free and clear, Marc asked Danny to take the helm after he killed the motor. Danny watched as Marc raised the sails in amazement before he came back and took the helm. "Ever want to learn?" Marc asked with a smile.

"Maybe some other time." Danny said as he turned and looked at the setting sun. "Looks like we get a sunset too." he said as he stepped over to the rail and leaned on it.

"It's easy you know. Once you get a feel for it." Marc shouted over as the breeze began to pick up.

"I drive on land." Danny replied with a laugh. "I haven't tried to steer a boat since I ran my uncles 20' Fishing Boat aground when I was a kid." Danny replied with a laugh.

"Your uncle let you run aground?" Marc asked with a laugh.

"He was drunk, I was on the wrong side of the markers." Danny replied with a laugh. "Hey, I tried."

"That wasn't your fault." Marc said as Danny moved back into the cockpit area. "He should have been helping you. How many times had you taken control before that one?"

"Never." Danny said with a laugh. "I was a city kid who had never even been out on the water before that." Danny said with a laugh. "God he was pissed when he woke up."

"I won't push you then." Marc grinned. "But if you ever want to learn, I'll teach you."

About an hour later with the islands in sight, Marc decided to lower the sails and drop anchor. While he was working to secure the boat for the night, Danny went below, coming back up with two steaming mugs in his hand and a blanket.

"Watcha got?" Marc asked with a smile as he accepted the mug and sat in one of the bench seats that faced out over the stern to open water.

"Hot chocolate." Danny said as he handed Marc one of the mugs and held the blanket open for them to put over their shoulders.

"You thought of everything." Marc said as he took a sip. "How many of my memories have you gone through?"

"Not many." Danny admitted as he blew on his hot chocolate. "I mean I did go through them a little to get an idea what kind of boat your father had. You know size and stuff so I wouldn't sound like a total idiot when I called to rent one." Danny added with a giggle.

"You know it's ok with me if you look into them. I mean..." Marc got out before Danny cut him off.

"Why would I go through your memories? I mean, they're yours. If I really wanted to, I'd ask you to look through them with me." Danny said with a smile.

"Did you bring an uplink cable?" Marc asked. "We could go through some of them tonight if you want."

"I did." Danny said with a smile. "But only so we could share a dream tonight. I still haven't seen how that works and from the way you explained it, I thought you might like to."

"Wow, you know with everything that's happened, it seems like that was so long ago." Marc said, directing his gaze up at the star filled sky.

"Yeah, who knew?" Danny said doing the same. "Ten days."

"Huh?"

"Ten days, that's all it's been since you brought me back." Danny said, as he hugged his mug close and idly blew on it.

"Yeah." Marc replied as he sat back in the seat. "Months of work and we got to spend a couple of days together." He said with a giggle. "I was thinking about building a clone of you so you could stick around for a while."

"Nah, you can't duplicate this." Danny said with a laugh.

"Oh please. I could build ten of you, no one would know."

"Eh, you would." Danny said with a smile. "Then you would have to worry about what all of us were trying to get into trouble doing."

"You think we're doing the right thing?" Marc set his mug in his lap and asked.

"What do you mean? With the Clan? Sure I do." Danny asked and looked at Marc. "Don't you?"

"Oh yeah. I mean like with KC or Joey." Marc questioned. "Bringing them back after they fail. That's not exactly common practice."

"You did it for me." Danny answered as he wrapped his arm around Marc's shoulders and pulled him closer. "I guess it would all depend on us bringing them back to find out if they want to be here."

"I guess." Marc said, shrugging his shoulders. "There are some out there that want to go. I've seen them. They are so angry and hateful when they regain consciousness."

"Did you see that in Me, Joey or KC?"

"No. Joey is new. He's looking at the world with wonder. He just loves so easily." Marc said as a smile crept across his face. "Simplistic wonder, and Jerry got it on his first try. I wonder if he really knows what he created with that school project. I mean; really created. KC was an accident. He didn't want his life to end. I know he misses his Dad but, he's making the best of it and holding his new family tight."

"Joey seems to really like him." Danny said with a grin. "From what I saw today, it may be hard to tell where KC ends and Joey begins soon."

"Yeah." Marc said with a giggle. "That really was what made it easier for Austin to go home with his family. He was so worried that Joey wasn't gonna have his big brother."

"They aren't that far away." Danny smiled.

"As for you, you're still accepting this." Marc said, tilting his head. "I don't think you've really stopped long enough to let it all sink in yet."

"Buried in my work." Danny said as he took another sip. "I guess I still have some soul searching to do." He said looking back up at the sky. "This time I have to add being wanted and needed here now. That wasn't something I had back then."

"I can understand that." Marc answered. "If it weren't for my work, I probably wouldn't have lasted as long as I have."

"Well I love my new family." Danny said as he emptied his mug and stood up. "You want another one?" He asked holding up his empty mug.

"No." Marc replied as he watched a shooting star work its way across the sky as Danny started off to go below. "Hey Danny? Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure bro." Danny answered turning around and leaning on the back of the bench seat.

"If you were still, you know, totally human..." He started and sighed in frustration. "Never mind, it's dumb."

"If I was still totally human I'd be over a hundred years old and not able to keep up with you." He said with a giggle as he kissed the top of Marc's head and started off again. "I'm gonna wash up and set up the bed."

"Cool, don't forget the cable. I haven't shared a dream in years. Hopefully it'll be a good one." Marc smiled and drank the last of his hot chocolate. "Nothing worse than sharing a nightmare." He added with a laugh.

"Hey, we already share a horror show at home. What's a good nightmare?" Danny said with a laugh. "Maybe we'll dream some sort of corny horror movie type stuff and be chased by a serial killing midget dressed in a clown suit with a nail file and a pop gun. That could be fun."

"You're nuts." Marc said as he hopped out of his seat. "Anyone ever tell you that?"

"Oh sure. I don't believe it though." Danny said with a grin. "It's only the crazy people who say I'm nuts. The rest are nuts and think I'm pretty ok."

"You are so impossible!" Marc shouted and chased Danny below, laughing all the way.

Once the bed was folded down and the sleeping bags were pulled out, Marc decided since they were connecting it would be a good idea to zip the two bags together. So they wouldn't separate too far in their sleep. With that done, they both took turns washing up. While Marc took his turn, Danny opened the bags and started digging around for something to sleep in.

"Um... Marc?" Danny said as he scratched his head.

"Sup?" Marc asked as he came back into the room with a toothbrush in his mouth.

"We can share the sleeping bags, but I think it's gonna be tough to share these." Danny said with a laugh as he held up one pair of jogging shorts.

"I must have forgotten." Marc said with a grin. "So we sleep in our underwear or go with the new dress code." Marc said with a giggle.

"That's cool." Danny said, throwing the shorts back in the bag. "More of your body heat I can leech." He said as he pulled off the rest of his clothes and climbed into the sleeping bag with a screech. "COLD!!! Omigod the bag is cold!"

Marc giggled and went back in to finish washing up before killing all the lights, getting undressed and climbing into the sleeping bag. "It is cold." He said as Danny rolled to face away from him, putting his feet on Marc's leg. "DUDE! Your feet are like ice! Get em off!"

"Told you." Danny said with a laugh, moving closer every time Marc tried to slide further away. "Hahaha, you're trapped." He giggled as Marc squirmed and squealed.

"STOP IT!" Marc shouted through his laughter. "I'm gonna kill you!"

"My hands are cold too, check it out." Danny laughed as he put his hands on the back of Marc's neck.

"OKAY! Okay! I give" Marc shouted as he continues to push Danny away. "Did you jump off the boat or something?"

"No, that's why I went and made the hot chocolate. I was freezing long before we dropped anchor." Danny replied as his laughter finally calmed down and he rolled on to his back.

"Why didn't you say something?" Marc asked as he rolled back to face his brother and propped his head up on his hand.

"I didn't want to ruin your night." Danny said with a smile.

Marc just sat and stared at Danny until the silence got him to look back at him. "Thanks Danny." He said earning a warm smile. "Not just for that, I mean for all of this." He continued motioning to the rest of the boat.

"Well, you were kinda tossed into all of this." Danny replied rolling back over to face Marc.

"It's not all that bad. Just may take some getting used to." Marc said just as Danny reached off the side of the bed and grabbed the communication cable.

"So..." He said as he handed Marc one end. "How does sharing a dream work?" He asked as he opened his uplink port and snapped the cable in place.

"Well, we have to decide whose dream we share first, then decide if it's going to be controlled or random." Marc said as he snapped the cable in place and lay back down.

"What's the difference?" Danny asked as Marc pushed him to roll over so he could wrap his arms around him.

"All dreams are random unless you decide there is something you want to dream about specifically. Even then, we both need to decide if we want to be in control or to just let it happen." Marc said as they got comfortable.

"You host, choose something you want to dream about and just let it happen. I wanna see how this goes without having all the control." Danny said as he closed his eyes.

"You asked for it." Marc said with a snicker before kissing the back of Danny's neck and closing his eyes.

Notes from the Author:

You know, the hardest part about writing this chapter, hands down was switching gears once the dust settled and things started to quiet down. Our group is back home and some of them for the first time will have a chance to get to know their family outside of a "Work" environment. Danny's comment about it only being 10 days since his activation was an eye opener for me. We've followed this group for so long but just touched the edge of things to come. There are so many things that are still so new to the characters, even though they have been right here since the beginning. It should be an interesting ride from here on... Well, once they tell me what's going on that is ;)

I hope you enjoyed riding along on Danny and Marc's night out. I almost didn't follow that path on the original concept of the evening's events. Danny wouldn't allow it though. Even for me, the chance to see Marc at the helm of a sail boat again after all these years was just too much to just pass up. Wonder what his reaction will be to Danny's planned surprise...

As Always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

Well it seems that the new vaccine for AAKD has failed and the kids just keep on joining. It is cool seeing Joey alive again and starting to speak a little better. It will be very interesting to see how Benji and Eli adapt to being complete again. Hopefully after Danny and Marc spend their romantic weekend together they will finally both realize they are destined for each other. The continued character growth and development and the interpersonal relationships that form and grow are what set this story and the rest of the CSU apart from most stories on the net. This story is about characters who have depth and substance and interesting lives to live. JeffP has given his Androids very Human like characteristics yet at the same time kept them as Androids; joining this story with the CSU has given him the opportunity for his characters to experience situations and characters that would not have been possible. JeffP has kept his characters true to themselves while at the same time expanding their lives. Another job well done JeffP.

TSL aka The Story Lover.

"Chapter 13 - Is Ewi up yed?"

'THUD... THUD... THUD...'

"What's that noise?" Caleb asked as he quickly tried to roll over and fell off of the sofa. "OH my god, Noah! It's daylight?"

'THUD... THUD... THUD...' The noise slowly continued.

"Huh?" Noah whined and stretched. "What time is it?" He asked as he tried to open his eyes but quickly closed them as the sun was shining brightly.

"Oh man!" Caleb pouted once he looked at the clock. "We must have fallen asleep." He said as he stood up.

'THUD... THUD... THUD...'

"What is that?!?" Caleb asked as he turned to the windows and saw a tennis ball bounce off of it. He rushed over and threw the window open to find KC and Joey below, now giggling. "Do you really have to?" Caleb asked glaring at both.

"We wouldn't have to if you'd answer the door!" KC shouted back up with a laugh. "Why? What were you guys doing?"

"Nothing." He shouted as he slammed the window shut. "Absolutely nothing." He repeated softly with disappointment in his voice until he looked over to Noah, who was once again peacefully sleeping.

'THUD... THUD... THUD...' the noise started again.

"I'm coming! Jesus!" Caleb almost growled as he stormed out of the bedroom.

"Huh?" Noah absently asked as he cracked one eye open, shrugged his shoulders before rolling over to bury his face in the back of the couch.

Caleb ran down the stairs and unlocked the sliding glass door in the living room. "It's open guys." He yelled before padding off into the kitchen.

"Unka Caweb!" Joey shouted as he ran into the house. "Casey's gonna deach me how do wide a bike!" Joey shouted in excitement as he ran toward the kitchen.

"That's great squirt." Caleb mumbled as he turned on the coffee maker and sat down at the table.

"What happened to you dude?" KC asked as he reached the kitchen. "Noah make you sleep on the couch or sumthin?"

"Yeah, whewe's Unka Noah?" Joey asked with a huge smile.

"He's up in your Uncle Danny's bedroom. Why don't you go tickle him awake." Caleb said with a laugh when Joey got excited and started to jump around.

"ODAY!!" He yelled and flew out of the kitchen.

"Bad night bro?" KC asked. "Looks like you slept in your clothes."

"I did." He replied. "We both did." Caleb said as he folded his arms on the table and rested his forehead on them.

"You guys have a fight or something?" KC asked patting the back of Caleb's head. "If it's none of my business, just say so dude. I'll butt out."

"No, we didn't have a fight." Caleb replied with a sigh. "I planned a nice quiet night for us both." He continued with a pause. "Too quiet I guess. We both fell asleep on the couch in front of the fireplace until you two woke us up."

"Oh man." KC replied, trying hard not to laugh. "That sucks."

"Go ahead, laugh." Caleb said, nodding his head. "It's just dumb cause I know he's been working hard and was probably exhausted."

"Just look at the bright side." KC said with a genuine smile. "At least you're both home and safe, together."

"Yeah." Caleb looked up and smiled. "Seems weird to think of this as home."

"Good weird or bad weird?"

"Good, It'll just take some getting used to." Caleb replied, getting up from his chair and grabbing a coffee mug and a glass from the cabinet. "You want a coffee or orange juice or something?"

"Nah, I'm good." KC said as Joey ran back into the kitchen.

"Unka Caweb! Unka Noah said dhad he wasn'd geddin up undiw he geds a kiss." Joey said all out of breath.

"So? Did you give him a kiss?" Caleb asked with a giggle.

"No. I dthougnd he wanded you do give him a kiss." Joey said with a smile.

"Joey." KC said ruffling his little brother's hair, earning a giggle from the little guy. "You march right back up there and kiss your uncle until he gets up. Make sure to tell him you gotta learn how to ride a bike today so he has to get up or else you're never gonna learn."

"Oday Casey!" Joey shouted before turning and running full speed out of the kitchen.

"So." Caleb started as he grabbed a jug of orange juice from the fridge and began to pour it. "How's bein a big brother workin for ya?"

"Joey's awesome." KC said with a smile. "That kid has, like the energy of four separate androids with sugar rushes." He continued with a laugh. "I bet I'm even gonna have a hard time keeping up with him."

"Keep up or just ride his wake?" Caleb said with a giggle as the door to the lab opened and a half asleep 10 year old wandered out.

"Ok, you're Sammy, right?" KC asked with a smile.

"Nice try." 'Bastian replied with a yawn. "I gotta pee." He announced as he stumbled toward the bathroom.

"That's 'Bastian." Caleb giggled when his face twisted in confusion.

"How the heck do you tell them apart?" KC asked now beginning to look defeated.

"Well, with that pair it's actually pretty easy." Caleb said, getting up from the table and grabbing 4 bowls. "'Bastian's nose has been broken. If you look carefully enough you can tell, even if they aren't standing next to each other."

"Tellin him our secrets?" 'Bastian asked as he walked back into the kitchen, his eyes closer to being opened now.

"Well, I don't wanna keep messing you two up." KC said with a smile.

"It's no big deal. We're kinda used to it when we meet new people."

"Fruit Loops?" Caleb asked as he dug through the cupboard.

"Really? Cool!" Bastian replied as he went to the refrigerator and grabbed the milk. "Everyone's up but Eli."

"Let him get all the sleep he can." Caleb replied as he grabbed 4 spoons and returned to the table. "Do you know how to deactivate the biobed he's on?"

"Oh yeah, it's just monitoring now, 'Tonio told me once it did that they could get up." He replied as he quietly opened the door.

"Cool, get your brother and his boyfriend out here then." He said to the retreating blond.

"Oh, hey KC." Noah said as he came into the kitchen. "I think you lost something." He continued pointing to the little giggle machine attached to his leg.

"Release." KC said with a giggle. "I'm tryin to train him but, you know punks." KC managed to get out before Joey scowled at him.

Before he was able to say anything, the opened door to the lab caught his attention. "Is Ewi up yed?"

"Nope, not yet." Caleb replied as he poured milk in three of the bowls. "You have breakfast yet Joey?"

"Yeah, gwamma was mad cause she was gonna make bweakfasd bud me and Casey woke up and had ceweaw awweady." He managed to get out in one breath. "Casey, can we go wide dhe bike now? Pwease?" He continued as he began hopping around in place.

"Sure Creep." KC said as he stood up. "We'll come back in later to see Eli and Benji. That way they can have some peace and quiet for a little while." He got out as he was practically dragged to the front door. "Later!"

"For me?" Noah asked with a grin as he pointed to the glass of orange juice.

"Yep." Caleb replied with a grin.

"Thanks." Noah said with a smile as Benji slowly made his way out of the lab, Sammy and Sebastian on either side. "Hey! Yur up!"

"I feel like I've been on that thing for like a week." He giggled as he sat at the table.

"How's the hand feelin?" Caleb asked as the twins sat down and started tearing into their bowls.

"It feels weird." He replied before taking a mouthful. "I think I can move it." He continued after swallowing.

"Wait for Jerry to come over first. He said he has to check you both out before you go tryin to move around too much." Noah said as he stretched a bit.

"Danny and Marc'll be home soon too." Caleb added.

"When do you think Eli will wake up?" Benji asked, putting his spoon down. "I kinda wanna see how he's doing."

"He's fine, will you relax?" Sammy said as he rested his head on Benji's shoulder. "He's got way more to heal than you, so he needs the extra rest."

"I guess." Benji replied with a sigh. "I'll just feel better when he's awake."

"Me too." Bastian agreed, earning a weak smile from Benji.

"Do you think I can call Jerry to see when he's comin over? I mean so I can find out if I can go take a shower at least?" Benji asked as all the boys smiled when they heard the sound of a sports car pull into the driveway.

"Oh, that's just got to be Danny's car." Noah said with a huge smile before downing the rest of his orange juice.

A few minutes later, Danny and Marc wandered in through the front door as the boys were just finishing up their breakfast. "Hey!" Caleb said once they both reached the kitchen. "Look who decided to finally get his lazy butt out of bed."

"Awesome!" Danny said as he went straight for the coffee maker.

"What? Awesome cause I made coffee?" Caleb asked with a giggle.

"Well... That too." Danny replied while he poured himself a cup. "How's the hand feeling bro?"

"Kinda itchy now." Benji replied as Marc knelt down in front of him.

"Lemme see." Marc said as he reached for his bandaged hand. "Any pain?"

"No, none." Benji smiled. "I kinda thought it would hurt or something."

Marc just smiled up at him as he carefully removed the gauze. "It shouldn't. I mean I'd expect it to ache for a couple days, but not much more." He got out as he took the last bandage off. "Can you move it?"

"I haven't tried yet. Noah said it would be safer to wait for you or Jerry before I tried." Benji said with a grin as he looked at the new prosthetic fingers. "It looks so real." He said in awe.

"It is real." Sammy said with a giggle. "Just some of the stuff inside is fake."

"That's one way to put it." Caleb laughed as he took another sip from his coffee mug.

"Grab my finger." Marc said holding up one finger and laughing when Benji shrugged and grabbed his finger with his right hand. "Great." He said with a giggle. "Now you wanna try with the new hand."

"Oh." Benji smiled. He carefully reached out with his left hand but, his new fingers didn't do much more than twitch a little. "It's not working."

"Give it time bro." Marc said with a smile. "Your brain hasn't figured out what it is yet. There's no rush now that most of the healing is done."

"But how long is it gonna take?" Benji asked with a defeated look.

"There's no way to guess at it. Your brain will start talking to it once it realizes what it is." Marc said as he stood up and ruffled Benji's hair.

"Does he need to stay wrapped up?" Sammy asked as he brought his bowl over to the sink.

"Nope. Most of the healing is done." Marc replied, grabbing a coffee cup for himself. "Just make sure not to bang it around. It's gonna be really sensitive for a while."

Benji looked at his hand and smiled as he stood up from his seat. "Does that mean I can take a shower?"

"Oh yeah, go for it." Marc grinned. "The only thing I wouldn't suggest right now is playing hand ball or boxing."

"Let's get a shower." Sammy excitedly said, grabbing Benji's right arm and almost dragging him toward the living room. "You wanna come 'Bastian?"

"Nah." He said getting up from his chair with a lost expression on his face. "I'll wait for Eli."

"Ok." Sammy shouted back as they rushed toward Marc's bedroom. "Marc, can you turn on the lights? It don't work for me."

"Just use one of the showers upstairs." Danny said as Marc smiled and took Sebastian's hand.

"Let's see how Eli's doing." Marc said leading him into the lab.

"So." Caleb said with a smile. "How was your night out?"

"Omigod bro, you should have seen the look on Marc's face when we got back this morning. I don't think I've seen him more relaxed in the time I've known him." Danny replied, sipping from his cup. "How bout here? You guys get some quiet time in?"

"Psh." Caleb shrugged. "We got lots of sleep."

"Dude. With the view from your room, the fireplace and soft music..." Noah got out. "I remember curling up on the sofa in your room with Cal, and that's pretty much it."

"You were alone, comfortable and together." Danny replied with a warm smile. "Doesn't sound like a bad night to me."

"That's true." Caleb said with a grin. "There's always tonight." He continued as both boys broke out in huge smiles.

"Hey, do we have anything planned for today?" Noah asked as both he and Caleb put their cups in the sink.

"Nope. We're all taking a day off unless you have something that you think we need to do." Danny said with a smile as he sat back in his chair and put his hands behind his head.

"I was kinda hoping we could take a walk on the beach. I've got my communicator on me if you need us." Noah replied.

"Sounds good." Danny said with a nod. "Maybe later on tonight we can take the Camaro out and see if we can find a quiet spot to start you driving."

"Really! That'd be sweet!" Noah almost shouted before Caleb grabbed his arm.

"He said tonight. Today, you're mine." Caleb grinned. "Later Danny!"

"Have fun guys." Danny shouted back as he stood up to get more coffee. "Grab a sweatshirt, looks like it's gonna be pretty cool out today!"

As Danny was getting ready to move his coffee out to the back deck, Marc came out of lab and quietly closed the door. "Goin outside?"

"Yeah." Danny replied with a smile. "You wanna join me?"

"Sure. It's gonna be quiet today. Might as well take advantage of it." Marc said and they both went out to sit and relax.

"I gotta thank you." Danny said as he took a sip from his mug and sat back in his seat.

"Thank me? For what?" Marc asked with a giggle. "After yesterday I think I should be thanking you."

"Well." Danny started. "When we talked about sharing a dream, I didn't think about how personal it could be. I wish I had the chance to get to know your father."

"Ah." Marc replied with a nod. "I'm just happy it doesn't bother you really."

"Bother me?" Danny asked with a smirk. "He loved you very much. What about that could bother me?"

Marc looked out over the water at the gray sky and took a deep breath. "The reason I was created I mean. Android or not, one of the reasons I was created wasn't exactly accepted by most people. I mean you're human, at least inside you are. I wasn't really sure how you would take the truth behind my relationship with John."

"What? The sexual aspect?" Danny asked, getting a weak nod from Marc in response as he looked toward the flooring of the deck. "Marc, you're my brother. You practically gave up part of your life to

bring me here to be with you. You'd move the earth for me if you could and I'd do the same for you. I don't care whether or not your relationship with him was sexual or not. From what I saw last night, that is far from being the biggest part of what makes you love him. You may have been made for him but from what I experienced last night, I really believe you were made for each other. If that makes any sense."

"Yeah. Scary but, it actually does." Marc giggled. "It's quiet, where's Noah and Caleb?"

"They went for a walk." Danny answered with a grin. "I guess Caleb is putting his foot down and they're spending some time alone, finally."

"I don't blame them." Marc smiled. "The past few days have been rough on us all."

"Really interesting though." Danny giggled. "Sometime soon you have got to come with me to meet Ark and the gang there."

"Yeah, where is that exactly? No one ever explained that." Marc asked, tilting his head.

"Honestly, I'm not really sure. I know it's under ground." Danny replied as he stretched his arms out to the sides. "That reminds me. There's something I need to talk to you about sometime soon."

"What's that?" Marc asked as he grabbed his coffee and took a sip.

"Well, did you notice those things on most of the boys' arms?"

"The fuzzy things?" Marc asked with a giggle. "I wanted to ask you about those. They aren't fuzzy you know."

"Well, duh." Danny replied laughing. "The kids nicknamed them that." He continued. "They are for protection and can be used as a weapon, a pretty powerful one as well from what I've seen."

"A weapon?" Marc almost choked. "But Timmy had one."

"Timmy's is special." Danny replied as his laughter finally died down. "For our protection, Cory recommended that we look into the possibilities of an AI being able to use them."

"That shouldn't be a problem. Is it something we are going to program the procedures for or something?" Marc asked with a nod.

"Well, no. They kinda need to learn how to communicate with us and we need to figure out a way for them to be able to do it. We'll need to learn their language or they need to learn our thought patterns. That can be saved and distributed I guess."

"I don't get it. We have to communicate with them?" Marc asked. Still very lost. "Do they use telepathy or something?"

"Not exactly." Danny said, directing his gaze to the deck. "They communicate with their host through a direct contact with the brain."

"They do what?!?" Marc almost choked. "Are you nuts? You want to introduce a foreign object into your brain, our brains? You do realize that could cause damage, right?"

Danny shook his head and sat back in his seat. "No bro. It's not like that. They speak with each other using electrical pulses. If we can find a way to let them come into contact with our brain, we could learn to talk to them that way."

"And fry your brain if it fails." Marc spat out.

"Marc, I'm not saying I want you to hook your head into one of the power cells of one of the cars. God." Danny said with a sigh. "All of our components communicate using electrical pulses. This would be just like an additional component."

"That could fry your brain!" Marc insisted once again. "I'm not sure I like the idea Danny, seriously. I like my brain as it is. I don't want to risk messing it all up with some new technology just cause someone thinks it's a better weapon."

"More than a weapon Marc."

"I don't care." Marc said as he crossed his arms in defiance. "We know nothing about them."

"I can ask Ark to send us some information on them so we will before hand." Danny replied as he grabbed his mug and took a sip. "Besides, it's not new technology. Far from it."

"I'll look over the info if you can get it but, If I don't like what I see I'll have nothing to do with it." Marc said as Danny began to grin. "And you won't either." He added, squinting his eyes.

"That's cool." Danny said just before Marc got up from his seat.

"I'm getting another coffee. You want one?"

"Please. That sounds great." Danny answered with a smile. Once Marc was in the house, he sat back in his seat and spoke out loud to contact the Ark through the subvocal device he had been fitted with. "Hey Ark."

<Hello Danny.>

"Are you busy?" Danny asked peering back toward the door.

<I am always busy Danny. Why do you ask?>

"Oh yeah, I guess you would be." Danny replied with a giggle. "I was wondering if you had a way to send me some technical information about Phasenmorphs. I'm having a really hard time convincing my brother that they can't cause physical harm to our brain."

<Why would he think that they would.>

"Well, he doesn't know anything about them. Since I don't know very much about them I guess my explanation made the situation worse." Danny said looking at the doors leading in to the living room. "Nyo and I talked about working out the details of us being able to communicate with them."

<That should not be a problem. I will compile the relevant information and have it transferred to your home terminal through your CIC. It should only take a few minutes before it will be available to you.>

"That'd be sweet Ark." Danny said as Marc came back out of the house with two fresh cups. "Hopefully that will make him more comfortable with working with them."

"Who are you talking to?" Marc asked as he sat back in his chair.

<Would you like me to notify Nyo that you have begun researching possible procedures?>

"No Ark, I'll let him know when we are ready to get together and discuss the possibilities we come up with." Danny said smiling at Marc; who just nodded his head at indirectly getting the answer to his question.

<May I suggest you plan to meet at this compound? It may be beneficial to discuss the topic with the subject matter on hand.>

"Good idea." Danny said as he grabbed his cup and took a sip. "I'll contact you when we're ready."

<I will look forward to hearing from you then.>

"Thanks Ark." Danny said, now smiling at Marc. "Ok, the information about the Phasenmorphs is gonna be on our computer to look over in a few minutes."

"Oh great." Marc replied flatly as he started to grin. "That's weird how you can talk to Ark without using any kind of a communicator. It makes you look like you're talking to yourself."

"I guess." Danny said with a grin. "It is a lot easier than carrying communicators around though."

"Are the guys able to talk to each other using it?" Marc asked, sitting back in his seat.

"I'm not sure. I mean if I ask Ark to speak with someone directly, I'm sure he can connect it. It just never came up." Danny replied.

"So, is it like some sort of implant or something?" Marc asked tilting his head.

"No." Danny replied as he pulled the small device out of his ear. "This is all it is bro." He continued, handing Marc the small ear bud.

"Where's the mic?" Marc asked as he looked at it carefully.

"It's built into it." Danny replied with a giggle. "Go ahead, put it in your ear."

"Okay." Marc replied as he carefully placed the device in his ear. "Now what?"

"Just say Hi to Ark." Danny answered, crossing his arms and smiling.

"Just say Hi." Marc replied under his breath with a sarcastic tone. "Right."

"Seriously. Just say Hi. You don't have to speak out loud either. If you don't want to be heard, just mouth the words. It'll still transmit what you say."

"Okay." Marc said, shaking his head in disbelief. "Hi Ark." He mouthed and then looked at Danny.

<Hello.>

"Omigod!" Marc almost coughed out.

"What?" Danny asked, now laughing at the panicked look on his brother's face.

"A voice said Hi, what do I do now?" Marc quickly asked.

<Normally you would introduce yourself.>

"Oh yeah, sorry." Marc said as he began to blush and nervously giggle. "I'm not really sure I knew what to expect cause I didn't say anything out loud."

<I understand. Would I be correct in assuming you are Danny's brother, Marc?>

"Yeah." Marc replied with a grin. "You know who I am?"

<Actually, I know quite a bit about you. Throughout your existence; excluding the cycle of humanity that created myself, you have accomplished far more than I have recorded for any of the cycles to follow with your Artificial Intelligence work.>

"Really?" Marc questioned as he watched Danny smile and sit back in his seat. "Have you been watching me or something?"

<Judging by your question, May I assume that Danny has not told you much about what I am?>

"Well a little." Marc replied with a giggle. "I know that you are AI like us but, way bigger."

<That would be accurate, although it is somewhat vague. Perhaps on your impending visit to this compound, we can discuss my function and the purpose for my creation if it would interest you.>

"That sounds great, I'd really like that." Marc said with a smile. "Considering what I've seen so far, I'll probably have a ton of questions for you. I just hope I don't start buggin ya."

<That is not possible.>

"Wanna bet?" Marc giggled.

<If you are referring to interrupting my normal operations with incessant questions, then I would be forced to bet, as you say; that you do not possess the ability to over task my central processing unit by simply asking questions. You are welcomed to try if you like.>

"You're on." Marc laughed. "I'll probably need some advice once we start looking into the Phasenmorph issue. Danny is determined that we need to research the possibilities of our ability to be able to communicate with them."

<You appear to have reservations on the issue.>

"Wouldn't you?" Marc asked, allowing his shoulders to slump. "Any way you look at it, we would be introducing a potentially hazardous object directly to our brain. Honestly, the idea scares the hell out of me."

<Approaching this situation with caution would be wise. I do believe however, a Phasenmorph would be able to work in concert with your brain once it has been trained, as well as it's host.>

"So you're saying they pose no threat?" Marc asked as he stared directly at Danny, who simply shrugged his shoulders.

<I would not eliminate the possibility entirely. Statistically, they pose a small amount of risk in the initial stages of training as they will be exposed to a foreign environment which could confuse the creature.>

"That's what scares me." Marc replied with a sigh. "If we can come up with some way to make them a bit more passive in the beginning, maybe that would allow us to slowly prepare them for the new environment."

<That theory holds merit. The files Danny requested are now available to you on your divisions Vulcan Terminal. You may contact me anytime you like with questions or concerns on the subject.>

"Thanks Ark. I'll talk to Danny about using his subvocal thingie if I need to run any ideas past you." Marc answered with a smile.

<That will not be necessary.>

Just as Marc was about to ask Ark what he meant, a small ear bud appeared on the table in front of him. "Oh wow." Marc said as his eyes opened wide.

<Now you may contact me any time you require my input or assistance during your research.>

"I appreciate the help Ark. I can't wait to actually meet you in person." Marc said as he picked the small device up and looked at it.

<I look forward to meeting you as well.>

"That is so cool." Marc said as he took the subvocal device out of his ear and handed it back to Danny. "I get the new one." He giggled as he put his own in. "The Ark says I can talk to him about my ideas and stuff to make it easier."

"So, are you still worried about testing this?" Danny asked as he put his subvocal back in.

"Duh." Marc laughed. "Ark says the risk is small, meaning there is some risk involved in the beginning. Not to mention we need someone to volunteer as a host."

"No biggie. I'll host the little guy." Danny replied with a smile. "I mean it's only fair since I'm the one pushing for it."

"What do you mean NO BIGGIE? Dude..." Marc got out as Danny stood up and grabbed his coffee.

"Why don't we look over what The Ark sent us before we start that argument all over again?" Danny said as he opened the door.

"Hey guys!" Caleb shouted as he and Noah ran toward the deck.

"You guys are just in time." Marc said as he stood up. "Daredevil over there wants to use himself as a guinea pig in the name of research." Marc said with a deflated look.

"Phasenmorph research?" Caleb asked as he grinned at Danny. "Marc's gonna let you do it?"

"Not without protest." said Danny as they made their way toward the kitchen. "He talked to Ark and they reasoned that there is some risk involved cause a Phasenmorph could get confused the first time they are introduced to our brain."

"Too bad you guys can't do some sort of simulator or something first." Noah said with a giggle, but froze once everyone turned to him and glared seriously. "What? I was kidding."

"Genius." Marc said grabbing Caleb's arm. "Did you know your boyfriend was a genius?"

"Wow?" Caleb replied with a laugh. "I would have never guessed."

"It was a joke guys." Noah said as he scanned everyone's faces.

"I don't hear laughing." Danny said as they all watched Marc and Caleb stare at each other in thought.

"Figure out how they can gain access, then configure a brain to act as a test dummy." Marc mumbled as he thought out loud. "Set it in a test loop or something so it will actively cycle internal communications."

"It would need at least a basic operating system. Maybe enable life support and an emulated personality." Caleb said as Danny and Noah silently watched.

"No, we could install a servant imprint. There wouldn't be higher brain functions but it would have basic communication which is compatible universally." Marc said with a grin.

"You have any clue what they're rambling about?" Noah asked as he elbowed Danny in the side.

"I think so." Danny answered as Marc and Caleb pulled out two chairs at the kitchen table and excitedly traded their thoughts on the subject. "I don't want any part of the conversation though." He giggled.

"Yeah, we lost them." Noah laughed. "So much for the day off."

"I can take you out driving now." Danny said, still watching Caleb and Marc.

"Really? Sweet." Noah replied. "Cal, you mind if me and Danny go out driving?"

"Sure, Ok." Caleb absently replied before attempting to sketch out a crude drawing of an android's brain on a napkin.

"Yeah, while we're out we'll see if we can get that car airborne a few times." Danny said with a grin.

"Great." Marc replied as he grabbed the napkin and began adding a few details. "Have fun."

"Yeah, maybe we can get arrested and you guys can come visit us and stuff." Noah giggled.

"Ok." Caleb said as he watched Marc sketch intently. "Maybe we'll order a pizza or something tonight so we can work on this."

"They didn't hear a word we said." Danny laughed. "We'll be back."

About an hour later, Noah and Danny came back to find Marc and Caleb still sitting at the table, now with two laptops up and running. "Are you two still working?" Danny asked as Noah just shook his head.

"We got some of it worked out." Marc said as he turned the laptop so Danny could see the display. "The direct uplink port would be perfect for this."

"But if you use your uplink port, wouldn't it stop you from using it to connect to computers and each other?" Noah asked, tilting his head.

"No dude, this port here." Caleb said as he picked up an actual Positronic Brain and pointed out a small port near the base, close to the section that interfaces with the spinal harness. "It's not used after the base operating system is uploaded."

"Why not?" Noah asked as he looked closer.

"Well, think of it like a normal computer. Before it can use the external uplink port, the operating system and the drivers for the port need to be loaded and installed. This port is used just once in the beginning, then never again." Marc replied. "It's not like we can't use the port. If we configure it for access and communication and then learn what a Phasenmorph needs for access, it could act like a Phasenmorph Network Interface." Marc said with a giggle. "Great, now we gotta rename the port."

"Doesn't that port have raw access?" Danny asked as he leaned in and looked at Marc's laptop more closely.

"Yeah, which may be just what they need. We can program any additional protocols that might be needed after we test it." Marc answered as he brought up a biological diagram of a Phasenmorph. "This guy is pretty complex." He continued pointing toward the tail. "The only way he could give us a surge that could be harmful is if he gets excited or frustrated. I need to ask them if there is a way to mildly sedate the little guy and keep him that way. The more docile he is in the beginning, the safer it will be for the host."

"You want to drug it?" Danny said with a giggle. "Won't we have to send it to rehab or something afterward?"

"Very funny." Marc said as he sat back in his chair. "I said docile, not stoned. Jeeze!"

"Same thing." Noah said as he dodged Caleb's playful swat. "So, are we ordering pizza?"

"That sounds great." Marc said with a grin. "I guess Mary and Jon took the kids out tonight so we are really on our own."

