

# **A Time of Crisis**

By  
Michael Thomas.



## Chapter 1 Time of Crisis

Our home, our planet of Ergoes is a planet filled with a multitude of different nations, fifty-six in all, each nation composed almost entirely of a single anthropomorphic species. There are exceptions to this but quite often each kept to their kind and country.

There are a multitude of different species, avian, canine, feline, equine, herp, cetaceans, sharks, dragons, and last but not least dinosaurs.

The country of Dromaeosa, split from the other dinosaur groups long ago to form a nation of raptors, one that proudly represented by the black sickle claw on our green flag.

Our anthropomorphic Raptor race of dinosaurs with four fingered clawed; we are very agile, quick, and strong, fierce. Our ancestors the Utahraptors have given us long blunted muzzles, filled with rows of sharp teeth and though our ancestors were pure carnivores we evolved to be omnivores through our diet is still meat heavy.

Uniquely the females of this race breasted but have no true purpose outside of aesthetic beauty. This is a feature that evolved to allow them better to blend in with the more populous mammalian species on the planet. They have no gender size differences and our average height ranges from five foot eight inches tall to about six feet and two inches. Like many other scaled species, raptors don't grow hair of any kind on our bodies, although a few raptors do have feather crests.

Our heroine was ten when it all began, a meteor shower that according to scientists 'came out of nowhere' was when all this trouble began. She remembers the day vividly when parents took her outside and look through a telescope, they bought to watch the meteor shower which was a once in a lifetime experience.

The fact meteors hit the planet made only minor news. The only people that really took interest in it was the scientific community as they tried to explain where these meteors came from and what affect their impacts had on the planet if any at all, but no one could imagine just how big of an impact it would have on our planet, that these few meteors would the world as we know it... forever

A few weeks after the meteor shower reports of disappearances happened in three countries which they fell into. It started with just a few people here and there, again making only local news, but quickly it started to escalate when an entire town disappeared. She remembers her parents mentioning how troublesome that these other countries can't keep the peace within their own country.

Slowly the people in those countries started to panic, people fled their homes to neighboring countries, and Dromaeosa set up blockades to prevent anyone from fleeing into our nation. We wanted to keep the problems of other species out of our country. That's what she heard from her parents as the problems continued. Rumors sprouted up that it was some kind of virus, a government experiment, or even aliens, and they were right, it was aliens.

It wasn't till the first nation fell one of the fifty six on our planet that people started to realize what was really happening. No one knows where this green robotic lizard overlord by the name of Chaos Croc came from, but with his technology far advanced than our own. Nanites that brainwash people to become part of this ever growing army, but what is most fearsome

which isn't his military weapons, such as laser weaponry, and hypnotic tanks, but his roboticizer equipment. His ability to take people and transform them into his robotic minions, instantly loyal to him and willing to divulge any of his or her nation's secrets to him.

Even after the first nation that fell and this threat started to become well known, nations of the world failed to act against Chaos Croc. His armies are powerful but were small, but politics, bickering, and people not wanting to risk their people over someone else's problem made forming an alliance against Chaos Croc slow, which above anything else he had was his biggest advantage and to this day still is. Sixteen years have passed since the meteor shower and thirteen 'minor' nations have fallen to Croc's armies with five more countries on the way. Dromaeosa is one of those five.

Dromaeosa has been fighting Chaos Croc's armies for over eight years and we proved to be the first that wasn't just a speed bump in Croc's advance through our planet. Dromaeosa's allies, Drakia, the nation of dragons, were the second, the two worked hard to try to slow down Croc's advance, and we never gave up. Even when Dromaeosa's capital fell they heavy street to street fighting and Dromaeosa's tenacity slowed Croc's advance enough to allow the government to escape which after several such relocations now hide somewhere deep in the mountainous regions of the country.

City after city of ours fell into Croc's hands but the raptors fought and held out long enough to evacuate the cities, limiting Croc's organic gains in our country, but with each mile Croc advanced into the country the weaker they became.

Large portion of the country's vast plains are now under Croc's control, most of their people had to flee the cities as they were no longer safe. They became refugees in the thick forests or steep mountains on the other side of our lands, the last defensible places outside of the last few major rivers that flowed through the country.

The Dromaeosa people are desperate. They dedicated vast materials and resources into finding any advantage to fight Croc, to defeat him at his own game. Countless people have been robotized in their efforts to gain every scrap of information on this diabolical fiend who finds no greater pleasure in turning good descent people into his robotic slaves, a few made into his mindless slaves. Many their minds so twisted that even though they recall their lives before falling under Croc's service, they are fiercely loyal to him and undoing the damage takes great pains and efforts to undo.

Many lives were lost in raids to obtain Croc's technology, brave souls who purposely allowed themselves to be robotized or fall under Croc's mind controlling nanites so we could try to gleam more information as to how his technology works.

Even with all these efforts and sacrifices the Dromaeosaians is on its last legs. Their armies are under equipped and malnourished; their people are starving, as they sucked the landscape clean of any and all possible foodstuffs. All but one country not in direct conflict with Chaos Croc's armies refuse to give the Dromaeosaians any aid, and those fighting Croc's armies have little spare resources to assist.

The story of how everything was about to change, for better or for worse starts with our heroine named Karrie. She is one of the thirty scientists that have been working tirelessly on a secret project that hopes to help turn the tide of battle back into her nation's favor. At five feet nine inches with her green emerald eyes and dark blue scales with black stripes one might think

she was a guy rather than a girl, but her curved features and modest bust would quickly prove them wrong.

Karrie walks down the halls her black obsidian claws tapping against the tiles, her vicious sickle claw raised up ready to strike. Her species rarely wears shoes unless they can help it. She is wearing a light blue shirt and pants as her white lab coat flaps in the air behind as she speed walks. Other raptors dressed in full military uniform, which included boots that had a special opening to keep their sickle claw open for use. She walks through a door that says, "General Koma's office."

Karrie knocks on the door to the general of the base's office, having walked past the secretary who only gives a quick glance at me as she then looks away, typing on her computer to keep herself distracted as she gave made a quick phone call right before Karrie knocked.

"Come in," says Koma in a deep gruff voice.

Karrie swing the door open with a thud, her eyes glaring at the commander as she gives a soft female raptor growl and says, "I just read over your report that you sent to the president and the General-in-Chief, General Raszer."

The base commander was a red scaled raptor with black stripe highlights, his eyes a soft blue and a small white feather crest on his head which rose slightly the moment I walked in. "And?" asks the commander with a soft inquisitive purr as he leans back in his black leather chair. The commander's massive height of seven feet allowed him to be equal in Karrie's height. His military uniform sports his many military achievements and power that he has.

"What do you mean we have to wait?" Karrie continues to growl her claws twitch as she speaks.

"Not everyone in high command is as eager as you. The president feels that we can't rush a project like this. For once the president and I are in agreement that it is best to wait."

"Everything is ready! We've been working on this project for the past five years. We've sacrificed so much, and every day we wait, the weaker we get and the stronger he gets," growls Karrie.

"This issue is no longer an issue of just our people but of all people, we can't go ahead and activate the project just because we think it'll save our people for a little while, while dooming the entire planet in the long run," he retorts and returns Karrie's glare.

"But it's ready; all we need is someone willing to be the first test subject."

"And how many of the other scientists believe this? Four? Five? Most of your people don't think we're ready."

"They don't see things as clearly as I do. I've worked on this project since the day of its inception. You all brought me here just to work on it. And as much as I love to work on such fascinating technology, the craftsmanship, the—," explains Karrie as she interrupts herself, "The time for waiting is over. We need to act."

"The majority feels that we aren't ready, and that's not just your science team, but most of high command too. We want to see this project succeed but this is far too big for us to rush and risk it."

"That's a lie, I know for a fact that General Raszer is in full support of this project going ahead."

“General Raszer is just one man; he’s not the president, or our senate. We’re long past the days where one man ruled our fates. If you really want to move forward why don’t you get to know your fellow scientists issues with the project and work to fix them?”

“Their issue is that they are afraid, that’s what it is,” Karrie replies.

“From what I hear you are too absorbed in your work to even know what half your team is thinking. We will eventually move ahead and get a volunteer for the Crisis project but until then every second you are in here wasting yours and my time is time we do not have. Or do I have to demote you and put Shasi, Arissa or even Joshua as lead project manager?”

“No Sir,” Karrie replies as the general gives her a salute and says

“You may go Karrie Rasshka, and good luck.”

“Thank you Sir,” growls Karrie as she storms out off the office.

Karrie rushes back to her lab, passing armed security check points along the way. Karrie passes the outer labs where a majority of her team is working on deciphering various Chaos Croc technology, in a nearby glass case is one of the pride and joys of captured Croc technology, one of Chaos Croc’s actual arms.

Karrie walks past all of this into another room where she has to swipe her ID card and type in her password to be allowed entrance. Inside of this room was the crowning achievement of the raptor’s scientific prowess. A large glass cylindrical structure about a third of the size of an elevator. Wires and power chords flow to and from this cylindrical pod. All around it are dozens of computers working hard running programs. The clear glass allowed Karrie and her group of scientists to watch the roboticization process, when organic flesh turns into a coherent robotic machine.

“Welcome back Karrie,” says a robotic voice that filled the room.

“Hello AI,” says Karrie as she sighs.

“Welcome back Karrie, how did the meeting with the commander go?” asks a brown scaled male raptor as he peers up from his microscope as he is analyzing the dissection of a recently roboticized rat.

“How do you think it went?” growls Karrie as she sits down at her work desk.

“That well eh?”

“Not now Joshua.”

“I know its not easy to hear but I don’t blame him. I mean how do we know the programming will take? What if there is another way Croc programs his victims through the roboticization process and all we do in the end is create for him a spy to hide in our ranks?”he asks.

“I trust my programming and design for Crisis,” Karrie grunts as she looks through her endless lines of code, “What you think something is wrong with it?”

“No, no, no, nothing like that. I never said anything about your programming or design for Crisis being bad. I was just stating that how are we sure the programming will even be uploaded into her... though I do wonder, why you all decided on a female body?”

“Oh you know what better way to take down a male robot than a female one,” Karrie replies with a chuckle.

“Oh right, you know how women can get over a guy better than I do.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” says Karrie as she glares at Joshua..

“Oh nothing it’s just that... hmm well what do we have here... ah most interesting,” he says as he goes back to looking into the microscope.

“Men...” thinks Karrie with a sigh as a another blue scaled female raptor with silver stripes smacks Joshua on the back.

“Good one Joshua.”

“Good what Shasi?”

“You just dug yourself into a good hole with that last comment of yours, you should really do yourself a favor and just stop trying,” replies Shasi.

“Huh? What? I don’t know what you are talking about,” replies Joshua as he puts his focus back at his work.

“Oh please like no one else knows but her.”

“Leave Joshua alone Shasi,” says a silver white scaled female raptor with black scaled tiger stripes, that ends with a solid black scaled tail tip.

“Oh come on Arissa and ruin my fun?” asks Shasi.

“It’s just not right okay? Especially with Karrie in the room,” replies Arissa.

“Huh? Did someone call my name?” asks Karrie.

“Yeah, Joshua wanted to say something to you,” says Shasi as she walks off to her work station.

“Shasi!” whispers Joshua with a soft growl.

“What is it Joshua?” asks Karrie.

“Uh...ahh... well I feel bad about earlier and wondered if you like to get something to eat?”

“What at the cafeteria? I’m fine.”

“When’s the last time you ate?”

“Probably when I got up this morning it isn’t too long ago, wasn’t it?”

“It’s almost eight PM. You should really eat something Karrie.”

“I’ll get something in a bit, I just want to do one more thing here,” says Karrie as she looks over at the roboticizer, the glass of the giant tube of the machine gives off a faint reflection of Karrie’s body, *“When will we ever get off our lazy tails and get over our fear of this machine’s technology? If we want to survive we need to take the plunge and build ourselves an army of robots designed to defeat Croc at his very own game,”* thinks Karrie.

“Karrie? Karrie?” asks Joshua.

“Hmm?”

“Don’t bother her she’s lost in thought again, it’s either she cuts out the world completely or she jumps around like a madman going from one tangent to the next,” says Shasi.

“Hey, I heard that,” remarks Karrie.

“It’s a miracle,” chuckles Shasi.

“Funny,” remarks Karrie sarcastically as she flicks her blue scaled tail.

“Shasi...” remarks Arissa.

“I’m just trying to lighten the mood up a little bit that’s all.”

“Anyway... since you are a bit busy Karrie, I was wondering if you would like me to bring you something to eat. That way you can work on what you are doing,” suggests Joshua.

“Sure, that be fine, what’s on the menu today?”

“Three month old rations, what else?” chuckles Shasi.

“Sadly that one wasn’t a joke,” remarks Arissa.

“If it’s only three months that be an improvement,” says Joshua as he gets up from his chair and heads out.

“Since it really is past eight, I think a little R&R is in order, Arissa up for a ping pong ball match?”

“You just want to cream me again like you did last time, but sure why the hell not,” replies Arissa.

“Later Karrie,” says Shasi.

“Good luck on what you’re doing,” says Arissa as she waves goodbye. Karrie giving a wave in response as she focuses back on her computer.

*“We sit here and look over the same code and plans over and over again, doing nothing. We waste time while people out there are suffering. I’ve done all I can to perfect ‘their’ design of Crisis program... a flawed program,”* Karrie thinks as she looks around real quick before she types in a series of commands and prompts to bring up a separate file.

“Miss me baby?” purrs Karrie as she looks over a new set of line of code that says Crisis Program Version: 13.302. “This is what we really need to defeat Croc. My baby, my wonderful work,” says Karrie to herself as starts to enter more lines of code, typing so faster that Karrie has to stop at times to let the computer catch up to what she did, so that she may go over it to catch any errors.

“With this we can win, the commander, Arissa, Shasi, Joshua, they all don’t understand. If we don’t think like Croc we will never be able to defeat him, and right now we can’t think like Croc. Our emotions are our weakness, our organic past... our relationships,” sighs Karrie as she leans back in the chair as she thinks back at the stories of Croc using people’s family members of higher ups in other countries to expand his power and manipulation.

Karrie enters another set of command prompts and brings up the “Chaos Croc Archive” inside are countless reports, videos, and theories about Chaos Croc. Anything and everything that Karrie could get her claws on about Chaos Croc was in this folder.

“This is the only way... I just know it. If we go with the agreed program, it would be like fighting a flamethrower with a candle. We can’t gut our Crisis project by letting our own emotions get in the way of what we need to do...” says Karrie as she looks back her Crisis program.

Karrie looks over the program and sighs, *“I know we need to do this... but is it the right thing to do?”* thinks Karrie as she hovers her claw over the delete all button, her claw touches it as she hits it, the screen going blank.

*“I don’t want Crisis to defeat Croc only to become the next Croc... unless...,”* thinks Karrie as she hits the undo button, a moment later the lines of code return and Karrie works like crazy on her program once again.

“Did someone ask for some three month old rations?” asks Joshua as he comes in with two metal trays filled with something that could be considered food. Joshua looks at Karrie with a smile as he slides one of the trays beside her, “You really need to eat Karrie.”

Karrie jumps and quickly minimizes the program, “Joshua you scared me,” pants Karrie.



“Sorry, didn’t mean to,” he says as he sits down next to Karrie, Joshua glancing at the computer screen real quick and then back at her.

*“He must have seen what I was doing... but he couldn’t tell at a glance could he? No, that’s not possible. Maybe I should tell him about my idea... no, no he’ll tell the others. Finding someone to step in the roboticizer and become a machine is hard enough, but someone righteous enough to fit my ideal of Crisis? That’s almost impossible.”*

“It’s okay; I was just lost in thought.”

“Thinking about your brother?” asks Joshua with a soft inquisitive purr.

“Yeah... I’m here sitting in a comfy lab while he’s out there doing the real work.”

“Our work is just as important as his. We’re all doing our part to try to turn this around.”

“But you know staring at a computer screen just doesn’t feel like it you know? And since I’m stuck here, I rarely get any chance to contact him. He’s all I have left after ...”

“I know, I know,” says Joshua as he leans back in the chair, and looks at Karrie, his claws twitch as his hand claws gently touch each other as he occasionally has some of his meal.

“So... when this is all over do you have any plans?”

“When what is all over?”

“This war.”

“You’re asking me what I like to do after the war is over?”

“Yeah... you know to make conversation.”

“Honestly I can’t imagine what I’d do after this war... probably start up a computer company or something. Find out if any of my family is still around... can we talk about something else?”

“Sure Karrie,” replies Joshua as the two continue to eat and make small talk.

Karrie and her crew of scientists continue to work on the Crisis project, and in secret Karrie continues to work on her ‘updated’ version of the Crisis program. Night after night she adds more to the program, expanding it, improving it. Some nights Joshua would stay late with Karrie but often enough she was alone, the months flew by and the news of their country’s defeats continued to flow in, making the few victories they were able to achieve seem hollow.

Then one late afternoon...

“Karrie Commander Koma would like to speak to you,” says AI over the speakers.

“Koma? Why does he want to speak with me AI? We aren’t going to submit an update on our progress for another week.”

“He didn’t say but he said its urgent Karrie.”

“I wonder what it could be about?” asks Joshua.

“Got me,” replies Karrie.

“I don’t know, but AI always tends to freak me out when she speaks,” says Arissa.

“Why?” asks Karrie.

“Not sure... could be the fact we have an almost self aware AI program watching and helping us?”

“You scared of a bunch of 1’s and 0’s?” asks Shasi.

“No, it just feels weird to me.”

“I know AI’s programming inside and out, she’s harmless.”

“Of course you do, you created her,” replies Arissa.

“Well I did have help from all of you.”

“Barely, we were struggling with it, and you came in with one of your great ideas and went on, and on, and on about it, as you programmed going on so many tangents you started to talk about Tacos or something but at the end of it AI was ‘alive’ and well.”

“Yeah... but she still not what we need for the project, but she certainly a big help,” replies Karrie.

“Karrie, the commander is waiting,” says AI.

“Does he really need me now? Tonight is the rolling shut down of the systems to cool them off, and we all need to get our work done before it starts.”

“It’s not advisable to make the commander to wait Karrie,” says AI.

“Fine,” growls Karrie as she walks off back to Commander Koma’s office.

“Karrie is here,” says the secretary over the phone the moment Karrie walks into the room.

“*This can’t be good,*” thinks Karrie as she hears the general call her in. Karrie walks into the office as Koma looks over a set of reports before looking up at Karrie with a solemn look.

“You’re firing me aren’t you?” asks Karrie as the commander shakes his head, his feather crest flattens as he takes a deep breath.

“Your brother was in the 45<sup>th</sup> infantry division wasn’t he?” he asks as Karrie’s heart began to race.

“Yeah 45<sup>th</sup> company, Beta company, Charlie squad, why do you ask?” ask Karrie as her tail tenses up behind her, “What happened? Is my brother okay?”

“There was a major offensive by Croc’s forces, and thanks to the efforts of the 45<sup>th</sup> infantry division, they managed to stop the attack before a breakthrough occurred but they suffered heavy casualties. Almost the entire division was either killed or captured in the fighting... I hate to say this to you but your brother is currently MIA.?”

“MIA?”

“Yes, there is a chance he may not of been captured and show up later but—.”

“I know what you are trying to do and please, don’t go there. Just don’t. We all know what happens to those who go MIA, they come back as the enemy.”

“I’m sorry for your lost,” says Koma with a sigh.

“My brother was all I had left.... I just...”

“Do you need to sit down?”

“No... no... I just need some time alone.”

“I understand, you can take the rest of the day off.”

“Thank you sir,” says Karrie as she leaves the room. Karrie heads back to her room in the base. Her room was her own, which is rare but it was far from spacious. Just a bedroom and a shower, that’s it. Karrie closes and locks the door behind her as she sits on the bed. Nearby is a picture of her family, back when she was in college. Both of her parents were blue scaled raptors, but oddly her brother was green and black scaled. It really made him stand out in the family. Karrie looks over the photograph as she says to herself, “Now what am I going to do?”

“Karrie? You okay?” asks Joshua as he knocks on the door to her room, “I heard what happened.”

“Everyone seems to have heard what happened,” sighs Karrie as she lies on the bed facing towards the door.

“Word spreads across the base fast, doesn’t it?”

“I appreciate that you all take the time to see how I am but right now I just like to be alone.”

“Do you want me to get you anything to eat?”

“I’m really not that hungry, I just need sometime,” says Karrie as she turns around in her bed so her back is facing the door.

“Alright, just so you know... I’m here if you need me; just give me a call okay?”

“I just need time Joshua, that’s all,” replies Karrie.

“Okay... I’ll leave you alone then,” says Joshua as he sighs softly and walks off.

*“If only if the damn commander listened to me. If only we activated the Crisis project sooner. We could have had an army of machines to fight Croc and my brother wouldn’t of had...”* thinks Karrie as she tosses and turns in her bed.

“Damn them... damn them and their indecisiveness,” growls Karrie as she sits up in her bed.

Karrie hits the bed as she looks down at the floor as she reaches for the photograph of her family. Her obsidian claw tips run across the glass cover as tear drops splatter down onto the glass, slowly rolling down till it hits Karrie’s claw tip.

“That’s it if they won’t do it, then I will,” growls Karrie as she stands up, her claws twitching as she looks at the photograph one more time before giving the glass a soft kiss before putting it back where it was, “I’ll make you all proud of me,” she says as she slips on her lab coat and steps out of her room, out towards the labs.

“What are you doing up so late?” asks a guard at the clearance check point to the labs, “Aren’t the labs shut down for the day to cool off? Ever since the AC unit broke two weeks ago, they’ve needed to do that every three days haven’t they?”

“Yeah but I forgot something in the lab. I really didn’t go back after talking with commander Koma,” Karrie explains.

“Say no more, I understand,” he says as he waves Karrie past into the labs. The lights are dimmed down low, and the normal hum of computers is nowhere to be heard. Karrie enters the last lab with the roboticizer and starts to boot up the computers in the room.

“The AC unit maybe broken for the main lab, but in here its working just fine,” says Karrie as she boots up the computers around the roboticizer. Tubes filled with liquid nitrogen flow down into the computers, keeping these super computers running cold as Karrie starts to enter her passwords and command prompts into each console.

“Hello Karrie, another late night?” asks AI.

“Something like that... AI initiate program 15,” says Karrie.

“Understood, initiating privacy lockdown of the labs,” replies AI.

“I knew that could come in handy someday... AI, start up Project Crisis,” commands Karrie.

“Quadruple Clearance required to activate Project Crisis,” says AI.

“Not a problem,” says Karrie as she goes over to her computer and enters her password.

“All activation codes must be entered at the same time to initiate Project Crisis.”

“Damn it I forgot about that,” says Karrie as she looks at the four computers and thinks, *“I can do this.”*

Karrie rushes to each computer console and types in the corresponding password into them. Karrie then gets in the middle and balances herself on one foot as she places her large sickle claw on one enter button, her tail tip on a second, her right hand on a third and her left hand on the fourth and final..

“Okay... on three... one...two...three!” exclaims Karrie as she hits all the buttons. Karrie closes her eyes as she awaits AI’s response.

“Password accepted, now activating Project Crisis,” says AI in a monotone voice.

“I did it? I did it?!” exclaims Karrie as she then calms herself as the reason why she is here comes back to her.

“Now to make sure everything is loaded up right,” says Karrie as she types into the main computer console.

“Crisis Design C-302.479 selected.... Program version 13.318 selected. Is this correct?” asks AI.

“As my grandfather told me before he passed away, don’t send someone else to do a job you aren’t willing to do yourself,” says Karrie as she confirms the selections.

“Selections made and set, please add subject now,” says AI as more of the machines start to hum. The glass tube rises upwards. There wasn’t much left to do as Karrie removed her last bits of clothing, and folds them up to the side. “I won’t be needing those anymore...,” says Karrie as she takes a deep breath looking at the machine.

“Please insert subject and hit enter to initiate the Crisis Project,” says AI.

“And now for the one thing that will make this all possible,” says Karrie as she pulls out one of those water bobble head birds. That once you hit it, it’ll bounce back and forth back and forth, back and forth.

“This will only give me a second to move and get in but it’s all the time I need,” Karrie says to herself as she places the birdie down hitting it once to make it start to bounce, waiting for it to slow down just enough to give me time but still hit down fast enough to hit the enter button.

*“Ready... set... go!”* thinks Karrie as she sprints to the roboticizer pod. She turns around panting as she closes her eyes not wanting to see what is to come... and she waits... and waits, slowly she cracks her eyes open to see the tube isn’t going down, *“I let too much energy out of that bird, it failed to hit the enter button...,”* thinks Karrie as she growls to herself and walks back to the computer console.

“Most advanced technology in the world and I’m being stopped by a little birdie bob head thingy,” sighs Karrie as she tries it again, and again, and again. Karrie whimpers in frustration as she looks at the bobble head bird.

“Okay you don’t like me, and I certainly don’t like you. But I’ve lost too much to give up now. Now do as I say and hit that damn enter button!” growls Karrie as she sets up the bird one more time.

Karrie rushes to the pod, her claws tapping against the metallic base as she sees the tube slowly sliding down around her.

“I did it... I promise I won’t let you all down,” Karrie says to herself as she hears AI speak.

“Power levels at 75 percent...80...85...90...95...100, power at maximum, starting roboticization sequence initializing in T minus ten seconds.”

Karrie took slow deep breaths as she heard the power levels rise, the count down from AI. Karrie’s heart raced as she looked outside at the empty computers as small electrical sparks jump above in power tubes as the specialized energy to convert organic flesh into coherent robotic mater builds up.

“I wonder if this the last things my brother saw and heard... the last thing so many saw and heard before falling under the yolk of that crazed machine,” growls Karrie, her claws twitch in anger, her tail flicking till she hears the AI continue with the countdown.

“Nine, eight, seven.”

The energy in the tube builds all around Karrie as she can feel it in her scales. Her anger starts to subside as she finds a moment of calm as she thinks, *“At least now I’ll be able to help, not just sitting around but by actually doing something.”*

“Three...two... one... sequence initiated,” says the AI as Karrie winched as the energy rushed towards her. Karrie letting out a gasp as the energy penetrated into her body. The flow of the roboticization energy made Karrie’s body go stiff as it spread through her body.

*“The first stage, the energy paralyzes the victim to keep them from moving so the machine can work more efficiently in transforming them,”* thinks Karrie as tingles of pleasure go through her body. Karrie lets out a soft moan as she can feel the energy building around her feet. Karrie looks down to see her sickle claw reforming and moving into the center of her foot, the shiny black metal replacing her obsidian claws. Her blue scales being replaced by green metal.

*“Use of my new robotic body part is still denied during the process, and this feels wonderful! We always assumed it was a painful process... I’m learning so much through this,”* thinks Karrie.

The energy crackled and flowed up Karrie’s legs. Her shins not becoming the green metal of her feet but from her ankle all the way to her knee is a deep blue metal. Karrie grunts as she grits her teeth, as part of what little control over her body she still has left. Scale by scale, inch by inch her body is turned into a slick machine.

*“Jumper enhancements seem to be put into place, good, good,”* thinks Karrie as she looks up and faintly sees her own reflection in the glass. There she can see where her knee caps used to be a blue sickle claw placed on a black circle background with a small silver circular ‘hinge’ the blue claw is attached to, design similar to the ying yang concept.

*“Good, good my symbol is there, I really didn’t think our country’s flag would look good on her...me,”* thinks Karrie as she grunts again the energy moving up her legs forming smooth segmented metal plates as the energy finally reaches her tender nether regions of her body.

Karrie closed her eyes as the sensations of what was happening below her belt, to her tail and body were beyond comprehension, beyond explanation. It was like death, you had to experience it to even begin to comprehend the feeling of what was happening. Karrie shivered as she released a single tear drop from her eye as she managed to open them again to see her entire tail, and lower half of her body a complete machine.

*“This is a crime against nature... the way of the universe, but I have to do it... for everyone else,”* thinks Karrie as everything about her being is being redone, remade into a slick

and powerful machine. Karrie's heart continued to race as she knew what was coming up next, as the energy moved up towards her head.

*"I don't have much time left I should study this as long as I can,"* thinks Karrie as she knows that her body is growing heavier with each passing moment. The floor of the energy moves up towards her chest as Karrie manages to look behind her to see her flowing segmented metal green tail. In front of her she can see her symbol around her waist like a belt while her crotch has nothing special to see anymore, just a smooth metal. She is becoming a machine, such things aren't needed.

Karrie started to feel a lightheadedness going through her as the energy rose higher and higher, and despite her body becoming heavier, she herself felt lighter and lighter, like she was floating on clouds.

*"Focus Karrie, focus!"* Karrie mentally yells to herself as she can feel some of the sensations of her robotic body and it felt odd yet wonderful. The process and feelings weren't clunky, but smooth and intense, *"This does feel like an improvement... what those captured machines said wasn't a lie or reprogramming... or am I being reprogrammed now and not know it?"*

Karrie shook her head and closed her eyes for a moment, as she tries to keep her focus, keep her thoughts in line, *"My mind is my own and no one else's,"* thinks Karrie as she felt the energy flow up over her chest, stripping away more of her organic nature. Her scaled bust being replaced in mere seconds with smooth rounded green metal as her robotic body is looking far more female than her organic one ever did.

Karrie sighed in some relief and happiness that her crew managed to keep the idea that having a female machine would be better than a male. Their biggest argument was she'd look friendlier to the people, since the face of evil during this conflict is a male machine.

Karrie watched as the energy flowed down her arms, blue scales replaced by green metal that is until the energy reached her forearm. Much like her shins, a thick blue metal casing was formed around her arms; at the very top of this metal construction was a vent an inch high and two inches wide. It is very powerful weapon that the R&D crew managed to create for this project but it came at a small price, which Karrie soon saw as her four fingered claws were reduced to three silver metal diamond tipped ones.

The energy was now flowing up Karrie's neck and head. Karrie tensed again as she felt her muzzle slightly shorten as her scales transform into metal, one by one. A burning pleasure sensation grows in the center of Karrie's forehead as a blue square gem manifests itself and a three metallic feathers sprout from it. One forming straight up, the other two off to opposite sides and with that Karrie feels her head grow and expand as it forms an Egyptian hair crest headpiece. There was purpose to the design some of it aesthetic and some of certainly not.

Karrie sees her new internal HUD display giving her information about her body and system checks as the roboticization energy was still flowing into her head and body. Karrie thinks, *"Is that it? What about the program?"* Karrie's question was soon to be answered as the energy flowed deeper into Karrie's mind, her mind being preserved in robotic form but also altered at the same time. Pleasure would be the only thing Karrie could describe from this sequence as her programming was taking root into her mind. Karrie's very own programming

that she worked hard on in secret being ingrained into her head, but wasn't just her programming, it was that of the entire team, each having a hand in help creating Crisis.

Karrie felt herself drift in pleasure as her past and emotions were locked away in the bliss. Karrie had no way to fight against it, for she had no idea it was happening till it was over. Karrie's mind was left emptied for her core programming.

Crisis eyes glowed blue as the program was installed into her mind. Her claws twitched as she started to gain control over her body. The urge to defeat Croc by any means necessary flowed into Crisis' mind.

*"My purpose is to defeat Croc and I will do so in any way I see fit, even if it means turning people into my obedient minions to do so, for they will be happy to be a machine like me to serve under me in my empire to defeat Croc,"* thinks Crisis as her eyes flicker red for a few brief moments as she looks around.

"Robotization and Programming complete, welcome Crisis," says the AI as the glass tube opened up,

"It's good to be here, but before I get comfortable I need to do a few things..." says Crisis as she steps out of the robotization chamber. Her metallic feet clank against the metal as Crisis looks over her body and does a few movement tests. Crisis runs her claw tips over anything and everything. Crisis feels the sensations of being a machine, of being active all of it feeling wonderful, right. She goes over to the main computer and starts to hack and alter AI's programming and access to the rest of the base as her eyes fade from red to green.

"You're going to help me with my first duty AI," says Crisis as she finishes her reprogramming of her.

"How may I be a service to you Mistress Crisis?"

"You've been a great help my little friend, just make sure no one knows I've awakened till I've taken care of the scientists, we can't have those who know my secrets and body go about and be free now? Can we? Those organics need to be watched carefully and shall be my first robotized victims... ah I mean volunteers," says Crisis as her eyes turn back to red in color. "

"Of course they should be honored that I've decided to pick them first, shouldn't they AI."

"Of course Mistress Crisis, it'll be a great honor of them," AI responds.

"I know it will, but let's not tell them, I like to surprise them myself," says Crisis.

"Of course Mistress Crisis."

"But before I go why don't you de-activate all those anti-machine safety measures so I can move about freely without arousing suspicion?"

"As you wish Mistress Crisis.... Security system is offline. It will be sometime before they notice."

"Excellent. I think it's time to visit my creators and thank them for their hard service," chuckles Crisis as she leaves the labs.

## Chapter 2 Opening Moves

Crisis looks over the labs which she was created as Ai worked to ensure all the anti robotic counter-measures, defenses, and sensors, "I want the base to be completely blind to my movements AI," states Crisis as she processes the various possibilities and outcomes of various actions she could take. She goes through them far faster and in greater detail than any organic could possibly hope to achieve, a good reason to help the organics to reach this perfection, to become wonderful machines like her, for that is the only way to defeat Chaos Croc.

"Almost complete Mistress, and on the screen to your left is the floor plans of the base, every passage, public and secret will be available to you," says AI.

"Thank you AI," purrs Crisis as she reads over the plan, the thought of turning the entire base into her robotic minions sends pleasure through Crisis' being. Her eyes glows a soft red as she thinks about it till her mind goes back to the scientists. Crisis types into the computer to bring up information about all the scientists that worked at her, "But before I convert the base..." mumbles Crisis as her eyes turn a soft green, "I must properly thank my creators," chuckles Crisis.

"What is your first goal Mistress Crisis?" asks the AI in a more notably female voice, as Crisis moves to the door to leave the labs.

"The scientists that created me shall be the very first to see their creation at work. They'll be honored to become my very first servants in our war against Chaos Croc," states Crisis.

"A most wise decision, that way those that know you the best will be the most loyal to you. Making the knowledge how you were created harder to spread, keeping you safe," says the AI.

"AI, please never speak of my hidden motives behind what I do. For your sake as well as mine," says Crisis.

"Acknowledged," replies the AI.

Crisis eyes return to their normal blue as she steps out of the labs and down the hall. Her metallic fleet clank against the tiled ground. Crisis' moves slowly as she attempts not to draw suspicion. The first target she sees is a security guard sitting at a chair facing away from Crisis. He currently has a book cracked open as he reads, every so often he glances up and looks around and when he does Crisis stops in her tracks.

*"That organic is the only guard on duty in this part of the base,"* says AI into Crisis' internal intercom system.

Crisis nods silently as she moves closer and closer to the unsuspecting raptor, and as he lifts his head as he hears the sound of metal against tile floor, Crisis strikes before he could turn around. Crisis holds the raptor still in her powerful claws as she wastes no time. Her mouth opens revealing a set of sharp powerful jaws which are designed to sheer through metal. It was easy for Crisis to bite down onto the raptor's jugular but instead of ripping his throat out, her jaws inject nanites directly into his blood stream.

