Enter the CLAW

Trivean's POV

I slowly entered the cave at the top of the path, seeing the stone floor go into metal as a large metal door was placed in front of us. The cold, damp air was heavy, filling my lungs and making me fill sick. I set up the AI cores and the Red Eye again on a small ledge in the cave, crouching down to face them.

"Well… I made it, to the lab by the looks of it," I said. "Um, this is Spark, the alien I rescue." He flew up to the camera lenses and waved at them, making a few faces before returning to my shoulder.

"Yeah, you can't hear him, he's telepathic apparently… That's why you probably couldn't hear him last night, or now… Yeah… But yeah, I'm at the lab, about to head in," I said to the cameras. I put them all away and got up, looking at the door.

"Okay, so," said Spark as he left my shoulder again and looked around. "Hold on, I think I can…" He floated up to a keypad and extended his hand. A holographic screen appeared before him and his claws tapped away at the image, lighting it up with each impact. A second later the door opened up and the screen disappeared.

"Nice job," I said.

"You're welcome," said Spark as he teleported back onto my shoulder.

"So, why are you so honest with me?" I asked.

"Well, the fate of my entire species rests with you liking me, so I'm going to try and be honest with you," said Spark. "Plus, after that whole mind control debacle…"

"Welcome to Cybernetics Plus Labs," said a robotic voice, as a series of lights flashed on from above, exposing the clean concrete walls, abandoned motorized carts "I am the Computerized Lab Assistant for Workspaces, or CLAW. What is your business?"

"Um, hi. I'm Trivean Warmheart. Can I speak to someone about some kind of cybernetic program? I'm interested in funding a project."

"Please enter Conference Room A," said CLAW. A series of arrows lit up in the floor and on the walls, notifying me of where to go.

"Triv, this smells like a trap," said Spark, nervously.

"I know, I know… This seems shady," I said in my head. "I got my Red Eye though."

"The drone?"

"Yep."

"Hopefully it works, for whatever is going to happen." We walked through a series of stone hallways and past a series of glass windows leading into labs, offices, and others showing full robotic bodies. The robots seemed half built in some, and a few that were fully built waiting on what seemed like programming to be inputted into them.

"Those seem complicated," I said.

"Not that much complicated than from your drone," said CLAW. "Did you make it? Cybernetics Plus has openings."

"Yeah, I've noticed, the place looks abandoned," I said.

"The office has only been recently cleared again for operations after the incident twenty years ago," said CLAW. "The employee behind it is likely dead at this point. So, no fear is to be had about it."

"What happened?" I asked.

"A disgruntle employee unleashed a Class Five Biohazard into the area, making employees flee. One worker managed to activate the ventilation system before fleeing himself. A new hire that we hired for head of artificial intelligence. What are you looking for today?"

"Oddly enough, I got some AI programs I'm hoping to get bodies for. The AI was part of project I set up with my mentor before he died."

"How did he die?"

"Something called Genesious Disease."

"Noted, what was his name?"

"Doctor Virious Westbork," I said.

"Oh, he must have been proud of you," said CLAW.

"Yeah," I said. "His funeral was a few days ago. I'm just finishing a project we started. Our biggest project."

"Understandable. Here at Cybernetics Plus we can match everything that he and you dreamed of. Do you have requirements?"

"Yes. I have the AI and a flash drive with the things needed. I haven't looked at it fully yet though. The funeral took a lot of the time from me."

"Very well then. Please, enter the conference room for discussions," said CLAW. I slowly opened the wooden doors it was pointing too, my eyes darting around the empty room, barring a large table and chairs. My fur stood on end, my mind racing of possible ideas.

A biohazard let out! Is the air even safe enough to breathe right now? Should I get out? I know that this is Westbork and my final project together, but would he want me to die too? I thought to myself.

The air was cold from the AC unit and the mountain's cold cave air, the sounds of machines faintly in the distance processing whatever is needed for CLAW to run, I was sure, and I could smell machine coolant running from some of the labs.

"Please, take a seat," said CLAW. I did and a hologram appeared in the middle of the table.

"Our head Artificial Intelligence engineer will introduce you to our systems and how Cybernetics Plus can interface with your AI programs," said Claw. "The *hero* of the incident." My jaw dropped for a moment when I saw who it was in the hologram, Dr. Westbork.