"Should I warn Eddie that we are planning to call his Dad to place an order?" Noah asked with a grin.

"No, but if you guys want to check with all on duty staff and see if everyone else wants some, I'll call in the order." Marc replied handing Noah a pen and some paper.

"You got it." Noah replied as he grabbed Caleb's hand and rushed for the door.

"So um... why are there brains all over the table?" Danny asked with a laugh as he pointed to the brain Caleb had been holding and the disassembled one that was scattered everywhere else.

"Well, we were waiting for you to come home so we could put it back in." Marc snickered.

"HA, HA..." Danny replied, rolling his eyes. "You've been spending way too much time with Caleb I think."

"Maybe." Marc laughed while he closed his laptop. "We want to build a simulated connection so we can introduce a Phasenmorph to it before actually setting it loose on you."

"Safety precaution?" Danny asked as he picked up the brain.

"Yeah, for you both." Marc grinned. "I'm horrified that it could get excited and surge you if it gets anxious. I'm also worried about it getting hurt if you accidentally surge it. It could happen either way until both are familiar with the other."

"That's great. The Phasenmorph will have experience before I do. I don't want it to get hurt during all this either." Danny said as he continued to look at the brain.

"You will have experience. I plan to compile the information gathered from test dummy there and upload it to you. That way you will kinda have already been in contact with him." Marc said with a smile. "It's just safer for you both that way."

"So how will that work?" Danny asked. "I mean how is this thing supposed to work?"

"Okay." Marc said as he turned Caleb's laptop so he could see it. "According to this, Phasenmorphs can communicate with each other. Humans can communicate with them as their host. If we can tell someone to pass a message through their own Phasenmorph to the one who will eventually connect to you, we can tell it to come into contact with this." Marc continued as he picked up a portion of the disassembled brain that once served as the same uplink port. "I'll create a harness to connect it to the master uplink on the brain which we can have connected to one of our terminals. Once it figures out how to communicate through the port safely, we might even be able to pass short messages back and forth. Mostly to see how bad the communication gap is gonna be."

"You're just gonna drop the end in its pool?" Danny asked with a grin.

"Yup, let the little guy check it out first and take it at it's own pace." Marc said as he brought up a second image of the Positronic Brain. "All components are sealed. If I wanted to we could just submerge the entire brain but, it's gonna be connected to a computer. That could be dangerous." He barely got out before the door swung open.

"Security's doin a shift change so it's just us tonight." Caleb said as he and Noah rushed back into the kitchen.

"Cool." Marc said looking at Noah. "Dude, go see what Eli, Benji, Sammy and Sebastian would like on their pizzas. I gotta borrow Caleb for a minute."

"No prob." Noah said before kissing Caleb and disappearing into the lab.

"Sup?" Caleb asked as he plopped down into one of the chairs.

"If I design the basic imprint to run test dummy, can you set the hardware up with the master uplink extension, standard uplink cable for the terminal including a power feed and something to enclose it all like we planned?" Marc asked getting a grin from Caleb.

"No problem." He replied resting his elbows on the table. "Do we have any cases in the house that are used to store these brains? With a couple of modifications, I can make it portable and even wire two external connectors."

"Test dummy in a box, that's not a bad idea." Marc replied with a smile. "There should be a couple of the transport cases in the lower lab. In the storage area. Maybe we should create a backup just in case."

"Sweet. Noah and I can have it all assembled in no time." Caleb said with a giggle. "I'll draw a face on it and we can call it Danny Junior." Caleb managed to get out before Danny quickly got up and put him in a playful headlock. "What? I can draw pretty good. He may look just like you..."

"Oh sure." Danny said as both of them laughed. "If that's the case, I'm gonna get myself a monkey and put your clothes on it. If I get a junior, so do you."

"Do they ever quit?" Noah asked as he came back into the kitchen just in time to see Caleb squirm out of his chair, taking them both down to the floor in a fit of giggles.

"Nope." Marc replied. "Fun to watch though." He added with a wink, earning a smile from Noah.

"Marc!" Caleb shouted as he ran up the stairs from the lower lab.

"In the kitchen bro." Marc shouted back as he slid his laptop away from him and rubbed his eyes. "What's up?" He asked as Caleb ran into the room.

"Can JR sleep over? He wants to help and I was kinda hoping to work on my Trinary project tonight. It's our project now so I wanted to wait til he was here." Caleb rambled as he sat down at the table.

"Well, that's up to his parents." Marc answered as he stretched. "Are they ok with it? I mean he just got home yesterday."

"I don't know yet." Caleb giggled. "I haven't called him yet."

"It's ok with me since it's Friday if you two want to plan for the weekend or something. It's not like there's anything going on. Just make sure you guys don't work yourself to death." Marc said as Caleb jumped up from his chair just in time for the noise of drums echoed through the house. "Looks like he finally found his surprise." Marc shouted over the noise.

"You goin up there?" Caleb asked as he looked up toward the ceiling.

"I better." Marc replied as he stood up and stretched once again. "Want me to tell him to knock it off so you can make your call?"

"Nah." Caleb laughed. "It actually sounds cool." He said as he tilted his head. "AC/DC?"

"Yup." Marc nodded. "Problem Child, I think."

"That fits." Caleb laughed before heading back down to the basement.

"HEY!!!" Marc shouted as he entered the bedroom. "The neighbors called, They want their ear drums back." He continued as Danny giggled and put his sticks down.

"You didn't tell me these were up here." Danny said as Noah grinned at Marc from the sofa.

"I knew eventually you would wander back into your room." Marc giggled as he walked over and sat down on the couch. "Aaron kinda thought you'd like them."

"Listen to this." Danny said as he picked up a folded piece of paper and opened it. "Hey Bro," Danny read aloud; "We gotta jam again sometime. It was awesome having you sit in with us. Just one more reason to welcome you to the family. Anyway, I figured since you sounded that good after not practicing for years, if you had a set of your own you would totally rock the next time we hit a stage. I really mean it bro; I left some sheet music and a couple of my CD's for you to check out. Hey, it's never a bad idea to have a back up drummer. Hope you like them! ~Aaron"

"Looks like you got yourself a friend there." Marc said with a smile. "It's unfortunate that I'll have to strangle him though." He continued with a giggle.

"This is way too much bro." Danny said as he ran his fingers across the deep glitter red finish on the bass drum and shook his head. "This set must have cost him an arm and a leg."

"He wanted it in blue dude." Noah said with a smile. "Since he gave you the red set, now he has a reason to get another one in the color he wanted."

"Really?" Danny laughed. "If he wanted blue why didn't he get that in the first place?"

"He was kinda stuck with it." Noah said as he sat back on the couch. "He told me all about it when we set it up in here. I guess he was on the road a year back and was supposed to perform in some club. His gear was supposed to get there before he did but, the van it was in broke down. He told me he wanted to buy a new drum set anyway, and they had the Pearl Export set in a shop close to where he was. It was the one he wanted, just in the wrong color." Noah said with a laugh. "You mentioned how much you liked the set, and that it was your favorite color so; he wanted you to have it."

"What does that leave him with?" Danny asked as he looked at the set again.

"He was gonna order the exact same set in blue as soon as they got home." Noah giggled. "One way or the other he was gonna get it."

Danny smiled as he got up and wandered over to the couch. "Lemme see if he's around." He said as he pulled out his communicator. "Page to Carter."

"Aaron here bro! What's up?"

"When does the blue set come in?" Danny asked with a giggle.

"Oh that... Hehehe... I should have the new set either Monday or Tuesday."

"Noah just told me the story." Danny laughed. "I don't know what to say bro."

"That's easy, say thanks and that you plan to wear out the skins before we get to play together again."

"That might not happen." Danny half whispered. "Judging by the look on Marc's face I gotta get some practice heads or else he may hunt you down for revenge."

"Does Marc play an instrument? Maybe you two can practice together?"

"I don't know actually." Danny said as he looked at Marc and tilted his head.

"I play a little guitar but, not in front of people." Marc said as he began to blush.

"He does but he's in the closet about it bro." Danny laughed.

"Well when he decides to come out of the closet, write me some new material. Hahaha!"

"Deal." Danny said with a giggle while Marc quietly sat and glared at him. "Thanks bro. We'll have to set something up soon."

"Definitely! I'll talk to you later; I gotta go put some dry clothes on."

"You got tossed in the pool again?" Danny snickered.

"What can I say... I guess I'll be in awesome shape with all the swimming I get."

"That's one way of looking at it." Noah laughed as he shouted loud enough for Aaron to hear him.

"Watch it bro! The ocean's colder up there than the pool is down here! I'll talk to you guys later! Make some noise Danny ok?"

"I can do that. Talk to you later. Danny Out." Danny said with a smile as he clipped his communicator back into his pocket and looked the drum set over one more time. "Unreal."

"Yup, the price of having a celebrity in the family." Noah giggled.

"Is he really that popular?" Danny asked, the only response he got was two sets of rolling eyes. "Ok, looks like I better listen to those CDs then, huh?"

"Unless you wanna get disowned by an airhead, yeah. I'd get on that if I were you." Noah giggled.

"Hey Guys!" Jerry said as he walked into the room and hopped on the bed next to Noah. "Was that you Danny?"

"Omigod." Marc sighed. "You really could hear that from your house?"

"Kinda." Jerry grinned. "Mom thought you blasted a stereo or something."

"Danny, we can replicate some practice pads for you." Noah said as he shuffled off the bed. "Get a set of headphones and you'll be able to practice whenever you like without shattering the windows next door." He finished with a giggle.

"Actually." Marc said to no one in particular. "Once we get all the equipment moved to the hospital, the storage half of the basement could be sound proofed."

"That's a thought." Noah nodded. "That area's big enough to set up a sound booth if we wanted to."

"Great." Jerry said with a smile. "You can record albums."

"Oh yeah." Danny laughed. "That's gonna happen."

"It's a thought." Marc said with a smile. "You never know when recording a drum line or something could help Aaron out."

"Well, without having to travel to Florida." Noah grinned. "When the room is empty, I'll run it by Air Boy and see what he thinks."

"I'll help." Jerry said as he rested back on his elbows on the bed. "There's nothing going on this weekend, is there?"

"Not that I know of, why?" Danny asked as he came out from behind his drums.

"Well, Mom and Dad are hoping if it's quiet enough around here for a couple of days to go out and visit my grandmother." Jerry said with a grin. "She was a little disappointed when my parents canceled our last trip."

"No dude, timing is perfect." Marc said as everyone else nodded their heads in agreement. "It'll give her a chance to meet her new great grandson."

"Yeah, and KC too." Jerry said with a smile. "So I can tell Mom it's ok if we go?" Jerry asked.

"Yup, we're not gonna be doing much for about a week or so." Marc answered as all four boys began to move toward the doorway. "Tell your parents we'll keep an eye on the house."

"Okay." Jerry smiled. "I think we're gonna be leaving soon then. I know a lot of their stuff is still packed."

"When do you think you'll be getting home?" Noah asked as they started down the stairs.

"Probably Monday night or Tuesday morning. I'm not sure." Jerry answered as they reached the living room. "I'll run home and find out."

"Ok dude. Let us know what the plans are." Danny said as Jerry rushed out the door. "Wow, things really are gonna be quiet around here." He managed to get out before giggling coming from the kitchen broke the silence. "Well, kinda." He continued with a laugh.

"Eli?" Noah gasped as they reached the kitchen. "Dude! You're up!"

"Ya think?" Eli said with a weak smile and an expression that clearly said "Duh." gaining a smile from Sebastian.

"He got himself into the wheelchair." Sebastian said with a smile.

"That's not good." Marc said as everyone took a seat around the table. "You shouldn't be moving around that much yet." He managed to get out as Eli levitated himself a couple of inches out of the wheelchair before gently setting himself back down.

"Didn't hardly move at all." Eli grinned.

"Oh yeah." Marc laughed. "Even when you're immobile, you're still mobile. I still don't want you moving around too much, ok?"

"Yes doctor." Eli half whispered as a slight grin started to appear on his face. "Where's Benji?"

"Sammy dragged him into the shower. They're probably taking a nap or something by now." Danny said as Noah began to laugh.

"Yeah right." Caleb said as he entered the kitchen with JR right behind him. "Dude, you can hear just about everything from the basement. Trust me, they AREN'T sleeping." He managed to get out as JR began to blush.

"T-M-I dude!" Sebastian groaned.

"Anyway..." Marc said with a giggle. "JR, you spendin the weekend?"

"Yeah. My Dad and Mom had some stuff to do so me stayin here worked out better." JR said as he glanced at Caleb. "Cal says we got some work to do with tha network an that new OS he's been creatin."

Danny nodded his head as he stood up from his seat. "About that guys." He continued as he met Caleb at the coffee maker. "We really need to plan out our projects. You two have that Trinary thing goin on as well as the network here and linking it up to CIC. Marc and I have a Phasenmorph issue to work out, not to mention having to be ready for our R&D setup. We also have to plan for therapy sessions for Eli and Benji."

"What kind of planning?" Caleb asked as he began emptying the sugar bowl into his mug. "Noah and I talked about it earlier. I want to run my ideas by Ark and see what he thinks of it before we do a mock up to show you and Cory."

"Well, we also need to run the Phasenmorph ideas we had through Ark before trying to prepare one for an android host." Marc said as he watched Caleb fill his mug half way with milk before adding coffee. "That's just gross dude."

"It keeps me going." Caleb said with a giggle.

"There's enough sugar in there to keep us all goin." Sebastian said to no one in particular. "Marc, don't forget that Antonio covered all the basic stuff we need to know about these implants. We can do exercises an stuff with em. All you really gotta do is check on em."

"That's true." Marc said with a shudder as he watched Caleb take a large gulp from his mug. "Well, Benji is ready to try small movements already. Eli, you're gonna need at least one more night on the bi-

obed before we try doing the same since you had so much more work done. If you guys want to spend a few hours in the living room watching TV or something today, tomorrow morning I want to handle your first session. 'Bastian, I'll want you involved too.'

"So what's the plan?" Noah asked with a smile.

"No real plan for today." Marc answered as he sat back in his chair. "Cal and JR planned to work on their ideas today and over the weekend. Since the Upper Lab is gonna be empty for a few hours, I was hoping to get some of the stuff in there packed up and cleared out. It's a mess in there."

"I'll help." Noah said watching as Caleb held his cup up and letting the saturated sugar slowly drool into his mouth. "Ok, now even I'm grossed out dude."

"Pffft..." Caleb said as he stood up and put his mug in the sink. "I don't tell you how to drink your coffee." He continued with a giggle.

"There was coffee in that?!?" Danny said in mock amazement as everyone else in the room bust out laughing.

"You didn't notice the milk was tinted a little?" Noah asked getting a punch in the arm for his efforts.

"I thought the sugar caused that." Danny continued as Caleb simply squinted his eyes and crossed his arms. "Or maybe something in the lighting."

"C'mon JR." Caleb said as he stuck his nose in the air. "The intelligence level just dropped in this room." He continued with a giggle.

"Well, there was an awful lot of sugar in there..." JR got out before he laughed and began to run.

"TRAITOR!!!" Caleb yelled down the stairs after JR. "Just for that you get to work with the test dummies!" He continued to shout as he descended the stairs.

"So..." Marc laughed as he shook his head.

Noah laughed before stiffening his back and becoming dead serious. "We'll pack up the Upper Lab, Sebastian and Eli can watch some TV or sumthin, Benji and Sammy will probably stay locked up in your old bedroom until we call the Fire Department and Danny can be a bum all day and not care." Noah got out with a gasp. "Did I miss anything sir?"

"Yeah. Marc said as he stood up from his seat and pointed toward the door leading into the upper lab. "You forgot to stand and salute. Now you gotta hurry up in there so you can do your 50 push-ups, 100 laps around the house and wash and wax the van and Danny's car."

"Say what?" Noah laughed as he stood up. "I don't get to wash and wax the Mustang?"

"Leave the FORD dirty!" Danny bellowed as he twisted his expression as if he were disgusted. "Show the neighborhood we have our priorities in order at this facility."

"Oh please." Noah laughed as the group began to break up. "You know you're jealous."

"True. Just think of how many tow truck drivers you get to become best friends with because of that car." Danny managed to get out before he couldn't stifle his laughter any more.

"Are you two done yet?" Marc folded his arms and began tapping his foot as he looked back and forth between the two. "Next thing you know you both will be out there dragging them down Marshall Boulevard."

"No way." Danny said before heading for the living room. "Too short." He continued with a laugh. "You and me junior. Route 703 just after you get certified to drive. It's time you got schooled in a few of the REAL rules of the road."

"Oh! You are soooo on bro!" Noah laughed as Marc literally pushed him into the upper lab.

"You two are so impossible." Marc laughed as he pointed over to the side of the room the two computers occupied. "Just pack everything into the boxes the new equipment came in. I'll start on the larger stuff on this side of the room."

"Okay." Noah grinned as he grabbed a box and began working.

About 45 minutes later, Marc looked over and saw Noah just standing in front of the area that all the pictures and newspaper clippings had been pinned up. "You spacin out dude?" Marc asked as he slid a large chest toward the door.

"Is that Danny?" Noah asked as Marc walked over and looked at the picture Noah had pointed too.

"Yup. That was the day he came online for the first time. Recognize that kid?" Marc asked as he took the picture off the wall and handed it to him.

"He looks kinda familiar." Noah replied. "That's not Kevin, is it?"

"Yeah. That was him when he was still human." Marc said with a smile. "I think our last simulation proved that we didn't miss any details."

"No kiddin." Noah said as he placed the picture in the box he had been packing before carefully removing a large framed news clipping from the wall that bore large black bold type in its heading.

ROBOTICS GIANT RELEASES NEW LINE TO PUBLIC

*By: Jeff P.
Staff Writer*

CHICAGO - In the midst of all the new gadgets and technological advancements, Vision Industries, Inc. was scheduled to release their new line to the public in an attempt to expand an already extensive lineup of robotics engineering. Specializing in artificial intelligence, the famed company was the spot-

light event this year. Operating an impressive display, V.I. representative and lead spokesperson; Alexander Rowen, had little time to spare us as he answered questions about current servant models the company had to offer as well as the future of their newest line of "Human-Natured" A.I. models. Our team was treated to witness the unveiling of their newest model endoskeleton, appearing as though their new model was designed to be of early teen design, After many attempts from this reporter to get some clues to their big release today, Mr. Rowan simply smiled and told us we would have to wait for their full public display.

Two hours of bustling crowds and multiple questions didn't stop the V.I. crew from ceasing operations at their display to retreat to the Expo's main stage back room with what appeared to be a security team that would make the Secret Service look careless. After about a half hour, the lights in the center dimmed and the curtains opened to an empty stage. In what seemed like hours the stage remained empty until the noise of extremely heavy footsteps worked their way into view. Gasps could be heard from the crowd as the bulky robot, mechanically walked to center stage, being controlled remotely by a young boy who appeared to be about 12 years old. The crowd around our crew grew restless at this disappointing display but quieted down as the young boy shut down his robot and took the podium.

"Isn't he cool"? The boy said into the microphone with a smile. "I built him myself." He added as the rumble from the crowd began to increase. "My name is Tony; I guess I kinda work for Vision Industries." He got out before a reporter in the front row shouted; "Where's this big display your company was supposed to have arranged?" with his annoyance being clearly projected. The boy just smiled at him and simply answered "Right here." further adding to the crowd's disappointment. "That radio controlled robot is not technological advancement!" Shouted one woman. "I'm demanding my money back!" shouted another. The boy was intriguing as he smiled and watched the commotion build as if this was all part of his plan. "If you'll allow me one second, I can explain." The boy said as he pulled the microphone from its stand and walked to the front of the stage and sat down with legs crossed waiting for the crowd to settle back down.

"What I was trying to say was, the display is RIGHT HERE." He said and emphasized by pointing to himself. "I built the robot and wanted you all to see him cause he came out sweet, kinda like Vision Industries did with me." He stated bringing the crowd to a deafening silence instantly. "Ladies and Gentlemen, My name is Tony. Well, the name I was given is Tony, I'm actually the Display Model for Vision Industries' M.A.R.C. series android. I'm sure you have all read about the prototype testing that has gone on over the past year or so. Well, I'm what they were testing."

After fifteen full minutes of the simulated youth occupying the spotlight, Alexander Rowan took the microphone and fielded questions while the android pointed out some of the children who were in attendance and invited them to the other side of the stage to try out his robot. I have to say of all the exhibitions I have attended and reported on in the past five or so years, this one was the most entertaining and informative. Mr. Rowan spent a great deal of time discussing proposed uses for a simulated youth. Uses ranging from couples who were unable to bear children of their own to same sex couples who were not allowed by law in some areas of the country to adopt. He explained the details of a "Custom Order", which would be how his company would handle each and every order placed. Applicants would be screened to deem their intentions were realistic, financial situations would be taken into account and in some situations would have an impact on overall pricing and post sale service situations. It seemed to me that Vision Industries had not only looked at every aspect of their newest creations release but, intend to make them available to those who may have a need for one; even if they don't have the financial means available which was a fact the on looking crowds openly applauded.

Following the demonstration, our team had the unique opportunity to interview Mr. Rowan and his small friend in private. We further learned that this model had in fact been in testing privately well before today's release and that a release timetable had been planned out well in advance. Our private interview covered not much more than the public information that was provided during the exhibition until young Tony asked to be involved in the conversation. We promised him that in our article, that we would relay a message for him even if it was not an exceptionally traditional means of reporting. After reading what he had typed into my tablet, I feel that it would be an injustice to not include his message.

Dear Readers,

I know I'm not really a reporter or anything but, I wanted to make sure everyone who missed our expo got a chance to kinda see what they missed. I mean I wish you could have been there. It was really fun! Especially since I've never seen a group of people as big as this before. The kids there were awesome too, even if they were just as bored as I was in the beginning. Anyway, most of the people I have been able to talk to have the same ideas about us so; I have to guess you might too. The biggest question I get asked a lot is; "Don't you think creating a robot to take the place of a human is wrong?" some people even say that the doctors who created me were playing god. I never really know the right way to answer that stuff. I mean, I know what I am. I know who created me. I am here, I care, I have fun, I hurt, I cry, I dream and I hope. I'm not exactly programmed to do that stuff but, I am the result of programming which somehow can do it. Why is a person an individual? Why doesn't; "I think, therefore I am." apply to me too? I don't have parents like other kids but, I do have adults around me all the time. I love them just like they are my family. They treat me like they do their own kids. I'm not any different, honest. Of course, I'm asking you to take my word for it, which isn't really fair to you or to me and the brothers and sisters I hope I'll someday have. I do know something Mr. Rowan told me was being planned. He said they are calling it a "Placement Workshop" and I think it's a cool idea. What they plan to do is set up a way for people to spend time with one of us. People with kids can come to play with us, sit and talk with us, watch a movie or just sit and talk. Whatever they want to do to get to know us. After a recreational meeting, as they call it; one of the doctors will sit down and answer any questions, help the people decide if they really want to adopt one of us or even the one they spent the time with, which would be really cool too. They got the idea after they first hired Mr. Rowan and found out he really had no idea what we were like in person. You should have seen the look on his face when he found out I was an android and not somebody's kid just wandering around and picking on him. It was funny cause we were friends for like 2 weeks before he found out. It was awesome. I guess seeing really is believing, so I hope anyone who has doubts will come and meet us before they make their final decisions. We aren't like anything that has ever come out of Vision Industries before, even though those models are really cool too.

Well, I gotta give this back to Jeff so he can keep telling you how cool he thinks we are. At least that's what I hope he plans to write. I'll be traveling with Mr. Rowan for a few weeks before we head back home and start meeting people there. Maybe some of the people who read this will come out to meet us. If you do, look for me! I'd really like to say hi! Just ask for "Brat" when you get there.

*Take Care!
Tony*

I can honestly say that this Friday's exposition was one of the most informative I have been to in quite a while and I am planning to stick around for Saturday and Sunday's displays as well. If not to learn anything new, I'll be honest and say that I really enjoyed my visit with Tony and Alexander Rowan and do hope to get to know them better over the weekend.

Electronic Design EXPO 1960

Navy Pier
Chicago, IL

Friday - June 17, 1960

Exhibits, Keynotes
& Product Demos

Saturday - June 18, 1960

Exhibits, Keynotes
& Product Demos

Sunday - June 19, 1960

Exhibits, Keynotes
& Product Demo

After reading through the clipping, Noah held it up to Marc; who had now gone back to work. "How come you weren't the one on stage here?"

"Huh?" Marc asked as he put down the armload and looked at the article in Noah's hand. "Oh, The Expo." He said with a grin. "They chose Tony cause he built the cool robot." Marc giggled.

"Yeah, right." Noah said with a huff. "No seriously."

"Tony was VI's um... I guess you could say he was the display model, even though I hate referring to him like that." Marc shrugged as he made his way to the wall and pulled down a clipping that hid his own face on it. "I went in for one photo shoot in the beginning before my first Father and I decided it would be better if they found another unit for public appearances and expos like that one"

"I didn't like having my time spent being a mascot for the company." Marc said before tossing the clipping into the box.

Noah looked at the framed article one last time before carefully placing it in the box with the others. "Tony seemed pretty cool. What ended out happening to him?"

"That was kinda funny." Marc said as he crossed his arms and smiled. "Him and Alex worked really close for the first 6 months. After that there really wasn't much more for them to do except public relations. As a thank-you from Vision Industries, Tony was given to Alex to adopt."

"That's awesome!" Noah smiled. "I bet they were happy."

Marc nodded his head before taking down a larger color version of the picture of Tony that was used in the article off the wall and placed it in the box. "It was. They got really close to each other. I think if they did anything else with him, Alex could have gone as far as kidnapping him. If they had made any other choice I would have supported kidnapping him."

"Did that happen a lot?" Noah asked, his eyes now wide open.

"VI giving employees androids? No."

"No!" Noah sighed. "People kidnapping them."

"Oh." Marc giggled. "It's happened. Look at Austin's situation." He continued. "If Sharon hadn't kidnapped Austin, it's possible he wouldn't have ever been brought online."

"Meaning he wouldn't be with us today." Noah mumbled. "I guess sometimes it would have made sense."

"Oh, it did." Marc grinned. "There were times when a model was supposed to be decommissioned or a project that was in testing was supposed to be scrapped. Not only did the doctors make sure that anyone who cared knew the details, but there were even times when they would purposely look the other way so the android would have a loving family instead of landing on a scrap pile."

"They would just scrap them?" Noah asked as he continued to carefully remove memorabilia from the wall.

"Well, in the initial stages of a project. Investors looked at the prototypes as nothing more than experimental pieces of equipment." Marc replied. "Even I was a loss of investor money once the results of my field testing were completed. Even though I was intended as a means of compensation to my original father for the information he provided them with. In their eyes, I could have been salvaged, rebuilt and sold."

"What about your memories and stuff?" Noah asked as he stopped what he was doing and turned to look Marc in the eyes.

"Erased." Marc said flatly. "Or disassembled and used in part to build a newer unit."

"They'd kill you?!?" Noah almost shouted.

"They didn't look at it as killing someone. To the people who dealt with nothing but the financial aspect of the company, it was simply recycling."

"That's Bullshit!" Noah spat out as Marc watched his face turn red. "How many of your family were murdered?"

"Noah. Don't get mad bro. It's in the past." Marc tried to calm him. "Trust me, they learned from the doctors who actually ran the company. There were a few in the beginning that weren't pulled out before they were decommissioned. Very few."

"Oh really?" Noah said through clenched teeth. "If that's the case, why did Sharon have to kidnap Austin? You know, just before Vision Industries *CLOSED?!?*" He almost shouted as he literally threw the picture he was holding into the box.

"Whoah!" Marc said as he held up his hands. "Time out dude! Austin wasn't completed. His programming and planning was nothing more than code and hopes when they made the announcement that we were closing. Sharon and I worked really hard on his planning." Marc said, watching Noah's expression closely. "Hard enough for her to rush in the end to complete him and sneak him out."

"Oh." Noah said once he realized Marc had taken a step backward. "I didn't think of that."

"Jesus bro. You goin psycho on me?" Marc said with a nervous laugh.

"I'm sorry." Noah said as he shook his head. "It's just that first Austin had been kidnapped to save him then we find out KC was kinda the same way. Now I learn that the kid who helped to build the company could have been killed too cause they wanted to save money. That's murder, end of story."

"Yes it is." Jerry said as he stepped into the room startling both boys. "Sorry, I knocked but for some reason you guys didn't hear me." Jerry said with a grin as KC walked into the room with Joey in his arms.

"See creep. Your uncles just had a disagreement, they aren't fighting." KC said to the sniffling android who had his face buried in his neck and his teddy bear in a tight headlock.

"Yes dhey wewe! I heawd dhem." Joey whimpered. "I don'd wand no mowe fighting."

"Mom and Dad had a little argument before we came over." Jerry said shrugging his shoulders. "Joey doesn't understand it and got kinda spooked by it."

Noah looked at Marc and Jerry before slowly walking over to KC and Joey. "I'm sorry little guy. I was just mad cause I thought some kids got hurt." He said getting a weak smile from KC. Rubbing Joey's back, Noah continued; "I was wrong and your Uncle Marc told me so."

"You wewen'd gonna hid each odhew?" Joey sniffled before looking back at Noah.

"Joey." KC said holding Joey back a little so he could look him in the eyes. "Just cause two people start shouting doesn't always mean they are gonna start hitting each other. Your uncles would never hurt each other."

Joey wiped his eyes with the back of his hand before looking at his brother and grinning weakly. "You cawwed me Joey."

"Sorry, it slipped." KC laughed earning a giggle from everyone in the room. "So, you ok bud?"

"Yeah." Joey replied resting his head on his brothers shoulder.

"Your parents are fighting?" Noah asked as he leaned on the work bench and crossed his arms.

"They were." Jerry said as he hopped up on the corner of one of the portable biobeds. "I guess my Dad made the plans to go see my Grandmother without checking with Mom."

"She doesn't want to go?" Marc asked as he sat down on the couch that had be hurriedly pushed up against the wall upon the arrival of all the new equipment.

"That's not it." Jerry said as KC sat on the other side of the couch, Joey still tightly clinging to him. "She wanted to finish their honeymoon trip."

"Ooohhh." Marc replied. "Maybe we can send them back to Hawaii once we get the hospital back up and running."

"That'd be cool." Noah said before turning back to the wall over the bench and removing more of the pictures and news clippings.

"So when do you guys leave?" Marc asked as he sat back and put his feet up on one of the boxes on the floor.

"We're packed now." Jerry replied. "Mom wanted me to give you a set of keys for the house and wanted to make sure you guys knew to use up some of the food that came back from Charleston."

"That's cool." Marc replied looking around the room. "Maybe by the time you guys get home we'll have figured out how much longer it will take before we're completely up and running."

"Eh, even without the hospital we aren't in real bad shape." Noah said with a grin. "Just as long as things stay quiet for a while."

"Like you can plan for that." KC said with a giggle. "Don't forget that word about all this is spreading. I wouldn't be surprised if there were tons of people who thought that Vision Industries just vanished."

"That's true." Jerry said with a sigh. "Even if they don't know this is the old company being incorporated with the Clan, now they'll know that at least someone is there for androids. We may start hearing from people that have needed help for a long time but, thought that there was no one to turn to."

"I've thought of that." Marc said. "Let's just hope we have some time before the first real wave."

"Agreed." Jerry replied as everyone else nodded their agreement. "Well guys, we need to get moving before Mom and Dad come looking for us." He continued as he stood up and pulled two keys out of his pocket. "Marc, these are for you to keep here."

"No prob. Let your parents know we'll keep an eye on the house." Marc said as everyone stood up.

"And eat some of the food." KC said with a smile. "Throw a party or something. Maybe even just make pigs out of yourselves." He giggled as Joey gave him a funny look.

"My Uncwes awen'd pigs!" Joey giggled.

"That's not what I meant, Punk." KC laughed.

"Bud dhad's whad you said." Joey shot back, getting a laugh from the rest of the boys.

"I give up." KC laughed as he hugged Joey tighter. "See you guys when we get back!" He added as everyone else said their goodbyes.

"You guys gotta see this." Caleb laughed as he ran down the stairs, startling Noah and Marc.

"See what?" Noah shook his head and asked.

"C'mere, trust me." Caleb laughed as he ran back up the stairs.

"Ok, what are you two up to?" Marc asked as they found Caleb and JR peeking in through the partially opened door leading into Danny's bedroom.

"Take a look." Caleb snickered as he and JR stepped back to let Noah and Marc see.

"Oh my god." Noah groaned as he stepped back and tried really hard not to laugh. "I think he likes Aaron's music." He added as he pushed Marc toward the door.

Marc grinned as he peeked into the room and saw Danny dancing around near the couch with his eyes closed, singing along with some of the chorus. "This is priceless!" Marc laughed as he silently opened the door the rest of the way and motioned to the other three to follow. "Shhhhh..." He said as they all took a seat on the bed and watched as Danny continued dancing and singing.

"...throw your hands up now, let the music take control. This is how we roll... I'm not too young and I'm not too..." He got out as he opened his eyes and saw his audience grinning at him. "old... oh no!" He said as he ripped the headset off and turned bright red. "How long have you guys been watching?"

"Long enough to figure out that you kinda like Air Boy's music." Caleb laughed.

"Yeah, he'll be happy." Noah said with a laugh. "I just wish I could have taped that though."

"I bet." Danny said as he leaned on the back of the couch and covered his face.

"That's actually a good song for you Danny." Caleb said with a serious smile. "You'll always be not too young and not too old."

"That's true." Marc agreed. "So you like the music?"

"Yeah." Danny said, his blush finally beginning to fade. "Not the kind of music I normally listen too but, it's fun and upbeat. Aaron's got an awesome voice too."

"Yeah he does." JR grinned. "I got more of his stuff in my bag if you wanna hear more."

"Sweet." Danny replied. "The drum track in this is synthesized though, translating it might be tough."

"Nah." Noah said as he picked up the sheet music Aaron left for him. "I've heard him beat that one out on his set."

"I don't doubt it can be played, it'll just sound a little different." Danny replied as he picked up the CD case and looked at it.

"There's nothing wrong with that." JR said with a wide smile. "Maybe you can get him to come back up here and work through it with him."

"You just want him to come back up here. Doesn't matter why." Caleb grinned as he elbowed JR in the side.

"Shaddap!" JR almost shouted. "He's an awesome artist!" He quickly added.

"...and cute." Caleb giggled.

"He's got an awesome voice." JR crossed his arms and said.

"...and he's cute." Caleb snickered and repeated.

"Whatever." JR huffed, giggling and nodding his head before adding in just over a whisper; "Ok, and he's cute."

"Oh boy." Noah said as he and Marc stood up and laughed. "Well if Aaron comes back up we can guarantee we're gonna lose Danny and JR now."

"No kidding." Marc said as he motioned toward the door. "For today, my last attempt at something productive is gonna be making sure we eat. Then I plan to watch a sunset before getting a good night's sleep; with or without the groupies."

"That sounds awesome." Noah laughed. "I'll help with dinner so Cal and JR can get back to their project and Danny can continue his little private concert up here." He managed to get out before one of the pillows from the couch bounced off his head. "He'll never get anywhere in show business if he keeps abusing his fans like that." He said to Marc before laughing.

"I'll show you abuse." Danny said seriously while he armed himself with another pillow before laughing at Noah's fake frightened expression. "That's right, you should be scared."

"Eek! Save me Marc... You're evil brother is gonna hurt me." Noah laughed as he ran out of the room.

"Oh, like I want any part in that." Marc said as he shook his head and followed him out of the room.

"Is Eli settled in now?" Noah asked as Marc quietly closed the door to the upper lab and took a seat at the table.

"Yeah, he's feelin a little sore now." Marc replied as Noah poured him a cup of coffee and grabbed himself a glass of apple juice. "I probably should have sent him back in there after dinner instead of letting him watch that movie."

"Oh come on." Noah said with a smile as he sat down. "You can't watch The Terminator without watching the second one. It's like, some kind of law. Just be glad you don't have a copy of the third one."

"True, but he didn't seem all that disappointed." Marc said with a sigh. "It wasn't as good as the first two."

"It's part of the story, he would have sat through it." Noah grinned.

"Right, and added another day on the biobed because of it." Marc said as he took a sip of his coffee. "Did you check in on Caleb and JR?"

"Yup." Noah said with a smile. "He has Test Dummy and Test Dummy Junior almost finished. He also has a ton of work on his Trinary operating system."

"I can't wait to see what his plans are with that." Marc smiled. "I'm actually even more curious to see what Ark thinks about it."

"Same here." Noah said with a giggle. "I'll just be glad when he stops being so secretive about it."

"He won't tell you anything either?" Marc asked, rolling his eyes.

"No. You'd think it was some sort of government secret or sumthin." Noah said with a laugh. "We may have to send Danny down there to order him to tell us what he's hiding."

"I wouldn't. Just let him work it out." Marc said tilting his head. "Speaking of Danny; he hasn't come down yet. I wonder if he fell asleep listening to one of Aaron's CDs."

"He's not upstairs." Noah replied. "I went up there to see if he wanted some coffee a few minutes ago."

"He's not downstairs either." Marc said as he put his mug down. "He may be out on the back deck. Wonder if I should go check."

"You do that, I'm gonna see if I can squeeze some information out of Cal." Noah said with an evil grin as both stood up.