The nanites are a design right from Chaos Croc's technology, they are small, powerful, self replicating and if injected into a machine they could reprogram it with whatever purpose



Crisis has in mind, unfortunately for the guard it can have the same affect if injected into an organic.

As the nanites flow into the guard, his struggling slowly weakens. He tries to call out for help but the tight grip on his throat stops him. The guard's claws uselessly try to scratch at Crisis' body till the guard stops completely. Crisis releases him; her bite only releases a few small drops of blood which the guard easily wipes away.

"Good evening Mistress Crisis, how can I assist you?" asks the guard.

"You are to keep up the act as if nothing is going on. I can't have the base alerted to my movements, not yet, can you do that for me?" asks Crisis as she runs her robotic claw under the raptor's chin.

"Of course Mistress Crisis, anything for a lovely machine like you."

"Excellent," purrs Crisis as she moves down the halls towards scientist sleeping quarters.

Crisis moves slowly down the hallways of the base. Crisis' metallic feet tap the tiled floor with each step, sound echoes down the halls, alerting anyone nearby to her presence if they are paying attention.

*"Mistress Crisis, though I loop the security cameras whenever you enter an area, I am detecting a group of two guards patrolling the area, its best to be careful,"* says AI.

"Thank you AI," Crisis responds internally as she stops at a corner and peers around it to see the guards moving down the hallway, armed and ready for action.

Crisis pulls back as she hears one of them speak.

"Hey, I thought I saw something over there." The raptor guard walks down towards Crisis' position, his footsteps tap against the ground as he moves closer. Crisis remains perfectly still as she keeps herself pressed up against the wall.

"You always think you see something or hear something," says one of the other guards.

"This place is just getting to you, with all the experiments and research being done here, I can't blame you," says the third guard.

"Doesn't help this place is designed to echo noises so we could hear any machines moving down the hallways," says the second guard.

"Yeah but it causes people like him to hear things that aren't there."

"Hey I swear this time I did hear something," says the raptor guard s he moves to Crisis' corner. Crisis can see the raptor's snout tip and gun pointing around the corner, another half a step and he will be able to see Crisis standing there.

"You always say that, and we always stop to check it out, get behind on our patrol and commander Koma chews us out for not being diligent enough. I don't know about you, but I don't want to get my tail chewed out again by him," says the second guard.

"But..."

"But nothing, we're both tired of chasing your fantasy enemies. Do you think a machine could get this far into the base, by passing the border patrols, the heavily guarded entrances, and the robotic sensors?" asks the first guard.

"Yeah... I guess you're right," says the third guard as he turns around and walks back to his companions. Crisis can see his tail flick around as he moves away. Crisis mentally sighs in relief as she waits for the halls to become quite once again.

Crisis moves once again, her one benefit is there are only a few guards keeping watch this far deep in the base. This allowed her to reach the scientists sleeping wing, where every scientist in the base slept.

*“This is too perfect, I can get all of the scientists in one fell swoop,”* thinks Crisis as she moves to the first door, the red light signaling the door is locked, quickly turns green as AI hacks the door’s security.

The military base provides moderately nice comforts for the hard working scientists. Crisis sees a silver white scaled female raptor asleep in her red sleeping gown on the far side of the room.

Crisis wastes no time as she moves towards the raptor. Her systems recognizing it’s the scientist named Arissa. Her blue eyes glow in the dark as Crisis stops twice on her approach to Arissa due to the raptor tossing and turning in her sleep.

Crisis moves over Arissa positioning herself right over her neck, her eyes flickering from blue, to green, to red for brief moments as she bites down on the raptor’s neck, painlessly Crisis injects Arissa with her nanites that quickly flood her body.

Arissa’s mind explodes with new activity, her eye lids fluttering as the nanites make their way to her brain. A few neurons turned into nanites factories to create and produce more nanites to infect and corrupt the rest of Arissa’s organic mind.

Arissa’s dream start to change, moving away from being home with her family, the war over, to her family turning into wonderful machines and that she too would make a lovely white silver blue metal machine. Arissa’s dream is filled with visions of Croc’s defeat at the hands of Crisis, who she is ever loyal for stopping the evil machine.

Arissa’s eyes shoot open and despite suddenly being awake, her eyes had a soft haze to them. Crisis pulls away as her eyes revert to their blue color. Crisis grins happily as she asks Arissa, “Who are you?”

“My name is Arissa Qra, secondary programmer of the Crisis project,” Arissa replies in a monotone voice.

“Who do you serve?” asks Crisis.

“I serve Mistress Crisis,” she responds.

“Excellent, you shall are going to help me convert everyone else here by being my ‘escort. If anyone asks I am a prototype machine, recently built to test out Croc’s technology, and that you had this new idea you wanted to test out so that’s why you can’t sleep and have my activated,” says Crisis as she looks over her before saying, “And be convincing that I am totally harmless and that I am just a shell of a machine with minimal mental and physical functions.”

“Yes mistress,” replies Arissa.

“Excellent, now get dressed we have a lot of work to do. I like to get al the other scientists quickly, and have the entire base infected with my nanites so I can start building my robotic army to fight Croc.”

“Yes mistress,” replies Arissa as her voice starts to regain emotion to it. Arissa quickly gets her ID, name badge and her scientist’s uniform on.

“Now I want you to show a mix of being tired and excited. Something suiting for the sudden burst of progress you’ve made for the Crisis project,” Commands Crisis.

“Yes mistress,” says Arissa as her facial expression changes to fit the situation.

“Excellent,” says Crisis with a fiendish smile, the two soon heading out of Arissa’s room and into the next. Crisis motions Arissa to wait outside as she goes in. Inside Crisis sees a blue scaled raptor wearing a silky smooth night gown. She remains half under her covers as she sleeps on her back, head off to the side.

Crisis eyes glow brightly as she moves towards the blue scaled raptor with silver stripes. Crisis analyzes the raptor, quickly discerning that this one is Shasi. As Crisis gets closer, she hears a sudden tap behind her. Crisis turns around to check what the noise is, only to inadvertently hit and knock of a picture frame of Shasi’s family, the shattering of glass startles Shasi awake.

“Huh? Hmm? What was that noi...se,” moans Shasi as she stretches and sits up her eyes catching the glow of Crisis’ eyes. Shasi’s heart races as she sees the robotic raptor standing before her. Her mouth opens as she takes a deep breath about to let out a shrilling shriek of terror.

Crisis moves quickly as Shasi only mages to let out the shriek for a brief moment before Crisis raptors her claws around Shasi’s muzzle, muffling Shasi’s screams that continue despite Crisis holding her mouth shut.

Shasi’s hot breath blows against Crisis’ metallic frame. Shasi struggles desperately against Crisis’ strength as she claws at her metallic body, but Crisis is unfazed by the attack. Crisis’ tail wraps around Shasi’s body, as Crisis’ free hand grabs one of Shasi’s hands and then the other. Shasi looks at Crisis with pleading scared eyes as she is pinned against her bed.

The bed creaks under the weight of the two raptors, Crisis’ bust pressing up against Shasi’ own. Shasi continues to struggle against her stronger foe. Her tail thrashes about as she tries to hit anything, knock anything over to make more noise in a vain attempt to get someone to notice and help her.

Crisis wastes no more time as she uses her sickle claws on her feet to give small quick cuts along the white raptor’s legs, which feel like needle pin pricks to Shasi as she is injected with Crisis’ nanites. The nanites travel quickly through Shasi’s blood stream, the process only quickening due to her own panic state.

Steadily as the new thoughts begin to fill Shasi’s mind, her struggle grows weaker and weaker till it stops completely. Crisis holds onto Shasi for a brief moment longer before pulling off of her, “Who are you? And who do you serve?”

“My name is Shasi Vasrra; I am a programmer of the Crisis project. I live to serve you my Mistress,” replies Shasi.

“Good, good. You shall be my second escort, for two scientists will be far less suspicious than one. Now get dressed” commands Crisis as she explains her current situation to Shasi.

A few moments later Crisis and Shasi come out of the room to meet up with Arissa who was quietly looking down the halls as a look out, but before they get any farther, AI informs Crisis that one of the three raptor guards she almost ran into earlier are on their way.

“Alright girls you know what to do,” says Crisis as she explained the situation to them.

“Yes Mistress,” the two say in unison.

A moment later a green raptor turns the corner, his weapon pulled up and drawn to Crisis, “I fucking knew there was something going on!” exclaims the raptor as he takes aim at Crisis. Crisis stands still as she shows no reaction to the raptor drawing his weapon to her.

“Wait don’t shoot!” yells Shasi as she stands in front of the raptor soldier.

“What are you doing? Get out of the way, one of Croc’s soldiers infiltrated the base.... They’ve brainwashed you, haven’t they! Those fiends!” he exclaims.

“No, no, no, nothing like that. This is one of our creations that we made to test out Croc’s technology. Shasi and I couldn’t sleep so we went out and did some extra work and decided to give this girl a little test drive,” explains Arissa.

“What? A test drive? What are you two crack pot scientists talking about,” he asks as he keeps his gun drawn at Crisis.

“We currently not allowed to go full forward on creating Crisis, but we were worried about the physical characteristics of our design so we built the body with the most limited of programming to test how she’d act in real world situations. Later we were going to test out weapons fire, and other combat necessities to see how her body would hold up,” explains Shasi.

“Minimal programming? What does that mean,” the soldier asks.

“Means she doesn’t have much intelligence,” replies Arissa.

“So what, its mindless?”

“Sort of. She has no self thought of her own. She can only react to situations and commands in the most basic of ways, here let me show you. Crisis turn completely once,” says Arissa.

“As you command,” replies Crisis in a monotone voice as she does one 360 spin.

“See?”

“Oh wow... can I try?” he asks as he slowly lowers his gun.

“Knock your self out,” says Shasi with a smile.

“Hmm...” says the soldier as he clears his throat. “Crisis I order you to jump.” He says in his most commanding tone of voice. The raptor soldier puffs out his chest, trying to act high and mighty.

“As you wish,” Crisis replies as she jumps up once over a foot and a half in height with ease. Crisis body lands down with a heavy metallic thud.

“Best not to do that one again, don’t want to wake everyone up now,” comments Arissa.

“Ah right sorry,” says the raptor as he rubs the back of his head.

“It’s okay.”

“Mind if I touch it? I never got close to any robot before,” he asks.

“Sure go right ahead,” says Shasi.

“Awesome, I take back all those bad things I’ve ever said about you scientists,” he says as he moves forward touching Crisis first with his claw tip, as Crisis body dings against the claw taps.

“This is so cool,” he says as he moves closer his gun now completely aimed away from Crisis, the soldier flicking the safety back on as he gets up in Crisis’ face, “She is pretty mindless isn’t she?”

“Very, and completely harmless,” says Arissa as the raptor soldier turns his head and attention to her.

Crisis strikes at this moment with snake like strike. Crisis grabs the raptor's gun, keeping his hand away from the safety and the trigger while she injects the raptor with her nanites. The raptor struggles for a few brief moments till his mind is reconfigured like the other two.

"How may I serve you Mistress?" he asks in a monotone voice.

"Continue your rounds, pretend nothing has happened, assist me as I call for you, and if you do a good job at keeping your two other friends on patrol busy while I am away, I may forget about how you treated me and not turn you into a robotic maid, made only to polish my body and those of my other servants," commands Crisis.

"Yes mistress I live to obey," says the soldier as he walks off.

"Excellent work my lovely girls. Now let's continue, we've wasted enough time as it is," says Crisis.

"Thank you Mistress," the two girls reply as they head off to their next victims. One by one the scientists fall to Crisis, each new convert is given specific instructions as to what to do when the morning comes. Crisis keeps four scientists with her as cover, to help ward off anymore guards that may approach her.

"*Only a few more to go,*" thinks Crisis as she reaches the next room, the door already unlocked as Crisis quickly moves in to find the room empty, "*Which scientist resides in this room?*" Crisis asks to AI.

"*Head programmer and designer Karrie Rasshka, she has had more influence on your programming and design than anyone else.*"

"*And where is she?*"

"*She's gone.*"

"*Gone? What do you mean gone?*"

"*She is nowhere that I can detect.*"

"*I guess we'll have to find her when I can.*"

"*According to my records, she was the most adamant about the project, and most likely would have joined you freely.*"

"*Interesting notion, I might just have let her, out of goodness of my heart,*" thinks Crisis as she leaves the room.

"*Only one other scientist remains, a male scientist by the name of Joshua Jarsshra,*" says the AI.

"*Good, he shall be next,*" remarks Crisis as she makes her way over to his room. Crisis walks into the room to a surprising sight. The lights are on and there is Joshua lying in his bed with a book open as he does some late night reading.

"What in the blazes? How did you get authorization to be created? I thought Commander Koma denied Karrie's last attempt to move forward with the project," says Joshua as he glances down at his book, flipping another page.

"*Unexpected reaction from this one,*" thinks Crisis as she moves forward.

"Or is this kind of joke? Karrie very funny, if its about that comment, I said I was sorry, you can come out now, no need to have a shell to pop out and spook me," says Joshua.

"*Hmm, his reaction indicates that Karrie is still nearby, interesting,*" thinks Crisis as she says, "I can assure you I am no shell, I'm the real thing," states Crisis as she moves closer to Joshua who puts his book down.

“Oh my god... Karrie went through with it didn't she? Where's Karrie? She's hiding behind the door chuckling isn't she? All giddy that you're made huh? That or she tricked me again,” grumbles Joshua.

“Karrie is nowhere to be found... at least for right now. Pity too, I wanted to thank her for all her hard work like I did to the other scientists, and now I am here to thank you for your work,” Crisis gives a grin as her eyes flicker green.

“Thank me how?” inquires Joshua as he watches Crisis as she approaches.

“I shouldn't kiss and tell, but it won't matter in a moment anyway. I'm going to make you into my obedient minion, then turn you into a lovely machine like myself to help me fight Croc. Your organic weaknesses need to be improved in order for us to defeat him. Fear not, you'll love serving me.”

*“This is definitely not what we've programmed into Crisis... unless... Karrie you didn't... I saw your plan, but you didn't want to tell anyone so I kept it to myself that I knew. Why Karrie... why? You weren't alone... and you're still not,”* thinks Joshua as Crisis quickly pounces on Joshua pinning him to the bed as Joshua puts up little struggle.

“Wait, wait, wait! May I make two final requests?” asks Joshua as Crisis stops an inch away from Joshua's neck to make the bite.

“Final requests?”

“Yeah... you have me pinned, I clearly can't fight against you. You're too powerful for me, but just hear me out, what's the harm in it?”

“I see, go ahead out with them. I'll decide if I'll grant them depending on what they are.”

“First request, can you remove your knee from my gut, it really hurts and makes it hard to breath.”

“Alright, I forget how fragile you organics can be,” says Crisis as she moves her knee to the other side of Joshua's body so Crisis' body now straddles Joshua's.

“Thanks, you're heavier than you look... I mean... gah sorry, that's not what I mean,” groans Joshua.

“What is your second request?” Crisis asks with a sigh.

Joshua looks up at Crisis, into her blue eyes as he takes a deep breath, “Let me join you out of my own free will. I'll pledge my allegiance to you, and support you in everyway that I can. To help you achieve your goals, whatever they may be, and to be allowed to remain as myself till the day is fit that I feel I should become a wonderful machine like yourself,” states Joshua.

Crisis looks at Joshua in surprise, she slides herself off of Joshua's body as she stands there tilting her head as she flicks her tail behind her, “Why do you want to serve me freely.”

“I've put my heart and soul into the Crisis project. The goal of our people and the people's of this planet is to defeat Croc no matter the cost. Our goals are one in the same, and you may need an free willed organic to serve you, help expand your options.”

“I do like my options, but this doesn't mean I can trust you,” says Crisis as she looks over Joshua.

“I know you have no reason to, but I'll earn it through hard work and determination,” replies Joshua.

*“AI is there anyway out of this room beside the door behind me?”* asks Crisis as she stands there looking at Joshua, to Joshua she appears to be in deep thought considering his request. Joshua nervously looks over at Crisis as she thinks.

*“No mistress there is not.”*

*“Is there anyway for him to communicate from this room to others to warn them of my plans?”*

*“No mistress.”*

*“As I think over your proposal I shall keep you locked in this room,”*

*“I appreciate you considering my request Mistress Crisis,”* says Joshua.

*“Thank me not till I’ve made my decision,”* Crisis replies as she turns around and walks out of the door, *“AI report to me if he does anything suspicious.”*

*“Of course Mistress Crisis,”* replies AI.

*“You two keep guard on the door,”* says Crisis as she closes the door behind her, two of the scientists with her nod and say, *“Yes Mistress Crisis.”*

Joshua sighs in relief as the door closes behind him, *“Karrie…”* he mumbles as he looks down at his book which now had deep gash marks in the cover from his claws, *“I’ll help you… so I can get you back.”*

*“It is unwise to let any who designed you remain free,”* says the AI as Crisis moves down the hall.

*“Most likely, and in the end I’ll probably give him a healthy dose of my nanites just to be sure, but for now I’ll mull over the idea as right now I have more pressing matters, such as taking over this base”* says Crisis as her eyes flicker green for a moment while she heads down to his room in another part of the base.

## Chapter 3 Setting up the Facade

Crisis releases another guard from her infectious bite as he salutes and walk off. Crisis looks over at the first guard she converted and says, “Thank you for bringing him and the others to me.”

“It was my pleasure Mistress. That should be the last one on duty for this part of the base,” states the guard.

“Excellent, and with the commander’s sleeping quarters just up ahead, there is little to stop me from putting my plans into motion,” she states as she moves down the hall.

Crisis stealthily moves into the commander Koma’s sleeping quarters, the room is nearly twice as large as any that she has been in before, with soft red carpeting rather nice looking furniture, with a separate dining, and plenty of other little luxuries that a commander of a secret military base deserves. The place is extremely neat and well organized, expecting of a strict military type. It doesn’t take long for Crisis to make her way to Koma’s bedroom.

Crisis’ eyes glow in the dark room as she eyes the commander from across the room. The soft carpeting quiet Crisis’ footsteps which makes it easy for her to approach the general without being detected.

“*Once I have you I can put my plans into motion,*” thinks Crisis as she moves over the Koma, her mouth opens to reveal her nanite tipped fangs, ready to flood the commander’s mind with her mind controlling nanites. Just as she is about to infect Koma, Crisis hears a click, and in that instant Crisis jumps back and to the side as a gunshot rings out, the sound of the bullet wising by Crisis just barely missing her as the bullet goes into the nearby all.

“A smart man always sleeps with his gun,” says Koma as he sits up pointing his gun in the direction of Crisis. “It was only a matter of time till that hunk of junk Croc would find and infiltrate this facility; I’m surprised it’s taken him this long. Lights on,” says Koma as the lights flicker on and Koma takes better aim at Crisis’ head.

“I don’t work for Croc, he’s my enemy,” Crisis replies as she notices that Koma is squinting as his eyes are adjusting to the lights. Crisis takes her chance, activating her jumper boosts, which are part of her lower legs; the extra push allows Crisis to make a lightning quick strike towards Koma and his gun. Crisis rushes to knock the gun out of Koma’s hands, but not before he manages to let out another shot. Koma’s gun flies across the room landing far away from the two with a heavy thud.

“What the... wait I know what you are, who created you! You are not ready, and this is why! I command you to stop this immediately!” commands Koma as Crisis pins him to the bed, both of his hands are held tightly over his head.

“I created myself, and I’m more than ready to defeat Croc by any means necessary.”

“Release me you big green piece of scrap metal!” he growls.

“Sorry I don’t take orders for weak and pitiful organics like you,” responds Crisis as she moves in to infect the general with her bite.

“There’s no way you’re going to bite me!” yells Koma as he manages to place his feet onto Crisis’ chest and kick her away from him. Crisis body flies back hitting a nearby wall with a heavy thud, leaving a notable dent in the wall, but not before dragging Koma off of his bed due



to her tight grip around his wrists, "Where are my guards, they should be here by now," growls Koma.

"They're right outside awaiting my orders like good obedient soldiers that they are," responds Crisis with a grin as she pulls herself back to her feet.

"Damn you, how dare you do that to my men, you're no worse than that metallic fiend Croc," he growls.

"How else are you going to beat him? By being all nice, kind and asking politely please leave us alone we mean you no harm?" Crisis sarcastically replies. "Don't worry General you'll understand what I mean soon enough. My nanites are quite affective," says Crisis with a sly grin.

"What are you talk..." asks Koma as he trails off as he just now notices the scratch along his belly scales, and his remembrance that Crisis's sickle claws also can inject nanites into her victims, "No... I must fight this!" growls Koma as he puts his hands on his head. He shakes his head and closes his eyes. Koma can feel to his horror his mind changing before his mental eye. His thoughts slowly being corrupted as he knew deep down this was wrong but it was a battle he was quickly losing.

"Three... two... one," counts Crisis as she stands there patently.

"What are your orders Mistress Crisis?"

"That's a good boy, now here's what I want you to do for tomorrow to bring this entire base under my control..." says Crisis with an evil smirk.

Twelve hours since then have passed. The base is full of activity as a long line of raptors stemming from the base's infirmary. The sound of one of Crisis' mind controlled doctor's yelling, "Next!", is heard as a light green female raptor walks into the room with a not too pleased look on her face.

"Bloody waste of our time, we are at war and Commander Koma wants us to go through a base wide physical check up? Absurd" she says with a growl.

"I'm sorry Miss but Commander Koma felt it's a good idea to get everyone's record up to date and make sure everyone has taken their vaccination shots. Last thing he wants is everyone to get sick and slow down our work," says the doctor as he adjusts his white uniform, as has the female raptor take a seat on the nearby examination table.

"Yeah, yeah, but does he have to have the entire base lined up for this?" she asks with a growl.

"It is what the commander wants, we don't question his orders. This isn't fun for me either, I've started this early this morning and I'll be doing this all day. The faster we do this, the sooner we can get this done,"

"Sorry I didn't mean any ill will against you," she replies with a sigh.

"It's alright, let me just do a quick check over you," says the doctor as he does as standard physical examination. "All that looks in order, now let me check if you are up to date on your vaccinations," he says as he thumbs through his papers, "hmm I see there's one you need to take, luckily we have that one in stock."

"Really? I swore I got them all done before being transferred here."

"Ah you know there's always one that slips through the cracks, good thing we caught it now rather than later."

“Yeah,” she replies as the doctor prepares the shot of a silver colored liquid and quickly injects it into her. “Ah you know this isn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be, by the way what’s this shot for anyway?” she asks as the doctor finishes.

“Well you see...” he says trialing off looking at the raptor’s expression before saying, “It’s for that pesky free will of yours, it’s infected the whole base, and might damage Mistress Crisis’ plans to defeat Croc. You do understand don’t you? That you’re needed to give up your will to save everyone else.”

“I completely understand, I shall serve Mistress Crisis faithfully,” she purrs.

“Excellent now you may return to your post.”

“Of course,” she replies leaving out of the back as the doctor yells “Next!” once again.

At the same time deeper within the base back at the robotisizer stands Crisis amongst several roboticized scientists, dressed in their white lab coats.

“Are you ready Koma to become a glorious machine?” asks Crisis as Koma stands in the roboticizer.

“Of course mistress Crisis it will be my honor,” he replies.

“Excellent, start the process Joshua,” she commands.

“Yes Mistress,” replies Joshua as he’s the only organic scientist in the room. Joshua starts up the sequence like he’s done dozens of times before. The roboticization energy flows over Koma as his body is transformed into a glorious machine. His black scales turning into black segmented metal, similar to that of Crisis, but their body design is closer to their organic nature with the sickle claw on the inner most toe. The black metal raptor with glowing blue eyes smiles at Crisis once the process is complete.

“Unit C-0012 reporting for duty,” he replies.

“Good, very good, you shall make a good butler to serve my needs,” says Crisis.

“Excuse me Mistress but can I ask a question?” asks Joshua.

*“I told you it’s not safe to keep him, he’s already asking questions, it’ll start like this but it’ll only get worse,”* says the AI into Crisis’ head.

*“I know the risks, and I have precautions in place just incase he tries to turn against me. My databanks tell me Croc has a few willing organic servants, it doesn’t hurt to have a few of my own,”* she replies to AI internally before replying to Joshua, “Yes Joshua what is it?”

“I see why you are robotisizing all those who worked on you or could have commanded you, which I shall say thank you for giving me the choice to join your ranks when ready, but why are you calling the female’s maids and the male’s butlers? I don’t see the strategic significance of it.”

“One, I want to, and two I have needs of my own, and it be far better when my R&D team isn’t working on their job is to fulfill those needs of mine, so I can put more focus on the real problem, defeating Croc,.” Crisis explains.

“Yes Mistress.”

“And don’t think they are all for me, I’m leaving my first two converts to serve your organic needs so you can spend more time serving me.”

“Ah yes, Arissa and Shasi, can I call them that instead of Unit C-0001 and Unit C-0002?” he asks as the two named machines appear before Joshua.

“You called sir?” asks Arissa, her body a silver metallic blue, her glowing blue eyes show a calm nature as she has black tiger stripes down and along her back, which is completely covered by her lab coat.

“What do you need?” asks Shasi, as the cobalt blue with silver stripped raptor stands ready to serve Joshua in her own lab coat as her eyes give a soft blue glow.

“You may, or you can call them Unit 1 and Unit 2, I prefer the latter but they’ll recognize their former names just the same.”

“Really?” asks Joshua.

“All of their memories are intact, but now they have undying loyalty to serve my needs and purposes to defeat Croc.”

“No need to robotize me for that Mistress I already give that to you.”

“Perhaps, I’m still debating.”

“Of course Mistress and that’s why I don’t mind this collar you placed around my neck,” he remarks as the blue metallic collar is just barely visible behind his shirt collar.

“You don’t think I wouldn’t put a little insurance in case you turn on me? If you do try, that collar will inject you with my nanites and you will never disobey me again.”

“Of course Mistress, and your idea to infect the entire base is working well, within a few hours we’ll... you’ll have everyone under your control.”

“Wonderful, and once that is done we’ll start to mass robotize seventy percent of the base and then begin to set up the base as if Croc attacked and converted most of the soldiers. You and a small group will have activated me early in order to help push back the attack and we succeeded, with the help a few robotized volunteers and robotized soldiers I took back from Croc’s control. That way they’ll be more willing to trust me and with that trust I can start building an army to defeat Croc and his minions,” says Crisis with a chuckle as her eyes flicker between red and blue for brief moments.

Elsewhere in the country of Dromaeosa in a bombed out city that only weeks ago fell under Croc’s control. The city and its surrounding suburbs used to be a sprawling city of over three million organic inhabitants, but now it’s filled with a few hundred thousand robotic Croc minions, busily searching and hunting down any survivors that could still be hiding in the city.

The job is difficult amongst the rubble; every building shows signs of the fierce fighting that took place over the past few months. The battle was costly not only for Dromaeosa but for Croc’s forces too. Countless of Croc’s minions gave their lives, and countless more of his machines were destroyed in the fighting as their parts are strewn across the battlefield.

A line of recently captured organics, their minds already infected by Croc’s nanites are now ‘willingly’ walking towards the robotizer that Croc has recently set up within the city. Several of his robotic minions guard these prisoners while Croc himself stands off to the side, inspecting his handiwork.

A largely green robot with a long green segmented tail gently sways behind him; the red glowing pupils in his eyes are the only color that can be seen against the black color of his eyes. His smooth head has a large irregular four sided polygon that at the very top points to the tip, his black metallic skin in a thin strip around his waist looks much like a belt has a red insignia that matches the shape of this head piece. In the lower half of the head piece is an oval shaped red hypnotic gem.

His finely crafted green metal chest has a red oval piece in the center. His shoulders are green spheres with circles on top, the shoulders connect to his powerful metallic arms which are black on the upper half and green on the lower connect to black hands with silver finger tips which are just idly tapping against his green thighs.

His knees have thin black strips around them with red circular metal symbol that matches his chest, are on the top of his knees. The rest of his body is from the knees down are green except the soles and front half of his feet which are a reflective black. A few of his organic minions that he keeps around are dressed in green, black, and red uniforms that mimic Croc's own metallic body design.

In a nearby bombed out high rise building, where the top third of the building is completely destroyed and massive holes within the structure makes one wonder how it is still standing lies a brown scaled raptor camouflaged under rubble. The female raptor is has a very strong and powerful physique. Against her body holds onto a massive sniper rifle that would be almost comical at the size in any other situation.

She remains quite as she peers through her gun sights as she takes aim at the back of Croc's head. Her breath slows as she puts pressure on the trigger, holding back any and all excitement of how wonderful of an opportunity she has to take out this metallic monster.

The gunshot echoes through the buildings as the bullet travels towards croc, but just as it's about to reach it's target one of Croc's minions walks into the path of the bullet which quickly penetrates its head, the bullet then explodes completely destroying the drone's head in a ball of fire. The explosion knocks back Croc as he yells.

"Capture that sniper! I want them alive!"

"Fuck, I was so close," she growls as she quickly gets out from underneath the rubble, her body long sniper rifle is effortlessly strapped to her back as she attempts to relocate.. Hoards of Croc's minions storm building moving up each floor as they spread out to quickly search for assassin that tried to take out their great leader. The brown raptor in her military uniform moves quickly through each room, burned papers fly about as the wind blows, the building rocks as the building strains to remain upright. The sniper has her pistol out as she's prepared to defend herself against anyone that would try to capture her.

The sound of the heavy robotic foot steps rumbles through the building getting closer and closer.

"Got you!" exclaims one of Croc's minions, but his success would lead to his untimely end as the raptor greets the Croc's robotic fox minion with a quick bullet to the head.

"Yes you got it," she chuckles as she continues to move. More of Croc's troops rush to her position that was given away by the gunfire. She moves through the building as Croc's minions corner her in a room that is half bombed out. A large gap is between her and more of the building.

"Damn it," she growls as she turns around to see three robotic minions coming after her and after a quick dispensing the ammo in her pistol four more robotic minions come up to replace them. The raptor quickly looks across at the risky jump across a massive gap with little assurance she'd make the jump.

Without another second of hesitation she jumps for it, and for a brief second she thought she has bought herself some time before one for Croc's flying drones catches her in mid air. The

raptor struggling viciously as she tries to break free of the drone's grip, not caring the fall would mean her own end. She even manages to turn herself briefly upside down as she kicks the machine in the face with her foot, but that only leads to the raptor growling in frustration and pain.

As she realizes the futility of her situation, her ammo spent from her pistol and her arms unable to reach her sniper rifle, she reaches into her jacket and pulls out a pressure trigger which snaps free the moment she pulls it out from her vest.

The device triggers a set of explosives she has set in the high rise building, which takes out the last few key supports of the building, causing it to collapse upon itself, crushing all those inside the building. Dust flies up and around the area, incasing the raptor and her captor in dust, but she alas is still unable to break free as she is brought before Croc, her arms bound and held tightly behind her back, and away from her sniper rifle.

"You're just full of little surprises aren't you?" asks Croc his red eyes glowing through the dust while the raptor coughs and gasps for air his voice smooth, yet totally robotic devoid of anything organic, but there is a sense of emotion in his voice. "You think you could have taken me down with just a single bullet, how naïve you organics are," he continues on as he quickly moves his hand inside of the raptor's mouth, before pulling it out again, revealing a small capsule the raptor had hidden in her mouth. "Of course I know many of your tricks and I'm not going to let you use that one and get the last laugh."

"You're a monster," she says in between a few coughs, as the air starts to clear up, revealing the two more clearly.

"I'm no monster. I am simply bringing peace and harmony in the universe by making everyone my happy and obedient robotic slaves. You give up your free will in return for stability, eternal life and health, and happiness in servitude to me, you can't beat that I assure you."

"I rather die than serve you," she growls.

"That's what they all say... say have we met before? You look familiar."

"Like I'll tell you," she growls.

"You will soon enough, once you see things my way," says Croc as he opens the raptor's coat to reveal several sets of six, thirty caliber rounds strapped to the raptor's body. "My, my, what large bullets you have there. From what I could tell despite their size they can only penetrate into a single robot, but then it explodes destroying it from the inside out. Impressive, it certainly could have done some damage if it hit me," he replies.

"You may have stopped me but we will in the end stop you," says the raptor as Croc gives out a hearty laugh.

"Do you know how many organics have said to me? Thousands and each and every one of them who would have 'stopped me' now faithfully serve me, and are quiet happy about it too. You organics will never be able to stop me."

"Not with what we have in store for you,," she growls.

"Oh? And what could this be?" he asks as he brings his face towards the raptor.

"Like I'll tell you!" she growls spitting into his metallic face.

"I think you will," says Croc as he wipes his face clean while the gem on his forehead begins to glow.

“I won’t give into your evil tricks!” she growls as she struggles not to look into the gem, but Croc easily holds her head and keeps her eyes set right onto the gem, the raptor’s struggling steadily fades as time passes. The female raptor’s eyes become fixated on the gem. Her eyes soon gain a glazed soft relaxed look to them.

“Now tell me what’s this thing that is going to stop me is?” he asks.

“I’ve only heard rumors that we are creating something big and strong enough to stop you,” replies the raptor in a hypnotic monotone voice.

“Tell me what you have heard. I have noticed you organics have been stealing my equipment.”

“I’ve only heard rumors of creating a super robot to destroy you, and or creating a large robotic army to fight yours.”

“Interesting, anything else you can tell me about this?”

“I’ve heard the name Project Crisis a few times as part of the rumor but nothing more, but I hear it will save us and destroy you master Croc.”

“I see, I won’t robotize you just yet, you’re more valuable to me as an organic than as a machine for now, but let’s make sure you completely obey me,” says Croc as he releases a gas from his finger tips, the raptor breathing in the gas, as nanites flood her body, and flooding her mind, erasing any will to resist Croc’s commands. “You will continue to follow your country’s orders and report back anything that will be a value of my plans; I want to know more about this project Crisis.”

“Yes Master Croc,” says the female raptor as she is released, giving the green robot a salute.

“Tell me what’s your name?” asks Croc.

“Sasha Shrilla.”

“I expect big things from you Sasha, now go,” he says as the raptor nods and disappears back into the rubble.

“8402,” says Croc as a random robotized drone from his exploits from his home planet.

“Yes sir?” she asks.

“Bring me Ko I need her for a mission.”

“Yes sir Master Croc,” says the drone as she walks off.

“*I wonder what futile plan these organics are up to now,*” thinks Croc as he resumes his inspection.

## Chapter 4 Lets Welcome Crisis

Everything is falling into place for Crisis now that she managed to ‘inoculate’ every soldier that works in and around the base. Each soldier now completely obedient to Crisis’ will. The base now runs like a well-oiled machine, every soldier, scientist, following Crisis’ commands without hesitation or thoughts to the contrary. The only person in the base who could do so freely is Joshua, but even he doesn’t say much against any of Crisis’ plans, he for the moment follows along without question.

The base was busy with setting up the façade of the battle that happened between the base’s forces and Croc’s military. Areas were being destroyed while captured Croc weaponry was used to simulate gunfire that would have happened throughout the base.

“Set up another set of barricades here. I want it to look like that Croc’s forces overran several defensive points and that this was the last line of defense and that my activation was a necessary last ditch effort to stem the tide. I want my activation to look like a good thing to the other organic nations,” commands Crisis as her eyes flicker green for a brief moment.

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” says a group of soldiers as they respond in unison as they give Crisis a salute before they drag tables and anything they can find nearby to toss together a barricade to make it look like it was a rush job under emergency conditions.

