# The Nine

*Trivean's POV*

I was in a dark room, looking around, seeing the eerie red glow of Westbork, as if he was the holograms. "Hello Trivean," said Westbork.

"Doctor Westbork," I said, addressing him. "So… I'm dead."

"Not yet," said Westbork. "You're dying, but you're not dead yet."

"Well, I'm going to be, if I'm talking to ghosts then…" I said.

"No, you see, there is still hope for you. But please, allow a dead man a few words. I did a lot of bad things in my life… A few to you as well that I deeply regret," said Westbork. "I will start at the beginning. When I first arrived on your planet, yes, I was working on a translator… But I was looking for someone gifted in machines like me, someone violent, someone that can handle what I made. I got lucky when you wandered in. Well, I thought lucky, but it was meant to happen."

"W-What?"

"Apparently, there's greater forces at work here, much greater. Which is another thing I need to repent for. When you were twenty you were getting dreams where you talked to a man named Geb. At first, I thought it was just a weird series of dreams, until he told you some secrets of mine. I… I started to wipe your memory of him, I was scared of you finding out about me."

"You did what?"

"I was wrong, I am sorry. He's here right now if you…" Two large blue eyes opened suddenly behind Westbork, looking at us.

"N-Nope, no, I'm good," I said. "But, what secret?"

"That… That I was working with the king to analyze your Lupvin techniques to make an army of robots," said Westbork.

"WHAT?!" I exclaimed. "You were just using me to invade my planet?"

"NO! No. I'd never do that to you. No, the king is worried about instability and the possibility of a coup in the kingdom. He wants to keep the kingdom together."

"I… I…"

"That's what got corrupted in my final message to you. To tell you of that. And to warn you of CLAW. I was going to go back for two reasons, to end this nightmare I have hid for so long, to bring justice to all of those that were killed by the murderous concoction made by some immortality seeking intern made. And to make the cure to cure myself."

"Cure?"

"Yes, I figured out the chemical formula to cure myself. But it needed to be mixed with a sample of the original gas."

"But…"

"Spark is already working on it with the AI, currently in their new bodies."

"So, it worked?"

"Yes. I've been watching over you on your journey."

"So, the intern, the one that released the gas… They became CLAW, right?"

"Yes, she mapped her mind into a neural network and uploaded herself to online systems. I was able to try and contain her from getting out… You saw what happened."

"I…" Three loud rings from a bell rang out and Westbork's eyes closed with a heavy sigh, then refocused on me.

"Triv, I know that you are a good person, and you made me a good person in the end. You don't abandon things or people unless you have to, you look for the good in people, and you brought it out in me. I know you can be… evil, but you hold yourself back enough to not allow for it to take you over. But be warned, the evil in you is like a pet, it needs to be let out and walked every so often. You can't be purely good; you need to balance it. I leave the Nine in your care, let them help you."

"Time's up Doctor," said a deep voice.

"I know… Trivean," said Westbork as he walked up to me, hugging me, his ghost was still warm. "Take care of yourself, move from the house, I don't care for it. Love yourself and don't hold back. And good luck with the museum and your new apprentice."

"Apprentice?" I asked, wrapping my arms around him, holding him tightly. I suddenly let out a sudden, loud breath, as I awoke in my own body.

"TRIV!" Cried Spark, wrapping his arms around my neck as best as he could "YOU'RE ALIVE!"

"Spark… I…" I said. *Apprentice huh? I see what you meant Westbork.*

"Trivean Warmheart?" Asked a voice. I looked up to see one of the robotic bodies standing over me, a needle in hand and one of the AI cores barely visible in the back of their head.

"U-Um, yeah. That's me," I said, trying to get to my feet. My legs were heavy and I nearly toppled over again, only grabbing onto the side of the now destroyed machine for stability.

"Please now, there is no need to push yourself like that," said the robot. They put the needle down on the table and lifted me up a bit more, helping me over to a chair. My eyes were still a bit blurry, and my lungs still hurt but were getting better. I looked up at the robot, realizing it had a female shape.

"Would it be better if I looked more akin to a living creature? Doctor Westbork programmed us with the technology to make us look like a regular creature," said the robot.

"It would probably help… Coming back from the dead really messes with you," I said. The robot took a step back and in a series of lights covered her, revealing a female adult Lupvin. She had dark blue fur covering all of her body, with purple hair, fur inside of her ears, eyes, nose, and pads on her hands and feet. She had a long blue tail coming from the back of her hips with a purple tip. She had a long white doctor's jacket wrapped around her body.