"Good luck with that." Marc giggled as he grabbed a second coffee mug and filled it with black coffee before heading through the living room out to the back deck. Once he opened the door and realized Danny wasn't on the deck, Marc put the two mugs on the table and sighed in relief once he saw Danny sitting down on the beach. Not wanting to startle him, Marc grabbed the two mugs and loudly walked down the steps to the deck.

"Noah made something for you." Marc said once Danny finally turned to look at his brother, revealing that he had recently been crying. "Danny? What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Danny sniffled as he wiped at his eyes and accepted the mug. "Well, nothing serious."

"Wanna talk about it?" Marc asked softly as he took a seat in the sand. "I can listen unless you just wanna be alone bro."

"Where's Kevin's imprint right now?" Danny asked quickly, almost cutting Marc off.

"Oh, um... He's in the terminal at the hospital right now. That room is secure, he's safe. I promise." Marc replied quickly. "Is that what has you upset? I mean I can bring him home if you want me to."

"No." Danny answered as he took a sip from his mug and then stared out over the bay. "That's not it at all."

"Is something wrong then? I mean if it's because he's not online yet, we can delay construction for a few days. I can get Billy to come back and we can spend a few days getting his imprint ready for the upgraded body." Marc said as he tried to project as much hope in his voice as possible. "It wouldn't be a problem. Just give the word."

"No." Danny said as fresh tears began to stream down his cheeks. "I want his imprint destroyed. I can't do this to him."

Notes from the Author:

Danny!!! What's goin through that head of yours?!?

Yeah, I know... Look, it's like this; I sit down at the computer with plan, and get right to work on it. Sometimes even accomplishing what I want too. Then out of the blue, the "ISSUE" pops up and sinks it's fangs into the chapter. Now, I understand that Danny still harbors a little bit of a reservation towards Emulated AI, I mean I can't blame him. He's been virtually trapped in that body for how many years? Now, if you wanted to ask me why he picked now to bring it up... I honestly couldn't answer. Maybe he's been reading all the Emails I've gotten from concerned readers wondering about Kevin. Maybe he's been mulling this over right along but hasn't had the time to let it hit him. Maybe he is sitting in a corner somewhere giggling cause he knows I'M gonna get in trouble for it , not him... ;) Don't worry, chapter 14 is already in the works :)

As always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe... You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

Well I thought this was going to be a nice relaxing chapter where the AI Division would get to unwind

and tie up a few loose ends. There was a little relaxing but also a lot of bonding and some soul searching. We did learn a few more things about androids especially the M.A.R.C. Series; Tony sounded like a nice kid. Now as to Kevin, I sincerely hope Danny changes his mind but I will have to wait and see with the rest of you.

As I said last chapter it is nice to see this story getting back to its roots yet still working with The Clan. Til the next chapter,
TSL aka The Story Lover.

"Chapter 14 - *I was having fun today...*"

"Wh...What?" Marc replied with a stunned expression on his face. "What do you mean, destroyed?"

Danny quickly wiped away his tears, but they were replaced with fresh ones just as fast. "I can't trap him here. It would be more like revenge to trap him here than anything else."

"Revenge?!? How is giving him more time with you revenge?" Marc asked, still a little dazed at what Danny was suggesting. "That's what he wanted. I mean, that's what he wants."

"A life sentence?" Danny almost spat out. "More like being sentenced to life." He managed to get out before being wracked with sobs. "I can't do that to him. I just can't Marc."

"What are you talking about?" Marc asked as he watched Danny shakily take a sip from his mug. "He knows what he wants Dan. He wants to be here with you."

"Then maybe I need to think about where I belong." Danny said coldly through a snuffle as he stood up and began to walk further down the beach.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Marc shouted as he jumped to his feet and began to follow, spilling a little of his untouched coffee in the process.

"It means I can't be selfish. If he wants to be with me as much as I want him in my life again, then maybe it should be in the plane of existence that would be natural." Danny said as he stopped walking and turned his teary gaze toward Marc. "Just because I'm trapped in this body doesn't mean it's right to do the same to him so we can stay together."

"You're talking suicide?" Marc asked, tears now welling up in his own eyes. "That's what you're talking about, isn't it?"

"You couldn't possibly understand." Danny said, looking away the moment he saw tears working their way down Marc's cheeks. "Humans were never meant to live forever Marc." He continued in an emotionless tone before he slowly began to walk again.

"You aren't human." Marc replied as he once again followed. "You're an android, just like I am. The part of you that was human is gone. I bet it passed just like it was supposed to."

"I wish I could believe that." Danny almost whispered. "The reality of it is my body died. My thoughts and my soul were stolen and trapped in this shell. I don't belong here and neither does Kevin."

"You don't know that." Marc cried. "How could you possibly think that one man's actions could twist the work of god? How could making a copy of you be anything more than a copy? I mean you are a real individual, but how could you be the same individual?"

"I know the real answers to that about as well as you do. I was born human. I lived my life. When that life was supposed to end one man found a way to extend it. I'm nothing more than some freak of nature who is probably going to hell now because I went against plans from much higher up. I won't let my fate become Kevin's. I want him released."

"Danny..." Marc managed to get out before Danny threw down his coffee cup and turned to face Marc.

"I'm right Marc. I've had years to learn that I'm right. So either you help me or you just don't get in my way." Danny said before turning to storm away once again.

"Where the hell is this coming from all of a sudden?" Marc asked through his sobs, freezing Danny in mid step.

"You want to know?" Danny growled. "I was having fun today..."

"That's what I mean. You were having fun. It's been a great day. Now all of a sudden you want to end it all again. This time for you and Kevin." Marc fired back with a loud snuffle, cutting off his brother.

"It already ended!" Danny almost screamed. "When I was alive I had fun playing drums. Kevin used to love listening to me and the guys I used to jam with. It was one of his favorite things to be involved with when..." Danny paused as he wiped away the tears. "When we were alive."

"Oh, so now that you're here you aren't allowed to enjoy the things you used to?" Marc asked in a sarcastic tone. "I get it. That was reserved for you when you were human. Being android isn't real. Hell, why are you even listening to me? I was never human! I'm not real! Why take the opinion of a machine?" Marc shouted angrily as the streams of tears continued to flow freely down his cheeks. "So, what now? You gonna go look for another boat to jump off of?"

"Why don't you get it?" Danny shouted. "I didn't choose to be brought back."

"But Kevin did choose to have his imprint taken so he could be with you in some form again." Marc added for him.

"Not knowing that it was going to trap his soul here for a virtual eternity." Danny spat. "I can't let him do that."

"You're wrong damn it! There's no way that's possible." Marc shouted, taking a few steps toward his brother. "It may feel that way to you but, it can't be the truth."

"Whatever Marc. Believe what you want, I know the truth." Danny managed to get out before the sight of Marc's tears caused him to choke back more of his own. As he quickly turned away from his brother, he froze as a familiar form stood in his intended path.

"Take a seat Danny. We need to have a talk." The form said as Danny's vision locked in on the face of the glowing silhouette.

"Mikey, tell him I'm right." Danny demanded. "Tell him what I'm doing is the right thing to do. You know, you just have to know."

"Danny, sit. Please." Mikey said as he took a step toward Danny. "Your heart is in the right place but your soul isn't where you think it is."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Danny asked, opening his eyes wide. "Just tell Marc that I'm right. Tell him what bringing Kevin back would do to Kevin's soul. Tell him..." Danny managed to get out before his sobs took over, causing him to fall into Mikey's embrace like a lost child.

"I won't tell your brother anything that isn't the truth. You know that I can't." Mikey almost whispered as he looked over Danny's shoulder to see Marc still standing frozen in place, crying. "Just like your brother, you have a real soul. Our father blessed you with a soul, just as he does with all of his children. The only way it will be different for you and Kevin when that time comes and your time on earth ends, is the fact that you will go to heaven just as Marc will. You will both go to heaven Danny." Mikey repeated as he redirected Danny's gaze into his own stare. "Just as a part of you has in the past." He finished as they both heard Marc gasp.

"Sorry it took so long." Davie said as he stepped forward leading two others he had brought with him to the spot where Mikey and Danny were still standing.

"Danny." A familiar voice caught Danny's attention. "Danny, please look at me."

"No." Danny began to sob. "I can hear Kevin." He managed to say as he gripped Mikey tighter.

"Maybe you'll listen to me." Another voice spoke, this one causing Danny's back to go ridged. "You do remember the sound of your human voice, don't you?"

"That's not possible." Danny said as he slowly turned his head and saw himself and Kevin, just as they appeared in life.

"It's more than possible." Mikey whispered as he released Danny from his embrace. "Get the answers from them. Learn the truth from them."

"You're me?" Danny asked as he stepped slowly away from Mikey.

"No." The glowing image of his human self said as he knelt down in the sand. "I'm the soul of the human you once were." He continued as he sat in the sand and motioned to Danny to sit. "You don't know what you are. You really don't."

"Of course I do." Danny sniffled as he sat and faced the image of his human self in confusion. "This body changes nothing. I'm stuck here. I should have just..." He managed to say before a thought overwhelmed him. "Wait. This isn't possible. How are you here?"

"Danny." The image of an adult Kevin said as he sat in the sand beside Daniel. "I've watched over you after I passed. I was with you beneath the ocean all those years."

"We were both with you." Daniel said as he put his arm around Kevin's shoulders.

"We watched Marc work day and night for months to bring you back. We were there when you woke up..." Kevin got out before Danny shook his head.

"How are you together?" Danny asked as he tried to make sense out of what he was witnessing. "I haven't died. How can you be..."

"You're right, you haven't died." Daniel said. "I did though."

"But I'm still me." Danny said as he shook his head.

"You are you. You became you the day you opened your eyes on that table all those years ago with me at your side. You gained consciousness just like Marc did. The only real difference between you both is that you woke with real memories of a real past. Making them a permanent part of your life." Kevin said as he pointed to Daniel.

"My life experiences are saved within you. They're so clear that you believe that you are me, and you have no real reason to look at it any other way." Daniel's image said as he tilted his head. "You have a soul Danny, just like Marc does. Just like any self aware android does. You earned your soul with your existence and how you chose to use it, long before you were ever aware what that choice was. What I was in life helped to give you your life. It's a part of you now, but you are so much more."

"My memories aren't my memories?" Danny asked as Marc came over to sit next to his brother.

"I guess they would be like the memories I was given when I was activated." Marc half whispered. Hoping he wasn't out of line for offering his thoughts.

"Marc, tell him about it. You're more right that you know." Daniel said with a smile.

"I didn't know I was an android in the beginning. My creators gave me memories to make me think I had a past. They made me think I had real parents that had passed away. I have memories of friends, family, events growing up that were nothing more than a planned out program to help me think I was a real human." Marc said with a sigh. "It was hard to accept that those memories weren't really mine but in a weird way, I like to think of them as mine. I mean they did help to make me who I am, real or not."

"So my memories before this body are with me, even though they aren't really mine?" Danny asked as he looked back at Daniel.

"It won't be easy to accept at first." Daniel said with a knowing nod. "Just know that you became who you are the day you were activated. Memories before then were simply carried over from the source of

the personality that you were given." Daniel said as he reached over and placed his hand on Danny's shoulder. "You carry a part of me with you. In such a way that I am still here on earth in part. Kevin will also carry memories of a human life that was never really his, but will be a special part of him forever."

"In a way, you're like our children." Kevin said with a smile. "Just know that we are always with you, watching over you and love you because you are a part of us as well. Take the best of what we were and use it to make your lives better. Use it to make the lives of everyone around you better, just like you already have been doing."

"Wow." Marc absently said before he realized by the stares he was receiving that he had said it out loud. "Sorry. I just realized that some of the stuff they said about Danny that I even thought was true; wasn't."

"Human soul prison?" Daniel asked getting a nod from Marc as his answer. "They said that because they thought just as Danny did."

"Human soul, stolen and trapped in an android body." Danny said as he felt Marc's arm on his shoulders. "Marc, I'm sorry for saying you couldn't possibly understand how I felt. That was mean."

"But from what you believed, it was right." Marc replied.

"Danny, wake my likeness." Kevin said as the group got on their feet. "Let him learn what you now know to be truth. He wants life; he wants to be here with you and your family. Give him that gift."

"But he isn't you." Danny said as a sad look swept through his expression.

"No, he's not." Kevin said as he looked at Daniel and smiled. "He will be himself and will carry a part of me. He will carry a very special part of us that will make you and him just as close. He wants life; he wants a life with you in it. Truth or not, he wants that life back so he can make it a reality once again, for you both."

"My whole life has been a lie then?" Danny asked as Mikey and Davie stepped back toward the group.

"Danny." Mikey began. "You physically weren't a part of making those memories a reality. That part is true. Look at it like a gift from a previous life. Daniel is a large part of the person you became. Without that human component, you could have become a much different person in the end. I can tell you for sure that someone up above is extremely impressed and flattered by you and your family for the love you show others and to him as well. In the end I have a feeling I'm going to have more help than I'll know what to do with."

"Our division?" Marc asked, causing Davey to giggle.

"He means our families." Davie said with a smile. "These two get to watch a part of themselves accomplish something they could have only dreamed about during their time on earth. That dream is a reality for them now, and it's all because of you and your new family."

"Besides." Kevin added. "When your time comes, and someday it will; there is a very special place reserved for you all. Not just androids either. Human and android alike. You are all as close to living saints as anyone could ever imagine."

"Yeah, so lose the thoughts of you going anyplace other than the one we spend most of our time in." Davie said as Mikey smiled at him. "I just hope you were prepared to spend eternity as a part of Clan Short."

"Enough for now." Mikey said as he stepped between Marc and Danny, wrapping his wings around them both. "This is all a small part of what the future holds for you both. Just keep in mind you are already on that path and it is the right one. To that there is no question." Mikey said nearly over a whisper as the tips of his wings brushed over both boys faces, causing them to smile and close their eyes. When they opened them, they were once again alone, and staring dreamily out over the calm water.

"Thank you." Danny whispered as he looked to the sky as a voice answered from a distance.

"Keep playing those drums Danny. I still like to listen." They both could hear Kevin's voice say, causing them to giggle.

"See, I told you it was too loud." Marc joked before Danny playfully pushed him and smiled, starting a playful wrestling match in the sand.

"Hey! Play nice!" Noah shouted with a giggle as he walked over to the laughing androids with Caleb and JR following closely. "Marc, you left your communicator on the kitchen table." Noah continued as Marc and Danny started brushing the sand out of their hair. "Billy's been trying to contact you."

"Oh." Marc said as he stood up and cleared his throat before accepting the communicator and flipping it open. "Furst to O'Keefe"

"There you are. I was starting to think you left the planet or something."

"No." Marc laughed. "But we've been a little busy. So, what's up?"

"Well, I wanted to let you know I will be back on site tomorrow morning. A few friends and I have been tearing apart my plans for your R&D Department."

"Tearing them apart?" Marc asked as he watched Danny try to get up and Noah tackle him back to the sand. "Is that a good or a bad thing?"

"Good. Actually better than good. I think you are gonna love the new configuration. Think I can sit down with you and Director Page sometime tomorrow afternoon so I can show you?"

"That'd be cool." Marc replied. "Would be cool for you to finally get to meet Danny too."

"Sweet. I'll be returning to active duty just before noon. I'll go over my plans and see if they meet with your approval before we get to obtaining the materials we're gonna need."

"Obtaining them?" Marc laughed. "Sounds like you're putting a scheme in motion here."

"Don't ask, don't tell. Hehehe. Don't worry; no one is gonna get mad or anything."

"Oh, that makes me feel so much better. Thanks Billy." Marc laughed. "I'll see you tomorrow morning. Marc Out."

"That the engineer?" Danny asked while grabbing Noah's legs and toppling him face first into the sand. "I was wondering when I was going to get to mee...." He got out before Caleb and JR both jumped him and pinned his arms down. "Ooofff... get to meet him." Danny got out with a strained laugh. "You guys are crushing me."

"That'll teach you to attack my boyfriend." Caleb laughed as he rolled Danny on to his stomach, pinning his hands behind his back.

"Bad move bro." Danny laughed as he hooked Caleb's arms with his feet, pulling him backward into the sand and sitting on his chest with his legs pinning each shoulder down.

"Sweet." JR said as he backed away, laughing.

"That's no fair!" Caleb gasped. "He's had like, a million years to practice moves like that!"

"Not quite." Danny giggled. "Plenty of opponents though." He added as he stood up and extended his hand to Caleb.

"There's always next time." JR grinned as Caleb stared a hole right through him.

"Oh yeah, weren't you supposed to be helping me here?" Caleb said as he slowly began advancing on the traitor. "You're next!" He shouted just as JR turned to run for the house.

"You ok?" Marc asked as he brushed the sand off of Danny's shirt.

"Yeah." Danny laughed. "That was fun. He's a tough little guy."

"I meant are you ok, with what happened before the main event here." Marc giggled.

"Yeah. I'm not sure what to think about it all though. I mean my life wasn't really my life." Danny replied as Noah tilted his head in question.

"We had visitors tonight." Marc said to Noah. "C'mon, I'll explain in the house." He added as he put his arm around Danny's shoulders and all three slowly walked back toward the house.

A few minutes later, all five boys were in Danny's room. JR and Caleb sitting on the couch with Noah, Danny and Marc lazily lying on the bed looking out over the bay at the passing fishing boats.

"You talked to yourself and Kevin?" Noah asked as his gaze snapped back toward Danny.

"Well, it's more like... Um... The real Danny and Kevin I guess." Danny replied.

"You're no less real than the human Daniel Page you know." Marc snapped. "You were just born with his life memories."

"That's a good way to look at it. It's like he's sorta reincarnated in you dude. That's kinda nice when you think of it." Caleb said as he turned to look back out the windows.

"I like that." Danny said as he lay back on the bed and stared at the ceiling. "I hope Kevin can think of it the same way."

"He's already told you he will." Marc replied as Caleb walked over to the stereo and turned on some soft music. "To make it easier, he's gonna dream about what happened tonight." He added tapping his head.

"So we're clear to bring him online?" Caleb asked as he plopped back down on the couch.

"Not entirely." Marc replied. "Now that we're going with Austin's upgraded system from one of the oldest builds known we have to upgrade his personality imprint to compensate for the changes before hand. That's gonna take some real work to accomplish."

"Would help if we had access to the terminal at the hospital too." Noah added.

"We gotta get this mess networked." JR said with a sigh.

"Easier said than done dude." Caleb replied laying back and resting his head on the arm rest. "We're dealing with three different platforms at like five different locations now."

"That's insane." Danny sighed. "They can't all be tied together."

"Well, not if we use any one platform as the base to the network. You have to consider the different environments accessible through the Federation, multiple functions of a Vulcan Terminal and a Modern Household Workstation. Add to that we need to have access to the data stored on the old Vision Industries System and have it tied into the Transporter System for the replication setup." Caleb rambled through a yawn. "I have some ideas but they all involve more than any known Binary System can handle."

"You're not talking about that Trinary Experiment, are you?" Noah asked as he shot Caleb a disbelieving stare.

"It'll work." Caleb grinned. "And when it does we'll have one terminal that will replace the three or four we would have needed at each location. Not to mention that it'll be more expandable than anything we've ever worked with before."

"I hope you have a plan B." Noah giggled.

"Oh sure." Caleb smiled. "Smoke signals and calculators."

"Very funny." Noah laughed as he stuck out his tongue.

"Give his idea a chance Noah. Just remember, each one of the platforms he trying to cross at one time probably sounded like half baked ideas." Danny said as he looked over and noticed Marc had fallen asleep. "The first Positronic Matrix was laughed at." He said as pointed to Marc. "Not too many people are laughing at it now."

"You're right." Noah said as he stretched across the foot of the large bed. "Sorry Cal. I didn't mean to make it sound like it couldn't work."

"You can make up for it later." Caleb said as he grabbed one of the pillows on the couch and curled up to watch one of the passing boats in the distance. "God the view is relaxing in this room." He got out as he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep along with the rest of the group.

"Report Doctor Furst." Danny yawned as he entered the kitchen, his hair still mussed from his pillow.

"Bite me." Marc giggled in response as he poured Danny a coffee. "I have no clue what's going on right now."

"Well, it's quiet. That's either a good sign or it means we should be looking for cover right now." Danny yawned.

"Well, Caleb, Noah and JR are in the basement. They won't say what they're doing and won't even let me to go down there. Eli, Benji, Sammy and Sebastian are out on the back deck doing some exercises and I've been sitting right here. How's that for a report?" Marc said as he sat back down and slid Danny's coffee to him.

"Well, I guess it works." Danny giggled, taking his first sip and almost choking as the refrigerator door opened all by itself and the gallon of orange juice seemed to float out of it; heading into the living room. "What the..." He managed to get out as the refrigerator closed just as the cupboard opened and four glasses took the same route.

"Get used to it." Marc giggled as a bag of cookies that were on the table began to levitate. "I said wait for lunch!" Marc yelled as he grabbed the bag and placed it back on the table with a laugh.

"Awwwwww...." Echoed Eli, Benji, Sammy and Sebastian from the back deck. "But we're hungry now." Sammy whined as he pressed his face up against the screen of the opened window in the kitchen.

"They did that?" Danny asked, still with a dazed expression on his face.

"Probably Eli." Marc replied. "I told him not to move around too much so, he hasn't moved for anything."

"Unreal." Danny shrugged before returning his attention to his coffee as the basement door opened.

"Guess who's here." Caleb said with a grin as he ran into the kitchen and plopped into a chair.

"Well, you are now." Marc laughed.

"Funny and true but, no. I mean who else is here." Caleb replied, folding his arms.

"Dude, we've been here." Danny said with a stifled laugh.

"Ok, other than anyone in this room. Gawd!" Caleb whined.

"We're here!" Sammy shouted through the window earning a round of giggles from the group out on the back deck.

"What is it with you guys?" Caleb huffed. "Okay! Other than anyone here in the kitchen or out on the deck..." He added as Danny raised his finger. "...or in the basement..." He cut him off.

"He's good." Danny laughed as he looked at Marc and smiled. "You got me bro, who's here?"

"I am." Billy smiled as he walked into the room. "You're Danny Page, right?"

"Our Chief Engineer." Marc smiled when Danny gave him a sideways glance.

"Billy O'Keefe, right?" Danny questioned as he stood up and shook his hand. "I've heard some really interesting stuff about you."

"We're even then." Billy smiled as he pulled out an open chair and sat down, quickly sliding a P.A.D.D. toward Marc. "I brought you a gift." He said with a mischievous grin.

"Oh?" Marc smiled as he put his coffee down and looked at the display. "Regeneration Chamber? What's this all about?"

Billy's smile got wide when Caleb quickly covered his mouth and clenched his eyes shut. "You can tell them if you want Cal." Billy laughed.

"Sweet!" Caleb excitedly replied. "It's what you get when you cross a replicator for androids and an operating room!"

"Is this one of those jokes?" Danny asked, looking back and forth between Billy and Caleb. "You know, like the 'What do you get when you cross a rooster and a Telephone Pole?' Joke?" Danny laughed. "Cause I know the answer to that one."

"No." Marc replied as everyone else cracked up laughing. "Fully functioning android med lab that we can replicate units directly onto the biobed the activation would be performed on. Billy, This is amazing!" Marc said as he looked away from the P.A.D.D. "Where'd you get the idea from?"

"The McKensie activation." Billy replied with a grin. "All the rushing around to move him and stuff. It just seemed a little uncoordinated and clumsy. I was explaining what happened to a friend of mine at Terra Main when a call came in for a site to site transport. I ended out spending most of the night on those plans, with a little help."

"Yeah, Billy's got a girlfriend." Caleb sang in a mocking tone.

"She's not my girlfriend brainiac, she's just a friend from the academy." Billy replied as his face began to blush. "Besides, there was a group of us."

"Oh yeah, I forgot." Caleb giggled. "NOT your girlfriend. I got it now. You did NOT just spend the entire night with her."

"Can you guys do something with him?" Billy laughed.

"Sorry." Danny shrugged. "Even Noah can't control him."

"Oh yes I can." Noah said as he wandered into the kitchen, JR close behind. "Hey Cal, go upstairs."

"No way." Caleb replied. "This is too fun."

"Ok." Noah said as he leaned on the doorway. "I guess I'll just jump in the shower all by my self then."

"Oh?" Caleb's gaze shot back toward Noah. "Later guys!" He added and bolted out of his chair, through the doorway and up the stairs with a grin.

"See." Noah laughed. "JR, we'll be back down later."

"Go." JR laughed as he sat down in the chair Caleb had occupied. "I'll go an hang out with tha other guys."

"Now about the replication chamber..." Marc managed to say before the cookies began to levitate once again. "OKAY! I'll make lunch!" He shouted as he grabbed the bag and put it back on the table. "Guard those JR." Marc giggled as he slid the cookies across the table to him.

"What's for breakfast?" Danny asked with a snicker.

"Breakfast? We've done been up fer hours." JR tilted his head and stated. "Ya'lls gotta getta alarm clock er sumthin."

"It's my day off." Danny laughed.

"Technically sir, you are this division's Director twenty four hours a day, seven days a week." Billy said with a grin as Marc tried really hard not to laugh.

"Hey now." Danny spat as he picked up his coffee. "I just met you and you're already giving me a bad time?"

"We briefed him before you got back." Marc giggled.

"Nice, really nice." Danny laughed as Caleb came running into the kitchen. "That was quick."

"Can we use your bathroom?" Caleb asked, somewhat out of breath.

"Mine? Why?" Danny asked as he picked up his coffee and took a sip.

"Cause it's bigger." Caleb replied with a grin.

"Oh, I don't know." Danny said with a grin as he slowly took a sip from his mug.

"Oh come on. Pleeeeeaaaaaaase." Caleb whined as he knelt down beside the chair and grabbed Danny's free arm. "Please, please, please. I love you, I really, really, really do."

"Wow. He's laying it on thick." Marc laughed.

"Gross." JR said as he got up from his chair and went to join the other kids out on the back deck.

"See, you chased JR out of the room." Billy said with a laugh.

"Please Danny! Please, pretty please..."

"Oh my god, YES! Now leave me alone!" Danny shouted before he cracked up laughing.

"Sweet! Thanks Danny!" Caleb shouted before running back out of the room.

"You're too easy." Billy said as he got up from his seat and looked in the refrigerator. "Do you guys have any juice or something?"

"Yeah." Marc laughed before he walked over to the window. "Billy wants some OJ guys. Is there any left?"

"Oh sorry." Eli laughed. "I'll bring him some."

"Sit down Billy. Eli said he'll get you some." Marc said with a grin.

"Eli? The kid you operated on?" Billy questioned as he closed the refrigerator and sat down just in time to see a glass filled with orange juice float into the room and softly land on the table directly in front of him. "Ok, that answers my question." He said as he grabbed the cup. "Thanks Eli!" He shouted toward the open window, being answered by the sound of four giggling boys.

"So, what was that you were working on?" Danny asked as Billy picked up the P.A.D.D. and started tapping on its display.

"Oh yeah." Billy replied, handing Danny the P.A.D.D. "It's a combination of a transporter, replicator and a small OR. When you guys create a new android body, like we did for KC; everything involved in the activation process can be done without having to move the unit after it's replication." He said as he picked up his cup and took a sip. "When we did KC's activation, we had to rush to get him on a portable biobed, tie him into the system and then start his heart. Everything was kinda half rigged in the transporter room and I knew we could do better."

"So, this room you designed has a transporter based replicator built in?" Danny asked, scratching his head.

"In a way, yeah." Billy smiled. "It is still tied into your transporter systems at the hospital but, from conception to activation, you can do all the work right in that room. The structure is still created in the transporter buffers but the unit will materialize in place on the permanent biobed in that room. Every piece of equipment in that room can be handled by one dedicated mainframe computer; which can be accessed anywhere in your network for monitoring and for replication programming."

"Wait." Marc turned and said. "You mean I can be here at home and can work on an imprint or check on the status of a patient on the biobed directly?"

"Exactly." Billy smiled. "You like the idea so far?"

"Are you kidding?" Marc asked looking up as Caleb ran back into the kitchen. "The bathroom is upstairs bro." He said with a giggle.

"Yeah, but there are no towels." Caleb panted.

"There are some in the linen closet in either bathroom down here. I forgot the upstairs bathrooms have been used quite a bit lately." Marc replied as Caleb took a deep breath and rushed into the bathroom, returning with an arm load of towels.

"Thanks Marc." He said as he rushed out of the kitchen and disappeared through the living room again.

"Is this his first shower or something?" Billy asked with a laugh.

"No." Marc replied with a grin. "It is the first chance he's had in a long time to be alone with his boyfriend."

"Ah, I gotcha." Billy replied with a smile. "Anyway, I have access to the equipment we'll need to get this project started once the tenth floor is cleared to work in. You guys just have to get your network plans finalized so I know how they will interface with each other."

"That's being worked on." Danny said as he sat back in his seat. "Actually, Caleb, Noah and JR have been working on that idea for a while now. I'm not sure what they've accomplished yet but I do know that it's seriously experimental and Caleb wants to run it by the Ark before he shows it to me."

"The Ark?" Billy managed to ask before Caleb rushed back into the kitchen, huffing and puffing even harder than the last time.

"Oh Caleb, cool. You guys are still working on the network interface, right?" Danny asked, receiving nothing more than a nod for an answer. "Great, are we gonna be filled in anytime soon? Cause Billy designed a unit that will need to interface with the network and it would help if he knew what he was interfacing with."

"It.. it'll inter... interface with... any sys... system that we... already work wi... with." Caleb said between puffs.

"That helps." Danny said with a giggle. "Did you need something bro or do you just like sprinting around the house for fun?"

"Yeah, I need..." Caleb got out before his expression became blank "Oh Damn it! I forgot." He sighed as he shrugged his shoulders and turned to run back out of the room.

"Okaaay." Marc said as he began putting sandwiches together.

"So should I plan to interface with a Federation based network then?" Billy asked watching Danny tap at the P.A.D.D. display.

"That's probably the safe way to go. I'd plan on the actual physical setup and hold the systems for last. I don't think it'll take long before we have a better idea what our IT guys have planned." Danny said as he watched Marc pile mountains of Tuna Salad Sandwiches on the platter he had on the counter.

"True, they don't waste any time." Marc replied before turning to the open window. "LUNCH!" He yelled with a laugh as the chatter that could barely be heard coming from outside was suddenly silenced.

"Great, if we're clear here for now I'd like to run back to Terra Main and get my group on some planning." Billy said as he powered down the P.A.D.D.

"So, you have a group?" Danny asked with a laugh.

"Informally." Billy replied as he stood up. "We kinda work on all our ideas together." He managed to get out as Caleb came back into the kitchen, this time walking. "Perfect timing. Caleb, could you beam me back over to Terra Main?"

Caleb froze in mid-step before smiling and shrugging his shoulders. "I guess. You just get here though?"

"I did." Billy replied as the platter of sandwiches levitated and floated out of the room. "You guys don't plan to eat?"

"GUYS! Some of those were for us too you know!" Marc yelled with a grin. "You stayin for lunch Billy?"

"I probably should head right back before my group goes on duty." Billy answered as he stood from his seat. "I'll be back later on today if that works for you Director Page."

"It's our day off Billy." Danny laughed. "Consider this personal time and do something other than work for a while if you can."

"Yes sir." Billy said with a nod.

"By the way Chief, my Certificate of Activation doesn't have the words Director or Sir on it." Danny giggled as Billy looked at Caleb with a confused expression.

"It's the same as a Birth Certificate." Caleb shrugged off. "He's trying to be funny and won't just tell you to call him Danny; like he should. Androids are weird that way." He laughed as both Marc and Danny shot him an 'Up Yours' glare. "Come on; let's get you out of here before he subjects you to his

full stand up routine." He laughed just as he turned to quickly leave the room, walking face first into the platter of sandwiches that were hovering there on it's way back into the kitchen.

"Direct hit Eli!" Sebastian shouted from the living room with a laugh as he watched Caleb start wiping tuna out of his eyes.

"You guys are so dead!" Caleb shouted, getting a squeal from Sebastian, who quickly turned and ran back through the living room.

"Guys! Save me!" He could still be heard shouting as Caleb turned back toward the group in the kitchen.

"Gross." Caleb whined.

"They got you good." Billy chuckled as he scooped up a hand full of tuna out of Caleb's hair, nearly dropping it when every communicator in the room bellowed to life.

"RED ALERT! All divisions! RED ALERT!" Tommy's voice was heard, freezing everyone in the room. "Security Personnel stand by for deployment! All Medical Personnel prepare for incoming casualties. Report status to Headquarters immediately. This is not a drill, attack in progress. Casualties HAVE been reported!"

"Holey shit!" Danny coughed out as he fumbled to pull his communicator out of his pocket. "AI Headquarters to CIC, Page reporting in. Tommy, what's going on?" He managed to get out as Scott's voice could be heard.

"LT. Shannon; AI. Division reporting in. Condition Red acknowledged. Security Personnel standing by for orders."

"Acknowledged AI Security." Tommy replied before once again addressing Danny. "We have men down and unknown injuries. Initial scans show a large number of attackers." Tommy's voice was heard as another shouted in the background. "More attackers just beamed in!" "SHIT!" Tommy shouted, losing his professional tone. "Danny, y'all better be a gettin' sumptin figured out; the shit's done hit the fan an' all kinda Hells gonna break loose."

"It's bad." Caleb said with his eyes almost bugging out of his head. "Tommy doesn't rattle that easy." He said looking at Billy.

"Tommy, stand by for a second." Danny quickly said before looking at Marc, not bothering to mute his end of the call. "Marc, tell me the hospital is usable."

Marc opened his mouth but got no words out as Caleb shook his head in disbelief. "I... I'm not sure. They couldn't have had enough time to seal the building yet." He finally managed to say.

"We need to know, like now." Danny replied before directing his attention back to his communicator. "Tommy, I need ONE minute to assess our situation. I will report back. Danny out." He said before quickly flipping his communicator shut. "Sixty seconds guys. We need to halt the contractors, recall

Medical Personnel and ready ourselves for incoming." He barked as he stood up from his seat. "Caleb, wipe the seafood off and get Noah down here. It's time to go to work."

Notes from the Author:

An angel watches... Several in fact :)

Ok, I know I'm gonna get some flack about the length of this chapter as well as the abrupt ending from some readers. There is a master plan in control of the CSU that these guys completely support. That's probably why they became the AI division in the first place. Thankfully, Clan Short has a couple of angels on staff. If they didn't, I really don't know how Danny would have ever come to grips with himself, or even with the hope of bringing Kevin's imprint online without them. I know quite a few of you saw this coming. (Thanks for all of the awesome emails a bunch of you sent by the way :) He may still have a little bit more to come to terms with, but it looks like we may finally see Kevin in person sometime soon. A bit of Danny's past joins him once again.

Now, about the ending... I know this chapter is about half the length of one of my normal chapters. (Normal... LOL! Like there's ever been anything normal going on in there...) This time it was extremely unavoidable, as time will show us all with the events to follow. All I can say is "Hold on tight" cause the CSU as a whole is about to show us all what kind of a world this is, and what our gang plans to do about it. Keep a close eye on the other CSU stories. That's the only info I can offer ;)

As always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our "Clan Archivist & Editor":

Clan Archivist Review Notes:

This was not what I was expecting when I started to read this chapter; I was totally amazed at what I was reading.

If there are any errors left in this chapter it is because I became so engrossed in what I was reading I missed them.

The depth of the angst that Danny was going through came through loud and clear. I would not want to be in his shoes.

This is another wonderful example of adding depth to characters. I am continually amazed at the depth and the amount of

life these characters have and how they continue to grow. It is almost as if they could climb right out of the Monitor

and say Hi.

This story continues to keep me enthralled except when there are endings like this one! All I can say is write faster

Dear Author write faster. I even wrote to Mr. Jeff's Fort and asked him where the rest of the chapter was. He told me I had all of it; I cried. This has to be one of his best if not his best chapter and I thank him for it. Til the next chapter, TSL aka The Story Lover.

"Chapter 15 - *All Hell Breaks Loose (Part 1)*"
Portions contributed by ACFan, Akeentia & Darkstar
This chapter is dedicated to 5 Years of "Memories" by: ACFan...
...here's to many more!

I'm guessing by now some of you guys have figured out that anytime I'm allowed to address you personally, either something really good or really bad is about to happen. I can't say which yet but, I can tell you that we're in for a bumpy ride this time. So much has happened in the short time that has passed since Mikey brought me on as his assistant. Poor Pablito. I don't think he's closed his mouth since the situation our family stepped into was explained to us. Just like the living angels we watch over, we're gonna do our best where we can. I just pray it will be enough...

~Davie~

AI Division - One minute later:

"...thanks Tommy." Danny said as he closed his communicator just in time for it to alert of another incoming call. "Danny here." He got out with a sigh.

"Danny, this is Jordy. We've got a youth AI in process of shutdown. We're bringing him in."

"We?" Danny asked as he rubbed his eyes with his free hand. "Dude, you come here and we're putting you to work. You know that, right?"

"You're getting sixteen unskilled sets of hands." Jordy replied. "Where do we need to go?"

"Beam to the Naval Hospital. Terra Main has the ER's coordinates. Just give us a few minutes before you beam in cause we aren't sure what the situation is yet." Danny replied before Marc nodded his head.

"Gotcha. Jordy out."

"Ok guys, report." Danny said as he closed his communicator.

"Hospital construction has been halted. Any construction crew with medical experience is now standing by." Marc quickly reported.

"Some of them have experience?" Danny asked as he tilted his head.

"If they can apply a band-aid, I told them to be ready." Marc shot back as he flipped open his communicator and wandered into the hallway leading into the living room.