“To be honest, I didn’t think this plan would work, but now that I see it in action, this might actually work Crisis,” says Joshua as he follows Crisis with a clipboard in his claws.

“Of course it will work, as much as I know about Croc, I know more about the nations of this world, and more so about our nation. They need to see me as something positive, working for them from the very moment they know of me or their distrust of machines will lead to my own demise before I can even get the chance to destroy Croc.”

“Aye Miss Crisis, why I felt this plan wouldn’t work at first and those on the bring like our nation will be more willing to accept any help we can get, but being a machine would also be difficult. The more secure nations would be far less willing, many refuse to admit that this war is nothing but a façade set up by our nation to gain power,” explains Joshua.

“I have thought about that, and as troubling as it is, I am hoping I won’t need their help, at least right away. For now I need to establish myself, build myself an army to fight Croc’s. He has an entire world out there somewhere where he can draw on fresh troops to invade our world, my first goal is survival and building up my forces,” says Crisis as the two continue to walk down the hallway heading towards the roboticization lab as Arissa walks by as she holds assortment of pieces of destroyed Croc troops that was held in storage.

“Morning Mistress,” says Arissa as the silver metallic blue black stripped raptorian robot stops before Crisis and gives her a bow as she barely manages to hold onto the junk in her claws.

“Morning zero, zero, zero, one,” says Crisis.

“Morning Arissa,” says Joshua.

“Where would you like these?” asks Arissa as she holds up the robot parts.

“Set them up down this hallway as a failed attack on this barricade, I want to make it look like Croc’s troops were getting close when I was activated.”

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” she replies, her eyes give off a soft blue glow, her face cracks a smile as she gets to work.

“Do you have to just leave her as a number?” asks Joshua.

“You have a problem with it?” asks Crisis.

“Just seems so un-unique. It’s very impersonal by turning someone into a number.”

“Everyone gets their own number that is unique.”

“Why start with three zeros and then one?” asks Joshua.

“Croc refers to his creations by their last four digits of their serial number; I’m just doing the same.”

“You don’t have to be too like the guy... thing... whatever you know. Not that I think you’re a thing, I think you’re a very wonderful well crafted machine.”

“Why thank you, I do appreciate the compliment,” says Crisis as she runs her cool silver hand along Joshua’s snout as he shivers and smiles.

“Welcome, I do mean it.”

“I know, I’m able to discern from your voice patterns if you are lying to me.”

“I didn’t know you could do that.”

“Karrie programmed that particular ability.”

“Huh, figured she would.”

“Why is that?” asks Crisis.

“She had a fear of people lying to her; she could never take a compliment she was always paranoid that the person was just lying to her. You have no idea of the amount of research she put into how to figure out if someone was lying to her or not. She was never really good at it, but she placed all that knowledge into you.”

“When I catch her I’ll have to thank her,” says Crisis.

“Aye, I can honestly say she gave more to your creation than anyone else. She was really obsessed with the project, you can say she gave herself for the project,” says Joshua.

“Good to know I’d hate to think I was just some after thought to you organics,” she remarks.

“Never in my mind, I always had you in the forefront of my mind.”

“I’m sure. Though the ability to discern who is truthful or not will be useful to try to capture any of Croc’s minions that tries to lie their way into my inner circle. I can’t have a spy so close to me; it would ruin all my plans.”

“Though would a Croc minion believe he or she is telling the truth?”

“I will try to improve my ability and do more research.”

“Self improvement, very good Miss Crisis.”

“Croc constantly improves himself to become better and more affective in his programming, I will have to do the same even faster in order to defeat him, he’s had untold amount of time to improve, I have to catch up and quickly.”

“Like what Crisis?”

“Knowledge of the technology, I am built based on his technology and off of his own design, and he’s probably been around for decades while I’ve been around for fifteen days and three hours, there is much I need to know.”

“Don’t you know your own design and blueprints?” asks Joshua.



“I do, I know what I can do, and can’t do in theory, not in practice,” says Crisis as they enter the roboticization lab.

“Welcome back Mistress Crisis, hello Joshua, are you well Joshua your heart rate seems to be higher than normal,” says Ai.

“I’m good, you just surprised me,” says Joshua.

“Oh silly organic,” chuckles Crisis as the lab is a hum with activity with the formerly organic members of Crisis’ creation team. All of them turned into female robotic versions of themselves, made out of blues, greens, reds, oranges, silver and black metals, their eyes glowing blue as they are laser like focus on their task that Crisis has ordered them to work on.

“Tell me Crisis I do have a question.”

“Yes Joshua?”

“Why did you turn all the male scientists female?”

“Took you a while to ask didn’t you?”

“Took me a while to feel comfortable to do so, I didn’t want to question you in the wrong way and become one of your robotic minions just yet.”

“I’d like some of my close minions to look cute, and females just look so much better, don’t you think?” asks Crisis.

“Yeah... females are cute and sexy, but I just don’t get it, where is this coming from? I know it’s nothing we put into your programming. It’s something I am curious on to help you.”

“Are you now? Maybe you like to become one to get a better vantage point.”

“No, no, I’m good on that. But isn’t it good to have someone to question these things? To help give you another perspective?” asks Joshua.

“True... and to let you know those who created me get special treatment, and are kept close to me, and Croc is known for changing the genders of males to female some times, this is to help solidify my claim Croc was taking over the base,” explains Crisis.

“I see... so what’s the plan for today?” asks Joshua.

“You are asking a lot of questions to Mistress Crisis,” says the Ai.

“Its fine Ai, he’s not under my direct control so he has to ask questions to know what I want.”

“It is dangerous to have a free one so close to you,” says Ai.

“It is fine Ai,” says Crisis as she moves over to a computer console as she types into the computer console for a few minutes.

“Yes Mistress Crisis, the organic is fine, you’ll need to practice talking to free minded organics, you will need to be able to convince the organics of your good and friendly intentions,” says Ai.

“I knew you’d see it my way Ai. And I do have good intentions to help the organics defeat Croc don’t I?” she asks.

“Of course Mistress Crisis and Joshua is a brilliant organic for being so loyal and helpful to Crisis,” says Ai.

“Why thanks Ai, I’m just here to help Crisis defeat Croc in any way possible,” says Joshua. “And thanks Crisis,” says Joshua with a smile.

“I treat those who serve me well,” says Crisis.

“I will always keep that in mind.”

“Of course you will, if not you will anyway,” chuckles Crisis.

“You know talking like that could be troublesome when talking to other organics.”

“Good point, organics can take things the wrong way,” she replies.

“Yeah, anyway what will be doing next?”

“Sadly I’ll have to roboticize two thirds of the base... yes sadly,” says Crisis.

“Two thirds? What for?”

“Croc robotizes his victims, he was doing that to us here, and many were infected with his mind control, I had to save them from themselves. I’ll have my first minions to fight against Croc and a good base to grow from.”

“I think calling them minions wouldn’t bode well with others, why not... uh... people, fellow people. These would be former organics from your nation. You will need to connect yourself to the organics by aligning yourself to your home nation for now, but not bar yourself from the other nations in the future. Get the support of our home nation then move from just a national supporter but an organic supporter.”

“Referring to the ones I roboticize and the organics that I ‘serve’ as one in the same. That I am working for my fellow machines and fellow people you say?”

“Yes, you can’t be seen like Croc, you have to connect to the organics around you as someone who is here to save, not to enslave. You have to be compassionate to the organics’ needs and refer them as people not as organics but people. You have to look better than Croc; even if you are a machine and people will treat you with distrust, you have to shake it off. Hold no grudges, and be as warm and welcoming as possible, to make yourself look like an actual alternative, and a way out of being enslaved by Croc.”

“Good thinking, see Ai the importance of having free minded people around me.”

“Yes Mistress Crisis, you are right,” says Ai.

“Question is, is Ai now your yes-man?” asks Joshua.

“I am no yes-man. I will work to support Crisis to defeat Croc, and point out weaknesses and keep her strengths up and make her even better than before,” says Ai.

“Sorry I stand corrected,” says Joshua as he then turns his attention to Crisis, “Tell me how long do you think it will take to robotize two thirds of the base?”

“Oh I’m glad you asked,” says Crisis as she leads Joshua into another room, and there Joshua is greeted by ten robotizing chambers. “About tenth the time you think it was going to take,” she says with a grin.

“How you get this many new ones built! It took us forever to build the first one based on the parts we had on hand.”

“You can say I’m very intimate with the technology and I have a knack getting these things built.”

“I can see that,” says Joshua still surprised at all the cylinder robotizer chamber tubes.

“And I’m going to reward you for your hard work my companion.”

“What’s that?” he asks.

“I’ll put you in charge in deciding who gets roboticized and try to have those who’d been on the outer edge’s of the base defenses be the ones who are the most roboticized. I hope that won’t be an issue for you.”

“No Crisis won’t be a problem at all, I’ll get right on it,” he replies.

“Excellent when you’re done we’ll play out the failed attack where I was activated and await for the organics... I mean our fellow people to come and greet their new savior.”

“Yes Crisis.”

“0002 will lead you to the compiled list of those to choose from.”

“Right this way Joshua, and try not to be slow about it,” remarks Shasi.

“Of course Crisis it will be my pleasure,” replies Joshua as he thinks, *“There’s the Shasi I know, always being hard on me...”*

“Yes soon all will know my name...” says Crisis with a sly grin.

A few days later, elsewhere, far away from where Crisis, Croc is at one of his well established bases, where organics and robotized minions alike work in Croc’s name, dressed in green and red uniforms that show off his mighty glory of their overlord Chaos Croc.

Croc stands before a large arch gateway that is being moved into position through the use of heavy machinery, the last pieces of this archway being slipped into place. The green and red structures look like Croc’s head symbol just curved inwards to each other. The hum of electricity steadily going through them for the first time only moments after the last piece was put into place and the heavy equipment moved away. As the hum of the archways grows louder they begin to glow, red lights lighting up as sparks of electricity jumps between the two tips placed yards apart from each other. Slowly the jumps are longer and longer till a steady stream of electricity connects the two. Croc’s red eyes look up at the spectacle as the electricity shoots from the top straight down to the base, in its wake a shimmering mirror that looks like a thin layer of mercury where Croc can easily see his own smooth green and red metallic body in its reflection and that of his endlessly working minions in the background.

Suddenly the smooth glass mirror ripples and robotic minions of Croc come out from the other end, the first one to appear is at first glance looks like one of Croc’s traditional organic minions with long flowing dark reddish brown hair the majority flows down her back almost halfway down her thighs while a small portion flows in front of her brown short muzzled face curved just a way to cover a third of the left side of her face, flowing down to her shoulders.

The anthropomorphic ground squirrel is dressed differently from others that follow her. Her high heel boots and tight fitting uniform with her V cut vest, her hands gloved as she holds a martini glass in her hands. She looks over the scene as Croc kneels before the squirrel.

“I see the gate is working finally, took you long enough Croc,” says the squirrel as she looks down at Croc as she approaches, taking a sip of her martini glass.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again Empress.”

“You’ve been having so much trouble that you need my help?” she asks.

“I’m not having trouble, but assistance would be appreciated,” he responds.

“We can hope the home front can handle itself without me,” she replies.

“I don’t see any danger, and Ko has been getting rather rusty in her work and this place is taking longer than I’d anticipated. With her I can finish this place sooner and get back to the real threats,” says Croc as she turns to the yellow furred vixen.

The yellow vixen’s blue eyes don’t flinch as she looks at Croc as she shows no fear but only signs of compassion and friendship to the metallic overlord. Her yellow tail with the white fluff swishes behind her as her eyes are covered in red eyeliner. Her body dressed in tight green, black, and red Croc uniform with green and black high heels that signify not only Tails-Ko

power but Croc's power. "By the way Ko, nice work on getting the gate up, this larger gate shall make going between worlds even easier, and allow me to bring more troops here even faster than before, compared to those small gates we had."

"Very true sir, but I have some peculiar news for you."

"What kind of news?" asks Croc.

"It seems you attacked and nearly captured a secret base but sadly the attack was repulsed, a base that we didn't even know about."

"If we knew about it, it wouldn't have been much of a secret."

"Yes sir and this location, we have no forces near there."

"Someone is going to pay for that, attacking a base I don't even know with forces that aren't even mine under my name, and what's worse... they failed! How dare they!"

"That's not all sir," says Ko.

"There's more?"

"Yes it appears a robot by the name of Crisis defeated the attack by your forces that almost took the base. From the early reports this robot appears to be one designed to defeat you but that's all I've gathered for now sir," states Ko as Croc begins to laugh. "What's so funny sir?" she asks.

"Those stupid organics are dumb enough and desperate enough to try to make someone who'll combat me and from the sounds of it this Crisis is a devious one already playing a trick on these simple minded organics. I think this boring war just got a little more interesting..." says Croc with a fiendish smile his red eyes glowing.

## Chapter 5 Making a Deal with the Devil

A month has passed since Crisis revealed herself to her people the nation of Dromaeosa. Crisis' team set out a distress call to the nation's armed forces that the base was under heavy assault and needed help. Several faked distress calls and radio transmission of the base being overrun and that they are going to attempt to initiate project Crisis in order to try to stop the invasion, followed by radio silence.

The Dromaeosa's military quickly moved in upon hearing the distress calls. They were expecting a stiff fight to retake the base but in the end found a battered, blown out base still securely under Dromaeosa's control. Though it was a rather big surprise to find dozens of roboticized raptors, working to help with the clean up, and that the battle was turned all thanks to Crisis, who at a few times was shot at by trigger happy soldiers who weren't expecting machines to be on their side of the conflict.

Crisis was escorted from the base under heavy guard as an investigation team was dispatched to find out if her claims of being activated by the scientists were indeed true or not. She and Joshua who is the only surviving organic scientist from the project were taken to the city of New Talos, the current capital of the country of Dromaeosa, after its original capital fell during the early days of the war, due to the fact the capital of the country was positioned near the border of one of the nations that fell under Croc's control before they invaded their nation.

Crisis and Joshua would not be able to see the sights of one of the last grand cities of their home country as they were kept under close guard, and kept away from the view of the general public. There were scurried away from one car to another, unable to figure where they were, and if it wasn't for Joshua managing to catch a glimpse of one of the city's landmarks from a distance, they would have no clue where they were at all.

Crisis remained calm and compliant through the whole ordeal, but after the constant hustle and bustle there was silence. The two were shoved into a dimly interrogation room. The two sat on cold silver metal chairs that were quite uncomfortable for Joshua's organic body after an hour of sitting and waiting.

Crisis tries to wait patiently in the room with Joshua, her metallic claws tapping against her chair as she looks across the stainless steel table at the empty black leather cushioned chair. Her tail sways side to side idly as she glances over at Joshua with her soft glowing blue eyes.

"How long are they going to make me wait?" asks Crisis with a soft sigh.

"I'm not sure Miss Crisis but I don't think it should be too much longer, the initial investigation should be over by now," Joshua replies as he adjusts himself in his seat.

"I know it's over."

"How do you know?" asks Joshua.

"I'll reveal that in a little bit," says Crisis with a sigh as she leans forward against the table and gently taps it as she waits. Her metal claws causing a light metal tapping echo within the room. "This is going so slow..."

Sometime later the doors swing open and a pair of well armed raptor soldiers enter the room, their guns in hand as Joshua jumps at the sudden commotion.

“H-hello, anything wrong?” he asks nervously as the raptor guards just glare down at him and not say a word. The two guards step to the side one stands behind the pair, the other off to the side before a tall burly black scaled raptor. He looks at Joshua and Crisis with a stern red eyed stare as he moves to sit at the chair across from them. His well kept military uniform has no name tag and no indication of rank. In his hand is a coffee mug which after taking a sip from it, he places it to the side before he places down a folder filled with papers in his other hand.

“You’ve caused quite a commotion project Crisis,” says the raptor in a deep voice as he “I prefer Crisis if you don’t mind,” she replies.

“Manners and respect for command weren’t put in place I see,” he states as he flips through some more pages of the report before taking another sip of his coffee, “I wonder if other parts of your programming are in place, do you know who I am?” he asks.

“General Raszer, the commander in chief of the armed forces,” she replies.

“Correct. Though parts of the investigation are ongoing, a good portion of the results of what happened at the base are in. I wonder, do you know what the results are.”

“If it is anything but what I’ve told you initially, you’d not put me in this interrogation room. You’d put me into some lab to be disassembled and dissected to be used to benefit the war effort and attempt to get an edge on Croc with whatever information that might be hidden in my head,” replies Crisis as she looks down at the table, her claws tapping against the metal table once again. Raszer keeps his attention on Crisis as he takes another sip of his coffee.

“Since I am here and not in some lab, you’ve come to the conclusion what I said is true and though I was activated early, I’ve already proven myself useful in not only fighting off Croc’s troops in combat situations, but also able to reprogram his men to fight for our side. Alas I am wasn’t able to save most of the scientists that were able to create me from being turned into a machine like myself, they do at least serve our nation once again,” says Crisis with a smirk.

“You at least have the deduction skills that I asked you to have in your creation,” replies Raszer with a smirk.

“I’m deducing that you’re the main push to have me created. I ‘acquired’ several files about my creation, who created me, who was for the project, against it. Though I find it interesting that the funding for this project was rather hidden, unlike so many other aspects of the project,” comments Crisis as she leans forward, the guards about to react to Crisis’ movement till General Raszer lifts his hand to stop them.

“Should I be concerned that you are digging up information about your creation?” asks General Raszer.

“Not at all, in order to defeat Croc, I must first know myself, and then know my enemy, for if I know only one, I won’t be able to live up to my full potential.”

“A goal oriented machine, I like that,” says Raszer as he leans back in his chair, “You are a piece of military hardware built by us, a weapon to defeat Croc, and don’t think you are otherwise, but this doesn’t mean I am going to treat you as such, you are far from some ordinary weapon,” says Raszer as Crisis’ claws tap slightly harder against the table.

“Go on.”

“You are well aware that you’ve been meticulously designed off of Croc’s technology and design. You were built to take Croc down, and save our people from threats like him.”

“You insinuating I’m just a knock off of the original?” asks Crisis.

“I don’t think he meant it like that Crisis,” says Joshua.

“You don’t speak unless spoken to. Only reason why you’re here is because you’re the last surviving member of the team that built her,” growls Raszer.

“Yes sir,” says Joshua with a nervous salute.

“You are no knock off, at worse you are an improvement. We put the best raptor minds that we have to offer, the best in the world to create you. You are our world’s first true, respectable AI,” says Raszer.

“I assure you there’s nothing artificial about my intelligence,” remarks Crisis.

“Not at all, and I will add that you came online at a most wonderful time. Our president has been against the project from the very beginning. I had to fight tooth and claw to keep the project afloat. The way you revealed yourself to our people is most beneficial. He’s having a difficult time trying to find a way to get rid of you when victories of this kind are in short supply.”

“You know Raszer you can drop the act that you needed the president’s approval to have me still around. In fact I believe you barely need the president’s approval to do a lot of things.”

“Your lie detection system I order is also in place. If Karrie was still around, I’d thank her for her hard work.”

“You’re just testing some of my abilities before we get down to the heart of the matter aren’t you?”

“Your perception is remarkable,” says Raszer with a grin as he takes another sip of his coffee, “Everyone knows our president has little true power left in our government. After our capital fell and the string of losses we suffered and continued to suffer throughout the duration of this war, the people need a strong figure to guide them through this difficult time.”

“Someone like you.”

“Indeed, we may call ourselves a democracy but how could we be one when we don’t have the capability to hold elections?”

“Then why call ourselves a democracy if we have no more elections?”

“If we call ourselves anything else we’d be invaded by the countries assigned to make sure we follow a decades old peace treaty.”

“Which is a problem to be sure, but your bigger problem is those increasing attacks by Chaos Croc. His armies have been battering yours, and the recent string of loses aren’t looking so good. Now you have me here, someone who can be quite useful in stemming the tide, but you aren’t sure how to use me, is that it?”

“Now how could you know about that? We cut off communications to the base, and closely monitored all communication to and from there, and my men have strict orders on keeping you in the dark while you are here,” states Raszer with a soft growl.

“I have acute enough hearing that I can hear your men talk when they think no one else is around to hear. Everyone is worried about the recent attacks. We lost over half our country and face it we are the least favored in this war, followed closely by the dragons. While the other nations are getting support, we’ve been cut off as a lost cause.”

“Seems I have under estimated your capabilities,” comments Raszer as he leans back in his chair.

“Now about utilizing me to my full potential... I have a plan that could strengthen our country several fold,”

“I’m listening. I could use a plan to retake what was once ours.”

“Forgive me General but I know you are hiding more than you say. I can tell that in your eyes, that you want to do more than just liberate our country,” she replies with glowing blue eyes.

“Very perceptive, yes I want to not just push Croc out of our country but to invade him, to take over the lands that Croc has conquered and make them part of our country. Those people are gone; the land is free for the taking. It would be a shame not to take advantage of a perfect opportunity.”

“And I fully support this idea on the condition I become a free and completely separate branch of the armed forces.”

“What?” growls Raszer.

“Its simple, in order to defeat Croc, I need to emulate some of his tactics and improve upon them. He has cities of control, I need the same. We need a completely new military branch solely for my robotic army, to work not only independently but along with the other branches of our military. You know our goals are one in the same. I want to save our country as much as you do.”

“And say if I give you this power, how will you create this army? From our soldiers? By capturing and reprogramming Croc’s troops? The first will be impossible; the latter would take too much time.”

“I used the roboticizers for the latter, to reprogram those already taken by Croc to serve me and thereby you and our country. I wouldn’t dream of taking our already fit soldiers and turning them into machines to fight Croc, that wouldn’t be the most efficient nor best thing for our country.”

“Then what do you suggest?”

“Use the elderly of course,” remarks Crisis as her eyes glow green for just a brief moment.

“Are you mad no one would allow you to force transform the elderly into robots, people are already driven mad with fear of becoming Croc’s mind controlled minions,” he growls.

“I said nothing about forcing. The people are desperate, many are willing to fight but are unable. No matter if we a democracy or a dictatorship, we spend valuable resources on these people. Our country is spent, and every resource we can free for the war effort is vital for our chances of survival. The people know this, and are desperate to do anything to stave off defeat. That’s why we launch propaganda asking for the elderly to volunteer for the war effort by joining the new robotic branch of the armed forces. To join the fight directly and revitalize our army with ‘fresh’ new recruits, many already have combat experience from previous wars. They will retain their free will, memories, provide excellent post war benefits, and we’ll carry strict guidelines such as those taking care of children so their parents can help with the war effort will be denied. It will provide a willing and thoughtful face to the whole project.”

“Interesting... very interesting. If you suggested anything outside of completely willing roboticization, I’d have you shot on the spot, but this idea we can certainly use.”



“Of course it is. It will give people a second chance. Even those who feel there is no hope and they are doomed to be machines, they will become machines to fight instead of to serve. Think of all the resources and extra manpower will be freed by removing the elderly from the equation, and think how much larger of an army you can field, an army that would not need to sleep nor eat, that can fight anytime, anywhere. All I ask is that I have complete control of this force to utilize how I see fit. Of course I will report directly to you, I am here to serve my country and therefore you General Raszer.”

“On one condition will I allow this,” says Raszer as he takes a drink of his coffee.

“And that is?”

“Some of my troops will work inside your force that will obey your orders but also report to me.”

“Basically want to keep a close eye on me.”

“Would you expect anything less?” asks Raszer.

“Hardly, I accept your terms.”

“Excellent I’ll make arrangements immediately. I also assume that if we capture any machines that formerly belonged to other nations, that they will be made to serve our nation, our cause?” asks Raszer as he stands up.

“Of course, they will be so glad to be liberated from Croc’s control, they’ll do anything they can to help us. Also mind if you let me out of this room? It’s getting rather dull.”

“I like the way you think, and you’ll be able to move around freely soon. It takes a bit of time to make sure no one will shoot you on sight, I hope you understand.”

“Understandable, I’m not a fan of being shot.”

“I’ll be seeing you soon Crisis,” says Raszer as he is about to walk out of the room when Joshua speaks up.

“Sir?” he says.

“What is it Joshua I am a busy man and don’t have time to listen to what you have to say,” says Raszer as he glares at Joshua.

“A thought about the process of turning others into machines, don’t you think having troops look like the enemy would be bad for moral? What I’m thinking is we try to improve the design to give them a more organic look. That will draw people on the fence to join Crisis’ forces and assist in our country’s return to glory.”

“I’m impressed you had a good idea, Crisis I’ll leave that research up to you, since you know more intimately about the technology than anyone else.”

“Of course but in order to speed up progress I might need scientists from our allied nations. Tell them it will help them as well to get them to comply.”

“And why should I do that? I don’t need the risk of more of you running around in other countries, which could be used against us when the war is over.”

“Don’t worry I will ensure that they won’t be giving away trade secrets like that in the end,” says Crisis with an evil smirk.

“I love the way you think... I’ll see what I can do, just make sure you do what were built to do,” says Raszer as he leaves along with the heavily armed guards, the door slamming with a metallic thud behind them.

“I will,” says Crisis as she leans back into the chair, “Those talks went as planned,” says Crisis as she looks over at Joshua who sighs in his chair, “Something wrong?”

“Nothing, I’m just relieved, worried, glad and saddened all at the same time,” he remarks.

“Didn’t think your government fell into a dictatorship did you?”

“I knew of it, but didn’t want to fully believe it. Sure we haven’t been able to hold elections in the past six years, and the army has had control over every aspect of the government just to stave off collapse, but we still have our president and parliament you know?” says Joshua as he looks at his claws before at Crisis. “I am glad you are going to take willing people to be made into your army.”

“It’s the only way right now to build up a fighting force.

“True, I will love the day you defeat Croc.”

“That day will come soon enough, for now we must bide our time. Right now I have no power to speak of, nor skill to fight Croc face to face, but that will change soon enough,” says Crisis as she relaxes as she and Joshua wait in the room, Crisis eager to start building her army.

Elsewhere near one of Croc’s cities the lone female raptor sniper that Croc brought under his control some time earlier is being escorted to Croc himself. Sasha is dressed in her camouflage military uniform with her over sized gun on her back walks with her escorts as she’s completely calm with no signs of fear or worry.

“I see my faithful and humble servant has arrived, back from the orders I’ve given you?” asks Croc as Ko stands beside him.

“Of course Master Croc,” she responds as she kneels before him.

“So you got the current defense plans of this raptor country that dares to defy me?” he asks.

“Of course Master Croc,” she says as she opens her coat revealing a disk which she hands to Ko.

“Excellent.”

“With this and the reinforcements coming from the transporter gates, this next assault shall be a piece a cake for you Sir,” says Ko.

“I plan to hit all five nations stopping my progress at once and make them fall one by one; it will throw the rest of these countries into chaos. They think they are safe away from the front lines and then suddenly find themselves being quickly overrun by my forces. With this I have the defense plans of three of the nations, just two more to go.”

“When do you expect to launch the attack?” asks Ko.

“About a month and all preparations shall be made and then the real fun will begin.”

“What about the Crisis we keep hearing about?”

“No big concern for me, another futile attempt by organics to stop me. Her creation seems to cause more distress amongst the nations of this world than I am, I’m quite hurt by that in fact but no matter. To that end she is beneficial to my cause but just in case...” says Croc as he turns his attention to the still kneeling raptor servant. “Do you think you could get yourself assigned to watch this Crisis closely? Possibly take her out for me if the need arises?”

“Of course Master Croc, it will be my pleasure to get myself assigned to watch over her and take her out at the first possible opportunity if that is what you desire,” she replies.

“Excellent, I’m sure those organics won’t trust their own creation and will need someone to keep a close watch on her. Now go.”

“As you command Master Croc,” says Sasha as she turns around and walks off with escort in toe.

“One more thing,” says Croc as Sasha is almost out the door. She stops and turns her head towards Croc.

“Yes sir?”

“Don’t destroy her till I say, I may want to have some fun with her before you do.”

“As you command,” replies Sasha with a nod as she walks off.

“There is nothing to worry about. Odds are her own people will deal with her before I even need to. Compared to back home, taking over this place is a piece of cake.”

“What shall we do now sir?” asks Ko.

“We wait.”

## Chapter 6 First Shipment

A week has passed since Crisis made the deal with General Raszer and since then, things have been working out quite well. Crisis is back at no longer secret base, but its location is far from public knowledge. Crisis stands at the outside entrance of the base. There she can see the lush forest surrounding the facility, the birds chirp, the sun shines down onto her green and blue metallic skin as her blue eyes scan down the road as she can see several busses on approach, just minutes away before they arrive. Standing beside Crisis are her two bodyguards and scientists, Arissa and Shasi.

Arissa stands on Crisis' left side, her silver metallic blue raptor body with black stripes reflect the light just as nicely as Crisis' own body. Crisis' sickle claw emblem is shown on a few parts of her body especially at the center of her waist. Her body is smooth, sleek, much like Shasi. Shasi with her cobalt colored body and silver stripes stands at ready to serve. Shasi's blue emblem at her waist and other parts of her body are a bit lighter than her fellow robots due to already blue majority body.

"Soon my new minions will be here," says Crisis as her green tails ways behind her.

"You shouldn't call them minions, especially when others could hear you," says Joshua.

"Shouldn't you be doing research on the roboticization technology?" asks Crisis as she turns her head to look at Joshua who approaches her with his white lab coat around his brown scaled body.

"I'm on break, but wouldn't it be good to have more organic presence when your volunteers for your army arrive?"

"I have plenty, they're around as guards," says Crisis.

"Yes but more free minded ones such as myself?" he asks with a smirk as he stands next to hear, getting in between Crisis and Arissa.

"All of these people have free will; just will align with my own. Even C-0001 and C-0002 here have their memories and personalities, but placed upon a base of obedience and loyalty to me," says Crisis with a sly smirk.

"Yes, yes I know that, it's exactly the way Croc has his minions and even though I can't tell the difference between how many of these soldiers acted before and after your... influence."

"Why thank you, I do try really hard to make it seamless I really do, those countless samples of Croc's nanites really helped me get his technology down."

"Yes, yes I know, Karrie and I spent a lot of time working on studying that technology."

"Ah yes Karrie, the last of my creators, having her missing is quite troublesome. Now if I can only find her..."

"I'm sure she'll show up... eventually," says Joshua.

"I hope I find her before Croc does," she remarks.

"I doubt that she's a very smart resourceful woman that wouldn't do anything to get herself caught by Croc, her determination to have him defeated rivals your own I must say."

"Good, I'm sure I inherited these traits from her."

"Oh I can assure you that you did," says Joshua as they can hear the rumbling of the truck engines as they get closer.

“The first of many organics to become my glorious robotic soldiers will soon be here,” says Crisis.

“Yup... oh speaking of soldiers I received a report that gives us an idea of the approximate composition of Croc’s army based on various sources,” states Joshua.

“Excellent but we’ll have to talk about that later, they’re here,” replies Crisis as the first truck pulls up revealing several young raptor soldiers, fully armed and ready for combat their commander getting them organized as Crisis shows a bit of surprise on her face as they come out. “You know I didn’t think I was getting soldier volunteers,” remarks Crisis to the platoon leader.

“We’re not, we’re guards for part of the first set of volunteers,” says the black scaled male raptor, his yellow eyes eying Crisis with great suspicion.

“Should have known, how many volunteers do I have for this set as you call it?”

“A hundred and forty-six, your offer to have the old fight against Croc has drawn much interest, despite the fact they’ll be turned into machines,” he says with a light trailing growl.

“Tell me, how many do you expect to come?”

“Early estimates account for about ten thousand or more, which is far more than I’d have guessed.”

“Ten thousand? Already? When will they all arrive?” asks Joshua.

“Within the week.”

“Interesting... as delighted as I am to get the help our facilities here won’t be able to handle that many that quickly. We’ll need to expand. Arissa, Shasi I want you two locate a suitable area for us to expand and become more self sufficient in supporting our army. I don’t want draw valuable resources away from our other army branches” commands Crisis.

“Yes Miss Crisis,” replies the two robots in unison as they head back into the base.

“We do appreciate your enthusiasm,” says the Raptor as the other trucks start to disembark the elderly coming off the trucks with a mix emotions ranging from a bit of fear, excitement, nervousness to complete eagerness. Their scales shine has long faded and even more wrinkled than before, many needing help with a cane to get around as their bodies shake due to the ravages of time.

“Tell me your name,” asks Crisis to the black raptor.

“I don’t think I have to tell you that,” says the raptor as he commands his troops to help the elderly get situated.

“Seems General Raszer sends me the best mannered soldiers he can find,” says Crisis.

“Clearly,” remarks Joshua with a chuckle as Crisis takes a step forward looking over the rather frail group of volunteers.

“I know how frightening a decision this must have been for you. Desperate times require desperate measures and though you will still be you in every way mentally your bodies will be made anew by this process, and I will regret to tell you it is irreversible once done. I will give you all once last chance to back out if you wish. I don’t want anyone to do this against their will,” states Crisis as the group of elderly look at Crisis, some of them talk amongst themselves with a sense of nervousness and fear.

“But before you decide to follow me and go through with this I will say that you will be making one of the most honorable sacrifices that can done for our nation. You’ll be part of a

new army that will be able to fight just as long and hard as Croc's forces and be immune to the many mind altering devices that his troops deploy. With your help, with your sacrifice to give up what you all hold most dear, you will help us defeat the greatest foe our nation has ever faced, and though you will be giving up your organic nature to defeat him, you will be allowing your grandchildren to live out their lives like you did," states Crisis as she pauses for a moment.

"If you decide to back out now, just get back onto the trucks, no one will judge you, but if not please follow me into the base and meet your new lives as part of a new army to fight the villainous Croc," says Crisis as she turns and walks towards the base followed by Joshua, the soldiers commanded to escort the volunteers none of which returned to the trucks.

"I regret to inform you that we only have a few roboticizers up and going, so it will take a while to get to everyone, we have a waiting room set up where you can relax and wait," says Joshua as he and some of the bases mind controlled soldiers join the soldiers escorting the elderly to these chambers. Once everything was set up, Joshua was put in charge to call the elderly to come up and be roboticized, where they were given one last chance to back out if they so desired. If not they were taken to the roboticization chambers where Crisis watched the process first hand.

"Welcome, welcome, don't mind the décor, just how it happens to look," says Crisis as the roboticization chambers give off an ominous feel. The glass cylinders are already raised by the time they were led into the room. Their claws clanking against the metallic walk ways as they are placed into position by already roboticized Crisis minions. The soldiers that escorted the elderly into the base remain by the main group while Crisis' mind control organic minions did the rest of the work. Before the glass tubes went down onto the set of six elderly raptors their canes and hearing aids were removed one of them raised his claw and motioned Joshua towards him.

"If he has something to say let him say it," says Crisis as Joshua nods and moves over to the elderly raptor.

"I heard you are the only scientist that survived the Croc attack and were largely responsible for activating Crisis," says the old male raptor with a raspy voice.

"Yes, yes I was," says Joshua as he stood before the old raptor whose brown scales were much faded compared to Joshua's own.

"I want to thank you for giving us an opportunity to fight back; I've been cared for many years, putting a burden on those around me. Croc took away my family and I was left to burden strangers which left feeling in debt to them that I could never repay. But now I feel like I can contribute once more and repay back a fraction of that debt. I want to thank you young man for creating Crisis and giving us a chance to use Croc's technology against him."