"A Lupvin?" I asked.

"Doctor Westbork thought you would be more comfortable with someone of your species," said the female. "He referred to my program as Marine back when I was first programmed, which I assume is my name."

"First programmed? How long ago was that?" Asked Spark.

"He mentioned he'd been working on the project before he met me," I said.

"He programmed us over the course of ten years, starting from thirty-one to twenty-one years," said Marine. "My program is twenty-seven years old."

"Oh, that long?" I asked.

"He wanted to make sure our neural networks were fully developed to replicate real life. He decided on the Lupvin looks a few years ago," said Marine.

"It does not matter," said CLAW. Another robot came through the door, a spear in hand, it's face torn up. "You will die here." CLAW aimed and threw the spear at me, causing me to flinch, putting my hands up.

"DO NOT HARM HIM!" Ordered Marine. I looked back to see the spear floating in the air, a beam of energy holding it there coming from Marine's hand.

She launched it back at the robot CLAW occupied, stabbing it through the chest.

"Whoa," I said.

"Yes, the others are currently dealing with more of them. I just needed to make sure you were okay," said Marine.

"Others?" The wall suddenly crumbled as another CLAW was sent through it, its head missing. A fully grown and extremely muscular male Lupvin came through the wall. Its body was red with grey hair, eyes, fur inside of its ears, pads on its hands and feet, and tip of its tail. A doctor's jacket wrapped tightly around his body as well.

At this point I figured out which template that Westbork used for the color scheme, the primary being the color their bodies were and the secondary being whatever their hair and eye colors were.

"I got it," said the red Lupvin. "Oh, Warmheart, you're up."

"Yeah… Who are you?" I asked.

"Another one of the AI cores."

"Blood, his name is Blood," said Marine.

"I was trying to be subtle about that fact," said the Lupvin. I only noticed that it had another fire axe in it's hand, holding it about waist high.

"Anyways," said Blood as he walked up to me. "Can you stand?"

"Yeah, just a sec," I said, getting to my feet. I felt a force hold my legs stiff, even though they were wobbling. I looked to my shoulder to see Spark sitting there. He gave me a single nod and a cheeky smile. I did the same and picked up my axe.

"C'mon, we need to get out of here," I said.

"Couldn't agree more," said Blood. "The others are clearing the way." We headed out through the hole in the wall, seeing a large assembly line filled with robots that were torn apart and another Lupvin. She was an adult female with light purple as a primary, and a light blue for a secondary. She had a wrench in her hands and was looting a tool belt from a bench, loading it with tools. She was also wearing a lab coat that was lose on her.

"Lavenda," said Blood.

"Oh, hey, you guys got him," said the Lupvin. She spung in a series of flips and cartwheels, landing on her feet right before us.

"She's the youngest of us, just twenty-one," said Marine.

"Gotcha," I said.

"I heard you," said the Lupvin. "I'm Lavenda, but just call me Lav."

"Nice to meet you guys, in… person?" I asked.

"Well, we've been with you in the AI cores for a while so…," said Lav.

"Hence why I don't know exactly what to say… Where's my Red Eye?"

"Oh yeah, borrowed it to break into the labs, sorry," said Spark. My drone floated through the halls, coming back to us, and I regained control for it, able to see through it again.

"Easy," said Blood.

"What was that?" I asked.

"The drone and its specifications, it's easy to replicate," said Blood. "I could make hundreds of them."

"Really?" I asked. The walls suddenly shook and the machines sprung to life, my fur standing on end.

"We gotta go!" Ordered Blood. He grabbed my shoulder and lead me towards the main hall. In the doorway was a large Lupvin like creature, unlike the others though, he had three heads. His primary color was a light grey, and his secondary was white, but his eyes were purple, on all three heads, and he had three tails. He stood up, towering over all of us, about fifteen feet tall from what I could tell from him having to bend over as to not hit his head on the ceiling. A series of lab coats were buttoned together to try and cover his body.

"Loop, get Warmheart out of here!" Barked Blood.

"On it," said the Cerberus. He grabbed me and carried me bridal style towards the door.

"Loop right?" I asked.

"Yes," said it's right head as the other two focused on the path ahead. "We are the ones that Doctor Westbork designed to run the company for you. We were the first that he designed some thirty-one years ago."

"Great, let's get out here alive first," I said. "And what's with the lab coats?"