"Right." Danny nodded as Caleb and Noah rushed into the room. "Did you guys raise Jerry?"

"No, we've been helping Billy get the transporters back online. They had some sort of surge that knocked them offline after he beamed in." Caleb replied.

"Wasted time." Danny grumbled, shaking his head. "Ark, can you hear me?" He spoke out loud.

<Of course I can Danny.>

"Oh yeah, dumb question." Danny sighed. "Ark, we have a serious problem."

"Several serious problems." Marc spoke up, as Caleb and Noah rushed past him and back out of the room.

<Understandable Marc. I have monitored 8 life threatening injuries, 4 confirmed casualties immediately being prepared for transport and your staff is having difficulty acquiring an acceptable number of medical personnel to assist.>

"Well, at least someone is on top of the situation." Danny sighed. "Ark, could you teleport my group to the hospital? Our transporters are down and we don't have time to address them."

<That would not be a problem. Would it also be helpful to teleport the staff your team has recently contacted to the same location as well?>

"You know it." Danny almost shouted. "Ark, I could kiss you right now!"

<If you think that will help.>

"You sure you aren't human?" Marc giggled.

<Absolutely not.>

"Just checking." Marc said as Noah and Caleb rushed back into the kitchen; each carrying medical kits. "Ark, do you have anyone available that could assist us at the hospital? We're really desperate for help right now."

<I do have one person available. I can have him on site when your crew arrives. How soon would you like to arrive?>

"Right now, if possible." Danny smiled. "Our crew is ready."

<Very well then.> Ark replied as the group suddenly found themselves in the lobby of the hospital.

"What the..." A boy wearing what appeared to be sub-zero gear managed to say as he toppled over. "Thanks for the warning, Ark!" He shouted as he sat up and brushed himself off.

"You ok?" Noah asked as he and Caleb helped the boy to his feet.

"Yeah." He replied as he quickly stripped off his hood and facial protection. "Ark! There'd better be a good reason..." He managed to say as Ark cut him off.

<Excuse me Rylan, Marc you have an urgent message from Cory Short.>

"Thanks Ark, put him through please." Marc replied as the group began to gather around.

Just as Marc was about to open his mouth, Cory's voice abruptly cut him off. "Marc, you have critical incomings NOW! If you can't handle it find someone who can, immediately."

"Dude we'll be ready. How many?" Marc replied.

"It looks like ..." Cory started to reply, pausing when a bone-chilling Eagle war cry echoed over Marc's subvocal. As Marc's eyes grew wide, Cory continued. "It looks like more than any of us want to think about."

"Gotcha bro;" Marc replied softly. With a determined tone he added "Whatever you got, send them our way. We'll be ready one way or the other."

"Thanks." Cory whispered as the link went silent.

"Get ready, we have incoming." Marc said as the group rushed for the ER. "Start out by uncovering and testing the equipment!" He was barely able to get out as a scream from down the hall forced them to run faster.

"GET DOCTOR FURST! WE NEED HELP! NOW!" Nurse Patty's voice could be heard causing the group to break out in a full speed run.

Turning the corner into the ER, the group froze and gazed at something none of them could have been prepared to see. It was as if they had all just stepped directly into a nightmare as Nurse Patty was frantically working on an adult woman who appeared to have a gunshot wound to her chest. Without as much as a split second to notice the other bodies, more teleported in.

"Oh shit!" Marc gasped, as he rushed to a small child who had also suffered a direct hit to the chest. "Danny, grab a helper and get on the bleeders. Noah, try to find us some help. We need more hands. Caleb! If they're not bleeding, try to assess their condition. New guy, do you have a name?"

"Rylan." The boy replied as he finally dropped the last of his gear on the floor, training his bright purple eyes on Marc.

"Great. Rylan, work with Caleb." Marc shouted, as he waved to Dr. Herron who was already hefting an adult male onto a biobed. "What do you have Chris?" He asked as he rushed off.

"Call Aunt Teri. She might be able to help." Caleb said as he quickly gave Noah a hug.

"Yeah, good idea." Noah said with a shaky voice as he pulled his communicator out.

"FYS Director, Short." Teri's voice could be heard.

"Aunt Teri! Can Ark teleport you over here? We need help with the incoming injuries at the hospital; they're coming in too fast!"

"Oh my God can Ark find the people on the other end of the call I'm on?"

<I can Noah, and I have their current locations already.> Ark's voice suddenly stated through his sub-vocal device.

"Ark has their location." Noah replied. "Please, Aunt Teri?"

After a moment of silence on the other end, Teri replied; "Tell Ark to give me one minute to prepare the people on the other end of the line; as soon as I hang up with them Aunt Carrie and I are ready."

"Thanks Aunt Teri." Noah replied before closing his communicator. "Thanks Ark."

<I will monitor their status and teleport them as soon as they are ready.>

"Aunt Teri's on the way." Noah smiled as Danny waved to him for help, leaving Caleb and Rylan behind.

"You're with me, I guess." Caleb said as he handed the small boy a medical tricorder and they both rushed toward a small brown haired child. "You know how to use that thing?"

"I'll manage." Rylan replied, as he began tapping away at the unit's display. "This thing just scans, I think." he huffed as he looked at Caleb with an aggravated shrug. "Where are your Medbots?"

"Medbots?" Caleb asked in reply as he motioned to Rylan to help lift the child onto a nearby portable biobed. "You mean androids? Marc and Danny are right over there."

"Those aren't Medbots." Rylan sighed as he tossed the tricorder on a nearby cart.

"You don't need it?" Caleb asked as he scanned the small boy and began tapping on the biobed's controls.

"I can't read it." Rylan replied, as he quickly looked around the room. "Look, just tell me where your Medbots are and I'll get them operational."

"What the fuck are Medbots?" Caleb almost shouted, as another boy in the room, who was bleeding profusely from his arm, cried out in pain. "Look, what we have right here is all that we have for equipment. So; are you helping me or not?!?"

"I'll help." Rylan said as he stepped away from the table. "Ark, this team is understaffed for the situation and working with inadequate equipment. I don't have the time to deal with the rudimentary electronic toys they have, we need Medbots, at least 20 of them, as soon as possible."

"Toys?" Caleb just barely managed to say before a group of robots appeared and strategically spread throughout the room to assist or take over. "Whoah." He said, as one gently pushed him out of the way and began to work on the small child on the biobed.

"Does that help?" Rylan asked as he crossed his arms and smiled.

"Um... Yeah... Wow. What are these things?" Caleb stammered.

"Something that I can't believe I wasn't sent here with." Rylan huffed. "I'm not a doctor and I can't read your language, so your equipment is useless to me. I CAN work with these." He boasted as a Medbot approached and picked the child with the gunshot wound up off the floor. "Come with me and I'll show you what we need to do to maintain them. Number twenty five has a short in it's laser suture assembly."

"I'm with you then." Caleb weakly smiled. "I'm not a doctor either."

"That's obvious." Rylan laughed. "I'd guess you were a fisherman by the smell, unless your people have strange taste in body scents."

"Um... No." Caleb blushed. "I'll explain later."

"Danny!" Marc shouted, as he and nurse Patty worked frantically alongside a Medbot on the chest wound of the adult male.

"Yeah bro?" Danny replied as he was replaced by another Medbot the second he stepped away from his patient.

"Unless we get more than these units can handle, we should probably focus on identifying some of these patients." Marc said without breaking his concentration.

"Sergeant Mike Reynolds of the Campbell County Sheriff's Department." Nurse patty said, causing everyone to stop and stare at her. "What? Don't you guy's watch the news?"

"Oh my god." Noah gasped as he rushed over to the table. "She's right. Marc, we saw him on TV the other day, remember?"

"The guy who those religious people were protesting against?" Marc asked as the Medbot attempted to push his hand out of it's way. "No no, tin can. You stay on the pulmonary artery." Marc said with a grin.

"I detect metal fragments throughout this patients entire chest cavity." The robot replied.

"Oh my god, it speaks." Marc said as he glanced down at the biobed's display. "Patty, we need to work faster or this guy's gonna bleed out."

"Excuse me." Another Medbot said, as it slipped into Marc's position and in almost a blur both began removing the fragments while Nurse Patty continued to perform artificial respiration.

"It would have stepped in sooner but it needed a repair first." Rylan said, as he and Caleb watched on with a smile.

"You're founder, aren't you?" Danny asked, as he tilted his head at the small boy.

"I am." Rylan smiled. "If I'm not mistaken, you are Council Scientia as well as this team's leader."

"You know who I am?" Danny asked as Marc waved them to an unattended patient.

"Sure I do, Ark has filled me in on recent events and your name has come up a few times, as well as the names of a few of your team members." Rylan said as he looked at Marc and smiled.

Just as Marc was about to open his mouth, Ark's voice came in over his subvocal. <Marc, I am holding injured attackers in my buffers. Do you wish to treat them also?>

"Oh god." Marc sighed as he looked around the bustling ER. "We have enough hands and bots to handle more incoming injured. Teleport them here and we'll handle them."

"Fifteen, eighteen and eleven, prepare for more injuries." Rylan shouted as he grabbed Caleb's arm and pulled him toward the idle Medbots.

"Marc, we have Jordy's team in Chicago reporting ready for transport." Noah said as he approached the group again.

"Downed android." Marc moaned. "I should take that one."

"Noah, Jordy's group is prepared to help out. Can you receive them and team them with members who have medical experience?" Danny asked.

"I can try. Don't forget, Aunt Teri is teleporting in still. I think she's bringing some help too." Noah replied before rushing out of the room.

"We can use all the help we can get, Dude. Let's get back to work." Danny said as a fresh group of injuries appeared and were quickly surrounded by the remaining three Medbots.

"Deceased, deceased, deceased..." Number fifteen said expressionlessly, as it began sorting through the bodies. "Critical injuries, head trauma, internal bleeding..." It continued to report, as other Medbots or people rushed to attend the injured.

"It passed right over that kid!" Caleb shouted, as he rushed to what appeared to be a 6 or 7 year old boy with severe injuries across his face and upper torso.

"Number fifteen! Why did you pass over this child?" Rylan asked as Caleb pulled the boy toward a bi-bed.

"Patient has a four percent chance of survival." The bot stated as it continued to sort through the recent injuries.

"I'll work on him!" Caleb shouted as he began scanning the boy for injuries. "Are you gonna help me?"

Rylan saw the tears welling up in Caleb's eyes before looking at the busy Medbot. "It says he's not going to survive."

"It said he has a chance!" Caleb barked before wiping away the tears with the back of his hand. "That machine doesn't have the right to dictate who lives and who dies."

"Help my son. Please help him." A man pleaded, gaining Rylan's attention.

"Well..." Rylan said, as he looked the man over. "There is very little chance your son can survive his injuries. Wait a minute, aren't you a part of the hostile party? How was your son even involved?"

"He had to see what happens to those who go against the lord's will." The man replied smugly.

"He wanted to be a part of this slaughter?" Rylan asked, as he knelt down next to the man.

"No, I made him come." The man stated as Caleb continued working on the boy. "He had to see what happens to perverts. He had to see for himself so, I made him come."

"You gave his life for your cause." Rylan said as the Medbot turned its attention to the man. "Good job Daddy, good job." Rylan said sarcastically as he nodded his head. "Number fifteen, what is this man's chance of recovery without medical attention?"

"Percentage of survival, fifty two percent without assistance." The Medbot replied.

"Assist Caleb with the child." Rylan ordered the Medbot. "This man gambled with his son's life and lost, let's see how lucky he is now."

"You can't do that." The man said, as he began to cough up blood.

"I can't?" Rylan said in a dead serious tone. "We can raise your son's chance of survival by diverting medical assistance. That's what you asked me to do." He continued as he stood up. "Proceed number fifteen. Assist Caleb."

"AUNT TERI!" Noah cried as Teri and a group of people suddenly appeared in the ER.

After looking around the room, Teri hugged Noah before pulling Marc aside. "Where can you use us?"

"It might be a good idea if you put together a non-critical team and set up operations in the Emergency waiting room. That area is set up and has an operational triage." Marc said with a smile as Teri ruffled his hair.

"You heard him, let's get to work!" Teri shouted as the small group made its way out of the ER seconds before Jordy and his team arrived with the failing android.

"Danny!" Jordy shouted as he almost lost his grip on the failing android.

"I got him." Marc said as he helped Jordy lift the android onto a gurney. "What's his name?"

"Teddy, we found him unable to remain conscious for more than a few minutes at a time. I knew what that meant so; we called you." Jordy said as Marc motioned to the far side of the room.

"Help me get him to the table and we'll see what we can do for him." Marc said as a loud crash made everyone in the room jump.

"Stay down!" Caleb shouted to the young boy's father who had attempted to stand up but was too weak and fell into a cart with supplies on it.

"I need help." The man cried.

"What's the status of your patient, Cal?" Danny asked, stepping over the boy's father without even looking at him.

"This child now has a twelve percent chance of survival." Number Fifteen stated coldly.

"Not good enough." Caleb almost whispered as he looked at Danny, his tears still staining his cheeks. "It looks like he got hit close range by a shot gun."

"I told him to stand back." The boy's father whimpered. "Little crybaby just had to run to see if the little fagot boy was hurt. Ran right in front of me."

"Wait a minute." Danny said, turning to acknowledge the man finally. "You shot your own son?"

"It was an accident!" The man tried to shout, before beginning to choke uncontrollably.

"If he survives, can I kill him?" Caleb asked with a stone cold expression on his face.

"No, don't." Rylan said as he patted Caleb on the back.

"I won't." Caleb sniffled before looking at the man. "Even if he does deserve it."

Rylan looked toward Danny with a dead serious expression. "Council Scientia; Does the Council still send criminals of this nature to serve on the moon outpost?"

"Moon Outpost? No clue, maybe it's something that should be discussed though." Danny replied as he looked at the man. "I'd personally like to see him survive to answer for all of this."

As the words were leaving Danny's lips, Austin and his group teleported in and took a good look around the room. "Dad, where can we help?" He asked as soon as he spotted Marc.

"Austin! Sweet!" Marc said with a smile. "Send your group to see Danny and have him get someone to help with those two injuries you brought with you. The rest can go help out your grandmother in the waiting room."

"Ok Dad." Austin said as he waved most of his group through the swinging doors before spotting Danny. "Uncle Dan, Matty and Sammy need help."

"I don't need help. Timmy fixed my arm already!" Matty said as he raised his splinted arm proudly.

"He sure did." Danny said with a grin as he wiped off his hands. "Austin, there's an open biobed if you want to check out Matty, I'll have a look at this guy's arm." He said ruffling Sammy's hair.

"You're a doctor?" Sammy asked as Austin led Matty in the other direction.

"Yup." Danny said as he motioned for Sammy to take a seat. "I have to cut your shirt open, so I can get a better look." Danny said as he rushed to find a Medkit that wasn't in use. Just as he was about to open the kit, he noticed the boy was craning his neck, looking around the room. The entire time clutching his arm in pain. "You looking for someone?"

"Have you seen my Dad?" Sammy asked, continuing his search.

"No clue, what's your Dad's name?" Danny asked as he started cutting the boy's shirt up the side.

"Mike." Sammy replied, still pulling against Danny's cutting to look around.

"I can find out for you, but first, I need you to sit still so I don't cut more than just your shirt." Danny said with a smile as Sammy looked at the scissors and then up at Danny. "What's his last name and I'll have my team try to locate him for you.

"Reynolds, same as mine." Sammy said as his gaze slipped toward the floor.

"I think I've heard the name." Danny said; remembering the condition of his father the last time he saw him was not good. As shouting near the doorway suddenly grew louder, he waved a Medbot over to take over before ruffling Sammy's hair and smiling warmly. "Tell ya what; I'll try to find your Dad for you but, you've gotta let our doctors fix you up first. Deal?"

"Okay." Sammy said in just over a whisper. "If you find him, can you come get me. I gotta see him."

"I promise." Danny said as one of the Medbots approached. "Gunshot wound." Danny said as he stepped out of a Medbot's path as it was going to take over. "I won't be far away, ok?"

"I NEED HELP HERE! NOW!" Marc shouted, causing Danny to turn and run.

"What do you have, Bro?" Danny asked as he met with Marc who was covered in blood and surrounded by Medbots.

"Three severe injuries, grenade explosion." Marc barked as Danny looked at the three new arrivals.

"Oh my god, Adam and Kelly." Danny gasped, once seeing the battered faces of the three boys as the Medbots sprang into action. "This isn't good, Bro. Our guys are starting to come in." Danny managed to get out as a Medbot left the group and rushed over toward Rylan.

"Sir, the three recent arrivals are too badly damaged to be treated in this facility. All three have suffered multiple lacerations on over 73% of their bodies as well as significant internal injuries. We estimate on average they have less than a 4% chance of survival in their current condition. This estimation is not in consideration to the amount of blood that has already been lost. How do you suggest we proceed?" The Medbot questioned.

"What are our options?" Danny asked when Rylan looked at him with an expressionless gaze.

"Suggest relocation to our facility to begin generation of replacement organs to increase probability of survival to 9%." The Medbot replied.

"Hardly seems worth it." Danny sighed. "Isn't there anything more we can do for them?"

"There is." Rylan shrugged before turning his attention to Caleb and his small patient. "Medbot, is Vifer an option in this situation?"

"It is, Sir." The Medbot replied. "All three would survive the procedure as well as have an estimated 93% chance of recovery."

"Vifer? Like Nyo?" Danny questioned as Caleb looked up from his small patient with wide eyes.

"Very much so." The Medbot replied. "The procedure would allow all three to heal at an extremely accelerated rate. At this time, none are strong enough to survive the healing process naturally."

"Your decision Council Scientia." Rylan stated, without turning back toward Danny.

"Gee, thanks." Danny shrugged. "Proceed Medbot, and thank you for the recommendation."

"What the hell?" Caleb nearly shouted. "Why can't they take this kid too? What, he's not important enough?"

"No Caleb, that's not why..." Rylan began to reply before Caleb cut him off.

"Danny! Make them take him too!" Caleb shouted, freezing Danny in mid step.

"That wasn't an option for this patient." Danny carefully replied.

"That's not fair!" Caleb cried as he looked at the small boy's face. "He's just a kid."

"He's too far gone." Rylan carefully stated. "You know that. He has severe damage throughout his head and chest. If he even survives, he'll have severe brain damage. You can see that yourself, you need to accept it as fact."

"I'll help him myself, then!" Caleb shouted before harshly grabbing the end of the portable biobed to roll it out of the ER. "You guys don't want to help me, I'll do it alone!" He barked as he pushed both out of his way.

"Caleb, wait!" Noah shouted as Caleb slammed through the doors and out of sight. "Should I go after him?"

"Do you think you can get through to him?" Danny asked, throwing his hands in the air.

"Not when he's like that." Noah sighed. "I don't think I've ever seen him like that before."

"I can respect his decision to try." Rylan said, looking back at the doorway. "Noble, even if it is futile."

"Can I get something for pain down here if it isn't too much to ask during this sweet little self back patting session?" The boy's father asked with a sneer from the floor.

"Oh. I'm sorry sir." Danny replied, over exaggerating his concern for the man's condition. "Are you in pain?"

"Are you really that stupid, Kid? Of course I am." The man barked just before being wracked with another fit of coughing.

"Sounds bad." Noah said, calmly, as he looked at Danny.

"Yeah it does." Danny replied, kneeling down next to the man. "Where does it hurt?"

"Right here." The man whimpered, pointing to the obvious wound on his chest.

"Here?" Danny asked sweetly, as he jabbed the spot hard with his middle and index finger; causing the man to yelp in pain. "I know what we can do for him." He continued as he dug in his pocket and pulled out a tongue depressor. "Bite down on this, when it hurts." He said with a smile, as he gingerly stuck the piece of wood in the man's mouth and patted him on the shoulder above the wound as hard as he could. "That should help."

"Very nice, Doctor." Noah managed to say without laughing. "I'll bring him a lollipop later."

"Guys?" Austin said as he rushed by. "Is it just me or, does it smell like tuna in here?"

"Oh." Noah finally laughed. "That's my boyfriend's new cologne."

"Okaaay, forget I asked." Austin said as Danny and Noah began laughing uncontrollably.

Just then Timmy and Antonio teleported into the ER, startling the small group. "Unca Danny!!!" Timmy almost screamed as he dove into Danny's arms. "Daddy's hurt!" He managed to get out before sniffling.

"Antonio?" Danny asked in question toward the expressionless gaze of Antonio.

"He's injured." Antonio said simply. "He sent us here where we'd be safe. Y'all need help?"

"We could use some help." Danny replied, tilting his head. "Wouldn't you rather go with Timmy to see Granma?"

"No." Antonio said after taking a deep breath. "I wanna work."

"Ok. Austin, could you team with Antonio while I bring your brother out to be with your Grandmother?"

"No problem." Austin replied as he hugged Timmy and covered his warpaint clad body with the lab coat he had just thrown on himself. "I'll come out and see ya as soon as I can."

"Otay." Timmy replied weakly as the gathering broke up.

Just as Noah was about to turn back toward the patient he was working on, his communicator went off. "This is Noah." He sighed.

"Noah, This is Jerry. what's going on over there?"

"Well, if you'd answer your communicator, you'd know that we're under red alert and buried in injured people." Noah snapped.

"Mom made me leave it in the room!" Jerry whined. "Look, I called because there's something wrong with Joey."

"What's wrong with him?" Marc looked up and shouted.

"Is he ok?" Noah asked walking closer to the table Marc and two Medbots were desperately trying to work on a small child.

"He won't stop crying and his face looks funny."

"Noah! Take over." Marc said reaching over and grabbing Noah's communicator. "Jerry, how does his face look funny?"

"He's red and puffy from crying but, it's like he's got streaks of other colors. Almost like he's bruising from the inside or something. I don't know what's causing it and he won't say anything other than he wants his brothers."

"Isn't KC with you?" Marc asked, scratching his head.

"Yeah, but he's asking for Timmy and Austin. I don't know what to do."

"Get him here." Marc said quickly. "His brothers are here right now. Besides, we need you and your family."

"Ok, thanks Marc. Jerry out."

"What else could go wrong?" Marc asked as he handed Noah back his communicator.

"More incoming wounded, these are our own guys!" Danny reported as he rushed back into the ER.

"You asked." Noah shot back, as more bodies appeared in the middle of the room.

"Jesus, those are our cadets." Marc spat.

"Clear the non-criticals, we need beds!" Noah shouted as everyone in the room scrambled.

"Broken Arm, deceased, internal bleeding..." A Medbot started calling out as each waiting doctor and Medbot received a new patient.

"Sit down." Noah said as he approached a uniformed teen with the broken arm.

"There was too many of them." The teen aged officer began to cry. "We couldn't hold them off..."

"Relax, Dude. You guys did your best." Noah soothed as he splinted the boy's arm and began wrapping it just as Cory appeared and plopped down hard in the seat next to where he was working.

"WHY!" Cory screamed in agony. "What the hell did WE ever do to deserve THIS?"

Noah turned from his patient and took one look at Cory before turning and shouting; "SHIT! DANNY! Get over here!!! Cory's bad!"

"NO!" Cory replied. "Don't worry about me; help the rest of these kids!"

"Yeah right." Danny said as he ran over and began scanning Cory. "Oh my god dude, you're a mess."

"I'm fine; take care of the guys who are really hurt." Cory argued.

"Number fifteen!" Danny turned and shouted. "Take Patriarch Short; sedate him if he resists." Danny got out as he turned back to look at Cory. "Argue with me Bro, I dare you."

"Oh shit." Noah mumbled. "You sure you guys aren't twins or sumthin?" He got out as the officer Noah was working on snickered.

Cory hung his head and began sobbing again. "Too many guys have died. I've lost a brother I promised would never get hurt ever again. I don't deserve a doctor."

"Lost a brother?" Danny questioned as he halted the Medbot's advance. "I haven't seen any casualties in close family yet and everyone has been brought through us, so far."

"Adam didn't make it here?" Cory asked through his sobs before painfully pulling himself into a ball.

"Oh." Danny replied as he put his arms carefully around Cory. "Ark, could you give me a status report on Adam Short and his team please?" Danny asked softly. "I'd like Cory Short to be able to here the report as well." He got out as Cory looked at him questioningly.

<Certainly Danny. Adam, Kelly and Dean are all in stable condition and will be undergoing their procedures individually. All three are expected to make full recoveries. Would you like a more detailed report?>

"Procedures?" Cory asked, moaning with pain as he extended his leg.

<Yes Cory. After the Medbots assessed their conditions, it was determined that they were in need of assistance beyond your modern medical practice. They are undergoing the procedure to make them Vifer to give them the ability to heal.>

"Noooooooo " Cory moaned. "I won't stop it, but I'm taking all the blame for this."

"Stop what?" Danny asked, as he held Cory at arms length. "Ark said they were gonna be fine."

"I broke my promise, Danny." Cory sobbed. "I promised Adam I'd never do nothin to let him get hurt ever again. Now he's gonna live almost forever and it wasn't his choice, it was my fault."

"Are you nuts?" Danny quickly stood up and almost shouted. "It's a frigin war out there and you DID NOT start it. These people would be dead if it weren't for you. Not recovering, DEAD! Every single one of us, including Adam was involved, not because you dragged us in, but because we chose to be here."

"Excuse me." A small boy with his arm in a sling softly said, instantly stopping Danny's rant. "Are you really Cory Short?"

Cory nodded weakly. "Yeah; I'm Cory."

"My dad is alive because of you, and so is the rest of my family." The boy began. "I'm alive because you came when I called and asked for help. He's sayin we'd be dead if you and your family didn't help. If you think it's all your fault then it is. It's all your fault that we are still here and not dead in our house right now." He continued, raising his voice a bit. "You help kids and people and if anyone should feel responsible it should be me, cause I called ya all but if you hadn't come...if you hadn't..." His voice trailed off as he looked toward the floor.

Cory tried to look at the boy talking to him. "I can't see you; my vision is all blurry. Who are you?"

"My name is Sammy" the boy said softly.

Cory winced as pain shot through his body. "Timmy and Austin got you guys out okay? I wish I'd known those bastards planned this; I woulda never let you get close enough to the house to get hurt."

"But they're part of what you do." Sammy said, looking back at Cory. "They wouldn't have come if you didn't show them the way. How can you think that? We wouldn't be alive if you hadn't come and if you hadn't taught them to care! And in case no one ever told ya, no one can see the future, so blaming yourself for not being able to is just stupid! Ah... sorry. I mean... you know..." He said, his face now blushing.

"He's right, you know." Noah said quickly as he continued to wrap the cadet's arm, which now had about four pounds of gauze wrapped around it since he wasn't paying attention.

"That musta been some wound." Sammy giggled, stopping Noah from working any further up the guy's arm.

"Nice job, bone head. Leave some gauze for the rest of the patients" Danny laughed. He then turned back to Cory. "So, you gonna let us work on you or do I have to have you sedated?"

"Please let em help ya, You gotta get better. You're really needed." Sammy said, as he stepped a little closer and placed his hand on Cory's shoulder.

Cory barely managed to speak; his voice betraying how bad off he really was. "Thank ... you ... Sammy. Danny ... I'm ... feeling ... woozy."

"Blood loss will do that to ya." Danny said as he motioned to the Medbot that was still standing by. "This guy will get you fixed up."

The Medbot picked Cory up, revealing a pool of blood from the wounds he managed to re-open on his leg. "Danny ... take ... care ... of ... Timmy." he managed to whisper before passing out.

"Oh shit he's bleeding out bad." Sammy said, looking at the shocked expressions on Danny and Marc's faces before turning to follow Cory.

"You shoulda just sedated him dude." Noah said, crossing his arms and watching the Medbot carry Cory's limp body to the biobed with Sammy trailing close behind.

"If I had, that little guy wouldn't have put him in his place and we'd have to do it on our own." Danny replied with a grin. "It was better this way."

"You sayin we wouldn't have gotten our way with him?" Noah asked.

"Yup." Danny laughed and turned toward the cadet who was still watching. "Noah, Let me know when the cocoon is finished."

"Should I keep going? I mean I have enough here to wrap the other arm too." Noah snickered, earning another laugh from his patient.

"OW! Don't make me laugh." The teen said as he wiped away his now drying tears. "Do you guys have any doctors here, or just comedians?" He asked with a laugh.

"Yes." Danny simply replied with a smile before returning his attention to his patient.

"Director Page, Doctor Owens and his family just transported in." Nurse Patty said just as the doors to the ER burst open.

"Dude, he needs help." Jerry said as he ran into the room with Joey in his arms; his parents and KC running along behind him.

"Ok, put him on the open biobed over here, and I'll get Marc or Austin on him." Danny said as he shrugged his shoulders seeing another Medbot in his place. "Or I'll just take him." He sighed as Jerry rushed to get Joey comfortable.

"When did this start little guy?" Danny asked as he looked Joey over.

"We wend swimmin an I fewd scawed. Unca Danny, whewe's Dimmy an Ausdin?" Joey asked through snuffles as he hugged his teddy bear tightly around the neck.

"Austin's down the other side of the ER and Timmy is out in the waiting room with your Grandma." Danny answered as he looked at the biobed's readout and scratched his head. "Jerry, I'm not seeing anything unusual except a slight elevation in his body temperature and heart rate."

"That could be caused by the crying alone." Mary said out loud to no one in particular as KC wandered over to a stool and plopped down.

"That's what I was thinking." Danny replied with a sigh before leaning over the bed and kissing Joey's forehead. "We'll get ya fixed up buddy, don't worry."

"Can I see Ausdin? Pwease?" Joey whined.

"I'll go get him." Danny replied before turning to the rest of the group. "You guys ok to go to work?"

"Where can we help?" Mary asked with a tired smile.

"Jerry, we need all the help we can get in here. Would you be ok with taking on some of the injured?" Danny asked with a concerned look. "Or do you want to stay here with Joey?"

"I can work." Jerry said walking over to the bed. "You'll let me know when you find out what's wrong with Joey, right?"

"Duh!" Danny laughed. "The second we know, you will. I promise dude." He added as he looked back at Jerry's parents. "Jon, you have any medical training?"

"Yup." Jon replied with a grin. "First response EMT. It's required training for all rangers."

"Sweet." Danny smiled. "Cory's Mom has a small team working out in the waiting room. I know she could use some help in triage."

"Then she has some help." Jon smiled before turning to leave the room.

"That was easy." Danny laughed before looking back at Mary.

"Put him in any situation and he rolls with it." Mary laughed. "How bout I recall some people and get the cafeteria up and running. With this many people we're gonna need food. You think O'Keefe can transport the contents of my freezer to our kitchen here?"

<The food supplies are already at your location Danny.>

"Jesus Ark." Danny gasped. "We're gonna owe you a box of cookies when this is all over."

<I do not eat cookies Danny. That fact should be fairly obvious.>

"Oh." Danny giggled as Mary tilted her head at him in question. "Can I have them then?"

<Is that a serious question?>

"No." Danny giggled before looking at Mary. "Do you think it would be possible to make up a small box of cookies for Ark?"

"Um... Sure." Mary replied. "You feeling ok Danny?"

<That would be a serious question.>

"I knew it, a sense of humor." Danny laughed. "Ok. Mary, Ark says the food is in the kitchen already and we need to make it some cookies so I can eat them."

"Sure he did." Mary replied before turning back toward the doors. "I'll be in the kitchen." She continued as she stifled a snicker.

"Unka Danny, Gwanma dhinks you'we dawkin do youwsewf." Joey said just above a whisper.

"That's ok." Danny loudly whispered back. "As long as we get the cookies." He got out finally getting a giggle out of Joey. "KC, you wanna hang here with your little brother while I see if I can free Austin up?"

"Whatever." KC huffed as he crossed his arms and sighed.

"You ok dude?" Danny asked as he ruffled Joey's hair and hopped off the bed.

Joey sniffled once again before saying in a raspy voice; "Daddy's mad ad Casey and said some mean sduff do him."

"He did?" Danny tilted his head in question toward Jerry who was still standing next to the bed.

"No worries dude." KC said rolling his eyes. "Just don't leave me alone with Joey too long. You know, so I can't be too much of a bad influence on him." He managed to get out as Austin came into the room.

"Oh please." Jerry growled. "Like you care what I think."

"Guys, I wanna talk to you later ok?" He asked before looking back at Austin. "I was just coming to get you."

"Yeah, I heard Joey wasn't feeling too good." Austin said as he glanced at Joey and grinned. "He's fine."

"Well... Um... Yeah, the biobed says he's fine but look at his face." Danny said getting a giggle out of Austin. "What?"

"Have you looked at my face? Or maybe Timmy's?" Austin said pointing at his freckled, war paint covered face. "It kinda runs in the family now, doesn't it?"

"I god face painds?" Joey asked as he ran his fingers across his cheeks.

"Yup." Austin laughed. "You have my DNA and I have Timmy's. Maybe we should get you out there with Timmy. He can probably explain better than I can." Austin said before turning toward KC. "You look pissed. Everything ok?"

"No." KC said as he quickly stood up and walked over to Joey. "I'm goin for a walk little guy. I'll catch you later on, provided your Dad lets me." He got out before kissing Joey on the forehead and rushing out of the room.

"Oh, please..." Jerry moaned.

"What's that all about?" Austin asked as he lifted Joey off the bed.

"Daddy's mad ad Casey cause he dwied do go cwimbing and cawwed him names. He made Casey sad." Joey answered as he wiped the tears off his cheek with the back of his hands.

"That's not good." Austin said looking toward Danny. "I'll have to talk to your Dad later."

"Austin could you get Joey out to the waiting room and make sure they're all set?" Danny asked as he stepped out of the doorway.

"No prob." Austin replied as he grabbed Joey's teddy bear and scooped Joey up with his free arm. "Let's go see Timmy and Grandma."

Jerry watched Austin leave the room with Joey before scowling at Danny. "He's trying to get Joey killed."

"Who? KC? I doubt that." Danny started as he leaned up against the biobed. "I've seen them together, KC loves the hell out of your son. It's pretty obvious."

"Yeah right." Jerry huffed as he folded his arms. "He might be ok with being put back together every other day but I won't let him..." He got out before Danny put his hand up.

"Now isn't the time Jerry." Danny sighed as he walked toward the door. "After this is all cleared up, we can all sit down as a family and talk about it." He said turning back to face Jerry. "I need 'Doctor Owens' in this ER right now not an angry eleven year old. It'll give you some time to cool off and think before you two end out in a fist fight. Trust me, KC would never let anything or anyone harm your son. I believe that and so should you."

"Whatever." Jerry sighed. "I'll let it go for now but..."

"No buts." Danny cut him off. "We have patients that need us. You with me?"

"Yeah." Jerry said under his breath as he rushed passed Danny and out of the room.

"Ah, there you are." Rylan said, quickly stopping in the doorway as soon as he spotted Danny. "Council Scientia, Ark has just given the word that more injured are being teleported in and your medical director is looking for you."

"Thanks Rylan." Danny shook his head. "And will you just call me Danny? Please?"

"I'm sorry." Rylan smiled. "I wasn't aware that you preferred to work informally."

"Now you are." Danny weakly smiled. "Unless we're in a formal setting, first names or nick names are all we use. It helps to break the tension."

"Sounds good." Rylan smiled as the hall began to get louder. "I believe we're going to be needed."

"Deceased, deceased, multiple lacerations, head trauma, deceased, deceased..." A Medbot announced passively as he sorted through the new arrivals when Danny and Rylan arrived.

"Number fifteen, what percentage of arrivals have been teleported in here deceased?" Rylan asked, as he placed his hands on his hips.

"Approximately seventy five percent, with more on the way," The Medbot answered without even pausing in its work.

"That's what I thought," Rylan said as he looked at Danny, who appeared to be deep in thought. "Sorting them this way is wasting time." He managed to add before a second group teleported in. Again mostly deceased.

"Ark." Danny said out loud. "Is there any way to sort our people from the attackers when teleporting them in?"

<Would that be preferable?>

"It would." Danny said as he nodded to the security team that was leading the hostile patients out of the room to be transported out. "Um..." He began as he got distracted by the sound of crying children, yelling adults and bustling staff and Medbots. "Let's do this; only send us our people, alive or not, and the critically injured from either group. Hostile patients that are non-critical can go directly to the security team outside the ambulatory reception door. That should help the staff focus on the patients they need to treat."

<What would you like me to do with deceased from the attacking party?>

"Ark, to tell you the truth, I really don't care." Danny said coldly as he scooped up a small child. "Loose them somewhere, anywhere but here."

<As you wish.>

"That should help." Rylan replied as he rushed by with one of the Medbots, performing a repair as the unit continued to work.

"Additional Security to the waiting room! Shots fired!" Danny's communicator announced, as he coordinated the bustling activity in the ER.

"We're on it!" A security officer shouted as he grabbed two officers and rushed out of the ER.

"God, please help us." Danny sighed as he carried a small bleeding child away from the noise of the open ER.

Meanwhile: AI Division Compound

"How's everything going in here?" Scott asked as he entered the living room where Benji and Sammy were flipping through the channels on TV while Sebastian worked with Eli on his physical therapy exercises.

"Ok." Eli smiled as he gripped a small rubber ball with his new right hand. "Look what I can do." He boasted before dropping it to the floor.

"You're s'posed ta hold it." Bastian scolded before picking the ball up and placing it back in his boyfriend's hand.

"Sammy! Go back one channel." Scott asked quickly as he sat down on the arm of the couch.

"...happening as we speak. We now take you live to the Charleston, S. Carolina police department where a statement is about to be issued."