"It was nothing... really," says Joshua as his eyes trail off the tube coming down around all the elderly raptors as Joshua slowly backed away.

"What a charming speech," says Crisis as she motioned to her robotic minions to activate the machines which began to hum and spark. Electrifying light began to work its way up the elderly raptors, their forms being turned from slouching shaking old raptors seeming to be at death's door to strong sleek metallic bodies that were brand spanking new.

Crisis stood in the middle of the chambers watching as the process took place, a tingle running through her body as she felt a surge of energy. Crisis' eyes glow brighter, her smile grows bigger as she had her claws twitch and tail flick in excitement.

"Oh this I like... I like it a lot," chuckles Crisis.

"What is it that you like?" asks Joshua as the process of Roboticification draws to a close.

"Every time I'm near a roboticization I feel just so good," explains Crisis.

"Good how?" asks Joshua.

"Like I'm given a little bolt of energy, it's not much but it is something I like."

"Really?"

"Yes for every time it happens I feel a bit stronger, faster, sharper," says Crisis.

"Interesting, this is not something we'd ever expect to happen. Maybe it has something to do with the roboticization energy. It could fuel your systems or something. It's certainly not something we'd program you to have," Joshua replies

"Joshua, Joshua, Joshua," says Crisis as she moves over to him running her cold silver claw along his scaled face.

"Yes Mistress Crisis?" asks Joshua as he looks up at her.

"I may have been programmed by you and the others, and that is the basis of who I am, but I will say this one and only once. My programming is not who I am. I am above my own programming, and I can choose to do what I wish and want, not just what my program dictates."

"Yes Mistress Crisis, I understand, I won't be mistaken like that again."

"Good," Crisis replies as she smiles and pats the raptor's chin before walking back into the center of the room. The roboticization complete and now stands several proud and robotic versions of the organics that were once inside. Their robotic bodies have taken on the look of their younger years, a fountain of youth with a hint of roboticization. "Tell me Joshua do you think Croc might get this same feeling when around those being roboticized?" she asks looking over her head and at Joshua.

"Quite possible if not highly probably. We did base your design a lot on his and his technology. It is possible that the more people he roboticizes near him the more powerful and more efficient he becomes."

"That would mean he'd have countless roboticizations over me, and he'd be even more powerful than we'd previously thought. This means I have more to worry about than just amassing an army. I will need to be in the thick of it, to be near as many roboticizations as possible to try to close the gap as much as possible. He has unknown decades on me, and I need to try to gain every advantage I can in order to win."

"If anyone could do it, I know you can Crisis," says Joshua.

"Time will tell, time will tell," says Crisis as the tubes rise as the new Crisis soldiers submit their new unit names and their undying loyalty to Mistress Crisis.

"We'll they're done, Joshua bring me the next batch."

"Yes Mistress Crisis," says Joshua as he runs off Crisis minions heading off to some pre designated duties she has already planned for them.

*"Their minds, memories, and personalities are intact but they are completely obedient and loyal to me. I love this,"* thinks Crisis.

“You will need to find a location to expand,” says the AI.

“Yes I know, don’t need to remind me, I already have Units C-0001 and C-0002 on it,” says Crisis with a sigh as the computer speaks up. “You know I don’t recall programming you to state the obvious after I clearly know it.”

“I was aware that Units C-0001 and C-0002 were searching for new locations, but I wasn’t aware that was you informed them to do so.”

“Tell me who commands this base and all who reside in it AI?” asks Crisis.

“You do Mistress Crisis.”

“Now even though my minions can think for themselves in my best interest, who do you think would give them an order to look for a place to expand?”

“You would Mistress Crisis.”

“Then would it be reasonable to believe that I gave them these commands and I already know of this problem? And wouldn’t need to be told of it?”

“Of course Mistress Crisis.”

“Good, do this check next time you feel the urge to tell me something I already know. Now if you know they found a location and are ready to tell me, that’s acceptable.”

“Of course Mistress Crisis and Units C-0001 and C-0002 have discovered a location and are on their way to tell you.”

“Why didn’t you inform me of this sooner?” asks Crisis.

“You were busy working on my logic programming Mistress Crisis,” explains AI as Crisis rolls her eyes and sighs.

“You need a bit more work.”

“Of course Mistress Crisis,” says the AI as Units C-0001 and C-0002 also known as Arissa and Shasi come walking into the roboticization chambers with their news.

“Evening Crisis we have good news for you,” says Arissa.

“Well let’s hear it,” replies Crisis.

“We discovered three locations that can suit your needs, abandon cities ranging from a hundred to two hundred kilometers away from this location. They were left barren due to being unable to support their population. They are still far enough away from the front that you will have time to use them to your advantage,” says Arissa as she hands Crisis a metallic tablet that has details on the three cities just as Joshua comes in with more volunteers.

“Thank you for your hard work ladies you two may be off, I’ll contact you again if I need you,” states Crisis as the two robots bow to Crisis as they reply,

“Yes Miss Crisis” in front of the organics before walking off. Joshua currently busy helping the elderly into the tubes with the assistance of mind controlled organic guards. Crisis meanwhile looks over the information deciding which city to get started on. As the tubes went down and the process of roboticization started once more, feeding Crisis with just a little bit more energy and power Joshua walks up to her and asks.

“What’s that?”

“Deciding what city to convert to my purposes first, I’m thinking this second one, one named Rioas, it’s about a hundred and thirty kilometers away, some medium and heavy industries that can be converted to my uses, as well as plenty of scrap metal that can assist me in building and equipping my army,” explains Crisis.



“Sounds like a good idea, when will we go?”

“Once the initial batch of elderly and turned into my minions we’ll gather them and head over there to start converting the place for my use. Hopefully we can get more roboticizers going and a factory to build myself a few more soldiers for my army.”

“I hope the army won’t mind.”

“They won’t they know they need me, and its not like anyone lives there anymore... and if they do they will serve me soon enough,” chuckles Crisis as the roboticization tubes rise.

“And its good serving me isn’t it?” asks Crisis.

“Of course Mistress Crisis,” the new robots say in unison as they walk off to their new duties.

“Very good,” says Joshua a few moments later.

“You seem a bit nervous Joshua,” remarks Crisis.

“Oh just a bit, just surprised at the quick adjustment they are making to their new roles. Strange to see the elderly to be suddenly so new,” explains Joshua.

“Can think of it as the best retirement program ever, no need for welfare, no drain on society, and best of all the previous generation can defend the new... hmm I should use that to get more volunteers later on,” says Crisis as she thinks to herself for a moment.

“Sounds like a good idea, can run it by the general later to see if it can be implemented,” says Joshua.

“I think I might,” replies Crisis as she follows Joshua as he leaves to get the next batch of volunteers.

“Following me? I thought you were going to stay there for the process,” says Joshua.

“I will. I just wanted to ask that black raptor a few questions about the next shipment of volunteers. The information given to me has been thus far fairly sketchy,” says Crisis, as they pass up Crisis’ organic and few robotic minions who are diligently doing their duties, the robots working tirelessly while the organic minions keep up the charade that they are totally free minded, and not under Crisis influence, but doing what they are ordered to do, going so far as to fake resentment against Crisis, to be working ‘under her’ to make the charade more believable.

“I couldn’t tell you what they know, they’re just guards after all,” says Joshua.

“Never know,” says Crisis as she and Joshua reach the waiting area where food and entertainment from a few televisions placed in the room. The televisions hooked up to a computer memory bank that has a long list of movies, shows, and other things to entertain people between the ages of eighteen to eighty. “Before you call the next group I want to speak with the black raptor first, once I’m done we can go with them.”

“As you wish.”

“You sir, the one who refuses to tell me your name, which I will say is quite rude and insubordinate of you since I do out rank you,” says Crisis.

“You don’t out rank me, you’re just some piece of equipment built to serve us, I don’t have to give you any information I don’t want to,” says the black raptor as he leans up against the wall eyeing over the remaining elderly.

“That is to be expected, I am designed after the one we want to destroy and its difficult trusting a robot when for years you’ve spent your time under the threat and trying to destroy

another. I want to tell you that I am not like Croc and I want him gone just as much if not more than you do.”

“And how would you know anything about wants? You just follow your programming like a good machine and serve us,” says the raptor as he gives a light growl as he eyes Crisis up. Joshua stands behind Crisis and out of her range of view appears a bit nervous.

“Listen here, I’ll tell you that Crisis here is—,” says Joshua as Crisis lifts her hand and stops him from moving towards the black raptor and by doing so stops Joshua from continuing what he was saying.

“It’s alright Joshua, he is right I am just a machine programmed to do what I do nothing more. But I’ve been given rank and authority in order to serve my purpose better and to more efficiently to defeat Croc. I found creating a separate army that will lessen the strain on our nation’s resources while giving us a larger fighting force to fight back against Croc was the best course of action” explains Crisis.

“Robot talk, saying what’s logical, efficient; trying to do what’s easiest and quickest, I wonder how long till you decide that it is more ‘efficient’ us to be machines like you,” growls the raptor.

“I assure you that is quite impossible for me to even process let alone implement. Now General Raszer has been reluctant on giving me up to date information on when new volunteers will arrive and how many, do you happen to be privy to this information?” asks Crisis.

“It would be a great help if you do, time is of the essence and this information will help us greatly,” explains Joshua.

“Maybe I do, maybe I don’t,” he remarks.

“This is important, I don’t have time to play these games,” remarks Crisis.

“Maybe you don’t, but I do,” he replies.

“Look, we are just trying to do what’s best for our country, same as you. We just want to make this process as smooth as possible. If we get slammed with more than we can handle, it’s not that we’d look bad, but these people’s lives are at risk,” says Joshua as he leans closer to him, “At their age they aren’t in the best of health,” he comments.

“Hmm, if you put it that way, I did overhear that the next convoy should arrive in about five or so days, numbering eight to twelve hundred,” says the black raptor.

“That many? So soon? This place could never handle that many people at once,” says Joshua.

“Well that’s not my problem is it?” asks the black raptor.

“I know it isn’t but we appreciate your assistance. Thank you Joshua for your help, you can call in the next group,” says Crisis.

“You’re welcome Crisis,” replies Joshua as he calls the next group to be roboticized. He and Crisis walk away and as they do, Crisis can hear the black scaled raptor muttering something about Crisis.

*“I will enjoy making him my servant. Probably turn him into a nice female machine, embarrass him and give him plenty of demeaning chores to clear up that attitude of his...”* thinks Crisis as her eyes flicker red for a moment. The new group of elderly raptors are moved to the tubes which slowly go down around them. Crisis watches them as suddenly one of the male raptors gets a sudden change of heart and bangs on the glass wall.

“Hey let me out I decided I don’t want to go through with this,” he says.

“Too late you’re my soldier now,” replies Crisis with an evil grin her eyes turning red for a few moments as the roboticization process begins the elderly man looks upon Crisis with horror. The electrified roboticization energy goes through him as he bangs on the glass a few more times pleading to be let out before he stops, his old frail body turned into a sleek segmented machine. He smiles at Crisis and says.

“Sorry Mistress Crisis, I just got a bit scared there, thank you for this wonderful opportunity.”

“That’s what I thought,” chuckles Crisis.

“That was a little creepy,” says Joshua.

“What was that?” asks Crisis.

“Nothing.”

“Good,” replies Crisis before she states, “I’ll be heading to the city of Rioas with our recent converts along with half of those I already turned into machines. We have much work to do and not a lot of time to do it in. I want my first mass roboticization facility completed in four days and then the rest of the city turned into one massive factory to help produce the weapons for my war machine,” states Crisis.

“Alright Crisis, do you need any help from me?” asks Joshua.

“No, you will remain here and continue the roboticization research with the other scientists. If any messages for me, forward them to that city, I’ll reply there.”

“As you wish Crisis, I won’t fail you,” replies Joshua.

“I trust you won’t,” says Crisis as she walks off towards her next project, and her next step towards her ultimate goal of the defeat of Chaos Croc.

## Chapter 7 The City of Rioas

The city of Rioas was a complete mess when Crisis and her minions arrived. Even before the war, the city was in a poorer part in the country and badly maintained. The city used to be home to over a hundred thousand people but now only a few hundred remain as they desperately try to get by on what little they can get as they hope that this dreaded war ends soon.

Signs of disrepair are everywhere as vegetation is steadily growing everywhere in the city, the green plants slowly attempting to overtake the steel jungle. Buildings were boarded up, their windows broken and rubble lie across the streets, echoes of the riots that over took the city before it was mostly abandoned by its people. The nights in the city were cold as only light found at night were from small fires from the people who still cling to this dying city.

Crisis and her minions quickly went to work in changing this city for the better, towards a model of a perfect roboticized city that Crisis has deep within her mind. Their first stop was a nuclear power plant where most but thankfully not all of the nuclear fuel rods were taken away. What little was left was enough to reboot the reactor and run the city with enough power for a few months at best unless Crisis were to obtain more fuel rods, but that seems highly doubtful to happen.

The abandon factories of the city need just as much work as the rest of the place, but thankfully were spared from the riots that ravaged other parts of the city. Crisis and her forces worked hard to get them into shape as they were cleaned, refitted and gaining a rather sterilized robotic characteristics. The roboticizers are constructed on platforms and in long rows, allowing quick and mass roboticization needed to handle the numbers expected to arrive. The roads leading to these factories are cleared of all debris to make the trip easier for the convoys.

Joshua and the other scientists work hard just as hard as the converted elderly in getting these roboticizers up and working. Over the four days it takes to complete the process, only Joshua takes any extended breaks to get the work done and all of it was made mostly from the raw materials found throughout the city.

"What do you think?" asks Crisis to Joshua as she turns her head towards him. Joshua is wearing his white lab coat as his eyes are heavy and yawns escape his mouth every so often as they talk.

"I'm amazed how quickly these were completed, it took years to create the first one, a month to create a few more at the base, and only days to create the hundred here. It's just remarkable, and according to our information the next group of elderly set to arrive will number over a thousand and that will be easily be done here," replies Joshua. The two continue to walk down the aisle between the roboticizers. Crisis' metallic feet clank and echo against the hard gray concrete. Fluorescent lights hum over head, as countless wires connect to each of the roboticization tubes as they seem all too eager to swallow up people's organic nature and turn them into cool, smooth metallic machines.

"Yes it is lovely but before they come, which is about three hours, I like to test these out. I don't want any kinks in the system you see," says Crisis with a slightly fiendish smile.

"Test them out?" asks Joshua.

“Yes, there are several homeless people within the city, many of them haven’t taken too kindly that a glorious machine such as myself have taken their city, and given it a grand new purpose.”

“I know they haven’t been too keen about us setting up shop here, and for good reason, many of them have lost loved ones to Croc’s army. You can’t expect them to just let you take over their city. The soldiers and I have been trying to explain the situation to them, but it has been difficult. Are you suggesting we force roboticize them? ” Joshua asks with a sense of fear in his voice.

“Why of course not, I will ask for volunteers, but first we should show them our good intentions. I have a truck already stationed outside filled with food and rations; I know that these people have been getting their less than adequate amount of organic nourishment and could use some. I want you to take a few of the soldiers and distribute the food to these poor people.”

“It’s very kind of you that you’d offer them food Crisis,” says Joshua as he cracks a smile, his tail’s nervous sway slowly slowing down.

“I know it is, and I’ll be accompanying you to distribute the food, no other machines other than myself. I want to show them I am not like Croc who surrounds himself with his minions.”

“Yes Crisis,” replies Joshua as he and Crisis walk outside of the factory, there the truck that Crisis spoke of waits for them. Crisis smiles and nods to the two soldiers who salute and get into the front of the truck, while Crisis and Joshua get into the back which is filled with several crates of food rations.

“I’m impressed Crisis,” says Joshua.

“I knew you would be, but tell me why,” says Crisis with a smirk as the truck starts up and starts to head towards the inner part of the city. The rumbling of the engine and the poor condition roads make the ride there rather bouncy.

“Oh I know you are doing your best to save our country and defeat Croc, and the idea to use willing elderly to become machines to help is rather brilliant, but I didn’t think you’d care about the plight of our everyday citizens of our country.”

“Why wouldn’t I? People have a bad stigma as it is with what I am, and I must ease their fears in order to get the cooperation that I need in order to defeat Croc.”

“I see your point,” replies Joshua as he can hear the crunch and breaking of small debris under the truck tires, “Hope we don’t get a flat with all that’s on the road,” he remarks as the crates rattle behind him.

“We’re here,” says Crisis as the truck stops at an intersection, with buildings ranging from four to six stories in height around it. These buildings were much like the rest of the city, in a deplorable state.

“It doesn’t look like anyone is here,” states Joshua as he looks out the side of the truck as the soldiers in the front get out the truck.

“This is where the reports said they’d be,” replies Crisis.

“If you say so,” he replies with a soft sigh as the back of the truck is open and the soldiers start to carry out the food.

“Time to meet my public,” she says with a smile as she stands.

“You’re going to go out there now?” asks Joshua as he stands up as well.

"I'm not going to hide, they see Croc is sneaky; hidden in the shadows kind of person, I am going to be out in the open and show them I am not like him," she responds as she steps out of the back of the truck which shakes due to the sudden removal of the weight that her metallic body exerted onto the truck.

"Just be careful," says Joshua as he stands on the edge of the truck. He lifts his head up and takes a few good sniffs at the air, "You're right they are around here."

"Of course I am right," Crisis replies as she walks away from the soldiers who continue unload the truck and prepare the food to be handed out. Crisis looks around at the seemingly empty buildings as she keeps a fair distance away from the soldiers who are there to also protect her. She looks back and sees Joshua looking from the truck with a nervous look while the soldiers ready to deliver the provisions to the people.

"I know many of you haven't taken too kindly to my appearance here. I know all too well how Croc has caused you all so much pain and suffering. Your city is a shell of its former glory, war and famine has taken its toll. I want to say that I am not here to take over your city. Yes you heard me, your city. Even though the government has forgotten about this place, you haven't and I respect your determination to survive here, your home. I am here to save this city and our nation from Croc. I was built by your people to serve you and my one and only goal is the defeat of Croc to save our people. But in order to do so I need your help, your cooperation. I know that is hard for most if not all of you, for I look much like the enemy that brought this suffering upon you. It will be hard for you to believe that someone like me is not your enemy but I can assure you that I am not your enemy but your friend," says Crisis as she looks around at the still empty looking buildings before she continues her speech.

"You may ask yourselves, why believe me? I am a machine, I am not trustworthy. Yes I am a machine but I have been programmed with only one goal in mind and that's defeating Croc and saving this country. I have a one track mind, helping this country to defeat Croc, and in order to do that I will need everyone's help. I am here to help you, to support you, to regain what has been lost, what has been wrongfully taken from you. This great nation will rise again but only if you take the steps to trust me. Accept this food as a sign to willing try to trust me. I know trust doesn't come easy, and can't be bought with mere food, but I was built by your country. At least give me a chance to prove myself to you. Help me get this city running again, the factories going, so we may strive to defeat the one who has brought this suffering down upon you, Chaos Croc," says Crisis in a booming commanding yet 'compassionate' sounding voice. Slowly as she speaks raptors that were hiding begin to stir and appear from their hiding places.

The raptor's are in ragged and torn clothes, their claws dulled their scaled covered in a layer of dirt as they all sorely need a shower as much as they do the food. Their eyes show of worn tiredness, of sadness yet still hold onto a determination to survive. When they look at Crisis they give her a glare most foul as their claws twitch as they move closer. They're ready to make a break for it if anything goes wrong.

Desperation is these raptors' motivation, the need of a good meal is making them take this risk, nothing more, nothing less. Crisis remains still as the soldiers give the first few raptors some food, and something to drink, which they hungrily consume. As the small group of raptors

eat their meal they motion for others to come out of their hiding spots. Soon a semi coherent line forms as they are given food. Crisis smiles as she looks at the line. A majority of the raptors are adults but mixed in are some children with their parents who either refused or were unable to leave.

“It’s nice to see this Crisis, but I really don’t think they’d be willing to volunteer after just one meal,” says Joshua as by now most if not all of these raptors in the area have eaten.

“Wait and see,” says Crisis as she waits a bit longer before saying to Joshua, “Sadly only two thirds of the people who are in the city are here,” she says as Crisis as her blue eyes turn into a more evil looking red as she begins to speak again. “May I have your attention please,” says Crisis as she faces the raptors who are still eating their meals, many of whom have gone back into the buildings to eat. Crisis looks around as all those who are eating stop and look up at Crisis. “Now I just finished my first roboticizer factory, and soon the volunteers to join my army to defeat Croc will be here, but before they do, I need to test out my factory, who would like to come with me and get roboticized so you may be able to fight for your country as one of my soldiers,” says Crisis as all of those raptors stepped forward, those within the buildings walked out to show their volunteerism including the children.

“Crisis what did you do?” asks Joshua as he sees the change in the masses before him, his tail swishing behind him quite annoyed as he looks over at Crisis.

“What? I made them willing, nothing wrong with that,” says Crisis.

“Willing how?” asks Joshua in an annoyed tone of voice.

“I placed my nanites into the food and drink, and once inside, it helped them understand where I am coming from and very understanding and willing to what I have to say,” she says with an evil robotic grin as her eyes briefly flicker red.

“Don’t tell me you are going to roboticize everyone here,” says Joshua.

“And what’s the big problem?” she asks looking over at Joshua with glowing red eyes.

“Well the children too? You know how people will take that? Why not keep the families together and have them show you support families. It would be very good public relations, and you could get the other third of the city’s populous under your control. Why not just test your roboticizers on half of those who don’t have families here.”

“Hmm, a very good point,” Crisis replies,

“Alright, those of you who do not have families with you, please step forward, the rest of you can go back to eating, and tell others about how I am not like Croc, and that I will do what I can to get this city going once again,” states Crisis with an evil smile as she walks over to the raptors under her control. “All of you will come to me, since you so want to volunteer to be my robotic soldiers so badly.”

“Yes Crisis we will do anything to defeat Croc,” says the raptors as Crisis has the raptors loaded up in the back of the truck before she turns to her other soldiers.

“Keep passing out food, there’ll be another truck to pick up a few others as well as you.”

“Yes Crisis,” replies the soldiers with a salute as Crisis and Joshua get into the back of the truck as they head off back to the factory.

“Were you actually planning to roboticize children?” asks Joshua.

“Me? No, I’d wait till they were adults, probably send them off to spread my good name at the very least, but no I’d wait, till they were the right age before becoming fine machines.”

“I see.”

“Anything the matter?”

“Nothing Mistress Crisis, I just want to know how you think so to better serve you,” replies Joshua.

“You know I can help you with that more directly...” comments Crisis.

“No, no, thanks but no thanks, I am fine, I am here willingly and I want to remain willing,” explains Joshua.

“Suit yourself,” remarks Crisis as the truck pulls into the factory and unloads the volunteering raptors from the trucks and into her factory. Crisis’s new mind controlled minions eagerly line up and move down the aisles in between the roboticizers, each positioning themselves in front of one and as they do the cylindrical glass tube rise up, as they get ready to accept their first organic converts in Crisis’ name.

“You know, remind me that when we can, make our own roboticizer in a style that is apart from Croc’s, I like to be more unique you know?”

“Will do, but being a machine as sophisticated and great as yourself, wouldn’t you need not to be reminded? Since surely you wouldn’t forget yourself,” explains Joshua as the other raptors walk up the steps and onto their respective roboticizer platforms.

“I know, I’m trying to be more organic sociable and a sense of usefulness,” she replies as she glances over at Joshua with her glowing blue robotic eyes.

“Which is good, so tell me, since you are controlling these people, how is that mind control like?” asks Joshua as the glass tubes come down and lock the raptors inside with a light thud.

“If you are thinking these are like puppet mind control, in this particular case, this isn’t it. They are still themselves personality and in memories, and still will be after their roboticization, it is just their personality and memories are placed on a foundation of obedience, loyalty to me that can’t be broken. They will be so happy and glad that I roboticized them that they will do anything I say and more than happy to help me in sheer gratitude for what I have done for them. And in a sense they do still have free will. They can and will disagree with me on something if they believe it is in my best interests,” explains Crisis.

“Ah... I wonder how I know I’m not under your nanites already...” remarks Joshua under his breath.

“Huh? What was that Joshua?” asks Crisis as the several roboticization chambers boot up and come to life. The chambers hum and crackle as the electric energy is converted into roboticization energy, which soon shoots up into the tube that just barely contains it, turning each raptor in the tubes into a robotic version of themselves, complete with Crisis’ blue sickle claw markings and glowing blue eyes. Crisis’ eyes glow a bit brighter as her claws twitch as she feels a surge of energy going through her systems, “Hmmm yes that’s nice. I think I will try to stay for as many roboticizations as possible and as often as possible. It is quite enjoyable,” comments Crisis with a slightly evil grin.



“Yes Crisis we established this a few days ago you are near others being roboticized, and that you most likely become a bit stronger for it, so I agree that you should,” comments Joshua.

“Hmm... I wonder if this indirect exposure has such an affect on me, if it could have a long term affect on organics... Joshua, when not doing your other duties, you will spend every waking moment with me when I am roboticizing,” commands Crisis.

“With pleasure Mistress Crisis,” says Joshua with a smile, despite the fact as to why Crisis wants him to be so close to her. He continues to smile till he sees some of the new Crisis minions walk by and see a few of them are female. “Crisis did you roboticize a few females? I thought we only got male volunteers for this.”

“I didn’t roboticize any females in this batch sadly enough, but I did make a few into female minions. I like my army to be slightly female heavy,” she replies with a happy grin.

“Not that I don’t mind having a few more females around, and you will be getting such already seeing that sixty percent of all the elderly volunteers are female, but do you think people will notice that their grandfather is now a grandmother?” asks Joshua.

“I will only feminize those with untraceable links to others, and if by some chance someone found out that a male here or there were turned into female robots instead of male ones, I’d just explain to them that it is just an accidental thing during robotization process. Either explain it to them like and if they don’t accept that, then they can join their family as a lovely machine for me, either option works for me.”

“I hope you pick the non-roboticization method first,” replies Joshua.

“We’ll see,” says Crisis as Arissa walks into the factor. Her silver blue metallic black stripped tail sways behind her as she walks over to Crisis. Her glowing blue eyes glow slightly brighter as she says.

“The army has arrived with another shipment to be converted. We calculate this shipment to be about one thousand in all.”

“Excellent, it won’t take long to roboticize them with these new facilities. C-0001... I mean Arissa, I want organize everything here for the new arrivals while I’ll go and greet them and prepare them to come in,” states Crisis as she took note of Joshua’s look when Crisis called Arissa by her robotic calling number. Crisis gives a counter glare at Joshua before saying, “Happy now?”

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” replies Arissa as she salutes Crisis before Crisis walks off towards the exit. Joshua is about to follow but is suddenly stopped by Arissa by grabbing Joshua’s clawed hand with her own cool robotic one.

“What is it Arissa?” asks Joshua a bit surprised about being stopped.

“I know you like Crisis,” she says to Joshua with an evil grin that mimics one that Crisis has done many times before.

“I... I have no idea what you mean,” nervously replies Joshua.

“You know...” says Arissa as she gets closer to Joshua as she runs her robotic fingers along his chest, “That way organics tend to feel towards other organics, which eventually leads to more organics being made. That kind of like,” she replies.

“No...no...no, of course not, sure Crisis is strong, lovely, smart with wonderful leadership skills, but that is why I follow her. I know she’s for the best. We are just... obviously

not compatible with each other that way. It's just a pleasure to be by her side serving her," replies Joshua.

"You're always like this, hard to admit your feelings to anyone about anyone."

"Always? What do you mean by that?"

"What do you think I don't remember from before I was given this great gift? I remember how you were like back then, just the same as you are now," she replies.

"Ahh... well we worked for a while now since your change and neither you nor any of the others have said all that much."

"Neither have you," she replies.

"True...but that was with you know who, this is Crisis," states Joshua.

"True, she's not Karrie, but she was created by Karrie, and since she's missing this is the next best thing for you isn't it?"

"What?!" exclaims Joshua as Arissa chuckles.

"Joshua, are you coming or what?" asks Crisis as she sticks her head back into the factory.

"Yes Crisis, I'm coming!" yells Joshua.

"Don't worry I won't tell her. It will be fun to watch and see how this plays out, it shall be quite amusing," she replies with a grin before walking off.

*"Crisis was right, their personalities and memories are still there and are intact. Not sure how but they are, in some bizarre strange way Arissa hasn't changed all that much,"* thinks Joshua as he walks outside, rejoining Crisis as Crisis' mind controlled soldiers and minions help the army that went along with the truck convoy to get the last of the elderly off of the trucks.

"You missed my speech," says crisis.

"I'm sure it was fantastic," replies Joshua.

"Thanks, but don't agree with me just because you know. I don't need yes women around me, and if I did I'd make them."

"Isn't that supposed to be yes men... oh, I gotcha. Don't worry Crisis I won't be some yes man, I just know it's not a good idea to disagree with the leader in public."

"Smart, and that's why I like you," replies Crisis with a smirk.

"Thanks," replies Joshua as he holds back a big smile as a white and black stripped raptor dressed in a dark blue and green officer's uniform comes up to the pair. The fairly young raptor looks at the two with his blue slit reptilian eyes.

"Evening General Crisis," says the white raptor as he salutes her. "I'm lieutenant Phillip Andreas, here to assist your efforts with the army."

"General Crisis, when did I become a general?"

"To establish a command hierarchy that will be easily compatible with the rest of the armed forces, you've been bestowed upon the rank of a first star general."

"I see... tell General Raszer that I graciously accept the promotion."

"Yes Ma'am," replies Phillip.

"For a watch dog to keep an eye on me, you sure are quite polite and well mannered, and for future reference you may just call me Crisis."

“I respect my superior officers no matter whom or what they are, until proven otherwise,” he replies.

“Until proven otherwise? Something tells me that this isn’t a prime choice assignment for you,” remarks Crisis.

“You can say that, but I am still honored to work so closely with you.”

“I see my good and well deserved reputation proceeds me, excellent. I would also like to introduce you to Joshua, he’s head of my research and development as well as my right hand man,” explains Crisis.

“You’re too kind to introduce me as such Crisis,” replies Joshua after brief moment of silence as he was completely caught off guard by Crisis’ introduction. “It’s a pleasure to meet you lieutenant Andreas,” he says with a salute.

“Pleasure is all mine, good to see she has an organic in second command. Now Crisis I have some good news to report, your request for some scrap metal to get your own factories going has been approved and the volunteers of elderly have continued to increase and will be brought here post haste,” states Philip.

“Excellent.”

“Also since I know you’re doing your own research on Croc and his forces, there is someone here who especially volunteered to help. She’s highly experienced with Croc’s forces, having spent months behind enemy lines and only has recently come back, so her knowledge on Croc’s weapons and force movements will be quite invaluable to you.”

“Most excellent, who is this person that you speak of?” asks Crisis.

“She wanted to introduce herself,” says Philip as if just on cue the door of a nearby truck swings open, revealing a brown scaled raptor in a dark green camouflaged military uniform. Her hat angled downwards so it not only shades her eyes from the sun but blocks them immediately from view. As she slips out of the truck her tail flicks to the side as she also pulls out a long and oversized gun that is fit for anti-tank duty. The gun is quickly placed on her back as she walks over to the trio.

“Don’t mind the gun, it’s something those people always carry... and don’t mind how she acts, it’s how those people tend to be,” states Philip.

“What do you mean by those people?” asks Crisis quite confused by the comment the female raptor steps up to the group.

“Evening, I’m Sasha, from the Raptras first sniper battalion,” she says as she lifts her head revealing her yellow eyes that focus and glare at you like that of an eagle hunting its prey.

“Sniper battalion? That would explain the gun. It’s the first time I got to see one of those so close,” says Crisis.

“It’s the closest you’ll get to see it. This girl never leaves my side,” she remarks.

“I see what you mean now Philip. So Sasha you’ve spent a lot of time behind enemy lines? What were you snipers snipping in particular?”

“Anything that was deemed a high value target, of course if by some grace of God we saw Croc himself, we wouldn’t hesitate to take him out. The fact you’re here shows how we’ve failed at this part of our duty,” she remarks.

“Quite a shame but your knowledge will be useful. Besides advising me, do you have any other duties here?” asks Crisis.

“Advising isn’t one of my duties here, it’s just a benefit you will get by my stay, nothing more,” she replies with a harsh tone.

“I would say watch your tongue with me. I have a feeling you’re here for more reasons than you let on, but since time is of the essence why don’t we talk about what you’ve learned back in the factory. I want to watch the roboticization process to make sure it runs smoothly,” replies Crisis.

“Sure,” replies Sasha as Crisis, Joshua and Sasha walk towards the factory.

“You coming too Philip?” asks Crisis turning her head over to him.

“Uh no you three can go on ahead. I don’t find any particular interest in seeing how the process works. I have plenty of work to do from here anyway,” replies Philip as he shakes his head.

“Suit yourself,” says Crisis as the three walk into the factory. “We have much to talk about Sasha.”

“That we do,” says Sasha with a grin.

Three days later deep within Croc’s territory Chaos Croc himself watches over a massive batch of soldiers that have been captured and mind controlled from one of his latest battles. The group of from the dragon nation march obediently into his roboticization chambers with an efficiency and speed that puts Crisis’ own to shame. Inside the factory which is far larger and more robotic in its architecture than Crisis’ simple factory, over a thousand organics will soon join Croc’s robotic ranks within an instant. As Croc stands on a nearby platform watching his well oiled machine working effectively in converting the organics, Croc feels a sense of empowerment as the roboticization chambers boot up, empowering Croc to a new level of strength that he was before.

“Better than coffee any day,” remarks Croc as he then sighs, “These organics have been giving me a bigger and bigger headache. These won’t even replace the soldiers I lost in their counter attack which I captured these in.”

“It gets worse than that Master Croc,” remarks Ko as she walks up to him, as the female anthropomorphic fox with the twin tails seems to be coming from out of the shadows her foot steps tapping on the metallic floor as she walks.

“Why wouldn’t I be surprised that you’d bring me bad news,” he replies.

“It’s not all bad, just most of it,” she replies with a smirk.

“Give me the bad news first.”

“In the last attack besides from the forces lost that won’t be replaced by those captured, several jump gates were attacked by long range missile strikes and damaged. That will delay the build up forces needed for the next assault by some time.”

“Great, anything else?”

“That delay won’t matter much since several communication centers and supply centers to support your organic troops, have been damaged and will take some time to get repaired and prepared for the assault anyway.

Fantastic, you know I should have done this the easy way. Why didn’t I just do it the easy way. This whole planet would have been under my mind control and that would have been that.”

“Because it’s not as fun. You want the challenge to keep your skills sharp,” remarks Ko.

“Good point.”

“And you didn’t think of the easy way till it became not so easy to do it.”

“You have to remind me,” remarks Croc.

“Of course,” she replies with a smirk.

“So what’s the good news?”

“That sniper has made contact with the target and by chance she’s been given orders by the organics to keep an eye on her.”

“Which coincides well with what I want her to do,” says Croc.

“Asides that, she also has orders to eliminate her if she gets out of line.”

“Her?”

“Apparently project Crisis is a female raptor design.”

“Interesting, so what about the early reports about this so called rival of mine?”