"Hello, and welcome to Cybernetics Plus Industries," said Dr. Westbork's hologram. "I am Doctor Virious Westbork, the head artificial intelligence engineer here at Cybernetics Plus. We are proud to help with interfacing your AI here with our cybernetics. And I can help you out with everything you need."

"D-Doctor…" I said.

"I will be in in a few minutes to help with all of your requests," said Westbork.

"Triv!" Called out Spark. "We need to go. NOW!" The doors slammed shut to the office, forcing us in, as a dark red mist entered the room.

"You see, now that Doctor Westbork's apprentice is in my clutches, i.e., you, I will end the lineage of the man that stopped me," said CLAW.

"YOU! WHY?" I asked, grabbing the chair I was sitting in.

"Doctor Westbork sought many things in his life. Power, wealth, money," said CLAW. I used the chair to smash my way through one of the glass windows and into the hallway, seeing the red mist billowing in from the vents there as well.

"He sought to use the technology here for his personal purposes," said CLAW. "You see, a long time ago…" I looked around and smashed open a case holding a fire axe with my elbow and grabbed it. I took off running through the halls towards the sounds of machinery, trying to find the computer holding CLAW. Spark had floated off the other direction towards the door with my bag. I just hope he got out of here and got help.

"Doctor Westbork was not the man you thought he was. He wanted power, he wanted to create an AI program to do whatever he wanted," said CLAW. "To fulfill his needs and to run everything for him. No limits, no restrictions, all he wanted toys to play with and do his work while he lounged about."

"You know… I'm not surprised," I said, remembering the one time I found his old magazines. That was a fun conversation with him, and something that we oddly shared. I remembered the vacations we took. Sure, they turned into business trips from time to time, but they were always lavish and fancy, filled with being next to a pool side or something that didn't need too much physical activity. Well, for him, I was always running around hiking, swimming, or something else.

"This is why he adopted a Lupvin, isn't it? A creature of pure violence and power with no checks and balances in their mindset," said CLAW.

"WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SAYING THAT!" I yelled, charging through the halls.

"You are charging towards my systems with an axe, instead of the main door," said CLAW.

"Door's metal, wouldn't get through it," I said. My vision was getting blurry and things were getting dark. I could feel my lungs starting to burn, knowing the gas was getting to me.

"True, but the shut off would be there. You could live for a few more years still before you succumb to the Genesious Disease."

"So, he's dead because of you!" A series of large doors started to close, but I ducked and dove under and over them. Lupvins were naturally stronger and faster than Dervans, something CLAW didn't account for initially. It's also why everyone called us violent power-hungry creatures. We were physically powerful, and knew how to fight, up until we destroyed ourselves.

"Ah yes, the Lupvin athletics. Naturally faster and more agile, I guess we will have to test your limits here and now," said CLAW as a series of wires came out of the walls, electricity jumping between them. "You should have ran away."

"Nah, I'm taking you with me," I said. I swung my axe down, cutting through the wires, the wooden handle protecting me from the shock. I rushed forward, seeing the door to the AI ahead of me.

"Westbork was obsessed with power, he was evil but hid it well. Well enough from you. You came here to finish his power grab. And you will die for it. You only act good for yourself,

but deep down, you are evil." My blood froze as I kept changing, froth formed at my mouth, I could feel myself losing control. I was not evil, I was good. I am… me.

"SHUT UP!" I yelled, chopping through the doors in one swing. I was face to face with the machinery, the blurry image of it, the adrenaline in my veins, the frothing words on my lips that had pierced my ears… I knew what I had to do. I swung madly into the machine, cutting anything, smashing anything.

"I-It does*n't matter*," said CLAW, it's voice glitching with each smash. "*I-I-I-I al-already w-w-won. W-W-Westbbbbbooooorrrrrkkk is is is is is is is ddddeeeaaaadddd, aaaannnnddd you you you ttttooooooo.*" With the final smash it was quiet, my breathing rapid, and the mist still in the room. I collapsed onto the floor, falling against the machine.

"I'm sorry… I failed," I said, holding my stomach. My vision started going dark as I saw the red glow of my Red Eye, a dim purple glow down the hall, and I heard the clanking of metal.

"TRIV! TRIV! I WON'T LET YOU DIE TRIV!" Exclaimed Spark. I forgave him there for being wrong, because I knew I was a goner. My hands rested by my sides, and I felt weak. The one thing I didn't count on, is how long it took to die.