"Issuing a statement? That can't be good." Scott mumbled as the television scene shifted to a rather old looking gentleman in uniform who was preparing to address the large crowd that had gathered around the steps of the police station.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press, thank you for joining us. I have an updated announcement to make and then I am prepared to answer a few of your questions." The man began, as he shuffled a few papers on the podium that had been set up. "As I'm sure you are all aware, earlier this afternoon CPD, in conjunction with our local division of Clan Short of Vulcan, responded to what appeared to be an act of aggression in the state of Montana regarding the personal attack of a Montana, Campbell County police officer's family by a rather well known religious organization. What appeared to be a minor incident, at first report, has become a full out act of terrorism and has totally overwhelmed supporting entities. I don't appear to have an actual report regarding loss of life but I am prepared to state that many casualties have been reported. As of 1:27pm, S. Carolina officials have elevated police action at both the Clan Short outpost on Sullivan's Island as well as their newly founded medical facility at the former Charleston Naval Hospital...."

"Elevated action? What's that supposed to mean?" Benji asked looking over to Scott, who had his eyes glued to the screen.

"It means our reports aren't accurate." Scott growled, as he pulled out his communicator. "Shannon to Fraser."

"Eddie here, what's wrong, Scott?"

"Nothing at either location with the exception of local police beginning to swarm the area. Why aren't we getting any intelligence reports?" Scott asked as he stood up and walked out into the kitchen.

"You have the same information we have."

"That's bullshit, Ed." Scot barked while at the same time lowering his voice to a whisper. "You know just as well as I do, anytime a press conference is held on the front steps of CPD, fires are being put out."

"Because they don't have the answers, Scott. That's all that means. The press is pushing for answers and CPD is acting as a smoke screen."

"Not if they're rolling units, it doesn't. Read into it dude. We're a potential target right now." Scott hissed.

"They're playing it safe; chill and let them do their jobs, Dude."

"Eddie, I've lost fifteen cadets in the past hour because they were dispatched to the front line. Untrained rookies, which means they're scraping the bottom of the barrel, now. Add to that CPD rolls extra units to both of our locations. They make both calls."

"So, what are you getting at?"

"They ARE gonna pull more." Scott whispered. "Look, they need trained officers. I'm combat ready and have my guys in place here. Let me go."

"No, you're two months away from being combat ready. If you go anywhere, it will be here to take over for me so I can go."

"That's stupid. You have more experience than I do in Clan Security. How the hell am I supposed to take over at CIC?" Scott asked as he rubbed his eyes.

"The same way you did there. Look, your orders are to remain on site there unless I move you. No arguments. Besides, as long as any official action doesn't go any higher than state police you have very little to worry about. Ok?"

"Aye sir." Scott sighed. "AI Compound out." He said through clenched teeth before walking back into the living room. "What's going on?"

"They were answerin' questions and then some other guy came in and stopped it." Benji replied without looking away from the screen.

"Wonder what that's about." Scott managed to get out before the crowd on the television began to quiet down.

"Ladies and gentleman, I have just received information from our officials in Columbia. As of 1:32 pm, S. Carolina is cooperating under the flag of the planet Vulcan. State officials are to be dispatched to aid in maneuvers of local law enforcement. The National guard has been placed under alert and will aid in securing our borders. This is the only information I am authorized to release at this time. Thank you for coming."

"Will more children be sent into that battlefield? - Is Clan Short an intended target? - What involvement does the Federation hold in all this?" Questions from the crowd started being shouted.

"I'm sorry, I'm unable to comment at this time." The older gentleman said before retreating into the building.

"National Guard?" Benji asked as he looked over toward Scott. "Is that bad?"

"Yeah Benji, It's bad." Scott said, as he once again pulled out his communicator.

"Need some help?" KC asked as he poked his head into the only lit room off of the hallway.

"Oh, yes, please." Caleb replied with streams of tears freely running down his cheeks. "The stupid biobed can't stabilize his heart rate and I don... I can't get..." He managed to get out before he began crying uncontrollably.

"I'm here for ya dude." KC replied, in just over a whisper as he came the rest of the way into the room and rushed over to the biobed. "Why are you treating this little guy separate from the rest?"

"N... no one wo... would even try." Caleb managed to get out as he struggled to get himself under control.

"Let me see your tricorder." KC said after punching a few commands into the biobed's controls. "This poor kid." He hissed as he looked at the results of the first scan. "He's lost way too much blood. Can we replicate more?"

"I did." Caleb said with a snuffle. "He's losing it faster than I can get it into him."

"Ok." KC sighed as he set the tricorder down. "Looks like his face, brain and chest are loaded with buck shot. I can try to extract it all but..." He began before the tears in Caleb's eyes began to flow again. "You just keep supplying him with blood, I'll do my best."

"O... Okay." Caleb replied, as he added another bag onto the little boy's IV.

"So um..." KC began as he slipped on a pair of gloves. "...you gonna share that sandwich? I didn't get to have lunch."

"I don't have a sandwich in here." Caleb tilted his head and scowled as he watched KC start in on the child's wounds.

"Could have sworn I smelled tuna. I guess I'm just hungry." KC laughed before shaking his head. "Dude, how long have you known Jerry?"

"Not too long, a few days I guess." Caleb replied as he dried his eyes again before scanning the bed's readout a second time. "Why?"

"He hates me." KC answered without looking up. "Thinks I'm tryin to get Joey killed or sumthin."

"Jerry? Nah, you must have misunderstood something he said or sumthin." Caleb replied as he rushed over to the replicator and started the unit.

"Right." KC shot back as the sound of a piece of buck shot being tossed could be heard on the floor. "How do you misunderstand being called irresponsible and a bad influence?"

"He actually said that?" Caleb asked as the hum of the replicator grew louder.

"That and more." KC said, finally looking up. "I've never had a little brother before. I didn't know he was gonna try to do everything I do. It's not like I'm gonna let him get hurt or nuthin. I really like the little punk."

"I don't see why he'd get that mad though." Caleb mumbled as he brought another bag over to the bedside. "I mean it's not like you jumped off a bridge or sumthin and tried to get him to follow."

"It was a cliff." KC half smiled. "I told him to get back but he wanted to climb it with me."

"I thought you guys were goin to the Grand Canyon. There's no place to go climbing there. I don't even think they allow it." Caleb said as he lifted the bag onto the IV stand.

"No way. The cliff at the sight seeing area we stopped at was perfect for climbing." KC grinned. "Mrs. Owens caught me cause Joey tried to climb under the railing to follow me. She gave us both hell and let it go, but Jerry won't give up."

"Oh." Caleb said as he stopped to run his fingers through the little boy's hair, starting the tears up again.

"Grab some gauze and see if you can help keep this area dry for me will you?" KC said quickly, diverting Caleb's attention. "Anyway, the only thing that stopped him from telling me to get out of Joey's life was Joey."

"You're his brother." Caleb sniffled as he dabbed a piece of gauze around the open wound. "He loves you."

"Yeah." KC said as he retrieved another piece of buck shot and tossed it to the floor. "I don't get it"

"Don't get what?" Caleb asked as he quickly wiped a stray tear off on the shoulder of his shirt.

"To have a brother who loves you. I mean, do I have to stop doing stuff cause Jerry's nervous about it? The poor kid'll never have any fun with Dr. Preschooler constantly trying to keep a protective bubble around him. I really think I love the little guy too, but come on, he's gonna hate me if I start saying 'hey you can watch but you can't do this cause you might get hurt' all the time." KC said without losing his concentration on his work.

"Maybe you need to stop doing so much dangerous stuff, then." Caleb mumbled. "I mean you gotta try to at least meet him half way."

"I can't help it sometimes though." KC said as he stopped what he was doing and looked directly at Caleb. "It's like what we're doing right now. I'm not a doctor. Hell, I've never done anything like this before in my life but, as soon as I needed to, I just could. It's in my programming."

Caleb shrugged his shoulder before replacing the gauze he was using. "You're more than just programming. Change it like a human would change a bad habit."

"I guess." KC answered with a sigh. "It'll just suck to have to give it all up."

"I never said all of it bro." Caleb shook his head. "Look, you take calculated risks because of the way Marc programmed you, right?"

"Yeah." KC simply answered before the ticking of another piece of buck shot could be heard.

"So, why can't you do the same when Joey's with you. Just consider the risks you take to be higher in his case and play it safer. We do that all the time, but play nicer when it involves the littler ones." Caleb half smiled. "I guess that could be the android way of playing safer."

"I guess you're right." KC said with a smile. "But Jerry won't trust me anymore."

"That'll take time. Just give him some space." Caleb replied before looking at the biobed's readout. "Blood pressure is way low and his heart rate is all over the place."

"Keep working and praying for this little guy. That's all we can do." KC answered as another piece of buck shot went to the floor.

"Noah!" Danny shouted as he almost tripped over a rolling cart. "Ark just reported more severe injuries on their way."

"MORE!?!?" Noah huffed as he dropped his arms to his sides. "We're getting overloaded now!"

"I know. Regardless, more are on their way in." Danny replied just as a small group appeared near the entrance way.

Noah just barely advanced on the new arrivals before Kyle shrieked, "JAMIE!!!" causing Noah to break out in a full run in his direction. In the two seconds it took to get to that area, he and Jamie were nowhere in sight.

"What??? ... Where'd they go?" Noah gasped as he screeched to a halt.

Levis frowned, "I...I'm not exactly sure...I...he shifted I think but I really don't know where to."

"Shifted?" Noah asked. "He disappeared with one of my brothers who was injured! Can you find them?"

Levis closed his eyes and transformed back into his energy form and took a deep breath. The aura around Levis began to expand and fill the area around him. "He doesn't have an anchor point directly, I can feel his pattern but it's not linked to any object, but it feels like he's linked to..." Levis opened his eyes, "Where's Tyler, he's linked to Tyler."

Noah's eyes opened almost as wide as his mouth at the sight before him. "Th...The waiting room. Um... Look in the waiting room." He stammered as he took two large steps backward; almost tripping on his own feet in the process.

"I'll bring him here then," nodded Levis as he got brighter for a second. Suddenly Tyler appeared a few feet from Levis with a confused look on his face. "Sorry for not warning you, Tyler but I need your help."

Tyler shook his head to clear it. "Okay I guess Levis; where's Kyle?" he replied once he got his bearings.

"That's what I need your help with," said Levis as he closed his eyes again and allowed his aura to expand to touch Tyler. "Someone that was injured badly was teleported in; he shouted, 'Jamie' and then both Kyle and the boy disappeared. The only thing he left behind was a pattern that only I can see, the pattern tells me that he shifted dimensional planes but it doesn't tell me to where he shifted. Kyle didn't set up an anchor point before he left, but he does have a link to you, a very strong link, actually. I'm going to follow that link to find him."

"Crap!" Tyler exclaimed. "If Jamie's hurt, Kyle's gonna be a mess! If he screwed up, please don't say anything right away; he poured his heart out saving those twins and I know it's gonna hit hard."

"The only way that Kyle could have messed up is if he shifted into a dangerous dimension," replied Levis. "I'll keep that in mind though. We'll be back." Levis pulled his aura back into himself and suddenly vanished.

"What did we just see here?" Noah looked at Tyler and asked.

"It's hard to explain. He's gonna help Kyle though, that's all I care about." Tyler replied with a sigh.

"But, what about Jamie?" Noah asked, as suddenly Jamie and Kyle reappeared on the floor between the two.

"What about me? What?" Jamie asked in confusion. "Wait a minute! How the heck did I get here!? Why's Jacob askin' if I'm okay? When did you get here Kyle, and why is everyone lookin' at me funny?"

Kyle barely gave Jamie time to speak before pulling him into a tight hug.

To the shock of every person with any sort of telepathic ability within his newly extended range, Kyle blasted out with a Kylegram stronger and louder than any he had ever done before. "Jamie's ALIVE and OKAY!!!!!!!!!" Kyle then kissed Jamie's forehead. "I'll explain later, angel brother. For now just understand that something happened and I had to do something I've never done before."

"Yeah, like give half of us a heart attack!" Danny yelled from the nearby open doorway through a stifled giggle. "Now get outa my head leech, I've got work to do here!"

"Way to go Kyle." Noah said, before grabbing Tyler's arm and whispering; "You're gonna explain what just happened, right?"

"Um... Sure. Once I figure it out, I guess." Tyler laughed as the group began to break up.

"Sir." A Medbot said as it approached Noah, with Rylan following on behind it.

"What's up number fifteen?" Noah asked, freezing when he saw the serious expression on Rylan's face.

"Sir, we are running dangerously low on medical supplies, treatment space and recovery areas within the defined uncontaminated areas within this building."

"Wonderful." Noah shrugged. "Well for right now, it looks like we're doing ok. I guess we can just make due with what we have for now."

"That's not why it's reporting Noah." Rylan said, shaking his head.

"What do you mean?" Noah asked, tilting his head.

After wiping the sweat from his face, Rylan sighed and replied; "Ark reports more incoming. The same if not more than we already have now."

Notes from the Author:

An angel watches... Several in fact :)

Wow, for a while there even I was having a hard time keeping up with them this time. Just the fact taht I knew pretty much what we were in for by the end of the last chapter, you'd think I would have been a little more prepared. Psh... Yeah right ;)

This chapter leaves us with so many loose ends. Jerry mad at KC, Caleb fighting a serious uphill battle, The whole gang being forced to be more ready than they could have ever planned and they are all in situations that no kid should ever be in. Sigh... Where does it go from here? I've got a basic idea. Now if Part 2 would hurry up and write itself :)

Huge amount of thanks to all the help I got with the characters from Ark, Out of the Past and Memories in this chapter. Having my gang running around in my head is normally hard enough to keep up with :)

I'd also like to send a "Get well Soon" wish to our head Clan Archivist & Editor who is at home recovering from a badly pinched nerve that is severe enough to put him completely out of comission. Which if you know TSL like most of us do, nearly nothing stops him. Keep him in your thoughts, ok?

As always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" by "ACFan" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us>, "Out of the Past" by "Darkstar" at <http://cornercafe.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Notes from our guest editor & assistant archivist:

I was informed that I could put in some notes here. This chapter has some really startling events. You also need to know that there is much more to come. Be warned; I have to wonder what will happen to the little boy, the son of the church guy. Will that son of a... survive? For that matter, will Jerry ever trust KC again? Joey loves his brother, and I think he will be able to convince Jerry that KC would never let any harm come to him. We'll have to wait and see.

Darryl, aka The Radio Rancher

"Chapter 16 - *All Hell Breaks Loose (Part 2)*"
Portions contributed by ACFan, Akeentia, Darkstar & Roland
Special thanks to D & B and Ilúvantir for their help as well!

Dedication: Throughout the course of writing this chapter, it was my intent to pay tribute to a television series and it's actors in which I hold a rather large amount of respect towards. Circumstances as they were in that time period, I was not able to watch in its entirety on the original air dates but, thanks to DVD and one generous person online filling in the gaps; I have now. Ironic as it may be, this plan was well before the passing of this series' leading actor; a man I do truly admire and respect. Some may be able to tell from this dedication which series I am speaking of, some may not. Either way, one portion of "Sentenced to Life" has always been planned to be introduced as my own personal "Hats Off"... Now even more so as a farewell, to those involved who are no longer with us in the creation of an idea that I believe had great merit as a concept; had it been given a better run.

"The twenty-first century. Mankind has colonized the last unexplored region on Earth, the Ocean. As Captain of the seaQuest and her Crew, we are its guardians.

For beneath the surface, Lies The Future."

seaQuest DSV/2032 - September 12, 1993 to June 9, 1996

In loving memory...

Royce D. Applegate: December 25, 1939 - January 1, 2003

Jonathan Gregory Brandis: April 13, 1976 - November 12, 2003

Roy Richard Scheider: November 10, 1932 - February 10, 2008

"Call on line four Lieutenant." The voice on the intercom startled the detective, who was enthralled with the case he was reviewing.

"Thanks Marge." Rich replied as he rubbed his eyes and picked up the phone. "Special Crimes Division, Murphy here."

"And where is he NOT supposed to be?" The voice on the other end asked sternly.

"Oh, Hi Sergeant." Rich sighed. "I swear I was just tying up the loose ends on the Foster case and I'm on Vacation."

"Rich, you were supposed to be on vacation after that McKensie case was closed. Now as your friend, I'm concerned that you are overworking yourself. You spend too many hours in that little office of yours and not nearly enough time at home where you are supposed to be."

"I will be, I just need..." Rich just barely got out before he was abruptly cut off.

"Go Home Rich. Go home before I have a physician remove you for your own good."

"Alright already." Rich said as he powered down his computer. "I'll leave my notes out because this case needs to be closed."

"I suppose you are the only person in the department who is capable to close and file it, right?" The voice said with a laugh. "Say goodbye and leave the building. I'm on my way there now. If you are still anywhere in sight when I get there I'll see to it that we will all be visiting you in a hospital room. Do I make myself understood?"

"Okay! I'm leaving." Rich half laughed as he grabbed his briefcase. "I'll talk to you in two weeks." He said as a click on the other side made him laugh. "Old Fart." He laughed as he opened the door and turned out the lights.

"Leaving Lieutenant?" His secretary asked with a smirk.

"Like you weren't in on that." He smiled in reply. "Yes, I was just ordered to leave and begin my vacation."

"It's about time." Marge laughed. "Enjoy yourself Rich."

Getting into his car was more of a relief than he expected. It's been two full months since he had taken a day off and now with the thoughts of two weeks at home becoming more of a reality, he smiled as he put his patrol car in gear and stepped on the gas. The fifteen minutes it normally takes for the drive was over before he even realized it. It gave him a smile as he watched a rather surprised looking thirteen year old on the front steps of the house break out in an ear to ear grin the moment he recognized the car.

"You're home?" The boy asked as Rich stepped out of the car and locked the door.

"You sound surprised." He smiled as the boy ran at full speed to wrap him in the tightest hug his small frame could muster.

"Well, yeah." He replied with a grin. "I figured it'd be late before you got home so I hadn't even thought about lunch yet."

"Screw it." Rich said as he melted into his boy's embrace. "We're both on vacation now. John, you wanna eat out?"

With a huge smile, John's blue eyes lit right up. "Really?"

"Yeah, really." Rich said as he sat down on the front steps. "I kinda feel like Italian, how bout you?"

"Mmmmm. Wanna hit Giovanni's?" John asked as he hugged Rich's arm when he sat down.

Rich sighed as he looked over at his excited young friend and smiled noting how cute the little blond looked in his backwards baseball cap, a tee shirt, cargo shorts and deck shoes. "Why go somewhere that we have to get dressed up better? I meant Italian, as in pizza and a coke."

"Sweet!" John almost sang. "How bout D'Amore's? We haven't been there in a long time."

"Hmmm... You thinkin what I'm thinkin there short stuff?" Rich smiled.

"PIZZA BIANCO!!!" The two both said as if they were reciting a battle cry, complete with fists in the air and smiles plastered on their faces.

"We have a plan." Rich laughed as he stood up and turned to go into the house. "Let me get out of uniform and we can hit the road then. Maybe a movie or something afterward too."

"Yeah." John said as he chased after Rich and began following him up the stairs after closing and locking the front door.

"Where you going? You're fine the way you're dressed." Rich said after he stopped in the middle of the staircase and halted the smaller ball of energy.

"Someone's gotta help you dress." He grinned. "Can't have you lookin like my Dad today."

"Okay, but no funny stuff. We haven't gone out in a long time. I'm looking forward to this."

"No, we'll go along with your plans." The boy said with an evil grin. "Until we get home."

An afternoon out was just what the two needed to unwind after such a stressful couple of months. Stuffed with pizza, the two decided to simply drive around, in absolutely no rush to get home. "You wanna hit a movie or something?"

John took his hat off and ruffled his shaggy blond hair while at the same time, twisting his facial expression as if in thought. "Nah, there's nothing out that I really want to see; unless you have a movie you want to see."

"Not really, just a thought." Rich smiled.

"You wanna just take a ride out to the pier?" John asked with a smile.

"Haven't been there in a few years." Rich smiled. "You remember the first time we went there?"

"Duh." John giggled. "I had you so convinced I was gonna push you off into the water."

"Yeah, I STILL owe you for that." Rich laughed. "Don't forget, I have weight and size in my favor now."

"Oh please." John giggled. "That worked when you were like 20. Now old age is your problem."

"Really?" Rich shot back, raising his eyebrows. "Technically, you're only 10 years younger than I am. Besides, I'm in damn good shape."

"Psh... Yeah, for your AGE!" John laughed before getting a serious look on his face. "I wish I could still be your big brother sometimes."

"You are." Rich smiled as he turned the corner and continued to drive. "I wish you would stop over thinking stuff like that. If Dad were still alive, he'd be giving you the 'Flesh and Blood' speech you know."

"I miss him." John quietly said as he looked out the window. "Can we go see Mom and Dad instead?"

Rich nodded his head before turning into a nearby business to turn the car around. Back on the road, a warm smile crept into John's youthful expression; gaining Rich's attention. "Whatcha thinkin?"

"Android or not, that's my blood running through those veins of yours tiger. Don't you ever forget it." John said in the lowest voice he could muster. "It never mattered to him, or Mom."

"Or me." Rich added before pulling up in front of a florist's shop. "The usual?"

"Yeah, you get Mom's flowers and I'll run next door to get Dad's coffee and newspaper." John giggled before holding out his hand.

"Why is it I have to pay all the time?" Rich laughed as he pulled out his wallet.

"You got the better paying job." John laughed. "Besides, my allowance sucks. We need to have a talk about inflation and the cost of candy again."

"Oh god." Rich laughed. "Not again."

"Oh yeah." John giggled. "How can I be expected to survive without Ho-Hos? I mean, come on!"

"You're so lucky I love you." Rich laughed as he handed the boy a twenty. "Keep the change my good man."

"Works every time." John laughed as he rushed to get out of the car.

"You pay the dentist next visit then!" Rich shouted before watching as his friend sprinted off toward the nearby variety store. "And share some of that energy, will ya?" He laughed before locking the car and heading into the florist's.

About 15 minutes later, the two were rounding the last corner and slowly pulling into the gates to the cemetery. Without a word said, the two remained silent as the car rolled to a stop in front of a headstone with the name 'Murphy' eloquently etched into its surface. As if rehearsed, John grabbed the cup of coffee and newspaper he had bought while Rich opened the box he had picked up that contained one dozen roses and two groupings of blue Forget-me-nots.

"Hi Mom, Hi Dad." John said as he approached the headstone and placed the coffee and newspaper at its base. "Giants are taking a beating this year Dad." He continued with a grin as he watched Rich set the flowers next to the newspaper.

"Those are pretty." John said as Rich sat down and motioned for John to join him. Sitting down and using Rich's chest as a back rest, John sighed when Rich wrapped his arms around the boy's chest and gently gave a squeeze. "Do you ever wonder what they're doing now?"

"Nope." Rich replied. "I know they're up there keeping an eye on their two 'hooligan' sons." He continued with a chuckle.

"Yeah." John barely said as he stared off through the trees to the slowly setting sun. "I kinda wish I was really their son sometimes." He got out before quickly raising his hand. "Before you say it, I KNOW they felt that I was and biologically I am so don't argue. Being born and being created and activated are two different things. Doesn't matter how you look at it."

"You're the only one who looks at it any differently you know." Rich sighed.

"Not in the real world." John said as he snuggled into Rich's chest. "I'm sick of always playing 'The Son' when I was 'The Big Brother' and am in love with someone who the rest of the world consider sick because of it."

"Here we go." Rich said as he hugged the boy tighter as soon as a snuffle could be heard. "You are the cutest dork I ever saw." Rich whispered, earning more snuffles and a weak laugh from John.

"I remember the first time you ever said that." John said as he wiped his eyes with the back of his hands. "That was when I got jealous about you having a date for your freshman dance."

"You were going too and also had a date." Rich laughed. "She was a cutie too, Christine right?"

"Yeah." John grinned. "Who knew she was gonna turn out to be a total psycho."

"Oh, like my date was any better." Rich laughed. "Robin the 'I'm the hottest and don't you ever forget it' date from hell."

"I think it was the funniest when we found out that I was dating a girl and you ended out dating a M.A.R.C.I.E. Unit that was all about how awesome she was." John giggled with a snuffle. "It was a fun night overall until Robin decided to start that fight with Christine about who was more popular."

"Weird." Rich replied. "After having the argument before leaving the house, we ended out spending most of the night together anyway. I'm telling you, it's destiny."

"No." John grinned. "It just proves that we are not good at picking out sane girls."

"Doesn't matter, I ended out with the person I wanted to be with anyway." Rich said as he reached over and opened the coffee. "Stealing a sip Dad." He smiled.

"Hey, I didn't buy that for you." John protested. "I'm telling."

"Whatever dork." Rich laughed as he took a sip and put the cup back in its place. Like he ever had a coffee all to himself.

"Yeah, that's true." John giggled as he reached for the cup. "Me too Dad." He laughed.

"Hey it was his own fault. He never let us have our own when we were kids, but it was OK for us to have a SIP." Rich grinned.

"Yeah, then he had to make like four cups just to get one whole one for himself." John replied before he started laughing. "Remember when he gave us that long 'Coffee will stunt your growth...' speech?"

"Oh god yeah." Rich groaned. "You and him debated that for like three days."

"He even went as far to call Vision Industries to have one of the technicians give me a long BS story about how it would stain my teeth, cause that's all they could come up with for an argument." John said before getting quiet once again. "I wonder how many androids were lucky enough to get cool families like I did."

"Quite a few I'd imagine." Rich softly replied. "Did I tell you about the one we found out near Point Dume?"

"Yeah. The one who was listed as missing for years." John shook his head. "That poor guy."

"He's doing well from what I last heard." Rich smiled. "Would you like to meet him?"

"Serious?" John turned his head with his eyes wide. "Yeah! That'd be sweet."

"Cool, tomorrow morning I'll give them a call and see if they're up for some company." Rich said before looking at his watch. "We still have most of the day ahead of us; you want to hit the pier before we decide what we want to do for dinner?"

"Okay." John said as he got up and grinned before grabbing the coffee and taking another sip. "Thanks Dad." He giggled as he set the cup back down. As rich got to his feet, John blew a kiss to the grave site

and with a tear in his eye whispered; "I love you guys." before feeling an arm wrap around his shoulders.

"Me too." Rich grinned. "Me too."

"You can get anything you want, at Alice's restaurant..." They sang as the car rolled down the freeway. "They still haven't opened that place back up, have they?" John asked as the car got silent.

"Nope." Rich grinned. "Maybe they refuse cause they know we'd be there singing."

"Oh god." John groaned. "You're the one who can't sing."

"No way, your voice cracks windows."

"Yeah, well your face cracks mirrors." Rich chuckled.

"Oh yeah, your face stops clocks!"

"I can't hear you." John said as he reached for the radio and quickly turned it on and up really loud to some news broadcast. "Music! I want music!" He whined and was about to turn the station before Rich grabbed his hand.

"Wait a minute." Rich said as the two listened.

"As I'm sure you are all aware, earlier this afternoon CPD, in conjunction with our local division of Clan Short of Vulcan, responded to what appeared to be an act of aggression in the state of Montana regarding the personal attack of a Montana, Campbell County police officer's family by a rather well known religious organization. What appeared to be a minor incident, at first report, has become a full out act of terrorism and has totally overwhelmed supporting entities. I don't appear to have an actual report regarding loss of life but I am prepared to state that many casualties have been reported. As of 1:27pm, S. Carolina officials have elevated police action at both the Clan Short outpost on Sullivan's Island as well as their newly founded medical facility at the former Charleston Naval Hospital...."

"Oh my god." Rich gasped as he grabbed his cell phone and started tapping away on it while John turned the radio down. "Marge, it's Rich. Yes I know I'm on vacation. No, I need you to do me a favor. Look, I just heard on the radio that the organization that helped us with that McKensie case is in the middle of some serious... Look, I need you to relay through local and state that this organization works in conjunction with us. Request that if at all possible, we wish to offer any assistance we can. No, I'm not coming in. I planned to visit their facility anyway so I'll be in South Carolina. Thanks Marge, call if you need anything." Rich got out as he grabbed his Patrol radio's mic and keyed it. "Dispatch, seven charlie fourteen, 10-10 is running code three, east bound Canan road to I101 north. Over."

"Seven Charlie Fourteen, 10-10 and code three. Acknowledged."

Rich quickly flipped on the lights and siren before leaning into the accelerator. "Looks like we're gonna be planning that trip sooner than later." He said as John turned the radio back on.

"Ladies and gentleman, I have just received information from our officials in Columbia. As of 1:32 pm, S. Carolina is cooperating under the flag of the planet Vulcan. State officials are to be dispatched to aid in maneuvers of local law enforcement. The National Guard has been placed under alert and will aid in securing our borders. This is the only information I am authorized to release at this time. Thank you for coming."

"That's not good." John said as the patrol car nearly leapt onto Interstate 101. "Are we gonna help?"

"We're gonna see if we can." Rich said without diverting his gaze from the road. "We need to haul ass back to the house. I have the number for their installation in my study."

"Ok." John simply replied before he started to laugh.

"What's so funny?" Rich asked, still remaining focused on the road.

"You just called in and told them you were off duty but running lights and siren. Is that even legal?"

"Did you hear them question me?" Rich grinned.

"Nope." John smiled. "Crooked cops." He managed to get out with a giggle.

"Oh shut it." Rich laughed as they banked off the highway.

Finally reaching the house and calling in, both Rich and John sprinted for the door. "You want me to dig out the suitcases while you call?" John asked as he started running up the stairs.

"Please. I'll be up in a few." Rich said as he rushed into his study. Reaching into a box on one of the nearby book cases, he pulled out a handful of notes; all bearing the same contact number. "I still need to figure out who was planting these all over the office at work." Rich chuckled as he brought up his terminal and punched up Clan Short's A.I. Division.

"Clan Short of Vulcan, A.I. Division. This is Lieutenant Scott Shannon, how can I help you Lieutenant Murphy?"

"Lieutenant, I need to speak with Noah Barnes if at all possible regarding your current situation." Rich replied with a serious expression on his face.

"I'm sorry; Assistant Director Barnes is not available at this time. Can I relay a message?"

"Actually, You may be able to help me." Rich said with a smirk. "May I call you Scott?"

"If you wish, Rich?"

"Yeah." Rich replied with a smile. "Scott, Noah helped our Department out a great deal in solving a missing person case that has been open and on the books for quite a few years." Rich managed to get out before Scott interjected.

"Kenneth McKensie. I know of that case."

"Well, the short story is, I just heard what's been going on over there. I've requested our adjoining law enforcement agencies to offer whatever assistance or support they can, You should be receiving a communication from the State of California sometime very soon."

"Thank you sir. I'm sure the head of our division will be very grateful."

Rich nodded before continuing. "The deal is, I am on vacation as of this morning and was planning on taking a trip to your area for, a social visit." He continued with a smirk on his face. "I have two free months available and my partner is more than capable to assist the A.I. division's medical. Could you use some help in security or at the hospital or both?"

"Are you joking?"

Rich laughed before resting his elbows on his desk. "I would like to repay your Assistant Director for the favor. We both would." Rich managed to get out before John bound in the doorway.

"I can't find your su... Oops!" John got out before coming into Scott's view with his hand over his mouth. "Sorry, I didn't know you were still in a call."

"No problem." Scott smiled. "Rich, to be completely honest; we really could use some help. Our division is losing it's trained Security Personnel to aid in the ongoing efforts in the field. I should be dispatched to assist as well but, lack of trained officers on site is making that impossible. Would you feel comfortable handling our base of operations at our Sullivan's Island and Charleston locations?"

"Standard Security Detail?" Rich asked while John listened in.

"Vulcan Diplomatic Rotations."

"That wouldn't be a problem, provided I can file my reports in a standard Terran language." Rich grinned.

"That works. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have the position if Vulcan was the required language."

"I can help too!" John added with his eyes open wide. "I'm a standard release M.A.R.C. series android with the common medical sub protocol programming as well as detailed information for all current and pre-release A.I. units. If you have more of us there, you may know what I am capable of." John got out and grinned at the shocked look on Scott's face.

"That'd be awesome. I'll notify Dr. Furst that you will be arriving and would like to offer assistance. I'm sure he'll be happy."

"Sounds like we have a plan then. Could you tell your team to expect us to transport in as soon as possible?" Rich asked.

"Consider it done. I'll ready Terra Main and arrange for the relayed transport. Thanks for contacting us Rich. This is seriously going to help us out."

"It's the least we can do." Rich replied. "See you in about half an hour. Murphy out." Rich said as the screen went blank.

"Did he say Doctor Furst?" John asked as Rich stood up from his seat.

"Yeah, I think so. Why?"

"As in Marc Furst?" John asked, this time leaving his mouth hung open.

"Yes." Rich replied again, this time shrugging his shoulders.

"Marc Furst as in the prototype for the M.A.R.C. series... Like all of us!" John continued as Rich chuckled and began to walk out of the room. "That's like... Huge! I've never met him in person!"

"Get a grip twirp. We're going there to work not fill our autograph books." Rich chuckled as he made his way up the stairs.

"Shut Up!" John shouted as he chased him up the stairs. "You just don't understand!"

"True." Rich laughed. "I can't understand most of the stuff you come out with. Maybe while were there we can finally get someone to check out your brain and tighten a few of the loose screws."

"Oh, you are sooooo gonna get it later." John got out as they both went into the bedroom to continue packing.

Earlier that same day - Bridge: Deep Quest, United States Naval Deep Submergence Vehicle (Prototype)

"Captain, there is an incoming message from Starfleet. Should I put it on the main viewer?" The communications officer asked before looking up from his console when he didn't receive a response. "Captain?"

"Oh, I'm sorry Lieutenant. Still getting used to the new title." Jim replied with a half smile. "On screen, please."

"Captain Strafford, I hear you are having a very successful maiden voyage." Spoke the image of Admiral Morrow.

"We are Admiral." Jim replied with a wide smile. "Deep Quest is going to be quite an asset provided the Navy accepts her for active duty."

"Oh, I have it on good authority they are already discussing that. Not to mention what their plans are for her active duty Captain."

"I hate to think of that." Jim replied seriously. "Hard to picture handing this many years of work over to someone else. Besides, this crew is shaping up to being one of the finest I've ever worked with."

"Good to hear." Admiral Morrow smiled. "Jim, could you have your communications officer transfer this call to your wardroom? I'd like to speak with you privately if you have the time."

"Of course." Jim replied, tilting his head in question. "Mr. Brodey, transfer the call please. I'll be in the wardroom if any of you need me. Commander Shaw, take command please."

"Aye sir." Both replied as Jim made his way off the bridge.

"Ok Admiral, you have my attention." Jim smiled as he sat down at the long table and stretched.

"Please tell me you aren't calling and interrupting our maneuvers to try and get me to change my mind about that job you keep harassing me to take within Starfleet development. I haven't changed my mind. Unless deep space is filled with ocean water, I'm still not interested." Jim chuckled.

"I still think that's a mistake on your part to not even consider it Jim, but that's not why I'm contacting you this time. Look Captain, I just got off the line with your commanding officer. We have a serious condition brewing in your hometown and in other places throughout the country. I have been promised two vessels to be stationed off the shore of Charleston. The U.S.S. Iowa is already being dispatched leaving us in need for one more vessel. We agree Deep Quest should be that other vessel."

"Admiral?" Jim questioned as he glared at the view screen on the far wall. "This boat is a prototype and classified, you're aware of that right?"

"Yes, we are. With all due respect Captain, Deep Quest is one of the most heavily armed subs in the fleet at present. Considering the location of our newly formed division of Clan Short, we want the big guns securing the surrounding waters. We believe the combination of your vessel and the fire power of the Iowa to be the best for these circumstances. You have been testing her fire power and all reports are coming back positive."

"She's not even half tested, this crew is still being broken in and from a military stand point, I am nothing more than a ship designer who was lucky enough to have naval training." Jim sighed. "Isn't there a better equipped vessel in the area?"

"Not in under a day sail, there isn't. Are you saying you are not fit for command? Because in that case, we can have a commissioned officer assume command during this crisis."

"Not at all sir." Jim replied, his back becoming ridged. "Is the U.S. Navy reactivating my commission?"

"If you accept, yes."

"Can I assume since we are being brought in that this project is being declassified?" Jim asked as he crossed his arms.

"To be completely honest, I never believed there was a reason to classify the project. It must have been rough on you and your son. All those months at sea and not being able to explain why."

"Admiral, is this conversation on the record?" Jim asked as he rubbed his eyes.

"It doesn't have to be." The admiral laughed. "Not all of it anyway. Just the outcome."

"Good." Jim said as he poured himself a glass of water and took a large gulp. "Harry, you know damned well that I have been sneaking around to get the funding and the people to make this project work. Having to lie to Marc about where I am or what I'm doing is killing me on top of it all. He loved being involved in these projects. After the life he's had, I hate shutting him out. Don't use the fact that you know how hard this has been to get your way with me or this vessel. That's dirty pool and I'd expect better from you."

"Whoah Jim, that's not what I meant at all. Marc does have a strong pull on this decision though."

"Oh really?" Jim questioned. "I'm all ears then."

"Look, you've been at sea for about a week now. Marc has no communication with you at all so I'm sure you have no clue what the situation is there. I know he's not biologically or legally your son but you are very protective of him and his well being, you've demonstrated that to me time and time again."

"He's not going to work for you either. He's said that before." Jim shot back.

"Well, even if that was an option, it's simply not possible now. Let's just say he has some news for you when you arrive home."