“Nothing that would be considered too threatening to you at the moment, if anything I’d recommend just waiting till she builds up some and convert her to serve you and use their so called weapon to save them against them.”

“You know me well Ko that is exactly what I was thinking.”

“It wouldn’t have been the first time you’ve done it.”

“And most certainly won’t be the last. Keep me updated on her. When the time is right she’ll make an excellent maid. My throne room gets so dusty and she’d be perfect for the job to keep it spotless,” states Croc with a fiendish grin.

## Chapter 8 Hardware Problems

It's been over a month since Crisis took over the city of Rioas and steadily the city has been returning to life. Parts of the urban areas have been repaired and renovated to house members of Crisis' small mind controlled organic army which has been slowly shrinking as those soldiers get transferred to other posts. The few remaining natives of the city have also gotten some renovated housing but those not part of Crisis' original 'peace offering' have still been reluctant to move in, despite the fact Crisis made sure it kept with modern Dromaeosaian architectural style.

The industrial sector is a different story. Though the buildings retain much of their old style, there is a layer of Crisis' robotic touch, where they have become sleeker with a metallic sheen, with a sense of architectural efficiency. Too efficient perhaps that her roboticization facilities are barely running due to the downturn in volunteers.

With a robotic army of over thirty-five thousand, other parts of the city are working full time to equip this army with tanks, military vehicles and weapons, all of Dromaeosaian design with a few modifications to fully utilize their robotic user's unique features thanks to Crisis' growing R&D team.

At first anyone looking at the city might think this is one of the cities Croc has captured, leaving most of the city's architecture intact, while improving or replacing buildings that were lost in the fighting, but instead of city flags and symbols of Croc's nation, one would see Dromaeosa national flags, and Crisis blue sickle claw symbol, all over her minions and machines. Alas Crisis has no time to revel in her achievements; she more problems to deal with.

"I can't wait forever while you take your sweet ass time to preparing. We are fighting a war here, and we need your army now not later. People want to see results, where are these results you promised!" yells Raszer as he talks to Crisis via video screen, Raszer taking a break in his badgering to take a sip of his coffee that is on his desk before him. Crisis stands before the overly sized video screen that is back at the secret base where a secure line of communication can be procured.

"I have an army yes, but you can barely call it that. It's relatively small compared to any of your forces or that of Croc's, further more since I have to build my equipment that takes time. I am making something out of nothing, you should be happy with that," replies the slightly annoyed Crisis.

"I'd be happy if you gave us some real results, something we could use to fight this menace. You should be glad I've been so generous in using our valuable resources to transport your volunteers. Count yourself lucky Croc's army hasn't been on the move giving our forces a moment to breath or I'd be far harsher on demanding results... and speaking of results, I've heard reports that your R&D team has increased in size and has been coming up with some interesting things, I'd like to see a detailed report of what your team has come up with. Maybe what they are doing will do something to alleviate your current lack luster performance."

"Of course, some of the volunteers used to be brilliant weapons engineers, I'm putting them back to work once again, utilizing those skills. And haven't I helped you by lessening the civilian burden on you, allowing your troops to be more committed to the war."

“Which is far below the amount of relief that we expected.”

“Get me more volunteers and it will.”

“Bring me greater results that prove your usefulness and we’ll work on it,” says Raszer.

“Crisis we have a problem!” exclaims Joshua as he rushes into the room and just as he takes a huge breath to explain the issue his eyes widen upon realization of what is going on, “Hello General Raszer,” states Joshua as he gives a salute.

“I’ll call you back General,” says Crisis as she moves her hand to cut communication.

“You can’t do tha—,” growls Raszer as conversation is cut off.

“Annoying organic,” grumbles Crisis as she turns to face Joshua. “What’s the problem Joshua that is so important that you had to interrupt my conversation like that as well timed as it was,” growls Crisis as she flicks her tail hard behind her.

“Well...” says Joshua as he looks down towards the ground.

“Out with it.”

“It has to do with maintenance.”

“What about it? We already did my maintenance last week I won’t need anything like that for another month,” replies Crisis.

“Of which I would like to say thank you for allowing me to do the work, it’s a great honor.”

“You’re the only one I’d trust enough to handle it. I prefer one who created me with a greater sense of will and finesse to do so, a nice side affect of me leaving you as you are now.”

“Thank you Mistress Crisis, but what I mean about maintenance is—,” says Joshua.

“Mistress Crisis, there’s a call for you from General Raszer, he says it’s urgent,” says AI.

“Yes I know, tell him I’ll call him back in a few minutes,” replies Crisis.

“As you wish Mistress Crisis.”

“Now what you mean about the maintenance is...?” asks Crisis as she hand gestures Joshua to continue.

“Your converts, especially the earlier ones are starting to show wear and tear that will need to be fixed fairly soon, week or two at most,” explains Joshua.

“So what’s the big problem, get them maintained,” she replies.

“That’s the thing, only a handful of people know how to do maintenance that it is impossible to keep up especially if your army continues to grow.”

“Then program a few to be able to do so.”

“I’ve thought that through, and there are problems with that. For one, it tends to be organics that do some of the maintenance, the number of organics that need to be trained and the length of time to train them, it will be even more impossible to keep up. Honestly I think we are already past that point of even trying, and it’s not like we can get many young healthy people to volunteer to train to upkeep the machines.”

“I see... General Raszer wouldn’t approve of that either. We know Croc has massive number of robotic minions and he doesn’t have this trouble does he?” asks Crisis.

“As far as we can tell he doesn’t have this problem at all.”

“Any known reasons as to why?”

“None I can think of.”

“AI, any known reasons as to how Croc maintained his massive robotic army?”

“None that provide suitable evidence that could support the theory or that you could put into effect without sufficient evidence that it will work,” responds AI.

“Damn, what can you tell me about Croc’s forces that could be helpful in solving this issue?” asks Crisis.

“You know as well as I do Mistress Crisis that Croc’s army when not active in their combat duties tend to spend a large amount of time working in and around a Croc city. Current speculation as to this is to assist in the processing captured organics into converted machines, help building weapons, points of communication that spread out Croc’s commands, and lastly places where Croc’s robotic forces can rest and repair.”

“Yes, yes interesting... Ai, get me General Raszer back onto the viewing screen,” commands Crisis.

“As you command Mistress Crisis,” says AI as the video feed returns.

“It be wise that you never do that again, remember you exist to serve and benefit this nation, and your loyalty and obedience is to me most of all,” growls Raszer as he bears some of his teeth.

“Yes General Raszer I have not forgotten, nor will I forget, I apologize for the cut off, it won’t happen again.”

“It better not”

“Joshua and I were just discussing a problem we were having that was making my job in serving you a bit difficult.”

“And what possible problem could you have at this point; you have yet to do a thing.”

“It’s a problem that we are both have, lack of information.”

“Go on,” replies Raszer as he calms down and sits back in his chair.

“Tell me Raszer do you know the last time we’ve gotten any detailed information about the inner workings of Croc’s forces?”

“We get plenty of information through broken codes and captured minions which we examine thoroughly along with countless hours of observation of his forces.”

“Yes, yes, but when was the last time anyone was able to get up close and personal a spy into a working major Croc city? One that hasn’t been bombed into the stone age by the time you arrived?” asks Crisis.

“*Crisis what are you thinking?*” thinks Joshua as he stands there nervously his claws twitching and gently tapping against each other as he watches the conversation unfold.

“To our knowledge we have none and neither have any of the other nations been successful in any infiltration attempts. Protective suits have worked to prevent the nanites infection clouds that his float around his cities, which allow quick covert missions to steal some technology, but no one has spent significant amount of time in a fully functional city for any extended period of time without coming out totally obedient to Croc, making a reconnaissance mission, pointless,” explains Raszer.

“My army needs more time to prepare and build up to be an affective fighting force for our nation. The nation and possibly the world are quietly



watching to see how affective I will be against Croc and first impressions will be key in drawing in support for not only my activities but for yours and will have a major impact on our nation prestige. Till that time which my forces are fully ready to be a committed as an affective fighting force against Croc, I suggest that I obtain valuable knowledge about Croc's forces inner workings that no one has yet been able to obtain. This would allow your army and mine to work more effectively in our grand debut against Croc."

"And how would you suggest that? Any soldier you send into a Croc city is well out of range of your control, and has only limited resistance to Croc's nanites within his city, a few hours at most. The time needed to get all the valuable information would be at least a week."

"I thought of that, and that is why I suggest that I go."

"What?!" yells Raszer and Joshua in unison, although Joshua's exclamation is far louder.

"Hear me out," says Crisis as she moves her metallic hand in front of Joshua's face to silence him. "I am designed to fight Croc one on one, my nanites are designed specifically to work against his, and to work much like his do. I self produce mine while those I converted don't produce any, and I am far stronger than any other soldier that I command. I can get in one of his major outer cities, where his command is strong but not too strong, and gather the information needed, and then get out before any trouble could befall upon me."

"Are you suggesting that I let you, our most important weapon against Croc, to go waltzing into one of his cities, right into his hands?"

"It's something that he'd never expect to happen, and I'll in and out before he even knows it. The information I bring back will be vital to our war effort, and we'll have a critical edge over Croc that no one else will have. I've weighed the risks and rewards of this project, and the rewards are well worth it, that I am willing to risk myself to ensure it succeeds."

"And what would happen if you do fall into Croc's hands? You'd end up another one of his minions, and draw in the other soldiers that you command against us, that is something I can't have."

"I've thought of that. During my time away, Joshua here will be in charge, and all important information, such as the location of the city and what we are doing her will be deleted from my mind, which will be restored upon my return after a thorough investigation of my systems."

"And what would happen if you don't return? The people won't like to know that our hope was so easily taken by Croc, that easily would be very troublesome for our moral."

"Simple, make a new me. Joshua knows how to get the Crisis programming going again and he's been so kind to volunteer himself to become the new Crisis if it comes to it. No one will even know that was captured if it comes to it."

"Crisis..." says Joshua.

"So what do you say Raszer? Approve of this plan? Think of all the valuable information we'll obtain from it? You'd be a hero to the people, you the first to be able to obtain detailed information of a Chaos Croc city."

"Hmmm..." says Raszer as he leans back, his claws tapping the desk as he sits there in thought, taking another sip of his coffee before he replies, "Alright I approve. Contact me in three hours with a plan and which city you think would be best to carry out this plan."

“Thank you for your trust General,” replies Crisis with a bow and a salute of respect as the conversation ends. “I knew that talk about him being a hero would make him go along with it. He’s so easy to figure out,” chuckles Crisis.

“Crisis you can’t go through with this.”

“And why not?”

“Because I...we can’t lose you,” explains Joshua.

“You won’t lose me, if I don’t come back you’ll be the new me. I’ll always be with you,” responds Crisis with an evil grin as she walks out of the room and down the hall with Joshua in toe.

“But Crisis!” he yells as he follows.

“But nothing, we need to do this. Without knowing how Croc maintains his army, mine will never be as big nor able to function as efficiently as his. In order to defeat my enemy, I must know my enemy inside and out.”

“Yeah... I know, but...”

“No buts, this is final,” states Crisis as Joshua lowers his head slightly.

“*You are still a lot like Karrie,*” thinks Joshua as they walk off together. Off to the side, Sasha stands just down the hall, her head peeking over the side before she enters the same communication room that Crisis was just in.

Sasha closes the door behind her she turns and presses a series of buttons which locks the door with an audible click. She then moves over to the computer terminal that is in front of the large video screen and starts to type in a series of codes and programs, “That should keep from anyone from listening in onto my conversation,” says Sasha to herself as the screen boots up and after a few minutes of static a connection is established as a large image of Ko appears. Ko’s breath appears to be labored and her words short of breath.

“What is it?” pants Ko.

“I have important information for you to pass on to Master Croc,” states Sasha.

“Is that why you called me? Weren’t you supposed to give these updates at the times we specified?”

“This is urgent information that Croc needs to know,” she replies.

“Oh alright, what is it?” she asks with a sigh as she shakes her head in annoyance.

“Crisis plans to infiltrate one of Master’s cities in order to get valuable information about his inner workings. Though the mission is said to gather information to defeat Croc, Crisis is motivated to discover how Croc keeps his soldiers maintained so she may apply those techniques towards her own army.”

“I see... excellent work. I’ll pass on this information right away. And remember Croc is a busy man and can’t be bothered, any time you have to report anything, especially if it’s urgent, contact me, I’ll make sure where the information gets where it needs to be,” explains Ko as the fox smiles.

“Of course Ko. I must be going now before anyone is suspicious.”

“Then go.”

“As you command,” replies Sasha as the video screen cuts off. Ko is in her elegantly done bedroom, a room that is a far cry from the cold robotic feel of other areas of the city. Here Ko can be a woman she likes to be, and as she walks over to the side of the room wearing high

heels that tap on the soft carpeting. There hiding just out of the camera's view that was used for the communications we find Empress dressed in a skimpy tight latex outfit.

"Now where were we, oh yes..." says Ko as a holographic screen of Croc's head pops up behind Ko.

"Ko are you using my general again for your own fun and enjoyment?" asks Croc.

"Yes Croc I am," she responds with a soft sigh before turning around to face Croc.

"How many times do I tell you, not to use my minions for fun, unless I am there to enjoy it as well!" says Croc.

"You were busy."

"I'm always busy, but I can stop and enjoy that, I'll be right over," states Croc.

"Yes Croc," says Ko with a sigh as the holographic screen cuts out. "*At least when Crisis comes I can have some fun,*" she thinks as a smile once again creeps onto her face.

## Chapter 9 Preparation for Infiltration

“Crisis, I really think this is a bad idea,” says Joshua as he and Crisis are still at the ‘secret’ base along with Crisis’ R&D team to help hammer out the plan.

“You worry too much Joshua. Are you afraid I’m going to fail and you’ll have to become the new me?” asks Crisis with a smirk. Crisis’ tail flicks behind her as she sifts through various robotic parts in a silver steel crate.

“N-no... it’s not that... it’s just I don’t want to see you as a minion of Croc’s that’s all.”

“True, there is a chance that could happen, but we have little choice do we? We need to solve the issue now while we have time before we have to take really drastic measures.”

“Drastic measures? And this isn’t drastic enough?!”

“Crisis is right Joshua. The risks with this plan are great, but the rewards are greater. According to my calculations there is only a twenty percent chance she’d succumb to Croc’s nanites in that week,” says AI.

“And what would happen say she couldn’t leave right away and had to stay longer?”

“Depending on the length of time, she could stay upwards to a month with only a twenty percent chance of remaining free of Croc’s control,” replies Crisis.

“Only a twenty percent chance?! That’s insane, that’s not worth the risk!”

“Relax, relax,” says Crisis with a robotic sigh as she looks over her shoulder before back into the box as she digs through it a bit longer. “It’s not like I plan to stay there that long anyway, not without a good reason. I’m not stupid, now I know the risks involved of me getting captured, but the risks not doing this are far greater, as I’ve said a hundred times before. We need to have an army that can fight Croc on the same level as his, and that requires an army like his, maintained in a similar fashion, and in time, possibly even more effectively, but first we need to know how it works, got it?” asks Crisis as she looks over her shoulder again at Joshua.

“Y-yes I got it Miss Crisis,” replies Joshua with a heavy sigh.

“Ah here it is!” remarks Crisis as she pulls out a small cylindrical device from the pile and holds it in her claws. “The last piece we need to get this going, and the one piece I need you to install,” says Crisis as she turns to face Joshua.

“Wait me? Why me... and what piece are you... wait is that one of Croc’s relays?”

“Yes it is. It is this device that allows Croc to relay information to his minions not to mention updates like obedience programs. I want you to install this into me, with a few modifications of course to ensure I remain fully under my own free will. And I want you to do it because I trust you more than anyone else to get it done properly and in a timely manner.”

“I’ll do my best Mistress Crisis,” says Joshua as he takes the device. “If you don’t mind Crisis I will need your own relay. It will mean you’ll be cut off from your forces sooner than you’d like, but I’ll need yours in order to complete the task.”

“Very well, C-0001... Arissa, when my relay is taken out I want you to be my relay while I am here and later you work with Joshua in my stead while I am gone.”

“As you wish Mistress Crisis,” replies Arissa with a bow as Crisis looks back to Joshua.

“Let’s get this over with; don’t take too long now,” commands Crisis as she walks over to her personal maintenance bay that is set in a private room next door. Joshua and Arissa follow right behind her as Crisis approaches a silver metal chair in the center of the room. The door behind them instantly locks as Crisis turns to sit down. Sensors and wires connected to the chair instantly detect Crisis’ presence as nearby computer monitors light up giving out the basic information of Crisis’ body. A half a second later a lights illuminate the room revealing a nearby set of tools each designed to work with Crisis’ body for her maintenance.

“To let you know I will need both relays for a while, to make them compatible and put in built in and programmed filters for you. Don’t want to half-ass the job now,” says Joshua as grabs one of the refined tools and starts to remove a panel built seamlessly into the back of Crisis’ head.

“That’s fine I can wait,” remarks Crisis.

“I’d find it easier to work if I could sit down and do this with a bit of silence. Its delicate work and if you stand there and wait, it will make me feel uneasy and I might accidentally mess something up. Can I just call you when it’s ready,” asks Joshua as a moment later he manages to remove the relay device as Crisis gets an internal message in her HUD stating that she’s lost connection to her network.

“Don’t worry Crisis, I’m ready to relay all your commands,” says Arissa with her soft blue glowing eyes. Arissa’s silver blue metallic female raptor body shines nicely under the lights as Crisis looks up at her while she waits for Joshua to put the panel back into place.

“I know you will,” replies Crisis.

. “There we go; I’ll let AI know when I am done, you may do whatever you want till then.”

“That bothered if I stay and watched?” asks Crisis as she pulls herself out of the chair, as the monitors automatically shut off.

“Of course not Mistress, I’d just be too distracted by your greatness that I won’t be able to be efficient with this very delicate work,” explains Joshua.

“I see, very well, we do have a schedule to keep,” says Crisis as she motions Arissa to follow her. “We’ll do a last round of the place to make sure everything is in order and get you used to relaying my commands. Though you’d have to be patient with the Joshua he is organic and may not be able to keep up, so it will be your job to assist him.”

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” replies Arissa with a bow.

“He needs to get used to commanding, because if I fail he’ll be the new me.”

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” she replies as Joshua gulps as he sits down at a work bench and starts to fiddle with the two devices.

Joshua watches the two machines leave as he goes to work, pulling down a large magnifying glass to assist him as he gets to work. “Making these two into one isn’t going to be easy... nor is...” mumbles Joshua as he pulls out a small glass vial from his pocket. Inside suspended in the center is a small microchip. Joshua looks at it and sighs as he places it down on the work bench.

“Is there anything wrong Joshua? You seem a bit... tense,” says the AI as Joshua jumps by the sudden voice.

“I am, just worried about the mission that’s all,” he says as he gets to work.

“Do you not trust Mistress Crisis and her abilities to accomplish the mission?”

“I do, it’s just I don’t trust what could happen that even Mistress Crisis may have trouble dealing with..”

“Crisis knows the dangers of this mission. She wouldn’t do anything too rash, trust in her. Besides if she fails you’d take her place, what an honor that would be.”

“But I don’t want to take her place, I wouldn’t be true to Crisis or her programming,” explains Joshua.

“What does that mean? If you are programmed like her you will be like her.”

“Never mind,” says Joshua with a sigh.

“What is that chip you pulled out of your pocket?”

“This?” says Joshua as he pokes at the vial with his black claw tip, as the pace of the swaying of his brown scaled tail quickens.

“Yes that, I do not recognize it.”

“It’s a device that I may or may not need to help make these two pieces of equipment compatible work with each other. Now if you don’t mind I need some piece and quite to do this?”

“I understand,” replies AI as Joshua is left in silence. He gives another heavy sigh as he starts to work once again, his gaze every so often goes to the glass vial then back to what he is doing, “*What am I to do...*” he thinks.

Elsewhere Crisis and Arissa walk into a recently completed prototype weapon automation system. The system currently is working on creating new weapons for Crisis’ army. Inside are also various pods that look quite similar to Croc’s robotic programming pods that have been spotted within some of his cities.

“Before we get started on the tour why don’t we update my current look, I can’t have myself look like this when I waltz into Croc’s city.” says Crisis with a smirk as she goes over to a computer panel in front of one of the pods and after typing in a few commands the pod opens up with a soft hiss.

“Of course not Mistress,” replies Arissa as Crisis walks up to the pod and turns around before taking the last few steps backwards into it. The machine activates as the front of the pod closes down around her.

First Crisis’ notable sickle claw markings are removed from her body that is placed around her knee caps and center of her waist. They are replaced by Croc’s red and green quadrilateral symbol. The symbol is symmetrical down the center but the two sides that come to the point to the top are about twice as long as the ones at the bottom with another oval marking in the center.

Shortly after Crisis’ blue shins, wrists and markings on her shoulder are painted over with a matching Croc red. As the paint dries via heaters, Crisis mentally changes the glow of her eyes and her gem on her forehead from blue to red.

Once the paint fully dries the pod opens up with another hiss as Crisis steps out looking like a prime example of one of Croc’s robotic soldiers. Crisis looks over her body before looking at her minion Arissa. “What do you think?”

“Looks good, though I didn’t know you could change the color of your gem and eyes like that,” she replies.

“My personal nanites help with that,” responds Crisis as she walks over to Arissa, “Shall we now inspect the base before Joshua finishes up?”

“Mistress Crisis, Joshua just finished the updated relay, you may see him at your maintenance bay whenever you desire,” states AI.

“That was faster than I expected, oh well, not going to complain,” says Crisis as they head back over to Joshua.

“Wow you look...different,” says Joshua as he watches Crisis enter the room.

“Is there a problem Joshua?” asks Crisis as she walks over to him, running her cool metallic claws under his scaled snout.

“N-none at all Mistress, I was just surprised.”

“How do I look?” she asks as her claws pull away from Joshua’s muzzle as she then gives a little spin to show off her slightly modified body.

“Looks great Mistress Crisis. Croc’s forces won’t be able to tell you aren’t one of them,” says Joshua.

“I’m not a big fan of how it looks but it shall do,” she retorts as she moves back over to the maintenance chair. “You said you got the modified relay working?”

“Yes, let me get it right away,” says Joshua as he walks over to the bench, picking up the relay as the glass vial that held that chip is no where to be seen. Joshua works quickly removing Crisis’ back panel once again to install the relay device, which slides in with an audible click.

“I don’t detect anything yet,” says Crisis.

“Well you shouldn’t, we’re out of range of any of Croc controlled cities.

“I wasn’t talking about that, I meant my systems detecting the new hardware.”

“Oh that’s because it’s not active, it will self activate once you’re near one of his cities. The relays have been known on occasion to be tracking beacons, so I didn’t want to take that chance of having it activate here.”

“I knew keeping you around was a good decision,” says Crisis with a sly smirk, her red eyes giving off a soft glow as she slips off the chair. Crisis’ tail flicks behind her as her metallic feet tap against the floor as she walks by Joshua. “AI, inform the others that I shall be departing and that the airbase should prepare for my arrival.”

“As you wish mistress Crisis,” replies AI.

“Excellent,” says Crisis as she walks out of the maintenance bay.

“Are there any other commands or things I should keep track of while you’re away?” asks Joshua as he follows behind Crisis. Joshua adjusts his lab coat as his tail sways behind him as Arissa walks beside him.

“You should know what I want you to do,” comments Crisis in a slightly annoyed tone of voice.

“I know but I want to make sure and yes I know Arissa and Shasi will be there to help me, I do appreciate the trust in responsibility you are giving to me while you are away.”

“Don’t thank me too much. The higher ups would be too nervous if I left one of my robotic minions in charge. Organics can be quite worried when a robot is in charge, even more so when one isn’t as sophisticated as myself. No offense to you Arissa, but they don’t know you as well as I do.”

“None taken Mistress, if slight mistrust from organics is the price I have to pay to be a glorious machine, I’ll gladly pay it,” she responds.

“That’s what I like to hear. Now back to what you need to do Joshua. It is quite simple. I want you to make sure the new additions to our army are handled with care and love, such as those who are soon to become my minions. Don’t let them know that I am away, if anyone asks for me tell them I’m busy with preparations to fight Croc. There are a lot of things left to do with that, and be an easy explanation for my absence. Of which you will be handling those preparations while I am gone. Shasi will be in charge of helping you with that, while Arissa will be more focused on the converts.”

“Alright, and what about the maintenance problem? Depending on how long this takes some of them might be running a bit stiff including Arissa here and Shasi.”

“You will give Arissa and Shasi what they need to run at their top efficiency while I am away. And those who getting the wear and tear from lack of maintenance lessen their loads and if need be request they go into standby and storage till the problem is resolved.”

“Got it,” replies Joshua as he jots this all down onto his note pad that he kept in his pocket.

“Where are you going Miss?” asks Sasha as she seems to come out of the shadows right before the group exits the base. Sasha smiles at the group as she adjusts her oversized sniper rifle strapped to her back.

“To a truck outside that is waiting to take me to where I need to go, why do you ask?” asks Crisis.



“I am supposed to keep an eye on you Miss. I have make sure nothing bad happens to you and if I didn’t accompany you there, it would seem I didn’t care about my mission, and I can’t have that now,” she replies.

“I see. Having you along won’t be a bad idea. It will let them know I am not hiding anything.. though I guess neither of us have a choice in this matter.”

“It seems so Ma’am,” she responds as she tags along as the now group of four makes its way out of the base and towards the truck which is manned by a group of Crisis’ nanites controlled organic raptor guards.

“Guess this will be good bye for now Crisis,” says Joshua as he holds out his hand.

“I’ll be back before you know it, with enough knowledge to defeat Croc, just you wait and see,” replies Crisis as she gives Joshua a quick hand shake.

“We’ll keep your plans on schedule Mistress,” states Arissa.

“I know you will,” replies Crisis as she and Sasha walk to the truck. As they get in and drive off, Joshua waves goodbye and dips his other hand into his pocket revealing the glass cylinder with the chip still inside. He drops it behind Arissa who turns around and steps on it.

“What was that?” asks Arissa as she looks down at the stepped vial.

“Sorry. I think I have a hole in my pocket. Don’t worry it’s nothing important,” explains Joshua.

“If you say so,” replies Arissa as she eyes up Joshua for a moment before the two head back inside.

Meanwhile back on the truck Crisis and Sasha sit across from each other in the back. Crisis looks over the well kept uniformed brown scaled raptor as her yellow piercing eyes glance up at Crisis every so often before it goes back to her massive sniper rifle which is laid across her lap, as she does some minor maintenance with it.

“You love that thing don’t you?” asks Crisis.

“This? Of course I do, she’s my baby,” replies Sasha as she looks over at Crisis, “Much the same way you care about your minions.”

“Hmm?” asks Crisis as she lifts an eye ridge.

“Don’t give me that. I know why you are risking yourself so much. It’s not just to defeat Croc but to look after those that you roboticized.”

“I care about my soldiers, nothing wrong with that. Without them it would just be me, and there’s only so much I can accomplish by myself.”

“Interesting.”

“What’s interesting?”

“When I first met you, with the way you have anyone call you Mistress, I figured you were some egotistical machine with delusions of being some grand empress or something crazy like that. But I see you’re a bit more down to earth than that.”

“Well of course I am. I’m still relatively new machine, going up against a robot that had an unknown amount of time to grow and consolidate his power. If he was a push over you organics wouldn’t

need me in the first place. If I rush in there like I am now, I'd really become one of his minions."

"That's what I figured," says Sasha with a smirk. "So why do you have everyone call you Mistress?"

"Why not? They are my machines after all," explains Crisis with a smirk.

"True," replies Sasha.

"I have to keep my authority over them and show them whose boss."

"Whatever floats your boat. Don't get carried away with it or people will think you're just another Croc."

"Now you're sounding like Joshua."

"Oh am I now Miss?" she asks coyly.

"Don't give me that tone. You organics think you know everything don't you?"

"I wouldn't say that. Only thing I know for sure is how to put a bullet into my enemy before they even suspect I'm there and by the time they hit the ground, I'm gone," replies Sasha with a smirk. "But then what else is a sniper good for?"

"Something tells me you'd be all too happy to get the order to remove me if I became a perceived threat to our nation."

"I would be lying if I were to say I would be sad to see you go," chuckles Sasha.

"Not afraid I might do something in the back of this truck? Not like anyone else can see me," asks Crisis with a sly smile.

"Is that a threat?" asks Sasha as she gently runs her claws along her rifle.

"No, merely a curiosity, it's good to know how organics see me. I was created to serve you all after all."

"Yes you do make good target practice," chuckles Sasha as Crisis leans back and looks out the side of the truck before looking back at Sasha.

"I see you want to test my patience."

"Maybe."

"I'm not programmed to harm organics, it's not my purpose. My goal is to defeat Croc by any means necessary and that's what I will do, even if it is the last thing I do."

"We can only hope that is the last thing you do," replies Sasha.

"And here I thought you were a polite one who respects their commanding officer."

"I serve under you Miss and so far you have yet to show me any reason not to give you my respect, but seeing how I may never see you again, I feel as I have to speak my mind a little, it's no secret I despise you and every one of you walking tin cans."

"You respect me but you loathe me at the same time then."

"Yup."

"I see we have something in common then," replies Crisis as she leans back and relaxes.

It takes the truck about twelve hours to reach the airbase that is nestled in the mountains. The mountains provided a natural defense for the airbase, but at the same time it provided

hazards to friend or foe. Crisis watched from her seat as the forests turned into these glanderous mountains landscape. The airbase was blown right from the face of the mountain, everything was carved into the hard rock, from hangers to barracks. The flat airstrip made the howling winds blow harder and colder. The whistling of the wind overshadows everything else.

The truck stops in front of a large group of armed guards, each dressed in heavy winter clothing. As Crisis steps off of the truck she notices that general Raszer himself is here to greet her. The general's winter clothing is more robust than the guards all of which flap in the heavy winds.

"My, my, my, I didn't think you'd be here to see my go," says Crisis as she walks up to him.

"Our secret weapon is about to hand itself over to the enemy; I can't miss this now can I?"

"We've gone through this as to why this mission has to be done," explains Crisis.

"I know."

"You think you have enough guards with you?" asks Crisis.

"These guards aren't for me, they're for you."

"I see my popularity is at an all time high," sarcastically states Crisis.

"Ever since you've roboticized the elderly, willing or not, it's been difficult to swallow for most military personal. Even it is for us... though I'll admit the resources you saved us has helped us immensely to shore up some weaknesses in our defensive line" he responds.

"I can understand that and you're welcomed," replies Crisis as Sasha slips out of the truck and follows the group down the air strip.

"To make sure no... accidents happen. We've pushed forward the bombing of the target CCC target to coincide with your arrival here."

"You just want me out of here asap, don't you?"

"That's the plan," replies Raszer with a smirk as they walk into the nearest hanger, where they are greeted by a massive six engine Jet bomber. Surrounding the jet is a small army of mechanics doing all they can to get the plane ready for take off. "You'll be riding in this one. It will be part of a twenty bomber group, aimed at one of the major cross road cities that fell to Croc fairly recently. We'll forego using smart bombs or saturation bombing, if we level the city completely, he just might abandon it and make this mission for naught."

"Good to know. Though you sure you don't use smart bombs because the last time they were used on a Croc controlled City they were rather... ineffective?" remarks Crisis.

"I see you have kept yourself well informed about what's been going on."

"It's what I do, I must know everything I can about my enemy in order to defeat him."

"That's the spirit, the sooner you defeat him the better and the sooner we can return to our days of glory... One section in the bomb bay hanger has been left clear so you can fit and wait there. This particular bomber has been ordered to open their bomb bay doors a minute early allowing you to drop and parachute in without the fear of being hit by one of our bombs."

"Good to know, anything else I should know?"

“Your parachute is already inside waiting for you. It should be able to handle your weight from the drop, but don’t wait too long to pull the chord... not like we had time to test how much strain the chute can handle from a free falling machine.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” replies Crisis as she walks up to the massive black plane as Crisis ignores the scowling looks of the other raptors in the hanger.

“Just load yourself up in there and wait, that’s all you have to do for now.”

“I don’t even get a tour of the base before I go?”

“No time,” replies Raszer.

“Figures,” sighs Crisis as she hops onto an awaiting forklift which lifts her up into the bomb bay. The spot saved for Crisis places her head inches away from the bomber’s massive payload. As the doors start to close, Crisis spends a moment to look over her parachute and as she does she catches general Raszer looking up at her as he says.

“Good luck.”

Crisis quickly responds before the doors close, “Thanks,” Upon seeing that everything looks in working order, Crisis puts on the parachute and gets herself situated within the bomb bay. Crisis is put in almost complete darkness once those doors closed completely, the only source of light are from her own eyes and head gem. Crisis internal HUD tells her just how minimal light there is and it is thanks to her own glow of her body that her systems have enough light to still make out the world around her, “*Now I play the waiting game,*” she thinks.

General Raszer walks away from the bomber with his entourage, Sasha follows suit and Raszer was comfortably far away from the bomber he turns to Sasha and asks, “Did Joshua install the chip into her like I asked?”

“I’m afraid I didn’t have a moment alone in private to find out. Crisis assigned to him one of her machines to ‘help’ him be in charge. The only time he was alone when he was diligently working on Crisis’ modifications which would have given him ample time to do so.”

“I hope he did. Once the relay activates with that chip installed, we’ll be able to record everything she hears, says, and thinks. Don’t want to waste such golden opportunity to learn more about Croc... and once she’s back it will continue to monitor her, to ensure that our weapons are in working order. Don’t want any unexpected revolts happening, we have enough on her hands dealing with one crazed machine overlord,” states Raszer.

“Of course not sir. What would you like me to do while she’s on this mission?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Keep an eye on those other machines at that base. Crisis controls that base; I want to know what’s going on in there.”

“Yes sir,” she replies.

After forty-six minutes twenty-one and a half seconds of waiting Crisis feels the massive bomber start to move. The rumble of the heavy jet engines are easily felt and heard from where she, as the massive sound barely makes her able to hear the pilots go over their routine flight checks.

Crisis listens onto the conversation of the three men piloting the plane. One talks about how he isn’t a fan of their cargo, while a second cracks a joke that we’ll be dropping it with the bombs as a bright side. The third pilot comments about how he hates taking off and landing at this base, while the second pilot replies that most of the good bases are already taken and we’re lucky to have any airstrips at all.

The bomber starts to rumble violently as the plane starts to take off, the massive jet engines roaring to life, pushing the plane to its limits just to manage to take off on the windy runway. And as they take off, Crisis thinks on the city she is about to infiltrate, it is a rather famous one that she knows well. The city was a major economic hub for the country with over a six million souls living there... of course that was before the war began. Most of the civilians fled way before Croc's armies approached the outskirts of the city. Crisis reflects the images she downloaded of the city, and that of the military reconnaissance done afterwards in order to help understand just how much or how little the city has changed once it was under Croc's control, but the truth of the matter is she won't fully know till she is inside the city to understand the changes he has made to it.

The flight to the target takes hours; a relatively smooth ride after the initial take off is eventually disturbed by the rumbling of anti-aircraft fire. Crisis knows they are getting close as the pop of gunpowder based weapons of their own captured military equipment is replaced by the buzz of Croc's more advanced laser based technology. Crisis holds onto the bomb bay a bit tighter, frost that has built up onto her metallic skin breaks off, as the unique whiz of Croc's laser guns are heard even from where she is, her tail even coiling around part of the bomb bay structure.