"We wore the first thing we could find," said Loop's right head.

He focused back on the path in front of us as two more Lupvins came smashing through the walls, destroying more CLAW bots on the way. The first was a fully grown male with a primary of orange and a secondary of dark green. The other was a fully grown female with a primary of yellow and a secondary of red.

"Hallow, Flora, cover the rear!" Ordered Blood.

"On it," said the male.

"Hallow, you take left I got right," said the female. From that I figured the male was Hallow and the female was Flora. The two fell to the back of the group as we headed towards the door.

"Hallow was made twenty-five years ago, Flora, twenty-three," said one of Loop's heads to me.

"Gotcha," I said. I would have said that I could get down and run as well, but I wasn't sure if my legs were stable enough yet, knowing how much Spark was holding them steady, and I would have just slowed down the group.

The building shook again, parts of the ceiling collapsing and falling behind us. I clung tightly to Loop's chest, hoping I wasn't going to die. I felt a child clinging to a fire fighter, but I was a fully grown adult clinging to a giant muscular robot. I felt something moving on my chest and I looked down, seeing Spark burying himself between me and Loop.

"Scared too?" I asked him.

"Yeah, this place is in self-destruct mode," said Spark.

"Attention all parties trying to escape," said CLAW's voice over the speaker system.

"Taunting us won't work," said Flora.

"Yeah, we've been programmed to hear it all before," said Lav.

"Please tell me it wasn't from Westbork's old movies," I said.

"It was," said Blood. The sound of mechanical motors came from above as turrets appeared from the light fixtures, their lasers trained on us. The turrets loaded their bolts into them. I saw my life flash before my eyes again as a series of metal rods sharpened into arrows went through them, destroying them.

"On your rears," said a female voice. I looked back to see a full grown female Lupvin coming. She had a primary of white and a secondary of light blue. She had a bow made of mechanical parts and cables with a few of the make shift arrows in her hands.

"Ivory, where's Shade and Veron?" Asked Marine.

"Veron's gone to find a new way out other than the door, Shade's…" said the white Lupvin. The mountain shook again and the roof collapsed above us. The debris was caught in a net of yellow energy and pushed away to the sides.

"Mind if I borrow this?" Asked a voice. I looked over to see an adult Lupvin grabbing my axe. He had a primary of dark grey and a secondary of yellow. The energy was coming from his other hand, holding the debris away.

"Sure," I said.

"Thank you," said the male. "I am Shade by the way."

"Okay…" I said, letting him have the axe. A metallic clanging came from behind us, a long metal claw coming from around the corner.

"MOVE!" Yelled out Blood. We rushed into a side room, Loop holding me close to him like he was protecting me with his life. Shade and Hallow barred the door and Ivory took aim. The others armed themselves with whatever was in the room as the giant claw came through the door, the barricade exploding in its grand entrance.

Everyone braced for a fight, but were stopped when another quake hit, stones and rocks falling down from the ceiling. It crushed and pinned the claw as ropes came down from the hole up top.

"UP HERE! HURRY!" Called out a voice.

"VERON YOU LIFE SAVER!" Yelled out Blood with a large smile. All of them quickly climbed the ropes other than Loop. He tied one of the ropes around me like a harness and yanked on it.

I felt the ropes tighten and I was lifted upwards, hearing the mechanical clanking of more robots coming from us. I looked back down to see Loop climbing one of the extra ropes and to see Spark riding in my pack again.

"We're doomed," said Spark.

"Lots of robots?" I asked.

"Yeah… But I'm picking up something else," said Spark. "I don't know what quite yet but I can tell it's big and bad."

"Lovely."

We got up through the hole, on the summit of the mountain, as we all took note of each other. Everyone made it out, with the addition of one last Lupvin, the ninth from what I counted.

It was an adult Lupvin, with a green primary and black secondary, with the only exception being that his eyes were green.

"Trivean, glad you're up," said the Lupvin. "The name's Veron."

"Nice to meet everyone now that you can talk back," I said.

"Um, Triv, you know that big bad thing I sensed?" Asked Spark. Another quake happened, throwing me to the ground. I looked around to see everyone else on the ground, trying to get up. I looked up at the peak, seeing it break open. A giant robotic Dervan appeared from the mountain, as if it was hatching from an egg.

"I WILL DESTROY YOU ALL!" Yelled out Claw from the robot.

"Yeah… that's it…" said Spark. I looked up, and then at the robots coming from the hole and realized, we were doomed.