"If he's in a Starfleet uniform when I get back, I'm going hunting for Admirals and you are number one on that list you know." Jim laughed.

"As much of an asset as he could be to the Federation, he is well beyond our reach now. That boy of yours can move mountains if he wishes and I think he's beginning to learn that now. Unfortunately, he's waist deep in the situation that has caused the Federation to take active control over all of Earth's defenses."

"Meaning the situation is interplanetary?" Jim questioned.

"It just became interplanetary, yes. Considering the situation I believed regardless of your current status, home is where you belong. If that means declassifying the DSV project, it's a small price to pay. Not to mention that I have complete faith in the abilities of your craft and crew under your command."

"Nice of you to say." Jim sighed. "Cutting this shake down cruise short isn't exactly wise though. Most of this equipment is experimental and quite a few of our weapons systems haven't even been brought online."

"Are they dysfunctional?"

"No." Jim laughed. "Just untested."

"So, start flipping some switches then."

"Very funny." Jim smirked. "\$2.6 billion dollar toy. I love how you space cadets think."

"Look, if you break anything we'll pay to have it fixed. Just accept this assignment and stop being so stubborn. Once this crisis is clear, you and your crew can enjoy a couple days of shore leave while your

vessel gets a once over in Charleston. Then you can go back to testing your heart out."

After a moment of thought, Jim looked over to a picture of his bridge crew that was taken moments prior to leaving it's berth for the first time before smiling and looking back at the main viewer. "In that case, we accept Admiral. Deep Quest reporting ready for assignment."

"That's what we were hoping. Your orders are to make best speed to Charleston and rendezvous with the USS Iowa. You will receive further orders upon your arrival. Fire up your tactical weapons Captain, we need you ready for anything. I will further brief you in one hour. Best of luck Captain. To you and your crew. Morrow out."

Jim nodded his head as the screen went blank and quickly got up and returned to the bridge. Once there, he looked around the brand new bridge of his vessel and noted to himself the mixture of nervousness and surprise before he grinned once his gaze met with his Executive Officer.

"What's our status Commander Shaw?" He asked as he returned to his command chair.

"Captain. We're receiving orders from Starfleet. Are we being activated?" The Executive Officer questioned as she tapped away at her console and everyone eagerly looked at Jim to hear his answer.

"They don't waste any time, do they?" Jim shook his head. "Mr. Brodey, bring up ship wide communications please."

"Aye sir." The man responded before the whistle alerted the crew for their attention.

"Well boys and girls, it appears our playtime just ended. Effective immediately, Deep Quest is on active duty and will be responding to secure the United States sea shore in the South Carolina area. This is not a drill. From this moment on we are on full military alert. I expect to have all of the bugs worked out before we arrive. Let's show off what this boat is really capable of." He said before he motioned to communications to close the connection. "Any concerns people?"

"Just one sir." The young helmsman spoke up.

"And?" Jim replied with a smirk.

"Sir, according to your specs Deep Quest is capable of obtaining at least ninety knots under full power."

"That's correct Mr. Miller. Are you saying we don't have the capability?" Jim questioned as he slowly walked up to the helm and motioned to the officer to sit down.

"No sir." The officer said as he punched up his display. "I think that's sort of an understatement." He got out before a few people started to snicker.

"So I understated her on paper." Jim laughed. "Bring her about and let's find out what her top speed really is." Jim ordered. "Any other questions?"

"Why us?" Navigations spoke up. "According to reports there are 4 other subs in that area that are commissioned and ready for assignment."

"Get us underway." Jim said to the navigations officer before confirming the course laid in at the helm. "Two reasons I think Mr. Ramsey." Jim said as he returned to his command chair and brought up a situations display. "We are slated to be the fastest and most heavily armed for one. This boat is one of a kind and they are relying on that for two." Jim said as he closed his eyes and rubbed them. "They also know my son is in that area. I'm sure if they didn't assign us Charleston they assume I would have requested to be relieved of duty to be with him."

"Understandable." The navigation officer nodded.

"Sir, roving periscope alpha-two just lost communications. We're blind port side." The Chief Sensor Officer cut in.

"Blinky, as always. We really need to go over the sensor array in that unit. Note our location. We'll come back for it later. Deploy alpha-four and hope it can keep up."

"Blinky? Where are these nicknames coming from? I didn't read about them anywhere in the documentation." The officer asked as he deployed the fourth RP.

"The development team Mr. Ingersol. Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde; RPs Alpha-one through four." Jim laughed.

"They were named after the ghosts in a pretty famous arcade game back when the Captain was a kid." The Executive Officer said with a smile on her face. "Pac-Man, wasn't it sir?"

"See, someone on this boat has had the proper training." Jim said with a smile. "Commander Shaw, I'm going to my quarters to make a phone call. Bring us up to transmitting depth and maintain course and speed." Jim said as he leaned closer to his second in command. "Set some speed records."

"Aye Captain." She responded before Jim turned to leave the bridge. "You heard the Captain, alter course and speed Mr. Miller."

Back in his quarters, Jim grabbed the phone off his table and tapped the alert button. "Is ship-to-shore available Mr. Brodey?" He asked as soon as he was connected.

"Yes sir."

"Good, could you patch me through to my residence in South Carolina please?" Jim asked as he kicked off his shoes and listened as the connection switched over and began to ring.

"Clan Short A.I. Division. Lieutenant Scott Shannon speaking, how can I direct your call?" The young sounding voice on the other end quickly stated.

"Clan Short?" Jim asked as he shook his head. "I must have been connected to the wrong number; I was attempting to contact 3199 Marshall Boulevard."

"The address is correct sir." The voice replied. "Who were you attempting to reach?"

"Um..." Jim stammered. "Marc Furst. Last I checked, he lived there."

"I'm sorry sir. Marc is unavailable at this time. Can I take a message and have him contact you?"

"Wait a minute, is this Danny?" Jim began to laugh. "Nice to see your sense of humor recovered. Now will you put your brother on the phone please?"

"Sir?" The voice questioned. "Director Paige is with Dr. Furst at the Naval Hospital in Charleston."

"Ok, I'll play along." Jim chuckled. "Tell Doctor Furst his Father will be home ahead of plans and needs to talk to him." He managed to get out with a snicker.

"Yes sir. I will have the message delivered as soon as possible. Will there be anything else sir?"

"No, I don't think so." Jim said before holding the receiver away from his ear and shaking his head at it.

"Very well then. Have a nice day sir."

"Same to you." Jim said as he set the phone down. "As if one clown in the house wasn't enough." He sighed before putting his feet up.

"What's goin on?" Danny asked as he poked his head around the corner and saw a dumbfounded look on Marc's face.

"I just got a report in from Scott. The officer that rescued KC is on his way to help out with security. His partner will be heading over here to give us a hand." Marc stated as he stood up from his seat behind the desk at the Nurses' Station.

"That's a good thing, we could use the help." Danny replied coming the rest of the way around the corner. "So why do you look confused?"

"No reason I guess." Marc replied as Danny rested his elbows on the counter that was separating them. "His partner is a M.A.R.C. Series Android."

"Yeah." Danny shrugged. "That doesn't bother you, does it?"

Marc crossed his arms and closed his eyes before shaking his head. "No. It just brought back some memories." He got out before powering down the computer and standing up. "I'm actually looking forward to meeting him."

"Dr. Furst!!!" Nurse patty shouted as she ran down the hall, making both boys jump. "We have more incoming. The injuries are getting worse as they come in. I don't know where we're going to put these patients."

"Dan?" Marc said as he stood up. "This is getting bad. We have one biobed that's not in use according to the last reports, which are probably out of date already and absolutely no room except for the parking lot."

"Oh, there's an option." Danny groaned just as his communicator went off. "Now what?" He griped as he flipped the unit open. "Page here."

"Danny, it's Noah. Number Fifteen just informed me that we are running out of supplies and beds. We have more on the way in, mostly severe."

"Oh boy." Danny said half under his breath. "Noah, do we have any non criticals that we can clear to the waiting room?"

"No. We've kept them clear. The waiting room is overloaded and anyone already treated has made their way down to the cafeteria. Dude, we have no more room."

"Don't panic." Danny replied as he took a deep breath, rubbed his eyes and wiped the sweat off of his forehead. "Where are you and do you know where Rylan is?"

"Yeah, he's right here with me. We're down near radiology."

"Good, step out into the reception hall. Both of you. We need to do some serious juggling." Danny said as he waved to Marc to follow.

"On our way."

"You have an idea?" Marc asked as they started to walk down the hall.

"Nope. Not really." He said as he raised his communicator once again. "Page to Doctor Herron."

"Right here Danny."

"Chris, do you have any idea where Phil is?" Danny asked as Noah and Rylan emerged from the ER and trotted to meet them in the hall.

"Yeah, he's running supplies near the ambulatory entrance. You need him?"

"Yeah, can you get someone to cover for him? I'm planning on taking him away from you." Danny said as Marc looked at Nurse Patty, Rylan and Noah and shrugged his shoulders.

"He'll be with you in five. Herron out."

"What's the plan?" Noah asked as Danny stuffed his communicator in his pocket.

"We're gonna have to pull off miracles here guys." Danny said as he looked at Noah. "How low on supplies are we?"

"We almost completely wiped out everything we had with that first wave." Noah said as Rylan started to laugh. "Dude?"

"There were no plans beyond what you had stocked?" Rylan said after clearing his throat.

"We had no idea how bad this was." Marc offered. "It was a serious magic trick to get what we already had."

"What about replicators?" Rylan asked tilting his head.

"Not functional with the exception of the unit tied into the transporter system. That's off limits though because we need that system clear." Danny answered.

"Not a problem." Rylan grinned. "Ark, I need two replicators. An organ replication unit would help too."

<They will be there shortly Rylan.>

"Thanks Ark." Rylan smiled. "Supplies are covered and the Medbots can be more efficient with an organ replication unit on site."

"You are the man." Danny smiled. "Can you work with Nurse Patty to teach her how to run them. We're going to need to refill quite a few cabinets."

"On it." Rylan said as he waved for Nurse Patty to follow him back into the ER.

"You called Danny?" Phil, the construction foreman shouted as he jogged down the hall.

"Perfect timing." Danny smiled. "Phil, I need you to pull a really big rabbit out of your hat." Danny started as his communicator chirped. "Danny here."

"Danny, O'Keefe here. I have a John Murphy on the pad. He's transporting in from our compound to assist."

"Direct him to the ER please Billy. Thanks." Danny said as he quickly closed his communicator. "Phil, I need clean rooms. What do we have that can be opened and used?"

"Oh god." Phil sighed. "I can give you part of the second floor. But those are just empty rooms except for the three you guys used before you left."

"I'll take them." Danny smiled. "Noah, go check on Teri's group in the waiting room. Make sure they're doing alright. Marc, meet your new doctor. Phil and I are going to go buy ourselves part of a hospital. I'll keep you up to date." Danny grinned as Marc stood frozen with his mouth hung open while Noah ran for the hallway. Just before they got out of ear shot Marc finally shouted and froze them in their tracks.

"Wait! What do I do with the incoming?"

"We'll ask Ark to hold them, just to give us enough time to get more space set up!" Danny shouted back before both he and Phil rounded the corner.

<How long shall I hold them Marc?>

"I don't know Ark." Marc replied as he leaned up against the wall. "We need enough time to get a few more rooms open and try to get some of these other patients stable enough to move them. How long is safe?"

<I believe I can give you enough time to prepare but, after monitoring your groups recent plans I have located the specific sections you plan to populate within that structure and have determined that a significant percentage of the area is in fact contaminated.>

"No." Marc whined. "We need those areas badly." He got out as Rylan came back out into the hall.

<Marc, the material within your location that endangers your group is easily detectable. If you wish, I can offer to have your building scanned with more detail and remove all traces without endangering those at your location.>

"It can't be done without causing it to become airborne Ark." Marc sighed.

"Bring the Techbots online Ark!" Rylan shouted as his eyes opened wide. "Let them scan the entire building and simply teleport all traces that they find out of here. It will be a lot safer than the way they planned originally."

<I agree Rylan. Four units will be at your location momentarily. They will not require any assistance Marc. Simply keep your group in the locations they are in currently and they will be safe.>

"You can really do that?" Marc questioned as he stared at Rylan.

"It's an easy contaminant to trace." Rylan smiled. "Besides, those units really SHOULD be used for something." He added crossing his arms.

<Rylan, I have had no need for them. Nyo has been exceptional in performing his duties. This fact has been established.>

"True, but it will be nice to see them used since quite a bit of time went into their design." Rylan huffed. "Maybe we can have them start looking at some of the primitive electrical systems in this building. If asbestos wasn't going to keep them from using this location, a fire probably would."

"We've had one already." Marc mumbled as he rubbed his eyes.

"Send them down Ark. Get the scans that you need from them and then I'll take care of the rest." Rylan said just as a new face turned the corner and started walking in their direction.

<As you wish Rylan. They will be at your location shortly.>

"I don't know how to thank you guys." Marc said placing his hand on Rylan's shoulder.

"Thank us?" Rylan grinned. "With everything that we have seen going on within this Clan and for all the years we have waited to see it? This is our way of thanking you." He said before he turned and went back into the ER.

"Doctor Furst?" The blond teenage boy who had entered the hallway carefully asked as he approached.

"That's me. Are you John?" Marc asked with a tired smile.

"Yeah." The boy replied as he extended his hand. "I can't believe I'm really getting to meet you."

"Yeah, well. It would be better if the conditions weren't so bad." Marc replied as he waved John toward the entrance to the ER. "You and your partn... Um... Father going to be around for a while?"

"We plan to be." John replied as he stopped and tilted his head. "Rich is a little of both."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to say it like that. I just wasn't sure." Marc replied as they made their way through the rushing groups to the Nurses' Station. "From what I've read, your living arrangement is a lot like the one I had with my original father."

"I know." John replied as Marc grabbed a stack of folders and a P.A.D.D. off the desk. "If it's cool, I'd really like to talk to you about that someday."

"Well, you and rich are more than welcomed to stay for as long as you like. I'd really like to talk to you about it too." Marc smiled. "For now, I need you to access your emergency medical files and have them readily available. Today hasn't been much more than a living nightmare so far." Marc said as he handed the P.A.D.D. to John. "Considering what is reported to be on the way, it's not getting much better yet either."

"I think I got it all." KC said as he took a deep breath. "How he's made it this far..."

"I know." Caleb replied as he tapped away at the biobed's controls. "I'm still seeing lots of fluid in his lungs and his heart rate is a little erratic."

Just as KC was about to reply, screaming from the hall caught his attention. Looking up he got a glimpse of a gurney being rolled down the hallway, followed by Kyle; who paused for a moment to look into the room. After a moment, Kyle's face seemed to become cold and angry. Just as KC opened his mouth to say something, Kyle shook his head and quickly walked out of sight in the direction the screaming patient was taken.

"I'm gonna hear screaming in my sleep for years after all this." Caleb said just over a whisper as he took the small child's hand in his own.

"Yeah." KC said as he slid a seat over for Caleb. "Sit down dude, all we can do is wait now."

"Did you know this kid's father did this to him? His own father." Caleb said with a snuffle as he pulled the chair closer and sat down, not once releasing the boy's hand.

"Well, when he pulls through you guys are gonna have to look into it I guess."

"Oh, we will." Caleb replied. "That I promise." He managed to get out as all the lights in the room seemed to dim for a moment; setting off alarms on half of the operating equipment. "What the hell was that?"

"Not sure. Running a self check on the biobed." KC quickly replied as more alarms began to sound. "The bed's cutting off the stimulant that's keeping his heart rate stable." KC said in almost a panic. "It won't let me override!"

As the words were leaving KC's lips, Caleb froze when the boy took a deep breath and then began coughing. "Easy little guy." Caleb whispered as he ran his fingers through the boy's hair. "He's regaining consciousness."

"I don't know how." KC replied with his eyes open wide in shock. "The amount of pain he should be in would be enough to put a full grown man into shock."

"Wh... where am I?" The boy asked with a gurgle in his whisper.

"You're in a hospital." Caleb whispered in as soothing a tone as he could manage.

"I can't see." The boy calmly stated after attempting to open his eyes. "Am I gonna be blind?"

"We don't know yet big guy. We're doing everything we can to make sure you won't be though." Caleb answered. "My name is Caleb, what's yours?"

"Hunter." The boy answered. "It don't hurt no more." He continued with a calm smile. "Did you save the boy?"

"Which boy?" Caleb asked as he looked over to KC.

"The one in the wheeled chair. My Dad tried to shoot him, but I stopped him I think." Hunter said as he coughed once again, bringing up some of the fluid from his lungs which was heavily laced with blood.

"Breathe slow buddy." KC said as he frantically tapped on the bed's controls. "You need to take it really slow and easy, ok?"

"Who's that?" Hunter asked as he still attempted to look in the direction of the new voice.

"That's my friend KC." Caleb replied as a tear made its way down his cheek. "He helped me get you all fixed up."

"Oh." Hunter replied as his breathing slowed. "Thanks."

"Thanks? Thanks for what?" Caleb asked as he took Hunter's hand in his own again.

"For fixin me up." Hunter answered before he paused and looked as if he was deep in thought. "Am I gonna die?"

Caleb looked at KC, tears now streaming down his cheeks. "We don't know." KC answered honestly. "You are doing lots better than we thought you could though so, you may be better than even we know."

With another sniffle, Caleb gave Hunter's hand a squeeze just as a tear fell from his cheek; landing on the boy's hand. "Are you cryin'?"

"A little." Caleb sniffled and answered quickly.

"Lemme touch your face..." Hunter started as he reached out his hand. "...please." Caleb leaned closer to his outstretched hand and released the one he was holding. Hunter gently touched his mouth and worked his way to Caleb's eyes, wiping away the tears. Then he continued to gently feel his way up to Caleb's hair before he brought his hands away. "What do you look like?"

"Um..." Caleb mumbled as he took the boy's hand back in his own. "I've got green eyes, just like yours." He started. "Blond hair that's grown a little longer than yours is right now..."

"Yur not old." Hunter cut him off.

"No. I turned 12 in April." Caleb replied.

"And you're a doctor?"

"No, just someone who's trying to help."

"You should be a doctor." The boy said as he tried to smile. "You'd be an awesome doctor."

"Thanks, but KC did a lot of the work." Caleb smiled just as Hunter winced and his body became ridged. "KC!?!"

"Checking." KC shouted as he frantically looked over the bed's display.

"I wish you were my Dad..." Hunter managed to get out before his small body was wracked with a violent seizure. "Help the boy... th... the one in the... w... wheeled chair..." he managed to get out before the seizure took control of him.

"I can't...he's... Oh god." KC started to shout. "His heart rate is off the chart! He's going into cardiac arrest! Beginning artificial respiration sequence." KC shouted as he banged on the controls. "We're gonna lose him! Stand back, We gotta shock him."

"Go ahead, I'm monitoring." Caleb shouted back as he rushed to the other side of the bed.

"Stand clear, defibrillating thirty percent intensity." KC shouted a moment before the whine and hiss of the bed filled the room and the boy's small body lurched with the shock.

"No rhythm." Caleb said as he wiped the fresh tears out of his eyes.

"Fourty percent charge." KC stated as the boy's body lurched once again.

"No rhythm, blood pressure dropping rapidly." Caleb almost cried. "Blood oxygen levels critical! We're losing him!"

"Not yet we aren't." KC replied as the heart monitor continued to beep away the boy's unevenly slowing heart rate. "Continuing artificial respiration, defibrillating fifty percent intensity. Increase pulmonary stimulants!"

"Marc, I need you for a minute." Rylan said, poking his head into the curtain that enclosed a bed that was surrounded with Medbots.

"What's wrong?" Marc asked as he slipped away from the team and stepped outside the curtains.

"Nothing really." Rylan grinned. "Your building is completely sanitized and the second level, including the permanent operating rooms will be functional in about 3 hours."

"Damn." Marc gasped. "What's going on up there?"

"Well, let's just say we have four very happy Techbots on site." Rylan smiled.

"I guess." Marc got out as Noah came into the ER being followed by an adult. "Hey Noah, Who's your friend?"

"Someone who wanted to meet you." Noah smiled as they approached. "Doctor Marc Furst, this is Chad Kroeger."

"Nice to meet you Doctor. I've read all about you and your efforts after the company you helped to build closed down." Chad said as he shook Marc's hand.

"Cool a fan." Marc smiled. "Just call me Marc though." He added before looking at Noah, who was grinning like an idiot. "Ok, what are you so goofed about?"

"Doesn't he look familiar to you?" Noah asked as Chad rolled his eyes.

"Kinda." Marc said looking at Chad a bit closer. "Wait... Chad Kroeger? Not Chad Kroeger, the lead singer for Nickelback."

"That's me." Chad laughed with a little embarrassment surfacing in his voice. "We were touring with Jon Bon Jovi when your Red Alert was called. Jon knows the leaders of your group so; he wanted to come here to see if he could help out in some way. We tagged along too."

"We?" Marc asked with a grin. "Your whole group is here?"

"Around here somewhere." Chad smiled. "We were all going to head down to your cafeteria to see if we can cheer up some of the kids, I just asked Noah if there was any way I could meet you first."

"That's sweet!" Marc smiled. "I'm a big fan of your music."

"We need to talk then." Chad replied. "Cause I'm a really big fan of your work. Have been since I was a kid."

"Deal." Marc smiled as he looked at Noah. "Rylan says we're in really good condition now."

"Just in time." Noah laughed. "Did you hear that we have assistance offered from the state of Iowa now? Even more hospitals willing to take our overload."

"Are you serious?" Marc asked as his eyes opened wide. "Have we started transporting patients?"

"Small groups only." Noah answered before looking across the hall to a bed Danny and a Medbot were frantically working on a patient at. "Marc, why don't you take a few minutes and show Chad the way to the cafeteria. You look like you could use a break. I got the ER covered."

"You sure?" Marc grinned as he asked.

"Yup." Noah replied as he powered on his P.A.D.D. and tapped away at it. "We have more incoming but, as soon as I clear some beds we'll also have more hands."

"Sounds good. Later on we really need to contact the Hospitals that are helping out and thank them." Marc said as he patted Noah on the shoulder.

"We will." Noah replied. "Don't forget though, this is their way of thanking us for what we're doing. Wait til you talk to some of these people. It's unreal."

"Ok." Marc said as he motioned to Chad. "I'll be back in five."

"Make it ten. Android or not, you need a break too." Noah smiled without looking up from the display.

"Fine." Mark giggled. "You want me to bring you back some OJ?"

"You know it." Noah smiled. "Anything for you Rylan?"

"What's OJ?" Rylan asked shrugging his shoulders.

"Orange Juice dude." Noah giggled. "Just bring him one." He added with a laugh.

"Gotcha." Marc replied as he and Chad left the ER.

"I know what Orange Juice is you know." Rylan said with a smirk. "Oranges have been around for a really long time."

"But you never called it OJ?" Noah asked seriously.

"No." Rylan smiled. "Seems like this cycle is too lazy to simply use full names for just about everything."

"Really?" Noah grinned. "FYI, it saves time."

"FYI? See? If you need to explain each abbreviation it actually takes up more time. How is that worth the effort?"

"And you guys are responsible for Ark's technology?" Noah giggled.

"We did it all while drinking Orange Juice, not OJ." Rylan shot back seriously before both broke out in laughter.

"What's so funny?" Jerry asked as he approached the group with a freshly bandaged cadet in tow.

"Orange Juice." Rylan barely got out before Noah's giggling got him laughing again.

"See." Jerry said looking back at his patient. "This is why you need to go downstairs and relax. You'll get all whacked like these guys."

"Gotcha." The uniformed teenager replied as they both left for the cafeteria.

"No sense of humor." Noah shrugged. "Ok, seriously. We need to group up the patients that are stable enough to move. If we can clear enough space, we can have Ark teleport the group he's been holding."

"Don't forget you have operating rooms available on the second floor now." Rylan smiled when Noah looked up from his display with a shocked expression. "The Techbots are just about finished with the second floor."

"Serious?" Noah asked.

"Yeah. Phil gave them the blueprints for the refit and they've been having a blast." Rylan said before he tilted his head. "Seems a little unfair though."

"Really? What does?" Noah asked before looking over toward the bed Danny and Medbot Fourteen were working at, noticing how pale Danny was looking.

"That they get to have all the fun." Rylan smiled. "Ark, could you send 8 more Techbots to the AI hospital? You know, to let them stretch their legs."

<Their legs are comprised mostly of an aluminum alloy Rylan. It is impossible to stretch them without rendering them inoperable.>

"It's a figure of speech Ark." Rylan sighed.

<Much like abbreviating commonly used words?>

"Who programmed you with a sense of humor anyway?" Rylan laughed. "Just send them to the second floor to join up with the other four. I think they'll enjoy this building."

<They will be at your location shortly.>

"Thanks Ark." Rylan said with a smile. "I have to run my checks on the Medbots You need anything?"

"No, I think I'm going to review our notes and start getting groups of 10 at a time transported out to Iowa."

"Ok, see you in a few." Rylan replied as he turned and went right over to the bed Number Fourteen and Danny were working at.

"Self status?" Rylan asked the busy Medbot.

"Self status acceptable. All systems fully operational." The Medbot replied without even pausing in its duties.

"What about you Danny?" Rylan asked, getting a quick glimpse from Danny as he too did not pause in his work.

"I feel like a million bucks." Danny replied with a forced grin.

"And you are a bad liar." Rylan smiled and shrugged as he moved along to the next Medbot.

"Is it hot in here." Danny asked as he wiped off his forehead before continuing his work.

"The temperature is currently seventy three degrees Fahrenheit director." Medbot Number Fourteen replied. "Your temperature appears to be two degrees below normal for your species however."

"Really? It feels more like one hundred and seventy three." Danny said as he took a deep breath, grasped the side of the biobed and closed his eyes. "Number Fourteen, I can't focus..." he managed to get out before taking another deep breath.

"Director? Do you need assistance?" The Medbot paused and asked.

"No... I'll be fine." Danny replied sternly before releasing his grip on the side of the bed. "I just fee..." he managed to get out before his eyes rolled back and he crashed to the floor.

"DANNY!" Noah shouted as he dropped his P.A.D.D. and ran to help, nearly crashing into a young looking boy in army fatigues, obviously appearing to have come right off the battle field. "Sorry dude." Noah apologized before they both knelt down next to a confused looking Danny.

"That is alright, my name is Chang, I am a doctor, may I be of assistance." The boy replied as he looked down at Danny and then up at the person he was working on before he collapsed.

"That'd be sweet dude, thanks." Noah replied before brushing Danny's hair out of his eyes. "What happened?"

"I tripped." Danny weakly answered as he tried to sit up. "I'm fine, really."

"Really?" Noah asked looking at Chang.

"From what little I have seen, and what I can tell just by observing him, as well as what I am sure he has had to deal with recently, it seems to me that he is suffering form classic signs of exhaustion. I

would suggest that you find someplace to relax for a while, you will do no good to these patients in the condition you are in." Chang replied.

"I agree with Doctor Chang." Medbot Number Fourteen added. "Director Page is showing signs of extreme fatigue. He is running a low temperature, his blood pressure is also low and he complained about his vision being impaired shortly before losing his balance and collapsing."

"Really Noah, I'll be ok. Just give me a second to shake it off." Danny said as he tried to sit up once again.

Noah nodded his head and sat back on his heels while he pulled his communicator out. "No deal dude. Two doctors to one, you're benched." Noah grinned as he flipped his communicator open. "Noah to Marc."

"Marc here. What's up?"

"Marc I really don't want to panic you but I have a medical emergency you need to handle." Noah replied as he shrugged his shoulders.

"An android?"

"Yeah." Noah paused. "Some thing's wrong with Danny."

"On my way! Marc out!"

"Do you believe that you can handle this until the other doctor gets here, because if you can I believe I should help out this other patient?" Chang asked as Noah closed his communicator.

"The doctor should clean up first." Medbot Fourteen stated before both boys stared at it blankly causing Danny to start laughing weakly.

"They are practical." Danny said with a weak grin.

"Yeah." Noah smiled. "Chang, there's a washroom over on the other side of the Nurses' Station down this hall." Noah said while pointing out the way before the boy practically broke out in a run. "Can you stand?"

"I think so." Danny replied as Noah wrapped his arms around him and helped him to his feet.

"The truth, what's wrong." Noah asked as the two made it to an open biobed and Danny struggled to crawl up on to it.

"I'm not sure." Danny replied as he closed his eyes. "I feel really tired. Almost like a human that hasn't slept in days."

"You slept last night right?" Noah asked as he started the biobed.

"Yeah." Danny answered just as Marc came running up to the bed.

"What happened?"

"He collapsed." Noah replied.

"I tripped." Danny weakly added.

"Sure you did. Just sit tight bro, we'll find out what's up." Marc said as he waved to a nearby Medbot. "Number Thirteen, could you take Director Page to examining room 8 and alert Dr. Murphy where he is. Just tell John that I'll be there as soon as I can."

"As you wish doctor." The Medbot replied as Marc stood up and looked at Noah seriously.

"Who's responsible for the last group that came in?" Marc asked as he led Noah away from the bed.

"Which group?" Noah asked shaking his head.

"The patient I took from that last wave. The only name I have on record for him is Alvin." Marc said shaking his head. "I think he's part of the Unit that took over on the field. I need to speak with whoever is in charge of that kid."

As the words were leaving Marc's lips, a uniformed teenager quickly turned and approached. "Excuse me, but is Alvin okay? I heard you say you needed to speak to someone about him. My name is Adam Casey, commander of the Unit."

"Commander." Marc said in greeting as he shook the boy's hand. "I'm Doctor Furst. Can I speak to you privately about Alvin?"

"Of course doctor, please lead the way." The boy said with his eyes wide.

Marc leaned in to whisper in Noah's ear. "Security to the ER." He got out before he turned and smiled. "We'll be in Examining room 3. Right this way Commander." and he led the way into the Exam room.

Just as Marc closed the door, Adam quickly turned and asked "Is Alvin okay?"

"Physically I think he'll be functioning fine really soon." Marc said shaking his head. "Commander, are you familiar with the components in an android?"

"Ummm... not really all that much, Logan would be the one to ask about Androids... if it's techy, he knows it." The boy replied.

"Oh, I should show you something then." Marc said as he approached the controls next to the bed and brought up a display. "I'm sure you can tell that this display is showing a human looking cranium with a Positronic... er... Android Brain I mean. I mean it's pretty obvious in this image, right?"

"Ummm... yeah." The boy again replied as he looked over the image, obviously a little confused at the questions.

"That's great." Marc said as he punched off the display, with a little more force than needed. "Do you think you can tell me why that android brain is in this human's skull?" Marc asked as he clenched his fists. "Exactly what kind of experimentation has your organization been doing out there?"

The boy looked at the bed and then back at Marc a couple of times before his eyes widened. "Hold on a second Doctor, obviously you don't have all the facts here."

"Oh, I'm all ears Commander." Marc said with ice in his voice as he folded his arms and leaned up against the wall.

"First off Dr. Furst, we had nothing to do with any of what was done to these kids. About four months ago, he, and about one hundred other kids escaped from a lab where the military was trying to create super soldiers. That kind of lab is where most of US came from." Adam said, obviously trying to keep himself calm.

Marc looked at the expression in Adams face before he tilted his head and took a deep breath. "I'm sorry." Marc said as he looked down toward the floor. "I tend to get a little upset when I learn that a child has been murdered in an attempt to incorporate android components within a human. It wouldn't be the first time it's happened." Marc got out as he quickly pulled out his communicator. "Marc to Noah. Stand down."

"Gotcha Marc." Marc's communicator sounded back.

"Apology accepted, now, however, I have to wonder how many more of us have Computer Brains?" Adam replied causing Marc to gasp.

"You mean it's possible this was done to more of your people?" Marc asked as his Jaw hit the floor.

Adam sighed and ran his hand through his hair. "Yeah, see Alvin and twelve others are actually clones of Logan, they were "made" to be the intelligence teams. However, there were just over one hundred other kids in that facility. So your guess is a good as mine. Not to mention that myself and four others came from other labs that were all a part of the same project."

"Holey shit." Marc practically coughed out. "Do you know who's responsible for this?"

"General Adams is the one who is in charge of the Genesis project... and this is just one more thing that he'll have to answer for when I get my hands on him." Adam said with tension building in his voice.

"Unreal." Marc said as he walked closer to the bed and put his hand on Alvin's arm. "I can answer your first question at least. Alvin is going to be fine. The gunshot wounds to his chest luckily missed any major organs. One shot grazed his left lung but that will heal without any real issues." Marc said as he turned and faced Adam again. "The shot to the head was the problem." He continued as he brought up the display once again. "A Human Skull is a lot more fragile than an android's. This display shows the crack he has in his skull."

"Is... is he gonna be okay?" Adam asked with a crack in his voice.

"Yeah, he'll be fine." Marc said as he patted Adam's shoulder. "See, a Positronic Brain is just as fragile as a human brain. The only real benefit is that his brain shut itself down out of self defense upon impact. Luckily, the only damage was a severe scoring of the external casing. That score will always be there but nothing inside was damaged at all. Had that shot impacted one inch higher and we would have been looking at total loss of the unit, possibly loss of the stored personality imprint."

"Oh thank God. I don't know how I would have been able to tell Logan." Adam said with a sigh. "You see, Logan got shot, and Alvin jumped on top of him to make sure Logan didn't get hurt anymore. I don't know how Logan would have handled it had Alvin died saving his life."

"He's not going to die." Marc said with a smile. "He is going to need time for his injuries to heal though." He paused and then continued; "The other question would be, what will his response be when he finds out about what was done to him?"

"I'm not really sure, however, the question I have right now is how many of the others have the same thing... I think I need to find Dr. Tony, he was one of the doctors at that lab, although he dealt primarily with the Cat/Human Hybrids." Adam said as if he was talking out his thoughts.

"Well, if your Doctor Tony needs anything from me or my staff in assistance; let him know he has it. If you guys have a lot more of these experiments in your group, I can't see how it's going to be easy to get through." Marc said as he motioned toward the door. "I need to get back to work. Your people are welcomed to come in and visit with him once he wakes up. If your Logan has any questions about any of this, just have him get in touch with me." He said as he opened the door. "I really am sorry for the grilling I was lining you up for when I first got you in here, and for the news I just dropped in your lap."

"Thank you very much Doctor, I'll let you know." Adam said as Marc just nodded and went out the door.

"That went well." Marc said as he rolled his eyes to Noah who was standing right outside the door. "I'm gonna go check on Danny and then hopefully we can take a few and grab something to eat. I'm starved." He said as he turned and walked down the hall.

"Sounds good, just grab me when you're done." Noah said before looking up toward the doors and seeing KC standing there with a lost expression on his face, almost as if he were on the verge of crying. "Hey KC!" Noah yelled as he jogged to meet him at the door. "What's wrong dude?"

"We lost him..." KC got out before tears began to run down his cheeks.

"Whoah... Lost who?" Noah asked as he led KC behind the nurses reception desk and sat him down.

"Hunter."

"Hunter? You mean the little boy Caleb rolled out of here?" Noah asked as he knelt down in front of KC.

"Yeah. He regained consciousness for about two minutes and then..." KC said before he openly began to cry. "We tried so hard... His little heart couldn't take any m... more."

"Where's Caleb?" Noah asked as he grabbed KC's hand.

"He won't leave him." KC said through his sobs. "They were taking him down to the morgue."

"I'll go find him as soon as I can." Noah said in a worried tone. "Dude, you guys did all that you could. Even that little boy couldn't have asked for more."

"If I ever get my hands on that kid's father..." KC began.

"Won't happen. Kyle has him right now." Noah winked. "I don't think there's gonna be much left."

"Good." KC replied as he wiped his eyes with the back of his hands. "I just wish that was enough to bring the little guy back."

"I hear ya." Noah said as he shook his head. "At least the little guy isn't hurting anymore."

"I hope Mikey and Davie find him." KC said as fresh tears left paths down his cheeks.

"I know they will." Noah replied as Marc approached the counter with a smirk on his face that instantly melted the second he laid eyes on KC.

"What happened?" Marc asked after taking a deep breath.

"Caleb and KC lost the Russell boy." Noah sighed.

"Oh man." Marc quietly said as he reached over the counter and gave KC's shoulder a squeeze. "I'm so sorry."

"I'm alright. I'm worried about Cal though. He's taking this really hard." KC said as he wiped at his eyes once again.

"I can imagine." Marc said as he pulled out his communicator. "Marc to Caleb."

After almost a full minute, Caleb's voice could barely be heard in his response. "Caleb here." He got out after clearing his throat several times.

"Cal, I just wanted to make sure you're ok. KC just told us what happened." Marc said as KC stood up from his chair and wiped his eyes again.

"I... I'm fine. Really."

"Where are you now?" Marc asked before looking at Noah.

"I wa... I mean I'm leaving the morgue now." He managed to get out before muffled sniffles could be heard. "Oh god Marc, this is so unfair. That little boy never hurt anyone. He was trying to save the life of another kid."

"Look, I can send Noah to meet with you. We can manage without him for a while if you need him." Marc said nodding toward Noah.

"NO!" Caleb almost cried. "I just wanna be alone for a while. I'm ok, really."

"I'm right here if you need me, ok?" Noah spoke up as he leaned in toward Marc's communicator.

"I know."

"I love you." Noah said as his eyes began to well up.

"Love you too." Caleb answered really quickly. "Caleb out."

"Maybe you should go be with him anyway." Marc said as he put his communicator back in his pocket.