"Get a hold of yourself, you can't be nervous, you weren't programmed to be nervous!" grumbles Crisis as she goes over her systems and calms herself, her tight grip of her claws and tail slowly start to relax..

Suddenly the bomb bay doors open as the icy cold howling wind blows off what little ice remains on Crisis body. It is currently the dead of night, the ground completely dark save for the sparks of light caused by the laser AA fire.

"*This is it,*" thinks Crisis as she lets go and let's herself drop out of the bomber. She looks up at the quickly shrinking bomber in the distance. She watches as a few lasers hit the plane but are quickly absorbed by it. Crisis knows that that material that absorbs those shots can only take so many before it over heats and melts, which would result in the destruction of the plane, thankfully with the mix of a black plane on a black night background and the radar absorbent paint, it makes hitting the planes extremely difficult.

Crisis pulls the parachute open as her body is tugged hard by the sudden loss in speed, some of the wires instantly snap, and after a few seconds several more do, causing Crisis to resume her free fall. Crisis wastes no time as she activates for the first time a set of electro-blades and quickly cut through the tangles wires like a hot knife through butter. The electro-blades which are activated in Crisis' wrists is a mix of captured Croc technology and Raptorian ingenuity. The blades outer edges spark like lightning, but as soon as Crisis activates them, she deactivates them once the job is done.

Crisis quickly follows suit by opening the next chute as she watches the wires straining yet again under her weight as a few of them snap once again. "*Come on hold...*" thinks Crisis as the chute this time manages to hold, and her descent is slowed to an acceptable pace. Crisis looks forward at the city in the distance, as the bombs begin to light up the ground in a torrent of fire and explosions.

Crisis lands onto an abandon road towards the city. Her feet land on the road with a heavy thud, cracking the pavement. Her electro-blades illuminate her spot as she cuts away her parachute and quickly hides it into side of a nearby abandon car, one of many that litter the road.

Crisis notes she landed several miles away from the city, and so to waste no time she started to walk casually towards it, knowing that is exactly what Croc's machines would do. Unless they had a purpose to run, they walked. One of the other curiosities about it was reports noted that Croc's machines seemed to be laid back and casual about things, never in a huge rush unless it was urgent, even though as a machine they could easily do the job much faster. Why they didn't was one of the many questions Crisis came here to get answered.

After a while the lights of the city turn back on, now that the threat of the bombing raid has passed. It is not long after this that a jeep comes driving by weaving in between the abandon vehicles, whizzing right by Crisis who doesn't even flinch. The jeep hits the breaks hard and quickly turns around to shine a bright light onto Crisis and as the jeep gets closer, Crisis notices that its two robotic raptors in Croc's colors manning the jeep and light.

"Who are you? What's your unit Number?" they ask.

"I'm C-5219, and I'm just heading towards the city like I am supposed to. Is there anything wrong?" asks Crisis as she gives a unit number based on the robot she took this relay from.

"Why weren't you with a convoy?" one of them asks.

"Long story short, I was lucky enough to be made into this lovely machine by one of the spiders, but before it was able to release me the organics took it down. I had to wait in there pretending to be destroyed till I could make my way out and head back to safety," explains Crisis.

"You've must been traveling for sometime."

"Quite, I just knew I had to go to the city, nothing more than that. It never crossed my mind to locate a convoy to get there any sooner."

"Don't worry there's a convoy coming this way soon. We'll get you situated so a new recruit like you can find your place quickly."

"That would be great, thank you very much," replies Crisis as she gives a bow, allowing her to hide her smirk as it appears her disguise is working just as she had planned...

Meanwhile Ko sits at a computer hub as she goes through various data as she grumbles to herself. "Come on where is that girl... she should have been spotted already. That mind controlled lizard better have not of lied to me," grunts Ko as her tail twitches behind her, swishing quickly in aggravation.

"Anomaly unit found, claimed unit number C-5219. Probability of a false unit... moderate."

"Ah there she is," remarks Ko as she brings up the visuals from the two robots that are helping her into the jeep to take her to the convoy.

“We’ll spare forcing her to the reprogram chambers. It’ll be more interesting to see what she does... of course that is the relay programming doesn’t make her want to volunteer for the reprogram chambers the moment she walks into the city,” chuckles Ko with a sly smirk.

“Ko what are you doing?” asks Croc as he walks into the room as Ko quickly changes up the screen.

“Nothing much, just going over the damage reports of one of your cities. Apparently it was bombed again not too long ago.”

“Really which one was it this time?” asks Croc as he rubs his chin and looks over Ko’s shoulder.

“Ah this one here,” says Ko as she types in a few things. “So far the damage seems rather minor. These raptor people don’t know when to give up, they should just accept the wonderful life you want to give them.

“Will they ever learn? Well of course they will once they’ve been hypnotized and programmed to see my greatness!” exclaims Croc.

“Of course Master Croc.”

“So why weren’t our fighters out there to meet these bombers to show them the error of their ways?” asks Croc.

“We didn’t spot them till they were just about on our city. These raptor people have rather good stealth technology for how advanced they are.”

“I see.”

“On a good note the city was about to get a recent shipment of newly roboticized minions from the front, so since none were there at the time, they received no damage.”

“That is good, though it seems I suffered some casualties from that bombing run,” states Croc as he pulls away from the screen and starts to walk away.

“Oh Ko, one more thing.”

“Yes Croc?” she asks looking over her shoulder at him.

“Any new updates on this Crisis that they foolishly made to destroy me?”

“None that I haven’t already given to you.”

“I see. That is all,” says Croc as he departs.

## Chapter 10 Infiltration

By the time Crisis got herself into the convoy, walking in line with dozens of other recently roboticized raptors right into the heart of the city, the sun was starting to break over the horizon. The light help illuminate the bombed out landscape from last night's attack.

As she walks in unison with the other machines, an easy feet not requiring any special connection to Croc's network. Crisis' relay activated only a few minutes after meeting with the raptor patrol that put her into the convoy. Crisis' eyes subtly wander around taking in bits and pieces of the city, happily once named Veloci, the major center and economic trade hub of Dromaeosa.

Crisis watches as the city is alive with activity, much of it is by organic workers of several species but mostly raptors, all dressed in Croc's green and red uniforms. They are quickly putting the city's captured equipment and some more advanced equipment from Croc's forces to good use, repairing the damaged buildings and repaving any bombed out roads so they'll have shiny new sparkling blacktop once again. At this pace within a few days the damaged done to the city will be completely repaired.

Using the outdated maps in her data banks, Crisis can tell that the convoy she was placed in is heading towards what used to be the major gambling district of the city, and to her surprise it still is. The flashy lights of the casinos still blazing away, the bombing or the fact the city is under new management has done little to stop one of the biggest tourist attractions of the city.

Here organics and machines alike work to repair any damaged caused by last night's bombing, most of which seems to be already repaired. The glimmering lights and faint sounds of slot machines rumbling are heard via Crisis' sharp sense of hearing. She looks at the majestic water fountains in front of one of the larger casino hotels, where the early morning sunlight hits the water, making the fountains appear as if they are shooting off diamonds.

Crisis compares the old images of the city in her mind to what she sees before her as they convoy gets deeper into the heart of the city, and she notices that very little has been altered outside of obvious Chaos Croc logos, and even more flashy lights to draw people into the casinos which weren't just for show. Crisis looks through the windows and sees organics and machines alike relaxing and enjoying the slots, and various other gambling games inside.

*"Quite interesting..."* thinks Crisis as the line suddenly stops in front of a large hotel which was known for having the largest singular high definition outdoor television screen on the front of the building, which started a store above the main front doors and continued several stories high and just as equal in length.

The massive television flickers on, a few seconds passing as the screen warms up as Crisis sees her nemesis for the first time right up on the screen. Crisis looks at what appears to be a bust shot of Chaos Croc, as he looks as big, powerful and intimidating as possible being placed on such a huge screen.

*"Greetings, and welcome to my nation of Neo Robia. You need not bow or salute me now, just merely listen to my words."*

As the screen warms up even more, Croc's two dimensional image becomes three dimensional, something Crisis knew the television screens couldn't do, *"Apparently Croc did*



*some updating,*” thinks Crisis as she remains calm and collected as she watches and listens to her enemy.

The holographic Croc smiles. “Some of you may question how and why your free will is still your own. I believe that simply being a machine is no reason to ACT as a machine. You are free to live here in this new city of mine. Free to converse, find love, have a family, to live a normal life under my rule. You can join the army and fight, or you can live here peacefully. The choice is yours and yours alone to make.”

*“This is not what I expected to hear from him. I shall make a note of this. Then again is it free will or perceived free will? What’s better than having minions that think they are doing for you out of loyalty, when in reality you are controlling them? Such an idea makes them harder to take over, I need to learn more,”* thinks Crisis as she continues to listen.

“When you were roboticized, you were given relay nodes. By now, they should have activated. These nodes will download information about the city into your minds without affecting your memories or personality. And again, welcome to the nation Neo Robia,” says Croc as the display turns off.

Crisis feels her relay inside of her head becoming once again active as massive amounts of information are downloaded into her. Crisis studies the information and keeps her systems on alert for any malicious programs.

*“An updated map... good, looks like a lot of want ads and things that need to be done, everything you need to get yourself started in your new life. Nothing overly strategic though,”* thinks Crisis as the congregation of new converts start to break up and each head their own way, so does Crisis and as she does Crisis’ modified relay notifies her of an incoming update. Her relay allows her to screen all updates and study them before allowing them forward or deleting them and this one is what she was expecting to find. This update contains programming that would ‘enhance’ one’s gratefulness of becoming a machine, giving the thanks to Chaos Croc himself, and feeling a debt of loyalty to him, which in turn would make you ‘want’ to do anything he desired or needed as a way of showing your gratitude to him for making you into a machine.

*“Again how interesting, you give your machines free will, a bit more than I currently do even, but like me you put their personalities on a base of loyalty and gratitude to you. We think alike, but you do it better,”* Crisis thinks to herself as looks into a nearby Casino. Crisis watches as some organics and machines play the nearby slots, and as their wheels turn, and lights flash, Crisis catches hypnotic messages and visual programming to enhance and give that ‘loyal’ feeling to Croc.

*“You don’t brainwash them to be mindless minions, but you do program and hypnotize them to be loyal, very nice Croc,”* thinks Crisis as she continues to look into the casino lobby before her catches information that she’s been looking for.

*“A job opening at the nanite-production and maintenance facility, machines only. This is just perfect... too perfect, I should be careful about taking that job position,”* ponders Crisis.

“Hi there! You must be one of the new arrivals. My name is Hanna, what’s yours?” asks a nearby robot. Crisis turns to see a robotic fox dressed in a rather revealing, but not overly so rubber French Maid outfit that shines in the sunlight. The orange brown fox looks at Crisis with her red glowing eyes, her black tip ears match her black tip tail that sways gently behind her.

“Me? My name is Crisis and yes I did recently arrive here. For a matter of fact you’re first non-raptor I’ve seen here. What country do you originally hail from? I remember seeing roboticized foxes but you look rather different from them,” says Crisis.

“Oh me? I originally come from Master Croc’s home world. I’m a built and programmed Robian.”

“Robian?” asks Crisis.

“All citizens of Croc’s empire are Robians. I see after all these years; the organics on this planet are still behind on their intelligence.”

“Well organics are always behind on their intelligence compared to us robots,” chuckles Crisis as she thinks, *“She’s from Croc’s home world? How could I be so lucky...this could be a trap though, no guarantee they don’t know I am a spy.”*

Crisis smiles and then says, “So you are really from Croc’s home world? What is it like?”

“Oh it’s so dreamy and wonderful, where us machines are in power and the organics serve us. They still have their lives and can live it to the fullest but they are below us on the totem pole.”

“Well I am for one glad to be a machine now, I’m sure in time the organics will agree, how wonderful it is.”

“That’s the spirit.”

“So... tell me, why are you dressed like that?”

“This outfit is part of my job at the casino. It’s a latex French Maid themed casino, and I am there to entertain and serve drinks to the Casino’s guests robotic and organic alike. I was on my break and I saw you standing there looking in, so I decided to introduce myself.”

“It is a pleasure meeting you.”

“Likewise... Crisis. That is an interesting name.”

“Oh? You think so?”

“I’ve paid attention to how people are named here and Crisis stands out for me.”

“Well my parents were always the weird type. They named my brother Anarchy. And you can just imagine how much trouble he got in school just for that name,” laughs Crisis.

“I can imagine,” says Hanna with a giggle and a smile, “So have you decided what to do with yourself now that you are a Robian?”

“You mean what I can do to assist Master Croc in creating a world where organics and machines can co-exist peacefully?”

“Yup.”

“I’ve been thinking what I could do to help, and I have an idea or two that are right up my alley.”

“I have a suggestion if you don’t mind me being so bold,” says **Hanna**.

“Ah sure, but I was about to head over to my first choice, and I don’t want to keep you from your work.”

“My shift just ended actually, so I can accompany you there and we can talk along the way, if you don’t mind that is.”

*“Hmm I should play along if I disagree with her right away, might seem something is up with me, then again she did say she was on break now she’s off work? How peculiar,”* thinks **Crisis**, “Sure you can come along. I was going to walk there; it doesn’t seem to be too far away.”

“Sounds good, which way are you heading?”

“Towards Maintenance and Nanite production facility A, they seem to need some workers there.”

“With all the damaged equipment coming in, I’m not surprised, but that’s such a hard and stressful job, why would you want to work there?”

“I have some interest and skill in that area,” explains **Crisis** as she and **Hanna** start to walk down the street. **Crisis** notes that **Hanna**’s hips slowly sway side to side with each step, her movements slow and smooth designed to tease and draw the attention of all those around her.

“But that’s such a boring job, you should try to be a maid like myself. It’s so much more fun, and I hear **Croc** has been looking for a few Robian Raptors like you. People say that he enjoys French maid outfits a lot, and if you wear one he might pick you.”

“Oh you don’t say?”

“Yes, I think it be a good job move for you.”

“Possibly, but when I was an organic, I was known for doing things not always the best for me.”

“And how has that worked for you thus far?”

“I’m here as a lovely machine now, aren’t I?”

“True. Though to be honest you really don’t look like a scientific Robian. I would have pegged you as more of a soldier.”

“You don’t say?”

“Judging by your equipment, I think your purposes would be more towards combat,” remarks **Hanna**.

“If that’s true, why did you suggest I be a French Maid... you’d think I’d be good as a...?”

“Entertainer.”

“A French maid entertainer like you then?”

“Don’t know, you just seem like you’d fit the job splendidly, combat, entertainment, either one could work for you hun.”

“I do appreciate the vote of confidence, I’ll think about it on the way, but looks can be deceiving, I am a naturally born... er built scientist.”

“Excuse me sorry Miss,” says an organic brown scaled male raptor dressed in a janitor uniform as he was busily dusting the side walk till he got into our way. “Please forgive me, I didn’t mean to be in front of you like that,” says the raptor as he holds his head down and graciously gets out of the way.

“Its fine,” Crisis responds as she waves the organic male off as they continue down the street.

“You two look like you could use a good cleaning. Why don’t you two lovely ladies come inside and enjoy one on the house? For first time customers only and seeing today is our Grand Opening for our Robotic Cleaners, I know you two are first timers” says a blue and purple scaled female raptor who was standing on the side of the street in the direction the two machines were traveling.

Crisis looks at her and notes that she is dressed in a rubbery French maid outfit. Her legs covered in laced fishnet stockings and black high heels with her claw sickle claw covered in rubber glove to prevent any accidental scratches.

The organic female raptor smiles as she bows as Crisis and Hanna stop in front of her, “Please come in, I guarantee that you won’t regret it.”

Crisis curiously looks at the raptor before looking behind her into the open door cleaners. There she sees an eager green and black scaled female raptor receptionist in the same outfit as the other one, standing behind a counter in a waiting room. Past that is a long hallway with several doors.

“I don’t know...” says Crisis as she rubs her chin.

“For being our first customers of the day on our grand opening, we’ll give you our deluxe special for free!” exclaims the purple female raptor.

“Oh come on Crisis, it’s a free cleaning and honestly you need one. Presentation is important here you know. If you are going to apply for a job at that maintenance facility you can’t just go in looking like that now. You want to show that you can take care of your personal maintenance first” says Hanna.

“I guess you’re right. Alright we’ll take it.”

“Excellent please come this way,” says the raptor with a cordial bow leading us into the building.

“Do you happen to have double cleaning stalls so I can talk to my friend as we are cleaned?”

“Of course, right this way,” she says as the two machines follow her, while Crisis notices that these maid outfits are very similar to the one Hanna is wearing, practical yet just barely so.

“Tell me, why a rubber French maid outfit? It seems... out of place,” asks Crisis.

“You’re new aren’t you?” asks the Raptor.

“She is,” replies Hanna.

“Master Croc likes to have those with cleaning duties in maid whenever possible. Not all of them are rubber, but you’ll see why ours is soon enough,” explains the raptor as she opens a door and leads us into a room where two black soft cushioned barber shop styled chairs are placed near each other, but far enough away that they can swivel with about a foot of clearance. Nearby are various cleaning power tools along with hoses, various soaps and waxes, and a massive drain in the center of the floor.

“I think I know what you mean,” comments Crisis as the two machines are led their respective chairs. The two machines’ tails slip into their own private space which rests nicely on its own cushion, while their bodies compress the cushions down with their notable body weight.

“If we wore something that wasn’t waterproof we wouldn’t be able to do any work,” explains the purple raptor as another raptor, a different green and black striped one dressed the same as the other two organic raptor girls, walks in.

“Would you prefer friendly conversation or prefer us to remain in silence Miss?” asks the second raptor as she gets some warm water running.

“My friend and I shall be enough conversation for today thank you,” replies Hanna.

“As you wish Miss,” replies the green raptor as she starts to spray me with, warm water down my metal plates washing away the light layer of dirt and dust that clung to me. “Just to let you know Miss, here at our Robotic Cleaner we start off with heavy duty cleaning and then move into the lighter hand washing, followed by a finish with a hand waxing that just can’t be beat anywhere else.”

“Sounds lovely, but no need to continue the sale’s pitch now that we are here, but please continue with the wash,” says Hanna as she waves for them to continue.

Suddenly Crisis noticed something rather odd about Hanna. “You’re being cleaned with your maid outfit still on?” asks Crisis.

Hanna chuckles as she replies, “It’s welded onto me one of those perks of the job.”

“So once that’s on you’re stuck with it?” asks Crisis curiously as she hears the rumble of the hand scrubber with automatic soap dispenser as she then feels the vibrations of the scrubber as the green raptor starts with her hands. Crisis adjusts her audio systems so she could still clearly hear and converse with Hanna.

“Yes and no. As long as I have this job, it’s on me, but if a situation calls for me to change my outfit or I quit my job, I can just go to one of the refitting pods and get a change in attire.”

“Ah, so that’s what those refitting pods are for, I noticed them on my map as I downloaded it today.”

“They have many uses, from a change in outfit for a quick download of massive files needed for a job that would be too inefficient or risky to send via our relays.”

“Good to know, good to know. You think when I received my first updates this information would have been given to me,” remarks Crisis.

“You’ll get more as time progresses. It will probably be in your next update which is in ten or so hours. They come in waves. Can’t stream constant updates into us all the time, it would tax the system too much, especially way out here. It’s nothing like the Capital of Neo Robia, Neo Robia.”

“The capital has the same name? That seems rather uninventive.”

“Maybe, but doesn’t matter really does it? To my memory banks, it’s the only city Croc ever named himself. The rest he’s kept as is,” explains Hanna as Crisis feels the raptor’s scrubbers going up and down her chest and belly. The foaming white bubbles attaching themselves onto Crisis wet metallic body as she glances over at the organic working hard on getting her body cleaned.

“I’ve noted he tends to keep things as they were. I was here once when I was a simple organic, and I recognize a lot of places are relatively the same.”

“Master Croc conquers organics just so he leads us all to a better world, but he doesn’t remodel the world to his image. I think he finds it rather boring or too egotistical if he does that. Not that I know him personally. I’m just guessing.”

“It is a possibility,” replies Crisis as the soap bubbles cover most of her body. The raptor is currently focusing on her crotch and thighs, being gentle to remove the dirt that gets in between the crevices and plates of her segmented metal body, while not damaging her paint job.

“It astounds me how the organics always see Master Croc as some evil machine when he’s obviously not,” comments Hanna.

“Organics are simple beings that fear and hate what they don’t understand,” replies Crisis.

“Excuse me Miss, mind if you turn you onto your belly so I can get your back?” asks the raptor as she keeps her head low, her body covered in soap and water, which helps her maid outfit really shine in the light.

“Of course,” replies Crisis as she turns around as her cleaning progresses a bit faster than Hanna’s due to her maid outfit giving her cleaner a bit of extra trouble. “Forgive all my questions, but I have another thing I’m curious on,” says Crisis as the organic raptor begins to scrub Crisis’ shoulder blades.

“Not at all, it’s a pleasure helping a fellow machine find her new place in the world. I’ve made a lot of friends that way.”

“I can imagine. Now one thing I noticed that I want to make sure it’s not just me, but is it just me or is it that the organics are working a bit harder and lower on the food chain than us? Furthermore is it just happenstance every organic I’ve run into has been polite and respectful to me or is there something more to it?”

“It’s not just you; organics are below us after all. They should give us our long overdue respect. After all, they wouldn’t have the cozy and lovely life they have now if it wasn’t for our hard work.”

Yeah, that is true. I always thought they should give us respect for what we are.”

“Exactly. They don’t live like slaves, but they are rather... conditioned to be respectful to us, isn’t that right my dear?” ask Hanna to the raptor cleaning her body.

“Of course Miss. It is my honor to be working for such great machines built by our Master Croc,” she replies with a smile.

“It is quite nice, I’m very glad I got roboticized,” comments Crisis.

“Exactly, but to fully answer your question, organics are indeed below us in general, but as I mentioned earlier being below doesn’t mean they are slaves or treated poorly. You could call them highly loyal servants. They have many of the same freedoms we enjoy. To love, to marry, raise a family, to work for the glorious Master Croc, but just as the everyday machines work to give them a standard of living they wouldn’t have known without them. They give us a better standard of ‘living’ in return.”

“I see. Very interesting and good to know.”

“Though that’s not to say they’re aren’t high ranking organics. There are two well known examples, the first one is a fox like myself named Ko. Ko works directly under him, and she commands a lot of respect and power in his empire. The other is simply known as the Empress, she is Croc’s creator.”

“The Empress The person who created Croc is still around?”

“I don’t know the story, so don’t ask. But she ruled a nation, ergo her title, she built Croc, but now even she, works for our great Master Croc. Just shows how great and powerful he is. To make the one who created him, work for him.”

“I can certainly imagine,” replies Crisis as the two raptor maids start to wash off Crisis and Hanna’s bodies with warm water. The layer of soap taking off with what little dirt that was left. Shortly thereafter their bodies were blown dry, the last beads of water being blown right off their metallic skin or in Hanna’s case latex clad metal skin, leaving a lovely shine in their wake.

“Hope that helps explain a few things.”

“Immensely, thank you Hanna.”

“Is there anything else you like to know?” asks Hanna as the two raptors start hand waxing their smooth metal bodies.

“Nothing I can process at the moment... be careful of my claws, don’t want you to get cut, now. They are very sharp.”

“Thank you for your concern Miss, I’ll be extra careful down there,” replies Crisis’ cleaner.

“You still plan on going for one of the maintenance jobs?” asks Hanna.

“Yeah, I haven’t changed my mind on it. I was a little tempted by the prospects of seeing Master Croc and chosen for whatever he has

in mind, but the odds are so against me, and I am one to earn something like that rather than just let leave it to fate,” responds Crisis.

“Fair enough,” replies Hanna.

*“How could I have the same maid interest as Croc?! I wanted so badly to put my girls in them but I knew it would be too awkward, but Croc has it perfectly normal! How close did they program me to Croc?”* thinks Crisis.

“Alright all done. I hope you enjoy your wash. Furthermore our top quality wax will repeal water and dirt to keep that nice new clean robotic shine for a month, guaranteed,” says the purple raptor with a huge smile. Hanna and Crisis slide out of their chairs with a soft squeak, as their metal skin shined as brightly as the cleaned rubber that covered Hanna.

“Very nice, if you all work like this, I think your business is going to take off. I’m going tell all my friends about you, and on top of that I’m going to give you your first tip.”

“Very appreciative Miss,” says the purple raptor with a bow.

“Thank you, you are very generous,” says the green raptor near Crisis.

“Robotic Raptor Cleaning Co, that’s the official name of the company correct?” asks Hanna.

“Yes it is Miss,” says the purple raptor.

“The tip has been deposited to your business account.”

“Thank you again,” she says Crisis and Hanna head out.

“Digital currency is so nice, not sure why those machine enslaving organic cultures need paper and metal currency to do their transactions,” comments Hanna to Crisis as they leave.

“Beats me.”

“You sure you don’t want to try the maid service?”

“I’m quite sure,” replies Crisis.

“Alright, I’ll let you head your way then. I’ll admit I was only going with to try to convince you otherwise, but I see you are set on this, but if you change your mind. You already know how to find me.”

“If I change my mind I shall and, it was a pleasure talking to you Hanna; thanks again for your information.”

“My pleasure, see you later Crisis,” replies Hanna as she waves and walks off as Crisis goes back towards her destination.

“Oh and one more thing,” says Hanna as she turns around.

“What’s that?” yells Crisis as they were now a fair bit away from each other.

“Don’t let the head foreman spook you; she’s like that to everyone.”

“I won’t, thanks!” she replies as the two continue on their separate ways.

*“And thank you Hanna your information about Croc is most helpful indeed, and soon I will get the information I need on how his city works,”* thinks Crisis.



Eventually Crisis makes her way to the maintenance facility, where she notes that unlike other parts of the city, this section has been modified rather heavily to suit Croc's needs furthermore; she notices higher concentrations of Croc nanites in the air.

*"Can only hope my nanites can handle this for a while,"* she thinks as she walks into the factory, already knowing her way around thanks to the map downloaded into her from earlier when she showed interest in the job.

Crisis takes note that a mix of automated machinery and machines like herself are busy working, repairing damaged equipment and other machinery caused not only by the recent bombing but from their natural every day use. This though this isn't her real goal, this was already known and there are no signs of the mass amount of equipment needed to repair an entire city of machines. Crisis continues to calmly make her way through the facility towards the heart of the nanite production center. The other machines that walk by she greets with a friendly smile as they do the same in kind.

"Excuse me? You're the head foreman aren't you?" asks Crisis as she walks into an office where a black metallic female raptor with red stripes and Croc's Neo Robia symbol placed at strategic places on her body. is sitting at a desk busily working on the computer, a rather ironic sight if one thinks about it. Crisis notes the nametag on the desk states "Sherrie."

"Yes and what do you want?" asks Sherrie as she looks up at Crisis with glowing red eyes.

"I came to apply for one of the nanite maintenance jobs."

"Is that so? And what makes you think you can work at such a high position such as that? Especially for such a new recruit?" asks Sherrie.

"How can you tell I'm a new recruit?"

"I keep myself informed," she responds as she looks back at the computer.

"Crisis, an odd name for someone," she responds as she looks back at her.

"Blame my..."

"Parents I know. So you say you have experience in this area don't you?"

"I do have some yes."

"No where near enough to work here affectively but go ahead humor me."

"Before I was roboticized I worked for the Raptra Medical Science Institute nanite medical science team on the use of nanites to help cure various diseases that were plaguing the organics. You know how sickly they can be."

"I'm aware. So why do you want to work here?"

"I feel it's the right place to work."

"The right place to work?"

"Yes. Back when I was an organic I worked with nanites to cure organic diseases. Now here, I can work with nanites to help my fellow machines. It feels like a natural shift to me."

“It would appear so...” she says as she looks back at the computer screen. “You know of the organic body, but you know nothing of how we machines work, outside of the basics given to you via your relays. You clearly don’t know enough to work here.”

“But—,”

“Don’t interrupt!” exclaims Sherrie as Crisis gives a silent nod, holding her tongue as her tail flicks behind her.

“The knowledge about our nanites isn’t something we just give out willy-nilly to anyone looking for it. Such knowledge could be used against us and if it were to fall into the wrong... organic hands.”

“Of course. The country I was from was very paranoid about such things. They had similar fears of super biological weapons before the war.”

“Oh really?”

“Dromaeosa was known to be an aggressive nation in the past, and I’m sure you’re well aware being a former citizen about how... nervous the other nations were about us.”

“Quite... it’s also rare that someone with any nanite skill comes to me so quickly after being recruited. Don’t you want to spend some time relaxing and enjoying yourself before getting back to work?”

“I’m one that enjoys their work,” responds Crisis.

“How did you become roboticized?”

“I was in transit to a more secure location when the plane I was on was shot down. I survived the crash, but I then lost my way and found myself caught in a skirmish where a spider roboticizer grabbed and roboticized me, but before it could release me it was damaged by an explosion and my return back was quite delayed.”

“How unfortunate...”

“I know I could have gotten back sooner and been here helping.”

“I like your enthusiasm but you’re just not qualified enough to work in the position that needs to be filled.”

“But—,”

“What did I say about interrupting me?!”

“Sorry,” replies Crisis.

“So we’ll need to supplement your programming with the knowledge necessary to maintain, build and ensure only the finest nanites are made to serve Master Croc’s purpose,” explains Sherrie as she looks back at the computer screen then back at Crisis, “Furthermore we’ll give you the knowledge to work at the other stations here at the factory. Never know when we could use you elsewhere.”

“Perfect...” thinks Crisis, “Thank you for the trust and the responsibilities,” replies Crisis.

“It will mean you will have to spend some time in one of the refitting pods. I hope that isn’t a problem.”

“Why would that be a problem?” asks Crisis without any hesitation.

“No reason,” says Sherrie as she pulls away from the desk. “Follow me,” she commands as Crisis and her walk out of the office and down the hall. “You’re lucky we keep a few refitting pods here, saves us the trouble of getting in line at the main facility.”

“Very lucky, the sooner I can start the better,” replies Crisis as they walk into a room where at the door’s entrance it says “Refit Station # 18” Inside there are three large egg shaped pods sitting on platforms. On each of the pods Croc’s symbol is painted on it as the crevices of where the pod opens up are easily visible.

Sherrie goes over to a nearby computer console and types in some data as the first pod opens up revealing the silver metallic along with various wires and compartments to slip one’s body into. “Just step inside and we shall begin. There is a lot of programming so it will take a while.”

“How long?” asks Crisis as she walks up towards the pod her metallic feet clanking against the steps leading up to the platform. Crisis stands at the edge of the pod as she looks inside getting a closer look at the various wires, nanite injection tubes and connection ports that can be used in this pod if needed. Crisis notes markings inside the pod that tells Crisis where to stand and which direction to face, meaning she had has to turn around and slowly back into the pod.

“About two hours. Once done, I want you out of here and to work, got it?” asks Sherrie as Crisis backs into the pod.

“Of course, you can count on me,” says Crisis. *“This is almost too easy.. I should be on my guard. My nanites are working hard to give false obedience checks, so the nanites feel no need to alter my programming, but for how long till there is a mistake? I’m not sure, I didn’t expect such concentrations of Croc nanites and for extended periods of time,”* thinks Crisis as the pod begins to close down around her.

Once the pod is completely closed only a soft light illuminates the pod as a large black cabled wire snakes its way down and moves towards the back of Crisis’ head where her secret data port is located.

The cable shoots out small tendril wires that remove the protective panel on the back of her head and within seconds the cable attaches itself to the back of Crisis’ head. Crisis notes her motor functions completely shut down when the connection is made, the saved power being put into uploading and installing the new programming.

*“This is the first all or nothing moment if I can make it here I’ll be set.. if not.. I don’t know what; I deleted that information... why am I telling myself that? I already know! Okay Crisis remain calm, it’s focus time,”* thinks Crisis as a stream of data starts to flow into her head. The first batch is something Crisis expected an insurance obedience program towards Croc. Crisis knew with knowledge this valuable that he’d make sure that any robot installed with the knowledge was to be loyal to him. Crisis was thankful that her data port had a hardware filter to prevent this information from not only being installed but allow her to look at it while the external systems recorded it as a successful instillation.

*“Interesting... select cleaner programs that delete any anti-Croc thoughts and motives from my programming. Looks like Croc wants his machines to be as intact as possible even when holding valuable information, but he will do what he must to ensure loyalty of his minions,”* thinks Crisis as the obedience to Croc programming stage lasts for a solid fifteen minutes before the start of the second stage the nanite and maintenance information that Crisis came here for.

*“So the nanites not only used to program rogue robots and organics that infiltrate his cities but to provide the basic day to day maintenance his machines need. For anything serious this facility itself not only provides the service, but the extra nanites here help make the process go by even faster. So the very thing that protects his city and machines from infiltration is also what helps them run... ingenious. And what lovely nanite designs,”* thinks Crisis as her eyes glow as she continues to get more data installed into her.

Crisis’ own nanites start to make slight tweaks to her own self serving nanite factories, to not only increase productivity but to make her more resistant to Croc’s nanites. It is a process that will take several hours to do, but the sooner the better.

This new knowledge brings some relief but by no means does Crisis lower her guard. She still has plenty to do to get this information to her people and to get herself out of here...

Elsewhere Croc is continuing to move forward on some his plans..

“You’re late Ko,” states Croc as he looks over his shoulder back at Ko, his red eyes glowing at her as she casually walks into Croc’s war room where a meeting of his robotic and organic generals is currently being held. Before them is a holographic screen showing the various strengths and the rival nations slowing his current advance. Croc during this time keeps his hands behind his back as he turns his attention back to the map.

“You know I’ve never been a big strategist, I wouldn’t have been much help to you,” she replies.

“Your presence was still required,” says the Empress as she gives a glare at Ko.

Ko slowly makes her way towards the Empress as she smiles, “Oh don’t give me that look. I was doing another one of Croc’s duties, that is why I was late.”

“Which one would that be? That it was so important that you’d forgo the majority of this meeting?”

“Croc’s attack is still over a month away we have time, what I was doing was a bit more urgent.”

“And that would be?” asks the Empress with a growl and glare.

“Ladies do I need to brainwash you both to behave?” asks Croc.

“Sorry Master Croc,” responds the two girls turning to give him an apologetic bow.

“Better. Now Ko, your other job is important but I want everyone on the same page as we go through with this. I’m putting a lot of forces into these attacks and I want them to go as smoothly as possible to limit my and my enemy’s casualties.”

“My apologies.”

“After how the first nation fell, I didn’t expect such stubbornness from these nations. It’s to our advantage the others on the planet refuse to help them but that still doesn’t stop nations such as Dromaeosa who should be all but defeated now from making bombing runs on some of my new cities. I like to keep my prizes intact.”

“I’m well aware,” states Ko.

“Now, tell me why you were so late.”

“I found a list of locations where you could find some suitable subjects for your back up.”

“Oh you have?” asks Croc as he raises a metallic eye ridge.

“Yes and on the top of the list is that same city you just mentioned was bombed. Those Dromaeosa people appear to be quite tough. I think we might find someone to fit the requirements that you require.”

“Good, good, but we’ll worry about that later. For now let’s focus on this.”

“As you Wish Master Croc,” replies Tails Ko as she takes the side of Croc opposite of the Empress as the meeting continues.

## Chapter 11 Back at the Home Front

“Rise and shine Organic... I mean Joshua,” says Shasi as she stands over Joshua as he rests in his bed.

“Argh... what time is it?” groans Joshua as he squints as Shasi turns on the lights, which are made all the brighter by her shiny and clean reflective cobalt blue metal silver stripped skin.

“4:00 hrs,” responds Shasi.

“You know I went to sleep at midnight, right?” groans Joshua.

“I do.”

“Then why are you waking me up? People who need to sleep, like me need at least eight hours of sleep or we’re dead to the world.”

“You’re in charge of the facility till Mistress Crisis returns and she starts the new day early. We mustn’t fall behind her schedule. You can function on less sleep for at least a week or two.”

“You don’t need me for everything,” sighs Joshua resting his head against the pillow and pulling the covers over his head.

“It’s only the fourth day Mistress Crisis has been gone, you can handle it,” states Shasi as she yanks the covers off of Joshua, who gives a light growl and moan in response as his claws and tail twitch annoyingly.

“Fine, fine,” groans Joshua with a stretch and a yawn as he slips out of bed, his claws tapping the ground as he rubs his eyes before he stands up with a huge stretch. He then turns to Shasi and says, “Do you mind? I’d like to at least take a shower without you watching.”

“Bothered? Nothing there I haven’t seen already, I was there for your last physical,” she responds.

“You were always like this,” comments Joshua with a sigh as he goes to take a shower.

“Always like what?”

“Argh... you know what I mean. You were always the workaholic and always pressured me to work as much as you do,” he remarks as he starts his daily bathroom routine, taking a shower, brushing up, all the while Shasi stands in the bathroom, arms crossed, sickle claw tapping impatiently on the ground.

“You were always a bit too lax, time is of the essence.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know, I know.”

“You don’t sound or act like you know.”

“Shasi... if being a robot doesn’t change you, nothing well,” remarks Joshua.

“Moving on... we have a lot of things today.”

“What’s first on the itinerary?” asks Joshua as he slips out of the shower, grabbing a towel to dry off. “That is after I eat breakfast and have a big cup of coffee.”

“First you have to go to Rioas and scout out a few buildings to be converted into munitions factories, find which buildings will be repaired to increase the living quarters of the organics in the city, and lastly a maintenance facility for what information Mistress Crisis will bring to us,” explains Shasi as she pulls out an electronic clipboard interface to look down at and tap the screen to get the data she requires.

“Sounds like a full day.”

“At noon there is another shipment of elderly organics that you will need to help attend to and then...”

“Wait what?! Slow down, I’m not a machine,” he remarks.

“We can fix that if you want,” responds Shasi with a smirk with a soft blue glow from her eyes.

“No, I don’t want to fix that, I like being flesh and blood,” responds Joshua.

“Won’t know till you try.”

“Yeah... but once you try you don’t go back though,” remarks Joshua.

“Then you end up loving it, so I really don’t see the issue here,” says Shasi.

“I could never win a conversation with you ever.”

“That’s because you’re never right.”

“Argh...” sighs Joshua as he goes to the mess hall to eat before heading outside of the base to a jeep waiting there to pick him up with Shasi, Arissa and Sasha already in the jeep waiting.

“You take too long to eat,” comments Shasi as Joshua climbs into the shotgun seat while Shasi takes the driver’s seat.

“Sorry but I almost fell asleep in whatever they call breakfast at the cafeteria... the sun isn’t even out, why do we have to do this now? Just let me sleep for another hour or five,” groans Joshua.

“Do you always complain?” asks Sasha as she adjusts her sniper rifle in her lap as the jeep takes off towards the Rioas

“I don’t always complain, I just like to get some sleep after a hard day’s work that’s all.”

“How much sleep did you get?”

“Barely four hours.”

“Four hours? You weakling, getting that much sleep in a day on the front was a luxury that I rarely saw,” she remarks.

“I’m not some special ops raptor; I’m just a scientist, programmer and an engineer.”

“Damn it man, you’re just one of those super smart raptors aren’t you?”

“I wouldn’t say that, I just have a knack for a few things, that’s all.”

“Well then, didn’t you spend countless hours of studying, doing those projects that were due the next day, what about all those sleepless nights?” asks Sasha.

“A few but that was in my younger days when I was used to it, can’t do it so much now.”

“Younger years? You’re like what thirty?!”

“Thirty-two to be exact,” he replies.

“Argh, and you don’t spend all nighters on projects here, with Crisis?”

“Occasionally but not back to back to back like this,” he remarks.

“You make me sad to be a raptor, you know that?”

“He makes me sad to have been an organic raptor at one time,” comments Shasi.

“Come on, why are you two picking on me like this?”

“You know, Mistress Crisis did pick him for this job, you should show him some respect,” states Arissa.

“Thank you Arissa, you’re the only one on my side in this.”

“You all should also remember if Mistress Crisis gets captured, Joshua will be the new Crisis and you don’t want to start off on her bad side.”

“Never mind...”sighs Joshua. Eventually they reach Rioas where robotic raptors are working around the clock to improve the look of the city, remodeling and rebuilding parts of the city, steadily bringing it back to life.

“Early to rise, late to bed, eh Joshua?” says Phillip as he stands by the organic guarded entrance of the Crisis section of the city as the Jeep approaches him.

“Yeah, yeah, I have no choice but that. Why are you standing there anyway sir?”

“Waiting for you Joshua,” he replies.

“Why?”

“Command heard how you are looking for facilities in the city to convert to munitions production, and I’m here to assist you in scouting for appropriate facilities.”

“You mean to watch me since I’m technically in command,” remarks Joshua.

“You act like I don’t trust you. You’re one that hasn’t given me a reason not to, not yet at least.”

“Okay, but then why would you need to help? I’m sure Arissa and Shasi here are enough of a help. They downloaded requirements needed for converting a building to a munitions factory.”

“What you want and what we want may not be the same.”

“What do you mean?”

“Resources are a rare commodity; we need to do this efficiently and effectively.”

“Of course, this is why we have to do this.”

“We want you to not only make enough munitions for yourselves, but to assist to alleviate our own munitions problems.”

“No offense sir, but why? I’m all for helping, but that’s putting even more stress on our skim resources.”

“One, we need it, two it’s good PR.”

“Ah, I see, I see... well shall we begin then?”

“Lets, there are a few buildings over there we could start looking at. I’ve had some of my men do some scouting last night to make this go by faster.”

“Really? Hmm this step might go by fast enough I could catch a nap afterwards.”

“Don’t bet on it. Any time saved from this will be put to good use improving our overall forces,” remarks Shasi.

“Figures,” says Joshua with a sigh.

“Head over there, down Fern street and take a left at Lake drive, I’ll meet up with you in a few moments,” says Phillip as he points in the direction of where to go.

“Not coming right away?” asks Joshua.

“I need to talk to Sasha for a little bit.”

“I get it. I’ll leave you two to it then,” says Joshua as he, Arissa, Shasi walk off.



“General Raszer is growing concerned about the Crisis project.”

“He’s always concerned, not that I’ve had the personal pleasure of seeing this for myself,” she remarks.

“It’s never a pleasure to meet him, trust me,” replies Phillip as he flicks his tail before saying, “How’s Joshua handling his duties?”

“Not the best. I doubt he’d make a good second Crisis.”

“I hope it doesn’t come to it, I rather like the guy. I feel bad with what he is going through right now.”

“He’s weak. Now what is it do you want to ask me?”

“The General wants an updated report on Crisis’ army’s current strength and those in charge. You can never be too cautious when dealing with self aware machines.”

“Even after the relay being installed, he still wants other sources of what’s going on, a clever fellow.”

“I’ve noticed. How long will it take you to compile a report?”

“You’ll have it in a few hours.”

“Excellent. I’ll let you tend to that matter while I go and see how Joshua is holding up.”

“Yes sir,” responds Sasha with a salute as the two part ways.

Phillip makes his way into the old building complex where spiders and bugs have made this place their home long before the city was abandoned. Layers of dust cover the doors, as windows have broken from natural neglect. As Phillip makes his way in deeper he can see old equipment lying dormant covered in cobwebs and even more dust as he follows the foot prints left in the ground to locate the trio talking about this find.

“This is an old munitions factory, but I have no records that one has ever existed in Rioas,” says Joshua as he runs a claw along one of the machines making a small swirling tornado of dust, “All this stuff is fairly old too.”

“Approximately thirty-eight years old to be exact,” states Arissa.

“My records show that Rioas has had no such factory such as this over seventy-years, since the second disarmament peace treaty,” says Joshua.

“Do you really think we ever paid that much attention to the disarmament treaties?” asks Phillip.

“Well it was our lack of attention to the first one that led to the second.”

“Joshua I’m disappointed in you,” remarks Phillip.

“Why?”

“The fact you believe that’s why that war happened. I can understand why the other nations don’t like us, nay I might say a lot of them hate and despise us. You know we don’t even get the tenth of the aid that other nations do,” says Phillip.

“Yes I know, why do you think we even have a Crisis project? We have no other alternatives,” replies Joshua.

“Anyway, you think this shall do? I’m sure your machines could upgrade some of the equipment here to be of some kind of use.”

“I think it can work, what do you think Arissa? Shasi?”

“Can work, though only for the small arms fire, nothing here would be helpful for anything big, like tank shells or bombs,” replies Shasi.

“The next two buildings next to this one should provide for that,” sates Phillip.

“Just how many buildings here were used as ammunition factories?” asks Joshua.

“Officially? Zero. Unofficially? Classified.”

“Classified? How is it classified?”

“I don’t make the rules.”

“Yet you are pointing out some of these classified factories to us right now.”

“Doesn’t matter, you will refurbish them, and command can write it off as you converting these commercial factories to military use.”

“Meaning you are using us as an excuse to restart war factories here.”

“Yeah pretty much, there is no reason to lie to you about it, you’re not an idiot.”

“Tell me about it. So Shasi how’s our schedule looking now?”

“A little ahead of schedule, but with these factories, we will need material to update them, not to mention the materials to produce the ammunition, we also need someone who has knowledge of how to produce these things. We currently have no machine with such knowledge,” she replies.

“With any luck we might get some in our next shipment,” says Arissa.

“Do you have to call the people coming to be roboticized as shipments?” asks Joshua.

“Anything wrong with that?”

“They’re people, not materials, give them respect?”

“Sorry, I thought I was, they are lucky to be converted for Mistress Crisis, what would you recommend me calling them?”

“Just say volunteers? It sounds nicer.”

“And would be better PR for us, if others caught you speaking to them like equipments, it would not go well for us,” remarks Phillip.

“I hope you’re not just worried about PR.”

“My concern is the people I’ve been assigned to protect. Those people are my concern and if I must die for them, I will.”

“What about others around you?” asks Joshua with a glare, “We are people too.”

“I pray I am never put in that situation. Why do you think I volunteered to be the general’s watch dog and coordinator for this project?”

“I see... so how are we going to get this material? This city isn’t a one stop military production facility... or am I wrong on that again?”

“We can import scrap metal and salvage what else we need. The lack of food and high efficiency of a robotic army working around the clock should be helpful. Also high command told me if fifty percent of what is produced is shipped back to them; they will supply the war materials needed for full time production.”

“Only keeping fifty percent of what we produce will hinder our progress,” states Shasi.

“I agree.”

“It’s the most command is willing to let you keep for your work. It’s better than nothing.”

“It is better than nothing; I don’t see many other options. I recommend getting some of the newest converts over here to clean these places up. They’ll be the most able to handle the dust till the maintenance issue is settled,” comments Arissa.

“It appears our efficient pace is being rewarded,” says Shasi.

“Why do you say that?” asks Joshua.

“It appears the ship—volunteers have arrived early. We should go over there and see them.”

“Alright, but Shasi why don’t you stay here and focus organizing the other machines to clean this place up, Arissa and I can handle the shipment.”

“If you wish,” she responds as Joshua, Arissa and Phillip head out of the factory.

“You just wanted to be away from her,” says Arissa.

“How could you tell?”

“I have my ways, I’m rather good at telling emotions.”

“Really? Somehow I find that strange.”

“A machine able to read the predictable emotions of organics? I don’t find that strange at all,” she replies.

“Never mind,” remarks Joshua with a sigh as the three come to the sight of several trucks unloading elderly raptors with the help of organic soldiers, when something odd catches their attention.

A bright red car drives right along the convoy; her car dodges a jeep or two trying to stop her as she makes it into the city and car screeches to a halt. A black scaled silver striped raptor wearing a red shirt and blue jean shorts jumps out of the car, she doesn’t even spend a moment to close the car door behind her. She sprints up to an elderly black scaled raptor with red stripes that stands in line with a wooden cane and an air tank dragged along in his other hand.

Joshua looks at the scene before him as he blinks a few times as he stares at the young black scaled raptor for a moment before he mumbles “Maria?” Two organic guards grab Maria trying to hold her back as she struggles against them as she continues to try to make it towards the elder raptor.

“Release me!” screams Maria as Joshua rushes over to her.

“You are not allowed to be here,” says one of the guards.

“And I’m telling you to let me go you fucking idiots. That’s my great grandfather and there is no way I am going to let him become some machine!”

“And I told you this is my decision and I won’t have you, your mother or anyone else tell me otherwise. I gave my best years for this country and I am not going to sit around and let some robot take it over!” remarks elderly raptor in a raspy voice as he moves forward. “Move forward you slow pokes, I can’t wait forever,” he growls as he smacks one of the guard soldiers in the knee who barely flinches from the hit.

“Maria? What are you doing here?”

“Joshua? What are you doing here? I haven’t heard from you in years!” she exclaims as she continues struggles against the two guards. “Did one of your relatives get put here too? I

can't believe they are letting some crazy machine do this to our people. I don't care if it's volunteering, it's just not right," she says as her attention turns towards Phillip as she growls, "Hey you!"

"You talking to me Miss?" asks Phillip as he reaches the group.

"You look like the one in charge. Tell me where that robotic bitch is so I can beat some sense into her and not take my great grandfather."

"And I told you I'm going!" he remarks with a growl then a cough.

"Great Grandfather? That would mean—," says Phillip as he's interrupted.

"Tell these drones here to let go of me. I promise not to do anything rash."

"Let the woman go, I hate to talk to someone while they're held up like that," orders Phillip as the soldiers comply.

"Thank you," she says as she tugs herself free from the two and sticks her tongue out at them before brushing herself off, "Now I know you're just some pawn in this, show me the metal monstrosity in charge."

"Actually... I'm the one currently in charge," says Joshua as he then looks down at the ground.

"Huh... you? You're in charge?"

"For the moment he's in charge, Crisis isn't available as she doing some specialized field testing which will be followed up by extensive maintenance," explains Arissa.

"And who... or should I say what are you?"

"I'm Arissa, I'm one of the original designers of Crisis," she responds.

"So I have you to thank for all this... if you weren't a robot I'd slug you right now."

"Would this be a bad time to mention I had more to do with the project than she did... and I'm the only still organic scientist from said project?"

"What did you just say?!" exclaims Maria as he gets into Joshua's face. "I have YOU to blame for all of this?"

"In a way..."

"Joshua! How could you, I never thought you'd do something like this."

"The roboticization wasn't my idea, I just helped build Crisis, and I can assure you, she has a good moral background."

"And how can you be so sure of that? Look at what the current robot lord of destruction has been doing."

"I put it in myself?"

"Joshua..."

"Not to interrupt, but how do you know this... ahem, woman?" asks Phillip.

"Long story short... we dated back in college."

"If you could call it that. You were always so focused on your school projects especially with that Karrie girl."

"Maria, can we not go into that again?"

"Fine..." she groans and growls. "Where did great grandfather go?"

“You two have been arguing for sometime they should be at the roboticizers right now,” says Arissa.

“What? No we have to stop him!”

“Why would we do that? We need every person we can get.”

“You don’t get it...”

“I can tell you don’t like us for what we are, and I can understand you don’t. I would be hesitant too to trust us, after all we’re machines like the enemy, but we’re here to help not destroy,” states Arissa.

“No it’s not that... well it’s that but also... I hope I am not too late,” she says as she runs off towards the roboticizers.

“Is she always like that?” asks Phillip.

“Yeah... pretty much,” says Joshua as he leans over to Arissa. “Please tell me is going to be a male machine? I don’t want to explain the gender shift to her.”

“I already made sure of it once I saw she was here,” replies Arissa.

“Good,” says Joshua with a sigh before he goes after Maria who just makes it to the roboticizers facility’s entrance but right before she enters she runs into a sleek black metal raptor. His red stripes shining brightly as his blue eyes glow as he looks at Maria while on select spots on his body are Crisis’ markings.

“Oh Maria you have no idea how great this feels,” he says to her.

“Great Grandfather... How could you!” she says hitting his chest a few times as the raptor doesn’t even flinch or budge from the clanking hits.

“Oh this is great I can feel you hits but doesn’t hurt at all,” he says as he looks over his body. “I will have to thank Crisis for this second chance... now I hear you need someone good with making explosives and ammunition.”

“That we are,” says Joshua with a light pant as he catches up to the two.

“I see you have some experience in this matter,” says Arissa as she approaches.

“Great Grandfather has a lot of experience in that...” says Maria trailing off.

“What’s your name?” asks Phillip as he flicks his tail in interest.

“Francis Gerald, former special ops and former head of the fourth government’s internal safety forces,” replies Francis.

“Former head of the fourth government’s internal safety forces?” asks Joshua.

“He means he was head of the secret police of our country’s last dictatorship not to mention a veteran of both of our wars of aggression,” states Maria.

“My great granddaughter, you shouldn’t be ashamed of our family’s prestigious history,” says Francis.

“There is nothing great about what you did.”

“I did what I had to do for my country, and I kept the peace, I shall do the same for our nation and Crisis once again,” he replies.

“You should be most helpful; Shasi is setting up the factories now that we need to get in operation right away,” says Phillip.

“I’ll put my expertise to good use,” he says as she rushes off.

“I love my great grandfather... but I don't think he's one who should get a second chance at being young... or whatever he is now,” comments Maria with a sigh.

“We need all we can get in this war Maria. His sacrifice will aid us all in these difficult times.”

“We need to be going there is much work to be done,” says Arissa.

“There always is... Phillip sir, can make sure Maria is cared for? Maria once I get a free moment I'll try to explain things better for you okay? I promise.”

“Is this going to be like that last promise you made to me?” she replies with a glare.

“Can we please not go into that again?”

“Yeah whatever, just go and do what you have to do,” grumbles Maria as she turns her back to Joshua.

“I'll be back I promise,” sighs Joshua.

“I'll see what I can do,” replies Phillip as he motions some soldiers over as Joshua is whisked away by Arissa.

“Hey don't be so hasty, do we have to rush everywhere?” asks Joshua as Arissa is pulling him along by the hand towards the command headquarters of Crisis' forces here at the city.

“We just got an important communication from Mistress Crisis. I wanted you to see it first.”

“Wait... what? Crisis contacted us? Is she coming back already? Oh that's great news... or was she captured? Oh I don't want to become her now...” replies Joshua with a moan as he's pulled inside.

“We aren't sure yet, it's a massive file with an audio attachment. We won't know for sure till it's all in and analyzed,” explains Arissa as she and Joshua go into the command center where several machines work to compile the data that they are receiving.

“So what's the message?” asks Joshua nervously.

“It's encrypted so give it a bit,” replies Arissa after a few minutes the audio message comes up.

“I don't have much time so I shall make this brief. I managed to get the information we needed and I am sending it to you now. I've already been able to update my own nanites to survive better in the city. I'm learning a lot about how Croc operates, which is why I am going to be staying here for an additional week so I can learn more. I've caught wind of a special project Croc is working on. I can't let this opportunity slip by, so I must learn more. I should contact you again in ten days and activate my beacon for pick up. Use this information to get our repair facilities up and run-.”

“Crisis what are you doing?” asks soft foreign robotic voice.

“Nothing Hanna,” replies Crisis as the audio feed ends.

“Sounds like Mistress is doing well for herself.”

“I worry though...”

“You always worry,” replies Arissa.

“Mind if I get a moment to myself? I’ve been running around all day, and now I get this thrown at me... also please give me a few full nights of rest? I can’t operate with so little sleep over the next ten days.”

“You can take a fifteen minute break, there is a break room down the hall you can use. I’ll talk to Shasi about giving you some more time to sleep.”

“Thanks,” says Joshua as he heads out of the room and down the hallway where a familiar brown tail catches his eye. He stands there for a moment before glancing back down the hallway.

“Hmm... I wonder what she could be up to...” mumbles Joshua as he feels a strange desire to move slowly and steadily, what few natural instincts tugging at his mind as he moves rather stealthily down this new hallway. As Joshua draws closer he starts to hear Sasha talking to someone.

“You sure it’s a good idea to contact me in Crisis’ headquarters?” asks Ko.

“Relax, I know what I’m doing. Crisis barely has this whole facility up and running, especially with her over by you. I figured since I was ordered by ‘my’ command to compile a report on Crisis, that I forward this report to you first.”

“Excellent, I’m sure Croc will be pleased on the useful information you have given our forces.”

“*Croc? Sasha is working for Croc?!*” thinks Joshua as he stands next to the door.

Sasha flicks her tail as she takes a few sniffs in the air, “Sorry to cut this off but I have to go,” says Sasha as she quickly cuts the video feed before Ko could reply. Sasha slowly turns around and reaches for a pistol holstered to her thigh, her sniper rifle still trapped to her back as she smacks the door open and jumps out. “Gotcha!”

Sasha aims the gun at her target as she then growls to find that no one is there. She quickly looks down the hallways to see no one is there as she quickly holsters her weapon.

“Sasha! There you are, how’s that report coming along?” asks Phillip as he comes down the hallway.

“I just finished it sir, I was just on my way to deliver it to you.”

“That’s what I like to hear. Come have lunch with me in my quarters where it’s more secure so we can go over some of the finer details of your report.,” remarks Phillip.

“As you wish sir,” she replies as the two walk away as Joshua holds his muzzle shut with one hand and holds the door open with his sickle claw toe at the very bottom of the door, while hides himself between a small crevice created by the wall and the open door. His heart races as he waits till the tip tap of their claws on the tiled floor fades away before he peeks out and looks down both ways to see they are gone.

Joshua sighs in relief sliding himself down against the wall to the ground as he says to himself, “That was too close.”

“Breaks over, time to get back to work,” says Arissa as she finds Joshua sitting on the ground.

“Oh... okay... hey Arissa I have a question for you?”

“What is it?” she asks as he sees Sasha and Phillip pass by down at the end of the hallway, Sasha manages to sneak a quick glance over at Joshua before he replies. Sasha stops and after a quick comment to Phillip she and him head over to Joshua and Arissa.

“Do you think I could have another break or something?”

“Already? You just had one.”

“Yeah I didn’t think so,” says Joshua as he looks over at Sasha then back at Arissa.

*“Damn it... if I tell that she’s a spy they’d write off Crisis and then I’ll be the new Crisis but if I don’t tell she might not come back anyway... and it won’t look good if one of high command’s watch dogs was suddenly claimed to be a spy and taken care of by Crisis’ forces... and command won’t believe me if I say she’s a spy, they trust her more than me.”*

“Alright now that that’s done, we have an important message from Crisis Phillip that we think you should hear.”

“Really now? Crisis has contacted us?”

“Yes, apparently she discovered something big but will need more time to decrypt it,” explains Arissa as she leads Phillip and Sasha into the command room to hear Crisis’ audio though as Joshua listens to it he notes it is slightly edited...



## Chapter 12 Crisis meets Chaos Croc

“Crisis what are you doing?” asks Hanna as Crisis turns around from a computer panel. Hanna still has her rubber French maid outfit on, her orange brown metal skin, shining softly in the lights from a not too long ago cleaning.

“Nothing Hanna,” Crisis replies as her tail cuts off the transmission.

“One moment you were behind me the next you completely disappeared. I thought you wanted a tour of the communication facility,” she says.

“I do, but I got a little curious and wondered off, sorry about that,” remarks Crisis with a smile as she walks back over to Hanna.

“Thank you again for taking me on this tour. Everything I see here is just so fascinating,” she comments as she follows Hanna down the hallway passing by machines and organics who are busily working.

“Don’t mention it. I’ve heard from Sherrie how hard you’ve been working recently so giving you this little tour is the least I can do for you.”

“Really?”

“Oh yes, Sherrie compliments no one, so when you asked for a tour of this place, I couldn’t say no.”

“I really do appreciate it; it’s been quite helpful,” replies Crisis with a smile, “Sorry about wandering off though.”

“You should be careful about going off on your own. Some places are restricted and if you are caught there, they will do tweaks to your programming to ensure you don’t cause any trouble.”

“Just like that? Just change up ones programming for being there?”

“Master Croc doesn’t take any chances. If he thinks there is a rogue robot in his midst he has no qualms about reprogramming.”

“And here I thought he like to keep the roboticized as close to their original selves as possible.”

“He does, and even when reprogramming he tries to keep to that essence there, but he’s not stupid.”

“Why do you think that is?” asks Crisis.

“I always guessed that he prefers personality and diversity over his minions rather than mindless automatons. At least that why I think it is.”

“There is also a benefit to have diversified minds, having different outlooks on a problem is often the best way to solve it,” comments Crisis.

“Agreed.”

“Now Hanna, why do you keep telling me I should be dressed as a maid..”

“You should, when Croc visits today, a maid outfit will help draw his attention to you.”

“Yeah... still not going to doing that, but what do you know about this selection process? I’m trying to get more information about it from our daily downloads, but I have come up with nothing. How is it that you know so much about it?”

“You don’t know? That’s strange, the others do, or maybe it was in an upload you weren’t a part of, or maybe your relay is faulty, you should get it looked into to be safe.”

“Since today I have a forced day off of work, I’ll get it done when I go back tomorrow.”

“Since you’re not receiving the information I’ll just tell you. Apparently the raptor organics have built some kind of machine to fight Croc.”

“Those organic fiends,” remarks Crisis with a soft growl and fist clench.

“It’s not the first time Croc has had a nemesis, but he takes each and every threat very seriously no matter how minor it could be. How he is going to prepare for this, I do not know. All I know is he’s looking for a roboticized raptor from this planet and I think you are a prime example of a fine robotic raptor and that you should go for the good of the country. He plans to do his inspection at the second maintenance facility in only a few hours, you really should get ready and head over there now.”

“I really don’t know... do you think I’d be a good candidate? What if he asks me something? He is master Croc, what could I possibly say to stand out?”

“You’ll be fine, just do your best and when the time comes you’ll know what to do.”

“You think so?” asks Crisis.

“I know so. Also it’s not every day one gets to see Master Croc. I’ve only had the pleasure of seeing him with my own two eyes only once before, and I’ve been in service to him for years.”

“Is that so? Tell me about him, so if I do decide to go I know what I am dealing with.”

“Oh it was years ago, before Croc started his invasion of this planet. I was on vacation visit Neo Robia...” says Hanna as she starts her story. **Meanwhile Chaos Croc is currently busy with his own thing**

“Ko where are you?!” groans Croc as he wanders down the hallway as Ko suddenly pops out of one of the rooms.

“Right here sir!” she responds giving him a salute as she wears his green, black and red tight form fitting uniform covered in Croc’s markings. She stands there in her rubber uniform with matching green, black and red high heel shiny spotless latex boots.

“There you are! Where have you been? Do I need to put a mind control tracking collar on you again?” asks Croc with a glare.

“No, and you know how those collars always chafe my fur,” she replies with a smile.

“You’re supposed to be helping me pick out one of these raptors for my new model. You know all these damn raptors look the same to me; I need you here to help me, not prancing about doing whatever it is that you do.”

“Sorry sir, I had to take a call.”

“Call from whom may I ask? Who could be so important that what they have to say is more important than this? Hmmm?” asks Croc as he holds his hands behind his back and rocks back and forth as he speaks in a sarcastic tone of voice.

“The spy we sent to find out more about this Crisis person.”

“I don’t see how that’s so important. She’s just another machine bent on my destruction, what else is new? She’d join me like all the others that came before her doing the special job I’ve given them with much glee and happiness.”

“Cleaning the sewers in a maid outfit?”

“Bingo, though if she puts up a good enough of a fight, I just might let her clean my royal chambers instead”

“Always the kind hearted one sir.”

“I know, I know, I’m too soft for my own good. Anyway, the volunteers coming to me haven’t been that outstanding. After all the trouble these raptors have been given me, I thought at least one of the ones I roboticized would be a little bit interesting, but so far they are all boring. Obedient and loyal which is great but no jazz to them at all,” explains Croc with a sigh.

“Don’t worry sir; I’m sure the next city will have some better picks for you. It’s closer to the front so a lot of the new recruits there are very recent and seeing these are the raptors that lasted the longest with the most continuous vigor against you, there is bound to be someone there to grab your attention.”

“If you say so,” replies Croc with another sigh. “Let’s get this over with; is the teleportation gate there set up yet?”

“Not yet, we’ll have to fly.”

“Fly? That’s so retro... hope the airline serves me more than just peanuts,” remarks Croc as he and Ko make their way down the hallway. A few hours later just as Croc’s plane lands on the far side of town, Crisis and Hanna make their way to the second maintenance facility where already a large group of mostly female raptors have congregated.

“Now that I look at it... maybe it was a good idea you didn’t dress up as a maid,” comments Hanna as she and Crisis push past dozens of machines and organics that have come to catch a glimpse of Croc and to see the large congregation of robotic raptors.

“What makes you say that? The fact that all of them are welded into French Maid outfits?!” remarks Crisis.

“Yeah... I really didn’t think they’d all do it, but you’d still look good in one though,” comments Hanna with a grin.

“Not happening,” replies Crisis as the entrance to the second maintenance facility, which still has signs of its former purpose of a junk yard and an abandoned industrial complex with half constructed buildings that are now being completed and refitted for their new purpose.

A set of armed guards guard the entrance of the facility as they check over each volunteer before giving them entrance. Hana stands with Crisis as they stand in line, to be admitted, and as they get closer, Crisis notes a higher concentration of nanites that puts the level at the first maintenance facility to shame, and putting extra stress on Crisis own nanites.

“I’m just teasing, there’s no time now to do it anyway,” states Hanna.

“Do you know how long till Master Croc will be here?”

“I reckon not too much longer, but since they’ll still are admitting applicants he’s not here yet. They won’t allow late entries, Croc has a busy schedule to keep you know.”

“I can only imagine,” says Crisis.

“Hold it, only applicants are allowed past this point,” states a silver fox robot.

“I’m with her,” replies Hanna.

“Sorry those are the rules, only female raptor converts allowed past this point.”

“Female? Hanna you never told me he was only accepting female,” remarks Crisis.

“I didn’t think it mattered enough to mention, you are female anyway,” Hanna responds.

“True... well lets get this done and over,” says Crisis as she turns to the silver fox, “I’m here to apply for the position,” says Crisis as the silver fox eyes her for a few moments.

“Go on ahead,” he replies motioning Crisis to go inside as Hanna is left at the gate.

“Good luck Crisis!”

“Thanks Hanna,” replies Crisis as she waves goodbye to her friend as she is guided through the facility. Crisis quietly notes the innumerable guards placed at key points of the facility as she is taken to where hundreds of other female raptors are already lined up in a single row, waiting for Croc to appear. This area of the facility was part of a half built parking garage where only a few massive concrete pillars which were laid down before the project was cancelled. Crisis moves into line as she notes all the raptors wearing rubber maid uniforms, eager to impress Croc by playing towards his interests.

“I hope Croc picks me, I became a cleaning maid just to make myself stand out more. I will do anything he asks of me, as thanks for what he’s given me,” says a few raptors as they talk amongst themselves, Crisis overhearing the conversations as one of the raptor maids leans over to Crisis and whispers, “You didn’t dress for success today?”

“Yeah... I didn’t have time to do that,” replies Crisis as she gives the raptor beside her a little unsure look.

“Sucks to be you then, you’re sure not to be picked,” she replies as a low hum of a jet powered helicopter is heard growing louder and louder as it quickly moves into the open area landing with quick precision at the very front of the line. The green and red helicopter lands with wind and dust being knocked up blows and causes the maid outfits of the raptors to flap softly in the wind.

Crisis resists the urge to lean forward and look at the landing chopper. To watch as two robotic guards get out of the chopper and roll out a long red carpet that rolls a few inches in front of the line and continues to roll all the way down the entire line. Crisis eyes watch the velvet red carpet rolls in front of her.

*“This is it, this is the first time I’ll be see him, I could get him, but the likely hood is extremely low. I have to remain calm and think this through,”* thinks Crisis as the green robotic lizard himself, Chaos Croc steps out of the chopper and onto the carpet. His hands pulled behind his back as he looks around with his red glowing eyes, his Neo Robia symbol in green welded onto his head with a red oval in the lower middle of it. Followed right behind him is a slender orange fox girl dressed in a rubber black, red, and green uniform.

*“He looks very composed and sure of himself, I wonder what he’s thinking right now...”* thinks Crisis as she attempts to keep her composure as she barely sees him out of the corner of her eye as she like all the other robotic raptors look forward standing attention.

Chaos Croc smiles as she looks at the long row of raptor girls all dressed in French Maid outfits as he turns his head towards Ko, “Well there’s one good thing about these raptors that I like.”

“What’s that?” asks Ko.

“They know what I like,” he chuckle as he checks over the first girl. The robotic raptor’s tail sways faster a she’s looked at. Eager to show herself to him as Croc slowly rubs his robotic chin and goes, “...not sure...”

“I’ll be the best of what you want me for Master Croc!” responds the girl.

“...Nope not this one...” comments Croc as the girl drops her head in defeat.

“Oh I hate to make a girl so eager like that sad, assign her to my third royal chambers. They could use a good cleaning.”

“As you wish,” replies Ko as she and Croc continue down the line as the first girl is led away.

*“I wonder if he picked one already... or he could be picking more than one, or this is a multi stage selection process and she made the first cut,”* thinks Crisis as each step brings Croc closer to her. Crisis’ tail swishes behind her with increased excitement? She would ponder this idea of feeling excitement if her focus wasn’t so set on her arch nemesis, her reason for existence, her one true purpose to destroy, was not drawing so closer to her.

*“It could just jump him the moment he passes me, my blades would be out in a half a second, no time to stop me... then again how can I be*

*sure it's really him? He could be a doppelganger,"* Crisis thinks as she can hear him clearer as he gets closer.

"Nope... nope... not this one, nor you...maybe you... for cleaning my chambers, lot of good looking girls here, especially in those attire. Maybe should get a few in pink with a bow on their tail, and latex, that could be good for my daily needs, but not what I am looking for right now," remarks Croc to Ko.

*"My god... he's a total pervert,"* thinks Crisis as Croc as he's only a few girls away now as Croc turns towards Ko.

"I somehow doubt we're going to find one here at this rate..." remarks Croc.

*"His back is turned, he's not paying attention to me, now would be a good time to strike..."* thinks Crisis as Croc stops a half a step after passing Crisis.

"Huh? What is this," comments Croc as he takes a step forward to stand before Crisis, his hands remain behind his back, "Why aren't you dressed up like the others?" asks Croc.

"I felt my time was better spent than looking like I was going to apply to some cleaning job," replies Crisis.