"No." Noah said as he wrapped his arm around KC's shoulder and walked out from behind the nurses desk. "If he says he needs time, then we need to give it to him." He got out before taking a deep breath. "How's Danny?"

"Oh yeah." Marc smirked. "That's why I came over here."

"Some thing's wrong with Danny?" KC tilted his head and asked just as John came over and pulled off a pair of gloves.

"Not anymore." John smiled. "At least for now."

"A new guy?" KC asked as he stared at a well tanned teen in a doctor's gown, his shaggy blond hair peeking out from all sides of his cap.

"Yeah, I'm John Murphy. My Dad is the officer in Malibu that found the android that you guys repaired and reactivated." The boy said as Marc looked at KC and grinned.

"Your Dad found me?" KC said after he shook his head a couple of times.

"Oh wow dude, you're Kenny McKensie?" John asked with a wide smile.

"Just KC." KC said with half of a smile. "You surf?"

"Yeah." John answered as he tilted his head. "How'd you guess that?"

"Shark tooth." KC answered as he pointed to the boy's necklace. "I guessed you were either a tourist or you actually spent time on the water."

"Good guess." John replied. "A friend of my Dad's rides waves. This tooth actually comes from a shark that bit him once."

"Whoah! You serious?" KC asked with a smile.

"That or he was really drunk and knocked it out with a bottle by accident." John said with a laugh. "He does love to tell stories either way. He gave me this on my birthday a few years back."

"Sweet." KC grinned as he looked at the necklace even closer.

"So, did you find what I did in Danny?" Marc asked as he crossed his arms.

"Yup." John replied.

"What was wrong with him?" Noah asked opening his eyes wide.

"Well." John began. "It appears that there were a few physical differences between the prototype brain and the prototype M.A.R.C."

"What does that mean?" Noah asked as he watched the other three nod their head as if it all made perfect sense.

"It means that even though Danny's upgraded programing has been telling him to sleep it hasn't been triggering his low power maintenance mode." Marc offered.

"Is that bad?" Noah asked getting a giggle from KC.

"Picture going for over a week without sleep. Just lying down and closing your eyes." KC replied. "He shoulda collapsed long before now really."

"I already adjusted his programming and the biobed has given him enough to go for a while longer before he's really going to need sleep." John said as he waved the other three toward the room Danny was in. "He's a little cranky." John added as they pulled back the curtains and saw Danny strapped to the biobed.

"Marc, is this really needed?" Danny asked as he tried to raise his arms.

"If you weren't so stubborn, no it wouldn't be." John replied before turning to look at Marc and grin. "I liked him better when he was asleep."

"No lollipop for him then." Marc giggled.

"Har har har." Danny said with a sneer in his voice. "Look, I'm fine and taking up a bed that we need."

After appearing to ignore Danny, Marc strolled over to the controls to the biobed and released the restraints. "You get to come with us to the cafeteria while the staff continues to ship people out. You will eat something to give your system something to recover with and then you will find a nice quiet place to take at least a half hour nap."

"Whatever." Danny said as he sat up and rubbed his wrists. "I want to go over our status first though."

"I'll allow it." Marc said. "The call is actually Noah's though."

"Gee, thanks Marc." Noah groaned as he grabbed Danny's hand and helped him to his feet. "I'll grab a P.A.D.D. if you promise to get some rest afterward."

"Like I have a choice." Danny grinned.

"This is good." Marc said as he tore into his slice of Pizza.

"Yeah it is." Danny answered with a nod. "I actually feel a lot better now."

"Nice try. You are still going in for a nap though." Noah said as he tapped on the display of his hand held. "So we have just about 100 who have already been transported out and we're still sending small groups as each of the four hospitals in Iowa report their readiness. Not counting the ones we can't move yet that should just about clear us out before we have more incoming."

"Ark is still holding a group, right?" Danny asked as he began to rub the stiffness out of his neck.

"Yeah." Marc replied with his mouth full. "There are even more in the field waiting. Ark is actually still slowly feeding us a few at a time as we clear out so we can treat and ship."

"That works." Danny smiled. "Where do we stand as far as the ones we aren't shipping out?"

"Roughly 15 that aren't stable enough." Noah said as he tapped away. "Mike Reynolds is close; he just hasn't regained consciousness yet. Samantha Perry is still in surgery, her chest wound was worse than we originally thought. She's in OR #3 being worked on by Medbots Sixteen, Seventeen and Twenty." Noah got out as he took a bite of his pizza.

"Number Fourteen says that she's expected to recover though." Marc added.

"That's good news." Danny smiled. "Marc, what about that android boy that came in earlier? I haven't heard anything about him since he first was seen."

"Teddy?" Marc questioned.

"Yeah, what's his status?" Danny asked before looking at Noah.

"Um..." Noah replied as he tapped away some more. "Theodore Carr?"

"That's him. I think Austin took him after I got buried." Marc replied.

"He did." Noah said, pausing to read the report. "John Murphy took over recently. He reports that the direct cause of his weakened system is partly due to malnutrition." Noah continued as he read further. "Here it is. Subject in a state of forced partial low power shut down due to overload and failure of re-generation circuits caused by biological deficiencies due in part to neglect. Malnutrition, in addition to stress induced by physical, mental and sexual abuse are assumed to be contributing factors."

"Mind if we join you?" Chad asked as he and his entire group approached the table.

"Sure." Marc smiled. "We can go over the rest of this later, right guys?"

"That's cool." Danny said grabbing the P.A.D.D. from Noah and powering it down. "Every thing's pretty much handled."

"True." Noah smiled. "You guys been busy down here?" He asked as Chad's group sat down.

"Not as busy as we thought we'd be." Chad replied. "Mike and I sang a couple of songs for the kids earlier, Daniel's been playing hide and seek for about an hour now and Ryan's been lending a hand in the kitchen."

"You guys volunteered?" Danny asked as he looked at Chad.

"Oh yeah, Danny hasn't met you guys yet." Marc giggled. "Danny, these guys are Nickelback, they were touring with Bon Jovi when the Red Alert was issued. All the guys came straight here to see if they could help."

"Sweet." Danny smiled. "That explains the guitars."

"It's all we had with us." Mike smiled.

"Dan doesn't keep a spare drum set in his back pocket?" Marc asked with a laugh.

"No." Daniel Adair and Danny said at the same time before looking at each other and laughing.

"You play drums?" Daniel asked with a smile.

"Yeah." Danny replied sitting forward in his seat and resting his elbows on the table. "I could have my set transported in from the house if you wanna play."

"Nah." Chad said getting a frown as a reply from Daniel. "Most of our equipment isn't here."

"Maybe some other time bro." Daniel said with a smile. "We should get you to sit in during a practice or something sometime."

"That'd be fun." Danny said with a yawn as he noticed Sean and Cory approaching the table and Noah getting out of his seat so Cory could sit down. "Hey guys." He said with a weak smile before sliding over in his chair to make a little room and waving to Noah to sit back down. "Plant it Barnes, you're off duty."

"Slave driver." Noah grinned as he walked around the table and plopped down, instantly finding an arm wrapped around his shoulder.

"Better watch it bro. I'll have KC give you another black eye." Danny grinned before looking back over to Sean and Cory as they sat down. "How are you feeling Cor? You haven't had much recovery time and really should be taking it easy."

"I'm okay I guess; Sarek put Sean in charge until I recover." Cory replied. "I'm more worried about you guys though; I'm really sorry I dragged you into this mess."

"Dragged us into this?" Danny questioned as Marc tilted his head and scowled. "No one dragged anyone into anything, family sticks together through the good and bad times."

"Thanks bro." Cory replied softly. "It just hurts knowing that people I love are going to have nightmares for a long time because I didn't realize how bad it was until it was too late."

"There was no way any of us could have known what was going to happen Cor." Sean said softly. "I talked to Justy and Seth while you were in conference with Sarek about the D'Kyr; none of our intelligence picked up anything that could have warned us."

"They were going after Sammy publicly." Cory replied while shaking his head weakly. "We should have expected them to try something else since that was not working."

"Should have, could have... You know Cory, life is full of those." Marc said as he rubbed his eyes. "If I had only known how hard things could get when you guys first showed up at our house, I might have refused your help and missed out on making new family. I made that choice, just like everyone else in your family that is standing at your side and refusing to stand anywhere else. No matter how bad it could get."

"You're not even being fair to yourself Cory." Noah said in barely above a whisper. "Or to us by saying this was some kinda mistake."

Cory sighed. "You're right; I'm sorry bros. Ever since I came down here I've been going over everything that happened trying to find a way I could have done something different so nobody died. No matter how hard I try I can't do it though. The Federation has declared a worldwide Red Alert and has taken command of all Terran Armed Forces; then they gave command of those forces to Adam and his group. Last I heard at least four states have declared themselves 'Safe Haven' states and are doing everything they can to help us. Right now, the Lafayette and the D'Kyr are orbiting Earth at full Red Alert. Even with all of that, things still went bad."

"So stop blaming yourself. Stop thinking there was a better way." Noah said as a child in a sling ran past the table toward a small group of kids that were playing on one of the mattresses on the floor. "Next time you do, look at one of those kids. If we ALL weren't willing to sacrifice for this, where would they be right now?"

"He was right." Marc smiled before scanning the room. "I think we all have something to be really proud about here. Just think about how much good can actually come of this."

"Or already has." Danny smiled. "Care for a report Patriarch?"

"That's Sean's job; I'm on the sick list." Cory replied, his mood slightly improved with finally admitting he was not to blame. "This might qualify though. Did Austin tell you that you're a grandpa now Marc?"

"Excuse me?" Marc almost choked. "No!"

"You are old enough." Noah jabbed in quickly, earning a laugh from everyone at the table, except Marc.

Cory tilted his head towards Austin. "He adopted those two angels sitting on his lap."

"No kidding." Marc said as he looked at the three who were obviously enjoying some needed quiet cuddle time. "The fair skinned one almost looks as if he could be diagnosed with Albinism." Marc said tilting his head.

"Give it a rest Doctor." Noah laughed. "Danny, can we take his batteries out or something?"

"What, he does. Look at him." Marc almost whined.

"I'll save you the trouble; Conner's a full-scale albino." Cory replied. "If I understood Austin right there's some surgery he needs done for his eyes. That's between you two; I'm not getting near another operating table for a long time."

"I can talk to him about it." Marc replied. "I hope he doesn't intend to perform the procedure himself. He may have the programming, but his emotions get in the way."

"So that's why he was down here." Sean stated. "He changed the subject when I asked."

"Speaking of androids not in the ER, you have relation that came in on the D'Kyr Marc." Cory said as he turned to look at the three boys who were supervising the cuddle party on their pet. "They brought their pet Sehlat 'Marju' down about an hour ago; Timmy already asked for one."

"Why doesn't that surprise me?" Marc laughed. "Are they M.A.R.C. series?"

"If you want, I can go get them so you can ask them yourself." Joe said as he walked up to the table. "You're starting to look better Cory."

Cory quickly twisted his head. "Hi Joe! If you don't mind that'd be great. We could do introductions all at once then."

"Definitely." Marc smiled as everyone at the table nodded in agreement.

"Danny." Chad spoke up as the rest of the band members began to stand up. "We're going to skip out on you for a few. Have a couple of calls to make and would really like to check up on a few of the kids we met today."

"Oh sure." Danny said with a smile. "You guys aren't taking off soon are you?"

"Not for a while." Daniel said with a grin. "I was actually hoping to get a look at this drum set you mentioned."

"Oh great." Noah moaned. "No one'll be sleeping tonight."

"Wah." Danny laughed. "Sweet, I'll look for you later."

"You got it." Daniel replied as the group made their way toward the door.

"Those guys are awesome in real life." Marc said as he watched them leave. "You should have seen them jump in and just start helping. It was unreal."

"They are cool." Noah nodded. "Even if they did bring in another Danny who likes to pound on things."

"So you've got a lotion shortage at your place too?" Sean giggled.

"What Danny does in private is his business." Cory added.

"Perverts." Danny laughed.

Just then Joe returned with the three boys. "You wished to see us Patriarch?" Sipek asked.

Cory nodded. "I'd like you guys to meet some more of your family. First let me give Joe a proper introduction. Guys, this is Judge Joe Lewis; he's the one that made it so I was able to live with Mom and my teddy bear again. The new blond here is Skirk. His black-haired brother is Syzik and his brown haired brother is Sipek. You guys already know me and Sean; the rest of the guys here are Marc, Danny, and Noah."

"Great to meet you." Noah said with a smile.

"Welcome to the family." Danny added before turning and looking at Marc; who appeared to be lost in thought. "Dr. Furst. Helloooo." He said with a giggle. "The mute says hi."

"I'm sorry." Marc said with a grin. "It's great to meet you. I just can't remember any of our kind being transported to Vulcan. Were you adopted?"

"It is an honor to meet you too." Sipek replied for all of them. "Our original owners ordered us to star in an off-Terra entertainment series. Upon termination of the series we were sold to another person who intended to use us for illegal films. Due to a mishap on the ship we were ejected in an escape pod and picked up by the D'Kyr. Our performance on the D'Kyr brought about the logical inclusion of the three of us into the ship's crew. The exact location escapes me at the moment; but you appear familiar Marc."

Cory smiled. "I bet I know why. He's Marc Furst; the entire M.A.R.C. series is named after him. He's also the R&D Director of the Clan AI Division. Danny there predates even him; he's the AI Division Head. Noah's the oddball; he's human but he's also Danny's second-in-command."

"I can see I've got a few months of catching up to do!" Joe chuckled. "Do you offer a speed course for remembering all of this Cory?"

Cory grinned. "Just talk to Kyle Joe; he'll get you up-to-date in about ten seconds."

Sipek tilted his head. "That would explain my recollection; I had an internal component failure twenty-seven years ago and was returned to Vision Industries for repair. At that time I overheard a conversation which stated the original M.A.R.C. was on the premises."

"Too bad our paths didn't cross." Marc smiled warmly. "I do remember reading about three of our own ordered for off planet entertainment, never thought I'd ever get to meet them though."

Skirk gave a small smile. "It is nothing like meeting the two people who made us possible. Patriarch Short has told us that we should attempt to be less formal with family; due to our immersion in Vulcan culture for over a decade it will take some time to reacquire our dormant emotional responses fully. I wish to apologize in advance if we seem detached for a while."

Cory giggled. "That reminds me Marc; is there any way you can reprogram them to call me 'Cory'? Some of the munchkins are trying to be like their new 'space heroes' and are addressing me as 'Patriarch' now!"

"I'll look into it Patriarch." Marc giggled.

Cory shook his head. "Thanks a lot bro. Danny; since your R&D department head has gone senile, do you have any good news?"

"Nothin new." Danny replied after a brief stretch. "With all the external help we are receiving we should be able to have this location shut back down by morning so we can get back to renovating this place."

"Thanks to Rylan, that's not going to take long." Noah added. "Dude, they cleared the asbestos and then just started going crazy on the wiring up there." Noah directed toward Cory. "Phil is havin a blast just watching them."

"They who?" Cory asked, tilting his head. "How can you remove asbestos with people here?"

"Oh sorry." Noah laughed. "Ark sent four Techbots here when we found out there was a small amount of airborne asbestos in the areas we were hoping to use. They scanned the entire building and teleported it all out, then just started fixing stuff on their own. You should see them work!"

"Ahhh!" Cory giggled. "Maybe I should talk to Ark about borrowing one after you guys have finished with them; when Austin starts wrestling with his brothers things get messed up quick!"

"I don't know." Noah laughed. "Three of them are playing up on the Sixth floor right now."

"Playing?" Danny turned and asked, tilting his head.

"Yeah." Noah said as he sat back in his seat. "They started ripping out the walls and the old wiring. It looks like a bunch of kids in a playground. Seriously."

"Kinda like you and Caleb going through Microsoft code?" Cory asked with a giggle.

"Yeah, kinda." Noah answered with a grin. "We stopped when we were finished though. One is still finishing up in the brig area and the other three just started goin house upstairs. They even stole the blueprints right out of Phil's hands. It was seriously funny."

Cory nodded. "That actually is good; from the sounds of it that is one less thing you guys need to worry about." He glanced over at Danny, who appeared to be on the edge of nodding off. "Tell you what; why don't you guys get Sleeping Beauty here to a bed; we'll start getting everyone outta here so you can close this place back up. We'll talk tomorrow sometime; right now I think the only reason I ain't passed out for the night is Ty trying to give my head a chance to sort all of this out. I'm gonna have to pin down Kyle and have him teach me how he does it."

"A bed?" Danny asked opening his eyes wide. "I don't look that tired, do I?"

"All of us do Danny; and from the looks of it I'd say you're pulling a Cory and trying to take it all on yourself." Sean giggled.

"Yeah right." Danny smiled. "Like he doesn't?" He said pointing at Noah. "I mean look at the bag under his eye." He got out as Noah covered his black eye and tried not to laugh.

Cory shook his head. "Y'all are nuts. Sean and I are gonna formally introduce Skirk and his brothers to a few people then we'll get everyone we can outta your hair. If y'all need anything get a hold of Sean; Tommy found out that Grandfather Sarek took me off duty so he refuses to even give me a chance to do any work."

Sean grinned. "That's our little brother for ya; hard headed as ever!"

"Yeah, it's back to work I guess." Danny replied as the group got to their feet and stretched. "I'll report in as soon as we have some kind of a time table figured out here."

Sean giggled. "Report in tomorrow when the rest of us can think without Ty messing with our heads to keep us sane. That's an order!"

"SIR! YES SIR!" Danny and Noah chorused seconds before Marc playfully slapped them both in the back of the head and pushed them toward the door. "Sean." Marc said with a smile. "Make sure Cory gets rest, ok?"

"You got it Doc!" Sean replied.

"It was nice meeting you guys." Marc said turning to the newest additions to the family. "We need to get together sometime and trade some stories."

"It is an honor Sir; we look forward to sharing the experience." Syzik replied.

Marc shook his head and grinned. "The proper response would be more like 'Sounds cool, can't wait' or something like that. You guys really need to recover your original protocols."

"Look who's talking." Danny giggled before running for the door.

"Oh, I'll recover your protocols dork!" Marc yelled before breaking out in a chase.

"Wouldn't they make a cute couple?" Noah said in just over a whisper to Cory.

"They're not a couple?" Skirk commented, overhearing Noah's whisper.

Noah snickered as he wrapped his arm around Skirk's shoulder. "No they aren't, but we're working on that."

Skirk grinned. "If android Elders are like Vulcan Elders you will be required to work very hard; they are very much set in their ways at times."

"Nah." Noah laughed. "I'll explain it to you sometime."

"So." Noah said as he walked back to the busy ER, finding Danny behind the desk at the nurses station.

"So?" Danny questioned, looking up at Noah.

"What member of security would you like me to have come and restrain you?" Noah asked; an evil grin forming on his face.

"Excuse me?" Danny said in shock as he stood up from his seat. "For what?"

"You are off duty and under orders to get some sleep. Or did you forget?" Noah said as he almost failed to stifle a giggle. "Maybe two security officers. I could have them rough you up a little too. That'd be fun to watch."

"You're kidding, right?" Danny questioned as he watched Noah pull out his communicator. "JESUS DUDE! I'm goin... Damn!"

"Good boy." Noah said, finally laughing. "The consultation office is quiet, dark and has a really comfortable chair in it." He said with a grin. "March!"

"Does Caleb know how much of a control freak you really are?" Danny asked as they entered the room and Noah led him right up to the chair.

"Yup." Noah smiled as he gave Danny a push, getting him to sit down; causing them both to laugh. "I'll come back and get you in about an hour bro. Get some real sleep, ok?"

"I will." Danny said with a yawn as Noah walked back toward the door. "Hey Barnes!" Danny said with a grin.

"What now?" Noah asked with a smile as he reached the door.

"Thanks." Danny replied, getting a nod from Noah as he closed the door. The second Danny's head hit the back of the soft chair, his eyes fell shut out of exhaustion.

"Ah Danny, what's your opinion?" Tyne's voice loudly echoed in his ears as if a part of his dream were coming to life.

"Yes, yes I think it's very important. What do you think Danny? Should we do it?" Cyna's voice added, finally getting Danny to open his eyes.

"Huh? What the..." Danny gasped as he nearly fell out of his chair. After rubbing his bloodshot eyes and blinking several times to try to focus, He looked around at the group at the table and simply shook his head. "Did I miss something here?"

"Oh don't tell me you were sleeping!?" Tyne said trying to sound like he was offended.

Kyle fought off giggles as he waved at Danny.

Danny mumbled as he looked around the table. "I was asleep, at the hospital..." He began as Kyle lost the battle and began laughing. "Yeah, you'll pay leech." He smiled before looking back toward Tyne. "Seer, I believe the answer to your question is, yes. We should definitely not take naps with leeches around."

"So that's yes to wild sex in the pool, but only when the leeches are not around," Cyna said purposely ignoring half of the comment. "I'll have the papers drawn up, thanks Danny."

"Oh..." Danny said with a yawn and a stretch before attempting to straighten out his shirt. "Glad to help." He giggled. "Any chance we could have a coffee break now?"

"We're just starting Danny, no breaks I'm afraid," replied Tyne. "But I'm sure we can get you a caffeine injection."

"Whatever works." Danny smiled as he pulled his chair closer to the table. "So, why are we meeting?"

"Now that a certain SOMEONE is done messing with people....." Cory stated while looking directly at Kyle.

Kyle tried to appear innocent. "Tyne SAID we needed everyone here!"

"Right, so now that we're all here what should we begin with?" said Tyne.

"Well we've got a list," Cyna said as a clipboard appeared in his hands. "We should probably start with the recent events, which will start with the attacks on the Clan, then move to the attacks on the Ark."

"Do we have any more information on this FCC other than the basics we've already got?" asked Tyne.

"Ark has been complaining about the amount of bodies it dumped," said Nyo. "If that counts."

"Um... That's my fault I think." Danny said as he lowered his eyes.

"They had to go somewhere." Cory replied. "I haven't had a chance to see what Clan Intelligence has found out yet, so I can't give any more information."

"We're still putting the data together." Kyle added. "The Clan Special Forces Team is following up on some leads to get more information, and once everyone has recovered from the shock of today's events we'll be able to put together a detailed report."

"That's pretty much what I figured, but I thought I'd ask anyway," said Tyne.

"Actually, I have something to add," Nyo said as he placed the camera he had been carrying with him onto the table. "I have reason to believe the attacks on the Clan and the attacks on the Ark were connected. This camera was found in CIC about an hour ago, it was phase shifted so it wouldn't be detected. It belongs or rather belonged to Axon. From what else we found that lead us to this camera we believe he has been watching the Clan as well as the Ark Compound for some time. While he may not be directly involved with the FCC, Ark thinks he might have been pushing them towards more extreme actions through his contacts."

"Have those cameras been found anywhere else Nyo?" Danny asked, now finally appearing to be more awake.

"Some of the connections we found were dead, meaning something happened to the camera but most of the ones we found were still active," said Nyo. "Ark is working on tracing the dead ones. While the others link to different locations where we have either visited often or have people stationed. Three of the active ones were in the Ark Compound itself, two were here in CIC; two of the dead ones were found to link to the AI Hospital, though we have only traced it and have not found the cameras yet. With the state of the building though I'm sure it wasn't hard to damage the cameras there. Another one of the live ones was watching a house in Montana. Three more go to different locations inside of Camp Little Eagle, which I'll be deactivating soon. The rest of the active cameras go to locations around the world, watching leaders here and there. We still have two more dead links to trace so I don't know where those are yet."

"I bet I know which house in Montana..." Cory muttered.

"I do too." Kyle replied. "Nyo; you might want to check with Xedyan and Miah to see if either of them can help you with locating them and spotting them if they get replaced. I'd like to get with you to check out how he did it so I can try to think of something too."

"We actually have scanners that can find them, we just don't normally install them in our locations," said Nyo. "I'll be looking into anything I can though for fixing this problem. Thank you for the suggestions."

"Hopefully that'll take care of any planned attacks but what are we doing about security in general?" asked Tyne.

"I've been working with one of the new security teams at the Ark Compound for the last few hours," replied Rusty. "While they still need more training they had some good ideas for keeping the compounds more secure. Ark also had some suggestions for equipment we could be using to detect anything that comes near any of the compounds within a hundred mile radius. While the hundred miles might be a bit much here it wouldn't hurt to have it. If nothing else Ark can keep an eye on it if we set up the grids."

"I like that," said Tyne. "But as soon as we have more security personal able I want to start or double our patrols."

"Oh that reminds me, we had a Phasenmorph die," Cyna added. "The poor thing did its job up until it ran out of energy; it was Adam's Phasenmorph."

Cory hung his head, and audibly sobbed before commenting. "I saw it happen. The idiot strapped a live grenade to his chest then jumped on Adam. All I could do was watch as he tried to kill my brother."

"His Phasenmorph saved his life." Danny said as he looked around the table. "Without that protection, I know he would never have survived that blast."

Sean wrapped his arms tightly around Cory. "He didn't die babe; our bro didn't die. Don't think about it right now; you'll hurt yourself if you do."

"I'm trying." Cory sobbed as he pulled Sean's arms tightly around him.

"Cor; let Ty help you bro." Kyle said softly. "Don't try to deal with your pain alone this time; we love you bro, we're here to help."

Cory nodded his head, and a few seconds later looked up and over at Kyle. "Thanks bro."

Danny watched silently before turning his attention toward Tyne. "I feel bad that the little guy was lost, I mean you guys may not look at them the same way some of the kids do but we may need to address Adam's feelings towards receiving a replacement." He said with a sigh. "I'll also wait to get together with Marc and Nyo regarding the issues of an AI and a Phasenmorph integrating. Now that I've see what those little creatures are capable of, and now that we know just how bad, bad can get; it would be irresponsible of us to not look deeper into it."

Xain nodded. "Your suggestion is logical Danny. Considering the probable outcome if a Phasenmorph had not been present; I believe it would be logical for us to investigate the possibility of increasing the distribution of Phasenmorphs to those who have anything more than a minute possibility of becoming subject to the attention of the aggressors which have targeted us."

"I don't want anyone walking around with a Phasenmorph if they don't have any training," Tyne said slowly. "But I agree that more of us need to be carrying them. I'd also like to look into a way to increase the ability of the Phasenmorph for situations like what we ran into today."

"I'll have Javyk look into it," said Nyo. "After I give him a basic run down of what not to try with a Phasenmorph, I think I'm the only one that really knows anything about how to modify them."

"Good, we can put his talents to use for what they were intended," replied Tyne. "Oh, speaking of talents I'm not sure if any of you noticed but we have a new Council member with us. I've asked Brant to be the Head of Council Human and Environment Affairs, making him Council Ingenium. And even before I gave him the title he already started working to help us out."

Brant blushed before responding. "Thanks Tyne; I'm still kinda in awe here. I know we've been given a lot of help from people, but I've been approached with an offer from somewhere I didn't expect. The

Moroi here in Florida have been silently backing us since the Clan moved here; in fact they've went so far as to deport or send to the next life any local Moroi that did not accept the responsibility. The 'Elder' Moroi for this area has offered to have the Moroi in Florida perform intelligence for the Clan. He did say they would not act on it unless there was immediate danger or we ask them to solve the issue. I'd been waiting to discuss it with Tyne before I gave him an answer; when I brought it up is when Tyne told me about my appointment here."

"I wanted to know if anyone had any objection before we tell Brant to give him the go ahead," said Tyne as he looked around the table. "So...any objections or other views?"

"I believe the assistance would be beneficial." Xain stated.

"Well unless anyone has anything else to add I believe you have the go ahead Brant," Tyne concluded. "Oh, that also reminds me, if any of you see Brant walking around in the day don't freak. We recovered a device from the encounter we had with Larry Malvya that he was giving to his Moroi. It negates the problems that Moroi have with the sunlight and reverses their sleep schedule. It powers itself using energy from the host so it won't fail on him either. But I just wanted to let you know that Brant has one of these devices so don't panic if you see him up and about tomorrow."

Kyle smiled as he commented "That's awesome!"

"Thanks Tyne." Cory added.

"Um, Tyne?" Danny asked as he scratched his head. "Is that device something that Brant can't easily loose? I mean, there's no danger of it coming off say, mid afternoon while he's in the sun out with his family or anything. Is there?" He asked looking back toward Brant. "I just wanna make sure he's gonna be safe."

"While it has an arm band, if he puts it under his shirt on his actual skin it seems to cling to the skin as long as the device is active," replied Tyne. "And it's not easy to deactivate since it's running off of the body. He should be safe. It also appears to be weather proof. If you'd rather run more tests on it before allowing him to use it though I'll understand, but Javyk and I couldn't find any drawbacks."

"No, I'll trust you guys on this. I was just worried that we could put him in danger if it was easy to separate from the person wearing it. Just wanted to be sure." Danny replied as he sat back in his chair.

"Thanks for worrying though Danny." Brant said, obviously overtaken by the concern shown towards him.

"No prob bro." Danny smiled warmly.

"So, since we have that done...can I bring up something that's been worrying me?" asked Cyna.

"Go ahead," said Tyne.

"What the heck is up with Kyle?" Cyna began. "Am I out of the loop on something? I don't have any records of him being teleported anywhere yet here he his, I've got strange readings all over the sensors but no physical representation of that. Can someone clear this up for me?"

"Yeah; it's kinda freaky when he decides to take you somewhere but don't ask anyone to do it." Cory replied. "What's up with that bro?"

Kyle giggled. "That's nothing; Ty can do that too."

Nyo frowned, "What do you mean Tyler can do it too? What did you do to Tyler?"

Kyle got serious as he replied. "Miah is still figuring out the details; basically when Ty and I took a nap, my brain decided that since I was the only Mikyvis in existence it was logical that the person who means the most to me in the whole universe should join me in forming our species."

"I guess that means he's not asexual," Cyna mumbled with a grin. "He had to convert someone so they could continue the species."

Tyne glared at Cyna as he replied, "It won't happen every time you sleep next to someone, will it?"

Kyle shook his head. "No; I was really worried about losing Ty because of what I'm turning into. That kinda helped push it. I went back and checked out what happened; I can control it and actually can do it any time if I need to."

Tyne was quiet for a few seconds before finally speaking, "That's a power you need to be careful with, Kyle. That can cause a lot of unbalance if you use it too much. Don't convert anyone else without at least running it through us first please. Tyler is fine since he's your partner but that's something we need to be more careful with then even Vifer conversions."

Kyle nodded. "I agree; it would take a pretty extreme emergency before I'd consider it. If someone asks for it they need to ask everyone here; I ain't gonna take that responsibility."

"I'll be holding you to that," replied Tyne.

"Has Tyler been checked out by a Medbot?" asked Cyna.

"Okay Tyne." Kyle replied. "Cyna, he's been checked out by the one Ferox who knows more about my new species than anyone else. I'm not sure if a Medbot could figure him or me out Cuz."

"I'd still like him to be checked out by a Medbot," said Cyna. "They can determine whether or not he's stable. We don't want him walking around with a chance of blowing up."

"Since Kyle's never been stable, and Kyle made Ty what he is, chances are pretty good" Cory said with a small smile.

"I can see Ty's helping you bro. By the way...bite me!" Kyle replied. He then turned to Cyna. "I actually agree Cuz; I've been watchin him and he seems to be staying stable as far as this plane goes. I didn't know Medbots could do that though; it might not be a bad idea for them to check both of us out so they can set up a base reference for the future."

"That's a good idea," said Cyna. "I'll make sure you guys make it to the Medical Bay tomorrow."

Tyne grinned, "You'll make sure?"

"If they don't I'll make sure they never forget again," replied Cyna. "They could wake up in some very strange places."

"Right, so do we need to cover anything else regarding Kyle and Tyler?" Nyo asked as he looked around the room.

"Yes actually, if Miah has a list of what Kyle knows how to do that would be a good thing to have around," added Tyne.

"One thing you need to be careful of with Miah." Kyle interjected. "He was Levis' Socius and is not taking it well at all. Be careful how you approach the subject; they were working together trying to figure me out."

"Thanks Kyle," Cyna said with an understanding smile. "We'll keep that in mind when we talk to him."

"So, what else do we need to discuss?" asked Nyo.

"Wellllll," grinned Cyna. "Speaking of Socius we have a growing list of review requests."

"Yeah -- we could even start with the two couples that are already here!" Kyle said with a grin.

Xain looked between Kyle and Cyna. "By any chance is there a genetic tendency to plot in your blood-line Cyna?"

"Yes Xain, more than you'll ever know," Tyne said as he shifted in his seat uncomfortably, "This is going to be strange, I can't review myself and I'm not sure if Cyna is allowed to head the review. Regardless, I haven't done a Socius review in a long time. Are we going to be performing any marriages after the reviews?"

Kyle's grin got bigger. "Tyne; do you remember what you told me earlier? I think I can cover for you, unless the start of the meeting automatically canceled it. Am I thinking that right Ark?"

<Your 'Voice' authority technically ended at the beginning of the meeting as that is what was stated for the limits. But in this case any of the other Council members can volunteer to head a Socius review in Tyne's place. Cyna would not be able to since in life he was Tyne's last Socius. If you wish to volunteer to head that review, and no one objects, then you are welcome to.>

To everyone's shock, Kyle's reply was serious. "Thank you Ark. I actually would like the honor of paying Tyne back in a little way for saving me from destroying my own head."

"Awesome, the job's yours then," Cyna replied with a large grin.

Tyne blushed and looked down at the table, "I'd rather not go first though."

Cyna rolled his eyes, "You said the same thing when we did it."

Kyle smiled once again. "This time you can be second Tyne; I'd like to see how it's done with another couple so I get it right."

"I didn't think of that," said Tyne. "I suppose that works."

"Great!" Cyna said excitedly as he bounced around in his chair. "So, who's first then?"

"I think Cory and Sean should be first." Brant replied seriously. "They're the reason we all ended up being here."

"I agree with your logic." Xain told Brant. "Those-who-are-my-brothers would have never become known to me without Cory and Sean."

"I agree too," added Rusty. "None of us would be here if it wasn't for them. They're the reason we all found each other, the reason we were rescued, and the reason in some cases why we strive to be better than we are. They're the foundation of the family they started; I think it's only right that they be the first."

Danny nodded. "Rusty's got it right."

"Very well," Tyne said as he stood up. "Cory, Sean, are the two of you ready?"

Sean gave Cory a reassuring squeeze. "I'm ready Tyne."

"So am I." Cory said with a blush. "And Kyle; tell your boyfriend to get his mind out of the gutter. This is serious."

Kyle nodded. "Already taken care of Bro. He promises to wait until your honeymoon for any more comments like that."

Cyna giggled causing Tyne to glare at him. "What? It's funny!" Cyna said, not even trying to stop himself from laughing.

Tyne just grinned and shook his head, "Alright, let's begin then."

"Do you remember where to start?" asked Cyna.

"As difficult as our review was, yes I remember," replied Tyne as he straightened up and looked over at Sean and Cory. After clearing his throat he began, "Socius, a form of marriage but there's more than that to it. Socius isn't just marriage but a kind of permanent relationship between two people and it's considered just as permanent if not more permanent than marriage. As laid out by Jyris Oraculum, founder of the Founder Council, this bond is never considered broken. Nothing, not even the Seer of the Council can grant the termination of a Socius once entered into. It is because of this that the Council itself regulates and controls who is fit to be bonded, requiring that those involved be completely reviewed by the Council. If for any reason the Council finds either of the people involved to be incompatible in any way then the request for Socius is not granted. But this is not just a simple question and answer session, there are no right questions that can determine if we should grant Socius so we use another method, telepathy. Those wishing to be reviewed must willingly open their minds to the one

heading the review and then the one heading the review will pass their findings to the rest of the Council after the scan is complete. But it's not just memories that we scan, in fact memories have very little to do with it. Rather scenarios are projected into the minds of those being reviewed and how their mind reacts to those scenarios is what is looked at. This isn't an easy thing to go through, your mind will believe what it's told until the scan is complete, but it's for a good reason. For it's not who you are underneath but what you do that defines who you really are and as such your reactions state your true feelings. That being said, do you still wish to continue?"

"I do." Cory and Sean expressed in unison.

"Tyne?" Kyle interrupted. "Ty said to tell you he's putting a temporary block on Cory's emotional reactions to recent events. He's backed out of Cory's head until you are done; then he'll go back in, remove the block, and resume feeding it to Cory in small doses so it does not mess up his head."

Tyne frowned, "I don't think you understand then Kyle. What do you think I'll be projecting for scenarios? They are meant to tax you, stress you, and see how you deal with life at your low points as well as your high points. This isn't something easy or simple; there's a reason I remember mine and cringe. I know today has been hellish and to add to that wouldn't be wanted but it's emotional responses I'm looking for."

Kyle held up his hand for a few seconds then replied. "I just asked Ty what he did exactly. Cory, you're using all of your head except the one particular thing that happened that your brain is overloading on." He turned to Tyne and added "Ty says all of Cory's reactions will be normal for him; until he has had time to talk with the three new Vifers that particular memory of what happened is causing stability problems."

"Alright, I suppose that's good enough," mumbled Tyne.

"Cory, are you sure you're ready for this?" Cyna asked looking very concerned. "Tyne's going to be rather rough."

Cory closed his eyes for a minute then opened them and replied. "I trust Tyne with my life Cyna. If I can't handle it now, what's saying I could later? I'm ready Tyne."

"Just remember that it's okay to cry, I did," Cyna added as he turned to Tyne. "The review is yours, Seer."

Tyne nodded his head and then focused on Sean and Cory, throwing all of his attention at them. Over the next few minutes he proceeded to project visions of loss, anger, joy, sadness, guilt, and depression into their minds. Each one was evident on Sean and Cory's faces as the situations they were seeing changed. Tyne kept at it until he couldn't stand to throw any more scenarios at them without breaking down himself. After stopping Tyne quickly gathered the resulting data in his mind and then finally he released Sean and Cory from his projected attention. Tyne sat back down, feeling exhausted and sighed, "Give me a few minutes to review what I gathered, and then I'll give it to the rest of you to do the same. Cory, Sean, the two of you can relax for a few minutes."

Cory and Sean held each other tightly as they both recovered from the stress they had just went through; each drawing strength from the presence of the other. Kyle closed his eyes as he silently went

back and reviewed what Tyne had done; all the time making sure that Tyler did not get wind of the process. Danny and Brant watched as everyone prepared for the next part.

Tyne closed his eyes for a few minutes, thinking silently to himself before he finally opened his eyes and looked around the table, "I'm done reviewing what I've found, I am pushing the results towards everyone else. To receive it just open your mind and the information will appear in your mind."

"That's rough!" Danny muttered as he reviewed the information.

"Woah; you didn't miss anything." Brant added.

Kyle tilted his head as he reviewed Tyne's condensed version of what Cory and Sean had 'seen'. He quietly did some internal projections based on that information, then straightened his head. "I've decided my vote."

"Does anyone have anything they would like to add or any questions they would like to ask of Cory and Sean?" asked Tyne.

Brant nodded. "I have one thing I didn't see which I know from experience is a possibility. If both of you were to be given extended lives, to the point that each of you appears not to change, can you still live with the commitment you are making. Think about it really good before you reply."

Both Cory and Sean were quiet as they mulled over their thoughts on the subject. Sean replied first. "I told Cory I'll love him forever long before I learned how long forever can turn into. I still stand by my promise to him."

Cory smiled before adding his reply. "I've lived with Sean most of my life; we argue a little, have fun a lot, and know what little things each of us does that the other has learned to ignore. After my stay in the home, I learned that even being apart Sean did not change. Everything good AND bad about him is what makes him the one I want to spend my life with; no matter how long it is."

Tyne nodded and then looked around the room, "Is anyone opposed to granting Socius to Cory and Sean?"

"My projections match their responses; I approve." Kyle replied seriously.

"I approve." Brant replied with a nod to Sean and Cory.

"Add me to the approve list." Danny said.

"I believe the union is logical." Xain stated.

"Me too," added Rusty.

"I see no reason not to grant it," said Nyo.

"I approve," Cyna grinned.

Tyne nodded, "After having put you through a very difficult and taxing review this Council finds you both to be fit to be bonded. I approve and as Seer of the Founder Council I grant Socius to Cory and Sean Short. You may be joined at any time, just let me know when you want the ceremony to be performed."

"Thank you Seer." Cory and Sean replied.

"I think after the Council Meeting; something good to end the day." Sean added.

"Do the two of you know what vows you'll be speaking to each other?" asked Cyna.

Cory blushed as he responded. "We've discussed that a million times since we found out it was possible. We'd like to do something traditional; the problem is we don't know what Traditional Socius Vows are."

"Get with me after the meeting and I'll help you out with that," said Cyna. "I can tell all about both Traditional Founder Vows as well as non-traditional."

"We had very traditional vows for ours," added Tyne.

"Speaking of that, you're next to be reviewed," Nyo said as he started to look through a list of people they still had to review before the end of the meeting. "Are you ready?"

"I...I suppose so," Tyne replied as he looked over at Rusty. "Are you ready for this Rusty?"

Rusty grinned, "I'm ready when you are babe."

Tyne nodded and looked over at Kyle. "Kyle, do you have any questions or do you understand what you need to do from watching me?"

Kyle nodded seriously. "I went back and followed what you did; I believe I understand it now. Let me know when you are both ready."

Tyne slipped his hand into Rusty's and gripped it tightly as he nodded his head, indicating that he was ready. Rusty smiled, squeezed Tyne's hand, and nodded as well.

Kyle closed his eyes; more to keep from being distracted than anything else. He followed the procedure Tyne had used on Cory and Sean; filing the reactions in a separate part of his brain to be combined once done. After he was sure of their possible reactions, Kyle opened his eyes. "Ok Tyne and Rusty; you guys can relax now. It'll take me a minute to break this all down for everyone."

Tyne pulled himself into a ball and nodded as he started to mumble to himself. Rusty wrapped his arms around Tyne and kissed his forehead, "Okay Kyle. Thank you."

"You're welcome Rusty." Kyle replied. "Is everyone else ready?"

"Fire away Kyle," said Nyo.

"This should be interesting," added Cyna. "Judging by Tyne's reaction though I'm afraid to know what you projected."

Once everyone had indicated their readiness, Kyle pushed the results out to the rest of the members. "Let me know when you have a decision."

Cyna grinned as he went over the data, "Not bad for your first review. Somehow I feel bad for those being reviewed though. You definitely were not easy on them. But regardless, I vote to grant their request for Socius."

"I agree with Cyna," Nyo said looking some what shocked. "On all of it."

"We really need to talk Leech." Danny commented. "I vote to grant it too."

Xain and Brant both signaled their approval too; both wearing expressions that made it obvious they did not expect what they got.

"Jeeze Kyle!" Cory said as he shook his head. "I approve of the granting of Socius."

Kyle turned to Tyne and Rusty. "After having put you through a very difficult and taxing review this Council finds you both to be fit to be bonded. I approve and as Voice of the Seer of the Founder Council I grant Socius to Tyne Oraculum and Rusty Timberlake."

Rusty finally got Tyne to relax and un-ball himself and return his hug. Feeling Tyne relax against him Rusty sighed contently, "Thank you Kyle. Tyne thanks you too."

"I'm surprised you got him out of his ball that fast," said Cyna. "It took me two hours after our review. I guess you're just good like that."

"So let's see who's next on the list shall we?" Nyo said as he picked up his handheld again. "Adam and JJ are next."

"By the time we find them Tyne should be fine," Rusty added.

"I've got them standing by." Kyle stated. "Before I bring them in, I think we need to discuss something. Cory, Ty is gonna let you discuss this without him stepping in unless he sees that you're losing control. I think there might be a new issue; Adam is now a Vifer while JJ is not. What should our response be if that is brought up as an issue by them?"

"I can't very well say no to JJ," Tyne said as he straightened up in his seat and blinked a few times. "I went Vifer so I could be with the one I loved."

"I'm with Tyne on this one," said Rusty. "For the same reason."

Nyo frowned, "It's not an easy thing being Vifer though. When they say a long time in regards to living they really do mean a long time. I'm over fifty thousand years old myself. I know JJ is going to want to do it so that he can be with Adam but he needs to understand that it can't be undone and forever really is a long time."

Kyle nodded. "I think Tyne will be able to determine if they really can handle that; his scenarios can be adjusted to take it into account."

Cory tilted his head as he silently used Sean's presence to keep control. "In their case I think they can do it. We also need to think about Tommy and Justy though; if we allow it for one this time the others might expect it."

"Cory's logic matches my conclusions." Xain added. "My projections using the data I have available show a high probability that if allowed all concerned would handle the duration acceptably."

Brant grinned. "Shrink the big words and Xain just spoke my thoughts too."

"They've got the personalities for making it." Danny added.

"I say we grant it, it's their choice to make," said Tyne. "I'd just prefer them to either be in or mostly through puberty."

"If it can be added to their Socius review like Kyle suggested and they get approved, with that in there, then I approve," Nyo replied.

"I agree with Nyo and Kyle," said Rusty.

"I think that's everyone; unless you need an official vote I'm ready to bring them in on your command Seer." Kyle stated.

"Go ahead," replied Tyne. "We still have a lot of people to go, each just as important, so let's get rolling."

Kyle nodded, and a few seconds later Adam and JJ appeared in the room.

Cory stood up, and as everyone watched he made his way over to them, silently pulling both into a hug. "I'm sorry..." Cory began to whisper.

Adam cut him off gently. "Shhh there's nothing to be sorry for. If you and JJ hadn't forced me to get a Phasenmorph I wouldn't be here now. That's twice you've saved me bro; stop beating yourself up."

JJ gave Cory a squeeze. "Adam's right bro. I know what can happen when you start blaming yourself; I had Ark run over the entire event for me to see it for myself and I promise you that you did everything you could do. Get that brain cell of yours back on track; all of us hurt when you are hurting yourself."

"I'll try." Cory whispered. "Since you don't hate me like I was afraid you guys would I feel a little better now."

"Get back to your cuddlebear." Adam said with a smile. "We both still love you as much as ever bro; we can talk about it more later."

Cory gave them both one last squeeze then made his way back to Sean.

Tyne slowly stood up, doing his best to keep his balance, and addressed Adam and JJ, "Welcome, Adam it's good to see you up and about again. But let me begin; you've been brought before this Council because one of you put in a request to be reviewed for Socius, the Founder form of marriage. Do either of you feel that you are not ready for this kind of review?"

"Does my being Vifer now have any bearing on it?" Adam asked quickly.

"Don't worry about that Babe." JJ replied just as fast. "I've already thought it over. Seer; I wish to petition the Council for permission to be made a Vifer."

Adam was speechless, which gave Tyne time to reply.

"It has already been brought to our attention that you would ask such a thing," replied Tyne. "As such we have agreed to integrate a few extra things into your review that would also test whether or not you could handle being Vifer. You won't know the difference but it will be in there. If you pass the review then your Vifer request is approved."

Both boys nodded. "I'm ready" they replied in chorus.

Over the next few minutes Tyne projected different scenarios into their minds, testing them and pushing them. Afterwards he gathered and shared with everyone else what he found. Having found them ready for Socius everyone was then asked to go over another set of data to determine if JJ should be allowed to become Vifer. No one objected in the least bit, especially since the data proved that both of them would be happier and healthier together through the years rather than apart. After telling JJ that he could report to the Ark Medical bay at any point to have the Vifer procedure done, Tyne had Kyle bring in Kelly and Tommy, as well as Justy and Dean, to have them reviewed for Vifer approval for Tommy and Justy. The Vifer approval went faster than the Socius review and a few minutes later they were sent back out with approval to have the procedure done. Tyne then had Kyle bring in the next couple, Travis and Gabriel. The Council quickly reviewed them as well as Clint and Crystal, Gavin and Josiah, and Nyo and Stepan finding all the couples ready for Socius before they came to their last couple.

Tyne sighed and looked over at Kyle, "Kyle, you and Tyler are the last couple that we need to review today. You can go ahead and bring him in so we can start."

Kyle smiled. "One cute Mikyvis coming up!" Kyle scooted back, and two seconds later Tyler appeared directly in front of him. Kyle immediately reached out and pulled Ty back onto his lap. "Yummmm ... You smell GOOOD!" Kyle giggled.

Ty blushed and giggled as he replied. "I'm in charge of making cookies! Helen's lettin' me do it all myself!"

Kyle turned Ty's head to give him a kiss. "You're my favorite cookie." he whispered as he leaned in.

"Hey, save that for later," shouted Cyna. "If I can't have any then while you're here neither can you."

Tyne grinned, "Cookies? Weren't you supposed to be guarding the door?"

Tyler smiled as he replied. "That's easy - CD and Calen are helping me. I'm popping back and forth, and I'm listening in their heads when I'm away from the door. They're feeling really good about helping guard their parents and Uncles. I'm still watching through them even though I'm in here." Tyler paused, then a plate of still-hot cookies appeared on the table. "Helen sent these; she says don't work so hard."

"I can't have those either," mumbled Cyna.

Nyo rolled his eyes, "I'm sure you'll get over it. We aren't going to give up a snack for you; sex maybe but a snack? I don't think so."

Tyne shook his head and grinned, "Right...so Tyler, we had Kyle bring you here because he put in a request while you guys were on the moon to have a Socius review the next time the Council met. So here we are and we've come to the two of you in our list. Do you feel up to a review?"

Ty nodded. "I've been waiting! Besides; my cuddlebunny here needs to know I was serious when I told him I was keepin him no matter what."

With a snicker, Brant and Danny looked at each other and in the sappiest voice they both said; "Awww... Cuddlebunny, how cute." Earning a few snickers from the room.

Kyle giggled. "You're just jealous cuz' I'm getting some and you ain't!"

"Oh no, I got some." Danny laughed as he held up his cookie and Brant snatched it out of his hand.

"You had some." Brant laughed as he picked a chocolate chip off of it and popped it in his mouth just before Danny was able to grab it back.

<Cuddlebunny, that is a new one. I shall add that to the list along with cuddlebear. I am noticing a trend in Clan naming conventions for significant others.>

Cyna rolled his eyes, "We'll have to work on their creativity then."

Tyne smiled and continued, "Do you know what is involved Tyler for this review?"

Tyler nodded. "Kyle filled me in already."

"Awesome, so do you think that you're ready then?" said Tyne as he looked back and forth between Kyle and Tyler. "And that question is for both of you."

"Yes." both boys chorused as Ty climbed off of Kyle and into a nearby chair.

Tyne sat up straight and focused on Kyle and Tyler as much as he could throwing all of his attention on them. He proceeded to project scenario after scenario into their heads using everything he had, knowing he didn't need to do this again and that he needed to give it more to make them believe it. He immediately found that he was right to do so because it felt harder to project into their heads since he didn't use his projection skills all that often outside of the normal controlled situations and their heads were definitely different. Almost five minutes later Tyne collapsed back against his chair holding his head and gasping for air as if he had been holding his breath.

"Ta...take a few...take a few minutes to rest while I gather the information and...and share it with the rest of the Council," Tyne said when he was able to calm down a little. "And Ark, can I get something for my head please? I think I hit my limit for the day."

"Are you okay Tyne?" Tyler asked with concern in his voice as he rejoined Kyle.

Kyle looked over Ty's shoulder. "We didn't hurt you did we?"

"I'll be fine, it was just a little harder then I thought it would be to project into your heads," replied Tyne as a glass of water and two pills suddenly appeared in front of him. "Are the two of you okay?"

Kyle and Tyler both nodded. "We're okay."

Tyne quickly took the pills and then sent the review data to the rest of the Council, "Despite it being taxing, on me that is, I think they did very well."

"I think they tested you more than you tested them Tyne," Cyna added as he went over the data. "I approve."

Cory glanced over at the pair. "You guys barely broke a sweat over this?" he said in awe. "Tyne I approve; but I really think we need to find out what all these two are capable of."

"Yeah we do; that batch is gonna give me nightmares!" Brant agreed. "Mark me as voting approved though."

"Makes me glad I'm not going through a review like this." Danny said as he rubbed his eyes. "Yeah, I approve and from what I just saw; you two are perfect for each other."

"I approve and I agree with Cory," said Rusty. "As well as Brant."

"I approve but I wanna get with Miah and trade notes," replied Nyo. "You guys just be careful."

"We are." Kyle replied seriously. "It's actually easier now; Ty and I can run things back and forth between us and figure out what might happen without actually doing stuff."

"Make sure you let Miah know of anything you discover," said Tyne. "It might help him figure out if there is anything we should make sure you control, like your converting others."

"I will Tyne." Tyler replied. "Thanks for doing this for us; I gotta run though, I need to check the cookies!" he added as he popped out of the room.

"So, is there anything else we need to cover with this meeting?" asked Cyna.

"I do have something I'd like to bring up. Danny said as he looked at Tyne and rested his elbows on the table. "We have a ton of assistance at the hospital from Ark right now. Medbots, Techbots and right now Rylan has been coordinating it all. My whole division really appreciates all the help. I mean, I have no idea how we would have managed everything without it. Our division is doing everything we can to get the Medbots back as soon as possible so we aren't tying up Ark's resources for too long, but I

was wondering if a couple of the Techbots could remain behind for a little longer. In just a few hours they made the hospital safe to be in and could really help to get the entire site up and running so we would be better prepared for situations like this in the future." He stated as he quickly scanned the group. "Hopefully, we'll never need it to this extent again, but I'd rather be prepared next time."

Tyne frowned, "Danny, you're not tying up any of Ark's resources. The help is given to you because you need it, you're family, and we want you to succeed. We don't really expect those bots back, please make use of them. Ark was created with over Five Hundred Techbots and Two Hundred Medbots to help it out, most of which Ark doesn't use. In fact Ark doesn't like the Techbots and hasn't used them in a very long time. The Techbots are itching to help you since they haven't done anything in fifty thousand years. They were designed to LOVE doing their job and they hate sitting there doing nothing. You should see the area that we had them stored in, it's the cleanest place on earth right now because they have nothing else to do but maintain their own systems and clean. So the bots are yours to keep if you need them; and if you need more than what you have now just let us know and we'll give you more. We won't be running out anytime soon and it's not like you having a couple dozen Medbots and Techbots is going to slow us down any."

"I can just make more if we ever find ourselves low anyway," added Nyo.

"Please, make use of them and keep them," said Tyne. "If you don't I can't see anyone else using them."

"Well, we have more than enough problems in that building to keep them happy for a long time." Danny giggled. "Thanks guys. Oh and Ark." Danny said looking toward the ceiling for lack of a better place to look. "You seriously bailed us out a few times back there. For a being that doesn't really have a heart, you sure are good at emulating one." He finished with a grin.

<Having a heart is a state of mind, not a physical trait. I have known a good many people that physically have a heart but are evil. But thank you Danny, I am glad I could help you. I think sending Rylan to you helped me realize what you needed as well.>

"Rylan has been awesome." Danny smiled. "Well, I still owe ya that hug Ark and someday I'll figure out how to deliver it."

"I can't wait to see that one!" Cory said with a smile. "You know; I think I might have an idea for some more of the Techbots. We have the D'Kyr in orbit right now; if I understand Sarek right it's about to be turned over to us. I know we don't have the manpower to maintain something of that size; do you think they would be adaptable to something like that?"

"Turning a ship over to us?" Danny asked as he shook his head. "When did that happen?"

"This afternoon; they were not supposed to be here for a couple of days but they somehow got it here today." Cory replied. "You've met the three androids that came in with it."

"I did, but no one ever said anything about a ship." Danny giggled. "Well, at least nothing about it being turned over. That's awesome."

"Yeah, if the Techbots are available I won't be as worried about staffing; we're overloaded as it is. Sarek has plans for us to make more ships too." Cory replied.

"Wow." Danny smiled. "We'll have to talk more later."

<Techbots can work on any system that you want them too, just make sure that I have access to the information they would need. I am their information database. Although they might need to be readapted to use the ships systems instead of mine if we do not have instant communication.>

"We can have Javyk work on communication systems like that Ark," said Tyne.

<If so then they do not even need readapting.>

"Thanks." Cory replied. "I feel a lot better about accepting the ship now. Do we have anything else?"

"That's all we had on the list for this meeting," said Nyo. "Unless you have anything else to add Seer?"

"No, I do not," Tyne said as he got up. "This was a good meeting, we got a lot accomplished; well done everyone. This meeting is hereby concluded. Let's all relax a little now and maybe get some rest."

"Speaking of which;" Kyle added with a smile, "I know a plane where time moves differently and you could get 8 hours sleep in about 15 seconds of real time if you are interested Danny."

"No thanks." Danny said as he sat back. "That wouldn't be fair to the rest of the team back home. We'll all get some real sleep soon though."

"Okay, but if anyone gets too run down let me know; I'll hook them up." Kyle replied seriously. "You ready to go home?"

"Yeah." Danny said as he tilted his head. "Wait a minute. Did Ark bring me here or did you?"

"I did; Ark deserves a break." Kyle replied.

"Yes, it does." Danny replied as he glared at Kyle. "The rest of us deserve notice before you drop us into a meeting too, twirp." He got out before he started to laugh.

"I didn't want to interrupt your beauty sleep!" Kyle said innocently.

"Yeah, thanks for that." Danny giggled. "I'll talk to you all later."

Kyle smiled. "Give everyone our hugs!" he announced just before Danny found himself back in the chair in the consultation room at the hospital. The lights in the room were now on and a very unhappy looking Noah as well as three security officers stopped and glared at him.

"Have fun?" Noah asked as he waved to the officers.

"Dude, I can explain..." Danny managed to say before Noah cut him off.

"Tie him down guys." Noah ordered. "If he tries to disappear again, stun him."

"Are you serious?" Danny asked as one of the Security Officers drew his Phaser and adjusted its settings.

"Try having Ark teleport you like that again and you'll find out how serious I am." Noah shot back, crossing his arms and leaning against the wall.

<I am not responsible for teleporting him Noah.>

"Well, he didn't transport out, I checked the logs." Noah said as he let his arms fall to his sides.

<Danny was teleported to your CIC for a founder meeting. He was not given an opportunity to object.>

Noah looked at Danny and then at his security officers. "Okay then." He said as he began to pace the room. "Ark, can you prevent him from being teleported anywhere else? Danny really needs to rest."

<No. Unfortunately I had no warning that he was to be teleported and I do not believe I could have prevented it even if I did.>

"Great." Noah sighed. "Maybe I'll just drug him and make him sleep. What good is he to anyone if they can't wake him up?"

"Noah!" Danny yawned. "I won't be any good here either."

<Danny makes a really good point although I really do not believe he is in danger of being teleported anywhere else at the moment. Natural sleep in your current situation would be the safest method as it would not impair him in any way in the case of an emergency.>

"Good point." Noah said. "Ok guys, we're gonna try to leave him alone again. Danny if you need anything..." He managed to say before he realized Danny had already drifted off. "...just call." He got out with a laugh. "Clear out guys."

"Where's Noah!" Marc yelled as Medbot Fourteen started to sort through the latest batch of incoming injured.

"He's on his way." Rylan shouted as he finished up a repair on another Medbot. "From what I heard, we lost Danny." He continued with a shrug.

"Lost him?" Marc stopped and looked over.

"Misplaced?" Rylan grinned. "I don't know. That's just what I heard."

"Right." Marc said as he shook his head and started toward the newly arrived patients.

"Deceased, deceased, internal bleeding, multiple abrasions, broken leg, deceased..." Number Eighteen droned as he sorted through the bodies.

"Eddie!!!" Jerry shouted from across the room. "Oh my god!"

"What's wrong?" Marc asked as he approached Jerry, freezing when he looked at the body Jerry was standing over. "Oh no... What was he doing out there?"

"I don't know." Jerry said as tears began to stream down his cheeks.

"What's his status?" Marc asked as Medbot Thirteen approached the table.

"He's gone." Jerry got out with a snuffle.

"Yes sir, Doctor Owens is correct." Number Thirteen confirmed. "Massive hemorrhage due to a severe chest wound. The patient's left lung and heart were severely impacted."

"I thought he was at CIC!" Marc stated as he noticed Noah approaching. "Noah! Who is heading up security at CIC?"

"Eddie." Noah replied as he approached the group. "He hasn't checked in...OH MY GOD!" He blurted out. "What the hell?"

"I don't know." Marc said turning his back to the table and pulling out his communicator. "Furst to Lieutenant Shannon."

"Shannon here. What's up Marc?"

"Who's heading up security at CIC." Marc asked as he draped his arm across Jerry's shoulders.

"I am sir. Eddie had me transport down so he could assist in the field."

"Okay." Marc said shaking his head. "Who's in charge here right now and WHY were we NOT notified?"

"Eddie was going to report in as soon as he returned. I can contact him if you like."

"No." Marc said as he took a deep breath. "No you can't."

"It's not a problem. He told me to contact him if I needed him."

"Scott, Eddie's here now." Marc said as he almost choked on his own words. "He was pronounced dead approximately one minute ago."

"Um... he... dead?" Scott gasped. "I spoke to him... Oh my god Marc."

"I know bro." Marc said with a snuffle. "Who do you have backing you at our compound?"

"Lieutenant Murphy from California."

"Ok." Marc replied giving Jerry's arm a squeeze. "We can't lose it yet. Scott, report in to Corporal Jackson. He needs to know what happened."

"Okay."

As Marc began to lead Jerry away from the table, a tear ran down his cheek. "I'll notify Eddie's father. Marc out."

"Marc?" Jerry asked pulling out from underneath Marc's arm. "Would it be ok for me to go down stairs for a little while? I just wanna see Joey."

"Go ahead." Marc sighed as he stuffed his communicator in his pocket, dried his eyes and turned toward one of the open examining rooms. "Take whatever time you need." He got out as he turned to enter the doorway without waiting for an answer.

"Oh Marc." Nurse Patty said as soon as she noticed Marc approaching. "I have another ready to be transported up to the Lafayette."

"I'll have Noah add him to the list." Marc replied looking over the patient's files. "A sniper huh?" Marc asked as his eyes narrowed.

"Yeah, what's it to ya?" The man shot back as he struggled to sit upright.

"Was just wondering." Marc answered. "You got any kids?"

"Not that it's any of your business but yeah, two." The man replied.

"Must be hard to raise two kids and then go out and try to kill someone else's." Marc blurted out without even flinching.

"You've got a lot of balls kid." The man said gritting his teeth as the pain from his wounds forced him to lie back down.

"Nice to hear..." Marc said as he tapped at the biobed's controls. "You know, from someone who has none."

"Doctor!?!!" Nurse Patty gasped.

"Terminating pain control." Marc said, blatantly ignoring Nurse Patty's shocked expression. "This guy is too much of a MAN to need it."

"Marc?" Rylan, who had overheard the conversation while passing said as he stuck his head in the doorway. "Can I speak to you for a second?"

"Sure." Marc grinned as he looked the man in the eyes. "Enjoy your trip, asshole."

"MARC!" Rylan raised his voice.

"On my way." Marc said still not breaking his eye lock on the patient. "Nurse, He's ready to be transported."

"I'll notify Noah." Nurse Patty replied as she looked back and forth between Marc and Rylan. "I'll take it from here Doctor."

"You may want to log his info as well. FYS might be interested in looking into his children's safety." Marc said before storming out of the room, right past Rylan.

"Marc?" Rylan asked as he rushed to catch back up. "Marc wait a second!"

Rushing past the Nurses' Station, Marc slammed through the first door he passed. Rylan followed, just in time to see Marc punch the wall and slide down it to sit on the floor; pulling his knees up to his chin. "Marc? Are you alright?"

"No." Marc said as the tears began to stream down his cheeks. "I can't do this anymore. I can't keep pretending that the people I'm helping weren't just out there killing children! They don't even care."

"I don't blame you." Rylan replied as he sat down on the floor next to Marc. "They deserve death for what they've done. Just think of it like you are helping them live long enough to be punished for this."

"Yeah, right." Marc sniffled. "That's not gonna change the way they think. These guys are all so convinced that they were doing the right thing and we're the ones who are wrong."

"Of course they think that way." Rylan said as he crossed his arms. "That's the true nature of humanity and the reason it's taken this long for a large enough group to make enough noise to make the rest of humanity stand up and hopefully take notice. You will never change the way these people think but you can send a really loud message into the future that these acts will no longer go unpunished and that the so called helpless aren't as helpless anymore."

"But is that enough? I mean really. How many more people have to die before that message is really heard?" Marc asked as he wiped his tears off on his knees before hugging his legs tighter to himself.

"One group willing to kill for no good reason and another willing to die to stop the killing. What message do you think is louder?" Rylan asked before standing back up. "The message has already been loud enough." He continued as he opened the door. "Now, let's go find out who was listening."

"Feeling better?" Noah asked as Danny entered the ER, his sleepy eyes and mussed hair clearly showing that he just woke up.

"Yeah." Danny half smiled. "How long was I out?"

"Long enough." Noah grinned. "My report is on this P.A.D.D. and I really need a few minutes when you are awake enough."

"I'm ok." Danny said as he grabbed the unit from Noah and sat down. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. It's just been a nightmare around here." Noah said as he stood up. "Now that we're down to about forty patients with half of those on their way to other hospitals I want a few minutes to go find Caleb."

"He's not up here?" Danny froze as he asked.

"No." Noah replied as he took a deep breath. "KC told me the last time he saw him was down in the morgue. I'm really worried about him."

"Go." Danny said without hesitation. "I'll call if I have any real problems."

"Thanks Danny." Noah said as he turned and jogged toward the door.

"Take him home if that's what you guys need, okay?" Danny shouted.

"I will. Thanks bro!" Noah shouted back as he ran through the doorway.

"Where's he off to?" Marc asked as he and Rylan approached the counter.

"Caleb hasn't been seen in hours." Danny replied before looking up and seeing Marc's reddened eyes from crying. "Oh my god, are YOU ok?"

"He's fine." Rylan smiled. "Just a little worn out."

"Well, Noah's got us winding down." Danny said as he looked back at the hand held. "Actually, I doubt I could have done better. He's got a time table laid out here." He continued, tilting his head and grinning.

"Excuse me Director Page." Nurse Patty cut in as she quickly approached the counter. "Is there anyone who could be available to help me detain one of these feline kids? I can't dress a wound that they refuse to stop licking."

"I'm on it." Marc said with a weak smile. "It'll be a nice change from the hostiles I've mainly been dealing with."

Patty crossed her arms and laughed. "Really? Wait til you meet him. We've been trying to wrestle him down for about half an hour now."

"Good luck." Danny giggled. "I'll be right here trying to catch up with what I missed."

"Chicken!" Rylan scoffed as he turned to leave the group with a laugh.

"What? Are my feathers showing again?" Danny laughed before scratching his head and continuing to read. "Feline kids..."

"Military Genetics." Marc grinned as he grabbed a tissue and blew his nose. "The ones I've met so far have been really cool."

"Oh, I know." Danny yawned. "It just sounds weird."

"When you two are through..." Nurse Patty shot in, tapping her foot.

"I'm coming." Marc giggled. "We sooo have to keep her on staff. You know that, right?"

"Cal?" Noah called out as he entered the hallway leading to the morgue as soon as he heard the soft sobbing of his boyfriend. "Cal, you in here?"

"I...I'm here." Caleb sobbed.

Rushing toward the sound of Caleb's voice, Noah froze as soon as he saw him. Sitting on the floor with a small child's tear and blood stained shirt grasped tightly in his arms. "Are you ok?" Noah asked as he quickly sat next to Caleb and pulled him into a hug.

"W...w...we couldn't s...save him." Caleb cried as he buried his face in Noah's shoulder.

"I know, I heard." Noah whispered as he rubbed Caleb's back and pulled him into a hug. "You guys did everything you could."

"I know." Caleb replied as he tightened his grip. "But he didn't deserve to die. He was trying to save another little boy. It's all he was worried about the whole time we got to talk... before he died." He managed to get out.

"Any idea who it was?" Noah asked, maintaining his eye contact.

"No." Caleb sniffled as he regained control over his sobs again. "He just called him the boy in the wheeled chair." Caleb grinned as the tears began to flow all over again. "It was so cute the way he said it."

"I know exactly who you're talking about." Noah smiled. "In the very first wave of incoming wounded, a boy in a wheelchair was brought in. His name is Brian."

Caleb's expression got serious as he wiped his eyes and cleared his throat. "Did he live?"

"Yeah. He's gonna be fine." Noah replied as he turned to sit next to Caleb on the floor. "That little kid kept him from being hit." Noah sighed. "He's a hero and he doesn't even know it."

"Yeah." Caleb hoarsely said as he looked at the shirt in his hands. "He was so tiny..."

"Bigger heart than most though." Noah quickly added while he watched Caleb hug the shirt to his chest again. "I talked to KC a little while ago. I guess while he had some extra time he did a little research into the Russell family. Looks like it was just the kid and his father. His mother passed away four years ago. They were living with his grandmother, until she passed away last year."

"Where's his father now?" Caleb asked.

"I don't know for sure." Noah replied with a slight chuckle. "I guess Kyle took care of him."

"So he might be dead?" Caleb grinned.

"Knowing Kyle, probably not." Noah replied. "If I had to guess, he set him up to be punished for what he did. Maybe he sent him with something to think about as well."

"So Hunter would have been all alone?" Caleb got out before balling up the shirt and hugging it tight.

"From what KC told me, he was alone anyway and has been for a while." Noah replied as he slowly climbed to his feet. "Look, I know this is hard for you. It's been hard on us all." He said as he grabbed Caleb's hand and helped to pull him to his feet. "Let's go over to the Cafeteria and get something in your stomach. Then we can go get away from this insanity for a while."

"What about Hunter?" Caleb asked.

"I'll talk to Danny about him." Noah replied as he pulled Caleb into a hug. "You tried so hard for him, I think it'd be nice if we could be family for him and help with all the last details." He got out as Caleb buried his face in Noah's shoulder. "It's not a lot but, from now on; he'll never be alone again."

"You'd do that for me?" Caleb's muffled voice came from Noah's shoulder as he squeezed the hug tighter.

"No." Noah smiled. "I'd die for you. This I'm gonna do for him." He said as he raised Caleb's eyes to meet with his gaze. "So, will you come with me?"

"Yeah." Caleb smiled as Noah reached up and wiped away the tears. "I just need to look in on him before we go."

"To say goodbye?" Noah questioned.

"No." Caleb said before swallowing hard. "To say that I'm not leaving him." He said before turning and beginning to walk toward the closed doors of the morgue. "I don't plan to ever say goodbye. Maybe just see you later."

Before Noah was able to respond, Caleb froze and watched as the doors to the morgue slowly opened and a familiar form appeared in the doorway. A glowing form inside the room held the door in place until the first form stepped into the hall and fully into view. "Hu...hun...Hunter???"

"Are you Caleb?" The small boy asked as he padded in bare feet a little closer as the room behind him became dark once again.

"Yeah." Caleb replied with tears once again flowing steadily down his cheeks.

"A man named Mikey sez hi." Hunter said as he looked over his shoulder to watch the door as it slowly swung closed. "Can I have my shirt? I'm kinda cold."

As if waking from a dream, Caleb literally ran to Hunter and wrapped him in a tight hug to both warm and protect him while he whispered over and over again; "Thank you Mikey... Thank you so much..."

Notes from the Author:

I'm not even sure what to enter for notes on this chapter. Seriously. I mean we still have so much up in the air in Charleston that even to me it feels like nothing from part one got answered. At least we can see the light at the end of the tunnel now. The boys are tired, worn out and not in the best of moods now I'll bet. I know it was a rollercoaster to read but, if it's any consolation... I held my breath while writing out some of the scenes myself.

We have quite a few things to look forward to. Looks like Marc's Dad is on his way home and bringing a huge surprise as well. Just hope he doesn't freak when he sees the house. LOL! The Techbots are playing a full building game of "Rip out the wall" and having some fun in the process as our construction team watches on in amusement. Wonder how long it's gonna take to get the place in shape now :) That should help to give the Clan some down time. They definately need it now, that's for sure. A special hug is reserved for little Hunter as well. The purpose behind him needing help made it really hard to simply write him off. Caleb must have felt that as well because he refused to give up on him too :) With a little help from our friend with the wings and halo, looks like we're actually going to get to know him a little better now...

Huge amount of thanks to all the help I got with the characters from Ark, Out of the Past, The U.N.I.T. and Memories in this chapter. This chapter was a rough one to get through. The good news is I recently learned to juggle... Paragraphs ;)

As always , gotta remind ya ... Those of you who haven't read "The other CSU stories" are truly missing out on a very important part of this story. You just gotta read em all, right now! Hehehe...

You can find "Memories" by "ACFan" Parts 1 & 2 at <http://cornercafe.us> and don't forget to keep an eye out for the events also unfolding in "Memories: Down Under" by: "Boi From Aus" at <http://acannex.us> as well as "Ark" by Akeentia at <http://paddedroom.us>, "Out of the Past" by "Darkstar" at <http://cornercafe.us>, "The U.N.I.T." by Roland at <http://storylover.us> and "Dear Diary" by Boudreaux at <http://jeffsfort.us> to get the whole picture so far! (Yes, that means the Clan Short Universe is growing from our own perspective. Hold on tight as this list begins to grow out of control, I hope that chair of yours has a seat belt ;)

HUGZ from myself and everyone at the Clan Short; Artificial Intelligence Division!

Clan Short Archivist's Review Notes:

Well the final piece of "All Hell Breaks Loose" Part Two is now completed and it filled in several gaps. We also know a lot more about a lot of the new characters and that is a good thing.

One of the most outstanding thing about this chapter and all of the chapters in "All Breaks Loose" Parts One and Two is that although the individual stories are very tightly intertwined they have all retained their own character and style. That is not an easy thing to do in a collaboration of this size and complexity. My hat is off to the wonderful job done by all of the authors and their assistants in this saga. I am looking forward to future chapters with a renewed interest as Jeff has incorporated several more intriguing story lines to follow.

Thanks for another wonderful chapter Fearless Leader now where is the next one?

The Story Lover aka TSL

Assistant Archivist's Review Notes:

Having read this chapter in pieces and parts as it was being written, I know some of the events as they were occurring, However I was pretty surprised at the wonderful ending of this chapter. Thank you, Mikey and Jeff for saving Hunter. I really wanted him to pull through. I want to let everyone know how happy I am at the way this entire set of chapters has come together and intertwined. I truly feel proud and happy to be a part of bringing this monumental undertaking into being. TSL is correct; there are still a lot of wonderful things still ahead, and I know everyone will be very excited to see what is going to happen in many of the stories pretty soon. As you may know, I edit for several of the CSU authors, and therefore I can say with certainty that you will really love what will be coming next, from several different directions. I can't make any promises as to exactly when these chapters will be ready, but I assure you that they will indeed be worth waiting for. Congratulations everyone; this was a wonderful triumph over a lot of difficult circumstances. Thanks to everyone for putting all the incredible work into this and making it great.

Darryl AKA The Radio Rancher