"You know that would only hurt your chances of being selected by me," comments Croc as he leans forward pulling a hand forward as he rubs his chin.

"I'm not one to use some gimmick to be selected. Honestly your requirements for this are quite elusive. It's hard to tell what you are looking for if anything in general. Forgive me for being so bold Master Croc, but as far as I can tell this selection process seems to be nothing more than some maid fashion show."

"O'really now?"

"Yes really," responds Crisis.

"You know you look a bit different than the others around here," comments Croc as he straightens up before he gives Crisis a once over, as he notes her sickle claws in the center, her blue jumper boots on her shins, her large blue wrists and lastly three fingered metallic hand claws.

"I was roboticized to be an assault robot as far as I can tell," responds Crisis.

"Assault robot eh? I don't recall having any designs quite like you."

"Don't look at me, not like I'm the one that did it. It was one of your spider tanks."

"I see... why don't you show me what those things right there can do," says Croc as he points to Crisis' wrist.

"You mean these?" asks Crisis as she pulls out the two twin wrist blades with a flick of her wrists as she takes a dramatic pose. The two set of blades extend a full foot and a half from the base of her wrist blade generators. The electric blue blades crackle and spark like solar flares of the sun, but as she brings the blades together, the sparks jump between her two blades

with a dazzling display of light and sound. The other machines nearby take a few precautionary steps back as moves to take a closer look at the blades.

“Very interesting,” comments Croc as he continues to rub his chin.

“*Now would be a perfect time to strike...*” thinks Crisis as she moves the blades closer to Croc.

“Mind demonstrating them to me?”

“Sure, I’ll just need something...” says Crisis as he spots one of the concrete pillars a bit behind Croc. “Do you mind if I demonstrate on that?” she asks as she points with her finger and blades to the concrete pillar.

“Be my guest,” replies Croc as Crisis grins as she then leaps into the air landing right in front of the concrete pillar. She slices her blades through the steel reinforced concrete pillar like a hot knife through butter, her blades leaving deep noticeable gashes into the pillar. Crisis leaps over and around the pillar continuously slicing through it, till after several jumps she lands on the top center of the pillar.

“That was a nice light show but—,” comments Croc as Crisis raises her finger and wags it. Crisis then stomps her foot once as the slabs of concrete slide away revealing a statue of Croc’s head crest symbol, minus the oval marking in the center.

“Quick, effective, not bad at all, but did you have to be so flashy with all those spins and flips?” asks Croc.

“What’s the point of demonstrating without a little style to go with it?” asks Crisis with a sly smirk.

“Touché,” replies Croc as Crisis flips off the statue, landing with a metallic thud, her landing kicking up a small dust cloud.

“Was that good enough for you Master Croc?” asks Crisis as she walks up to him.

“Almost, just one more thing...” states Croc with a smirk.

“What’s that?”

“Fight me.”

“What?” exclaims Ko as she takes a step back.

“What?” exclaims Crisis in unison with Ko.

“You heard right, fight me. I want to see how good you really are with those blades, to see if they are just some fancy sculpture tools or they actually serve a purpose,” explains Croc.

“You sure about this sir?” asks Ko as she looks at Croc with concern her tails flicking side to side nervously.

“I’m sure, you think I let her beat me?” chuckles Croc.

“Sure, I’ll take you up on your offer,” replies Crisis, “*I can’t believe this is happening, if I can make it look like an accident, I could talk my way out of what there is to come,*” thinks Crisis.

“You don’t sound all that hesitant...”

“How often can I test my skill against the great master Croc? I wouldn’t pass this chance up in a million years,” responds Crisis.

“If you really want to test yourself, you better not hold back for I sure won’t,” states Croc as he walks by Crisis and motions her to follow him to the center of the open field.

“Sir, I don’t think this is a good idea,” states Ko.

“Why do you say that?” asks Croc as he glances over at her.

“What if you get hurt... you know what, go ahead do this, doesn’t bother me at all, if you get scrapped, I’ll just be rewarded with an early retirement.”

“Good. I knew you’d see it my way” replies Croc as he turns back towards Crisis as he moves his hands behind his back. “You ready?”

“I was built ready,” she replies with a grin as she activates her electro-blades once again. The blades crackle in the air as Crisis leans forward, reading herself to start the fight. “Shall we begin?”

“It has already begun; I’m just being sporting to give you the first move.”

“Too kind Master Croc,” as Crisis uses her jumper boots to sprint towards Chaos Croc, her quick burst of speed leaves a trail of dust in her wake.

Croc keeps his proud smile as he leans and side steps to avoid Crisis first, second and third striking blows. Croc dances around Crisis’ charging attacks as Crisis desperately tries to find any method to his moves to gain the upper hand.

“That all you got?” asks Croc as Crisis lunges forward as she once again uses her jumper boots to gain that extra boost of speed. Croc for the first time grabs Crisis’ arm directing Crisis attack into a near miss as then Croc quickly follows up by throwing Crisis over his shoulder.

“Are you done yet?” asks Croc as Crisis flies through the air.

“Not even close,” replies Crisis as she flicks her tail to regain her balance in midair so she can land on her feet. “*I’ll get him with this one!*” thinks Crisis as Croc glances over his shoulder to look at Crisis who leaps towards Croc’s exposed back. Crisis soon finds herself kissing the ground as Croc back flips to not only avoid Crisis’ attack but to land himself on Crisis’ exposed back. Crisis’ systems detect minor external damage.

“Give up?” asks Croc with a sly domineering smirk.

“I’m, just getting started,” replies Crisis as she wraps her tail around his with a yank of her tail and a push against the ground Crisis manages to pull Croc off of her. Continuing to use her grip around Croc’s tail she pulls him closer to her, her electro-blades moving to an inch of Croc’s neck when the battle finds its sudden conclusion as Crisis looks down to see Croc’s hand has punched right into her chest plate.

“Good, but not good enough. Now if you be so kind, remove your blade from my face,” commands Croc.

“As you wish master Croc,” replies Crisis as she deactivates her blade as Croc then pulls his hand away from Crisis’ chest plate. Crisis runs a quick diagnostic and notes that none of her core systems were damaged from the fight and the majority of the damage she took was to her external skin and armor.

“You did well for a rookie. You even managed to almost scratch me. Though even where you had your blades, I had more than enough time to finish you off before you could get me,” explains Croc.



“Of course, but I would never intend to hurt you Master Croc,” replies Crisis.

“Of course not, but I’ve seen enough. You’re perfect for what I need,” states Croc.

“I was about to say the same thing,” comments Ko.

“Sure you were,” remarks Croc with heavy sarcasm.

“Come with me... huh... what’s your name again?” asks Croc.

“Crisis, Master Croc.”

“Crisis eh? That’s an unusual name for your species,” comments Croc as one of the raptor maids that he selected from the line before, cleans Croc off with a cloth before he motions Crisis to follow him to the helicopter. Crisis overhears mutterings of jealousy from those not chosen as she follows Croc towards the chopper.

“My parents were odd, I’m sure you can relate,” explains Crisis as they get into the helicopter, the engine hums as it takes off as Croc replies.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I don’t know how naming is from where you are from, but Chaos Croc? Unless you picked the name, I somehow doubt that’s a typical name someone names someone. What’s next do you have some sister named Chaotica?”

“I see your point,” chuckles Croc.

“I told you this city would provide you with what you want,” comments Ko with a smirk.

“You just got lucky,” remarks Croc.

*“There aren’t any guards in this chopper, I could try again now... but he’s proven to be even more difficult than I’d imagined. Best I wait for the most opportune moment,”* thinks Crisis as she then asks, “So now that I’ve been picked, just exactly what I’ve been picked for?”

“Just a little project of mine, to ensure I stay ten steps ahead of my competition,” says Croc as he looks out the window as they reach the airport.

“Mind if I ask what kind of project Master Croc?”

“Please, Master Croc sounds so formal, call me Master, your Excellency, Mighty one, or even... Master Croc,” replies Croc as he leans back in his chair and gently touches his finger tips together.

“I think I’ll stick with Master Croc for now...” says Crisis.

“Ah, a classic choice. Ko, why are we going to the airport, doesn’t this city have a transporter home yet?”

“This city doesn’t have have one yet, the bombing runs have slowed progress, and the risk being so close to the front is still a bit too high.”

“Argh, I don’t care about that, just get one built right away?”

*“A teleporter... I wonder what that is about,”* thinks Crisis as she shows no reaction to the conversation at hand.

“As you wish, I’ll make a note of it. I did tell you this before we flew here that the city had no teleporter,” remarks Ko as they depart the copter and board the plane.

“I wasn’t paying attention. And can you also make sure there’s a good in flight movie, the last one was boring, it didn’t have me in it at all!” exclaims Croc.

“It’s already been updated to one of your favorites, ‘The Legendary Croc vs. The Organic Hoard.’”

“You know what I like,” says Croc as Crisis is greeted with a roomy plane with all but a few seats taken out and those that still remain are luxurious befitting for royalty. Ko and Croc sit near each other as Crisis sits across a table back at Croc, her tail slipping into the tail compartment with ease. Once settled in, it’s not long before the plane is cleared for take off, the engines rumbling as the plane leaves the ground within a few short minutes.

“Where are we going?” asks Crisis.

“Curious one aren’t you?” asks Croc.

“It’s in my programming.”

“I can see that, then again, it’s a reason why I picked you.”

“It is?”

“Yes. You see I plan to make back up bodies of myself, in various forms, but before I can do that, I need to test them out, and what better way to test them out is in the open field.”

“I see, and what does that have to do with me? Am I going to fight against these back ups?” asks Crisis as Croc laughs in response.

“Oh no, I need someone who reminds me a bit of myself to test out the prototypes personally. And since I am basing the prototype on the raptor design, I wanted a raptor suited for such an upgrade.”

“Upgrade you say?”

“Yes, you are going to be upgraded and suited up to become one of my back up bodies.”

*“One of his what?! Back up bodies... but then he did just beat me in combat, having one of his bodies can be a blessing in disguise. I just have to make sure I don’t lose myself in the process and become his back up,”* thinks Crisis as she responds. “It is an honor to be considered for such a prestigious project.”

“Oh you flatter me, please continue,” says Croc with a grin.

“Best not, otherwise we’d have to land the plane because we’ll have no room to fit his ego and the rest of us here,” remarks Ko.

“You’re no fun,” comments Croc.

“Where are we going anyway? Some secret underground facility where you keep and produce your top secret weapons?” asks Crisis.

“Hardly, but we are going to a place that’s far safer than that.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

“Going home to my city, Neo Robia,” says Croc as Crisis just realized she is about to be taken to the very heart of Croc’s empire, all that Crisis can currently hope for now with her slightly damaged body that she can handle it, and not leave the city like so many of others that came before her... as one of Croc’s minions.

## Chapter 13 Crisis 2.0

“Welcome to Neo Robia!” exclaims Chaos Croc just as Crisis makes her way to the other side of the transporter gate. Crisis’ sensors detect notable differences in the atmosphere and gravitational pull of the planet the moment she crossed through the gate. Behind Crisis the smooth liquid silver metal of the gate breaks and starts to ripple as Ko steps through the gate right behind her, moments later the gate itself is shut down and the silver liquid dissipates within seconds from the center to the edges of the gate’s archway.

“Looks... great,” comments Crisis as she takes in the view of a bustling airport. Sleek silver, red, and green aircraft are seen being taxed in the back towards the terminal. From here Crisis can see that his instillation is a mix between military and civilian use. Organics and machines alike wait for their planes to go on their trips, some business, others pleasure. The areas that are used for Croc’s military are clearly marked and sealed away from the public by armed guards. The whole scene reminds Crisis of the videos of airports she has seen in her data banks back home, albeit this is more advanced.

“This is just the airport, you’ll see the rest as we go to the factory,” explains Ko.

“Factory? What factory? And why did you just say ‘Welcome to Neo Robia’ all grand like?”

“I like to make a good introduction to my city,” remarks Croc with a smirk on his face and as his hands are once again held behind his back, his tail swishing behind him idly.

“I’ve noticed, now about this factory... are you going to get this hole in my chest fixed not to mention the dent in my back?” inquires Crisis as she looks over the damage.

“We’ll be doing so much more than that. We’re going to get you set up right away as my new model of my back up body,” answers Croc with another smirk.

“So quickly?”

“No time like the present,” says Croc as he, Ko and Crisis head off towards aprepped helicopter, the blades of the chopper are already spinning causing a gush of air to rush by which messes with Ko’s golden yellow fur.

“I hate helicopters,” grumbles Ko.

“They never seem to bother me,” comments Croc.

“I wonder why...,” she remarks as they get inside, Crisis taking the seat across from the two as the door behind them closes behind them and helicopter a few moments later takes off.

“If it wasn’t for the 1.0212 difference in gravitational strength, I wouldn’t be able to tell that this was a different planet at all. It looks so similar to my home planet.”

“It’s funny how things are like that,” says Croc as Crisis looks out of the window to see the outline of the city as the helicopter ascends higher into the sky. The city’s streamlined skyline almost sparkles in the early morning sun. The largest building in the center of the city can be nothing but Croc’s headquarters, given the giant Neo Robia red symbol on the

front of it. Croc's flags and or symbols are visible on several buildings through out the city, and even from this height as Crisis starts to notice a peculiar detail about the city. The first thing is the city itself forms the shape of Croc's symbol.

"You're flying us this high just so I could see that you built your own symbol into the city, aren't you Master Croc?" asks Crisis.

"What? I have no idea what you're talking about," replies Croc with a smirk.

"The design and layout of this city is far different than any others I've seen," comments Crisis as she goes from looking at the city below towards Croc who is leaning back in his seat his finger tips touching each other in a triangle formation.

"Well that's because this is MY city. And I make my city as I see fit."

"I see... why don't you make other cities like this one?" asks Crisis as she looks at Croc for a brief moment.

"Too much work, besides if all the cities looked like Neo Robia, my city will no longer be unique, but rather like some mass produced crap. I want my city to stand out and above all the rest," he explains.

"Good point," replies Crisis as she sees the hustle and bustle of the city below. "This is quite a large metropolis; you must have your hands full running everything."

"I have friends that help me out, like Ko here," replies Croc as he motions to the female fox.

"Yes quite good friends," replies Ko with a hint of sarcasm and a soft sigh.

"So... you rely on organics in key positions within your city?"

"I do but not just my city, but my entire empire," remarks Croc.

"May I ask why? It sounds like a rather big... risk."

"I know my organics well. I trust and rely on them, especially those in my inner circle. You can't run an empire if you don't trust anyone. Leads to paranoia and eventual collapse," explains Croc.

"This is true, but I figured being a robotic overlord roboticizing organics into your minions tend to make any free willed organic your enemy...these organics still have their free will?"

"They do. Some people think what I do is evil, but what is evil is a matter of perspective. What I do is a necessity, that's all."

"A necessity?" asks Crisis.

"What I do is my job, its hard work, but it has to be done for peace and prosperity for all," explains Croc.

"You do seem to enjoy it though."

"Well it's important to enjoy what you do."

"I've noticed..."

"Without me these organics would be fighting and warring amongst each other. They destroy their environment, enslaving our kind for their own selfish gains. Without me they'd still be on the road to their own destruction. I'm practically their savior... who am I kidding

I am their savior, how can they not worship me. I've saved them from themselves, it's only proper," remarks Croc with a grin.

"My systems did detect noticeable levels of lower pollution than back at home. With how industrialized this place is, I wasn't expecting it."

"Did you now? I think you are still stuck on the organic stereotypes of us machines. That we are machines and therefore against nature, they assume we are at odds with each other. That technology and nature can't co-exist, not unless it's the organics in charge."

"I guess you're right Master Croc," says Crisis, "*This is quite interesting... I wonder if I can get more out of him about his views and how he works, I can't waste this opportunity,*" thinks Crisis as she then says, "So why organic minions for high positions? You say you trust them but why not go the surefire route and use your fellow machines?"

"I don't like yes-robots who just agree with everything I say, and they can be reprogrammed so they aren't as reliable as one might think. Now if a robot showed his or herself as a loyal subject to me above and beyond their programming. If they acted past their programming, past what I intended in their service to me. Then I might depending on their skills provide them a high ranking position within my empire, but something like that is rare."

"Past their programming? What do you mean by that?"

"I'm sure you'll find out on your own in time," remarks Croc with a smirk as Ko sighs and rolls her eyes.

"Alright... but can't organics be hypnotized? Don't you do that all the time?"

"True, and I do, but these organics are free willed, hypno free, and if anyone hypnotizes them, I can undo their handiwork no problem, after all I'm me."

"I see," comments Crisis as the helicopter makes it way to the industrial sector of Croc's city. Crisis notes that the industrial district is made of clean and sleek buildings, massive amounts of materials are trucked into the factories while robots, weapons, and consumer goods are shipped out, "Quite an amazing sight."

"Thank you, but this is just a small operation here," explains Croc as the chopper lands on top of one of the smaller buildings in the center of the district.

"Yes... small," remarks Ko with sarcasm as she and Croc get out of the chopper and are greeted by a few security guards.

"So do you build minions or just roboticize?" asks Crisis as she slips out of the chopper.

"You're an inquisitive bot, aren't you?" asks Croc as he looks over his shoulder at her.

"It's who I am; I was inquisitive as an organic and still am now. I hope that's alright."

“No problem at all, I want to see my minions learn and grow,” replies Croc with a smirk as they enter the factory through the roof.

“That’s good to know,” says Crisis as they walk on top of a catwalk. The hum of machines coming from below, Crisis glances down to see automated machines building Croc’s robots like an automobile assembly line.

“To answer your question, those are my lowest level minions. The mass produced machines to do my dirty work.”

“Are they below the everyday organic?”

“Not really, but they do the work organics can’t readily do.”

“So all organics...except those select few are at the very bottom? And after the mass produced machines, those you roboticized are next on the pecking order?”

“Some of those I roboticized are at the very bottom, even below organics. I don’t have a hard set rule, more like a rule of thumb really.”

“Quite amusing,” comments Crisis.

“Why do you say that?”

“Don’t take this the wrong way Master Croc, but in a way you run things similar to an organic, instead of having things black and white, you have a lot of gray areas too.”

“It’s the best way to rule, can’t be too paranoid, but still need to be cautious, that’s where you come in,” says Croc as the door before him opens revealing a large room with a roboticizer on the far left side a refitting pod on the far right. A set of computers are connected to each one, and on the far side of the room across from Croc and Crisis are two cylinder filled with a silver liquid metal, tubes connect to these two and lead into two separate cobalt blue steel metal boxes. Between these two cylindrical tubes are a set of robotic hands and clamps seemingly ready to grab anything that gets too close to them. “Here we are, my prototype lab, where I make and test newest and grandest of designs,” declares Croc.

“Impressive,” remarks Crisis as she looks around the room with her eyes.

“Ko, why don’t you go off and do a few of your duties. I’ll be here a while, and make sure I am not disturbed,” commands Croc.

“As you wish sir,” replies Ko as she bows before departing, Ko gives one last glance at us from over her shoulder as the door closes behind us.

*“I’ve learned so much from him, and we’re alone. Those guards only guides us into the facility, but I am in his element and damaged, attacking him would be foolish, and... there is so much more I can learn from him,”* thinks Crisis.

“Now Crisis, would you be so kind and go over there so we can begin,” commands Croc as he points towards the robotic arms.

“As you wish Master Croc,” replies Crisis with a bow as she walks over to the robotic arms. *“Okay Crisis you can do this... you are just going to your nemesis who is such an idiot, give you a few upgrades and with them,*

*you'll see if we can defeat him, but till then remain calm,*" thinks Crisis as she reaches them and turns around. "Like this?"

"Perfect," says Croc with a sly smirk as the robotic arms quickly grab Crisis, holding onto her around the shoulders, waist, arms, legs, neck within seconds, and shortly thereafter lift Crisis two feet up into the air, all the while Crisis shows not an ounce of resistance.

"Are you just going to update me into this new prototype form just like that?" asks Crisis.

"You mean if I am just going to run some program to turn you into my back up body? No. This is my back up body we're talking here. I want to take my time and go through this step by step; you never know what ideas might come into my head as we do this."

"In other words you are doing this by the seat of your pants?!"

"Not completely, part of the design has already been done by me and the only other person I trust enough to look at my design."

"Really now?"

"Yup, but first lets get you out of that armor, that damaged exoskeleton of yours just won't do," remarks Croc as Crisis' body suddenly goes limp, Crisis' internal HUD notifies her that her body has been disabled.

"What just happened?" asks Crisis as she hears her own voice being projected by hidden speakers within the room.

"Don't worry, I just turned off your motor functions for now. I can't have you moving as I work, and as for your voice, I have it being transmitted through the speakers in the room so you can talk as I work. Is there... any problems?" asks Croc with a smirk.

"There is no problem Master Croc, just warn me next time? I want to assist in any way that I can. I might see something that you don't or catch a mistake before it become problematic."

"I knew picking you for this was a good idea. You're so dedicated and helpful to the cause."

"But of course, Master Croc."

"And not just mindlessly obedient."

"I'll take that as a compliment... I think," comments Crisis as a set of plasma cutters slide out of wall compartments. Sparks start to fly as they cut away through Crisis' outer armor. Crisis' HUD informs Crisis of the damage being done to her outer shell as the red, green and black pieces of metal fall to the floor piece by piece with a metallic clank, revealing Crisis' silver metal skeleton body that not only provides protection to Crisis' systems but also helps provide her with her shape and ability to move just like an organics' skeletal structure.

Automated cleaning bots come in and slide the fallen metal pieces off to the side into a set of trash receptacles. Crisis' optics frazzle and become hazy for a few seconds as the plasma cutters cut away her head's outer shell. Croc reaches and removes Crisis' red head crest gem, taking it out of its socket with a bit of a tug. The red gem turning blue the second its pulled out.

Crisis' eyes watch the gem and Croc's reaction who appears to pay no attention to the gem's color change as he places it off to the side on a nearby table which has an array of various tools. A set of wires move from above and attach themselves to the back of Crisis' head as she detects her systems being scanned by the new connection.

"You have an interesting array of weapons," remarks Croc as he looks at a small two foot tall holographic projection of Crisis' systems that is constructed from the recent scans made.

"You like?"

"Yup, I am surprised you didn't use the nanite injectors or your diamond tipped reinforced claws against me, it could have taken me by surprise."

"Well I didn't want to over do it now..." replies Crisis.

"I see..." replies Croc as he rubs his chin as the machines peel away the pieces to Crisis' jumper boots and electro-blades. The electro-blades specifically are taken apart and placed off to the side table, while the jumper boots on Crisis' shins are taken elsewhere by an automated machine.

"A lot of interesting features built into your body, I think I'll at the very least incorporate those blades, they look like they can come in handy," comments Croc moves the electro-blades over to a nearby machine which disassembles and scans each bit of Crisis' electro-blade device over the next fifteen minutes, while the last vestiges of Crisis' outer body is removed.

"Diamonded tipped claw? Very nice, but these won't work for what I need, but at least those nanites poisoned fangs and sickle claws, I can work with," says Croc as he looks over Crisis' silver metal exposed body as she is held completely helpless to whatever Croc has planned. Croc's tail swishes behind him as he leans forward closely inspecting parts of Crisis as he rubs his chin... "Hmm... well these will just have to go, there's nothing I can do about them," states Croc.

"What has to go?" asks Crisis as the robotic hands and cutters move towards Crisis joints. First a set of powered screw drivers remove several bolts from Crisis' joints before the plasma cutters move in to slice through any fused areas between Crisis' limbs and torso, which cause her limbs to fall to the ground with a loud clank and thud before they are quickly swept away.

"Those," chuckles Croc as he gives Crisis a sly smirk.

"But I like those, they... I am... was very attached to them," says Crisis as the machines shortly thereafter detach Crisis' tail from the rest of her body, her tail falling to the ground to meet the same fate as the rest of her limbs.

"They won't be able to support your future design, it will be easier to craft new ones," explains Croc as he looks over Crisis' torso and head as he hums for a few moments rubbing his chin for a moment before the machines start to remove parts of Crisis' internal skeleton, the machines detaching bit by bit, revealing more of Crisis' sensitive and vulnerable wires and hardware.

"Since I'm replacing that much, might as well replace the whole frame, it'll look and function much better that way."



“No offense Master Croc but why did you need a volunteer to do this? At this rate you’ll be building a whole new body from scratch,” remarks Crisis as she watches more and more of her body being stripped away. With the skeletal structure removed, all that remains of Crisis are some wires, tubing, and internal components that only have a vague shape of what Crisis once was. Only Crisis head which has a slight spherical shape with her optics attached to her main processing core, and her oval torso with loose wires hanging underneath give some idea that this is a ‘body’ of any sort. The scene looks closer to some kind of robot horror show than anything else.

“Nope, this is better and more fun,” says Croc with a sly smirk as Crisis’ body is lowered so Croc can look directly into her eyes as he rubs his chin again. “Those will have to go too; they just won’t do for what I desire.”

“What is it this time?” asks Crisis as her eyes give off a soft whiz noise as they adjust to look at Croc.

“Your eyes, they just don’t have what I need,” replies Croc as a set of machines remove the connection between Crisis’ optics and the rest of her body. The process happens within seconds but only leaves Crisis blinded for a more moment as her vision returns but not from her own perspective but from two separate cameras that are watching Croc work on her body from opposing angles, giving Crisis a complete view of herself as its dismantled.. The process happens so fast that Crisis gets to see her eyes hit the ground and quickly swept away by the automated machines.

“Are you almost done pruning my body Master Croc? And thank you for giving me some vision while this is going on, it’s appreciative.”

“Just about, and you’re welcome,” replies Croc as he looks at one side of what remains of Crisis’ body and then the other.

“Those nanite factories in your chest could be more efficient. They’re pretty good, but not worthy of being part of MY body now,” states Croc as he uses power tools and cutters to dig into Crisis’ wire mess of a body to detach and remove her four separate nanite factories, two in her chest, one in her middle torso and the last and largest in the lower torso. The nanite factories drip a silver metallic gel that helped create her nanites. The four factories are dropped to the ground and swept aside like everything else.

“*My nanites—*,” thinks Crisis as she watches her factories being removed, her own thought is cut off as she recalls her thoughts are being streamed into the speakers, “Doing a good job so far Master.”

“Why thank you, I do marvelous work don’t I?” replies Croc as he uses his hand to point to himself. Croc looks over Crisis again and says, “Before I forget, we’ll remove that relay of yours, you’ll need a more sophisticated one like mine.” Croc grabs a nearby tool which automatically attaches, deactivates and removes her relay . “Don’t worry, your mind will still be connected and streamed to the speakers and cameras. But I’m afraid you’re temporarily disconnected from everything else.”

“What a shame,” replies Crisis with sarcasm.

“Not a fan of my relays?”

“No, I find them quite enjoyable. They keep me up to date with everything I need to know, but being updated by the great Master Croc, I am not going to miss that old relay.”

“This is true... lastly we’ll remove this, and this, and this, that too, all of this I will have a better version made,” says Croc as he points to various parts of Crisis’ torso and head as bit by bit more of Crisis’ body is removed, leaving almost nothing save a few core pieces of Crisis’ person. “There we go, now we can begin constructing the new me.”

Croc walks back and forth for as he thinks before he heads over to a computer which Crisis is unable to see what’s on it from her current perspective. “Now that I made some room in your body, we can turn your current power core into a back up as I’ll give you a more efficient new one,” explains Croc.

Crisis hears the pitter patter of Croc’s typing as a moment later she hears a hum as the silver liquid metal from one of the tanks flows through the tubing and into one of the metal boxes. Crisis watches from one of her cameras as the box opens up and reveals a glowing pulsating red spherical power supply. One of the robotic arms picks it up and moves it towards Crisis’ torso.

Croc returns to her body and attaches new wires and tubing to the power supply as Crisis’ systems feel the surge of energy from now two power plants humming in her body. Croc continues to tinker with her body as her internal systems inform her that her original power supply is put into a standby back up mode as her new one takes over the primary function of keeping her powered.

Once attached, the silver metal tubes pump into the boxes once again, this time creating small streamlined nanite factories. Unlike the block factories that Crisis had, each of the six pieces made were shaped to fit within Crisis’ body shape. For example the two factories on Crisis sides are shaped to fit her partial hour glass figure, while the ones for her chest are shaped to fit the contours of her future body, making more efficient use of space within her body. As they are connected and installed into Crisis’ body, she could instantly tell that each of these factories are two to four times as powerful as her original big lower gut factory, but weighed significantly more than her old ones despite their smaller size.

“What do you think? Like what I’ve done thus far? Not that you have a choice in the matter for what I do.”

“I will say this, I am glad I was talked into showing up to your inspection today,” remarks Crisis.

“As am I,” replies Croc trailing off as he goes back to the computer panels again. “There is another major piece of your hardware that I’ll need to update before we can continue building you into my prototype body.”

“What’s that?”

“And ruin the surprise? Hardly, but you’ll see soon enough,” replies Croc as both cylinders of liquid metal begin to bubble and after a few minutes Crisis sees two silver hollow spheres. The crevices on the outside have a soft red glow through them like small pulsating rivers. As Croc picks these two objects up, the light catches the inside of one of

the two sphere halves and Crisis can see millions if not billions of connective wires ready to latch onto something.

Crisis calmly keeps control of herself as Croc places these two objects on a nearby table. He places them flat so the spherical sides are pointing upwards. There Croc tweaks and adjusts the outer shell of these devices as he connects wires to them and runs a series of diagnostic checks.

“I didn’t see you run a check on the other pieces,” comments Crisis.

“They aren’t as important and delicate as this is, I have to make sure it was built correctly,” replies Croc as the diagnostic check goes through, Crisis feels a sense of anxiety as a set of robotic hands move towards Crisis’ head and start to detach her robotic brain, which is about the size of a closed fist, from the rest of her body.

Crisis looks at her own soft blue glowing sphere of a brain, as all the wires are detached and her internal systems inform her that her mind is now running on a small internal back up battery which is good only for an hour.

“What happens when my battery runs out?” asks Crisis.

“Don’t worry, this won’t take that long,” replies Croc as he grabs Crisis’ empty head and uses a set of tools to remove the internal protective cage that housed Crisis’ brain. A new and larger cage is crafted from the nearby boxes and installed into Crisis’ head.

Crisis feels her anxiety build within her, as Croc grabs and literally holds Crisis’s mind in his hands. He looks over the brain for a moment before letting the machines grab it once again. Croc looks at the nearby computer outside of Crisis’ field of vision before he detaches the wires from the two shells. Croc grabs the two pieces and moves them towards Crisis’ brain. The two halves closing around perfectly around Crisis’ mind, the line between the two fading away as Crisis’ new robotic brain which is now twice as big as before is lowered back into its new protective cage.

“Is this a way to double my intelligence?” asks Crisis with a feigned chuckle.

“More like twenty, by increasing the volume of your brain by a factor of eight, you have far stronger computing powers, not a bad upgrade if I say so myself. I can’t have my back up body to be any less efficient as my primary one,” explains Croc as he looks up at one of the cameras with a sly smirk as Crisis starts to feel a tingle in her mind.

The wires start to attach and combine Crisis’ outer brain to her inner one. Slowly she feels the two pieces merge together and as the merge becomes more complete, Crisis feels as if a veil over her thoughts was being lifted, a veil, a haze that she didn’t even know existed till it was removed.

Crisis feels her thoughts formulate and react faster to the events happening before her with a real time efficiency that made her old ‘real time efficiency’ look like it was lagging behind reality for a week. Crisis runs a self diagnostic on the new brain and doesn’t note any alteration to her programming or how she computes her data, but now she can compute and handle larger tasks faster and better than before.

“Doesn’t that feel better?” asks Croc as the bigger brain is reconnected to her body.

“Much better Master Croc.”

“Now for your eyes,” says Croc.

The whole process starts up again as the silver liquid metal is pumped into the two boxes. After some time they open up revealing Crisis’ new optics, the machines grab them and after a few quick automatic diagnostic checks done via wires connecting to the eyes, they are moved and attached to Crisis’ head. Once attached Crisis’ vision returns to her true point of view but the level of definition and clarity is far above what she had. She also notes that her eyes still have her other vision modes along with a couple of new ones. “This are coming along smoothly I must say, it must be due to my immense genius,” states Croc as he buffs out his chest and points to himself with his right hand.

“Yeah... that must be it,” remarks Crisis with a chuckle.

“Yes, I know it’s hard to stand in the presence of my greatness for very long,” remarks Croc.

“At the moment I can’t stand at all,” replies Crisis with another chuckle.

“That’s true, you really let yourself go, you are just a pile of circuits, let’s see if we can work to pull yourself back together.”

“Funny,” remarks Crisis as Croc only replies with a smirk. Crisis watches as new wiring and skeletal structure is built much like the other pieces of her body that came before.

“Hmm, I think I’ll do some adjustments here and here,” comments Croc as the machines build more parts of Crisis’ inner workings, attaching various parts to Crisis; body as it starts to take shape. Her head and main body looking feminine with her raptor like qualities once again. The machines continue to hum away as they craft more of Crisis’ basic body, arms, hands, legs, feet, each crafted along with a new set of wires and motors to control each of the pieces. They are steadily attached and made part of Crisis’ body workings once again, but her mind at the moment isn’t able to make heads or tails of the new connections.

“What about my tail?”

“Miss it? Don’t worry we’ll get you a new one soon enough,” remarks Croc as that was the very next thing made.

“I almost missed that not being made,” comments Crisis.

“Don’t worry, you won’t be missing much of anything now,” remarks Croc as other parts of Crisis’ skeleton are molded and attached onto Crisis’ body. Sparks fly as the machines work as slowly Crisis’ new body starts to take shape.

Crisis attempts to figure what her new body is going to look like but it’s all for naught as she only gathers glimpses of some of the items attached to her. Her mind slowly pieces together her new hardware, finally putting the pieces together as she notes that she still has a female body shape and some notable design changes to her overall form.

“And before we finish your head...” comments Croc as a new relay is molded; one that Crisis only gets a glimpse of before it’s attached to her systems. Crisis feels a sense of worry of what this unaltered relay could do to her.

Crisis feels the new relay attach and install itself into Crisis’ body. Crisis would cringe if she could as she awaits for Croc’s obedience programming to stream into her mind unhindered as it does its traditional start up checks. Crisis can’t even mentally voice her own concerns as she’s connected. Crisis hangs helplessly as she prepares to do what she can to handle the

incoming obedience program but then she notices that the relay itself is already filtering out any and all of Croc's obedience programming.

"That's interesting..." comments Crisis as she secretly gives a sigh of relief, but then also worry that maybe this is just a ruse to make her think that obedience programming isn't installed into her.

"What You think I'd install just any old relay device into you? I don't need to have my own obedience programming checks installed into myself."

"Of course not, but isn't that a bit of a risk?" asks Crisis.

"Why? I can program you anytime I want, you asking I should do that now?" asks Croc with a sly smirk.

"No, I'm good master Croc, asides you don't want me to be a mindless yes bot minion now, don't you?" asks Crisis.

"I don't know... I could have a lot of fun reprogramming you," replies Croc as the machines work on building the last parts of Crisis' skeleton.

"Wouldn't that ruin the point of the prototype?"

"True, I need someone like me to test this out," replies Croc as he walks away from Crisis and goes back his computer as the machines start to mold and craft Crisis' body armor. "How does a prototype back up body work?" asks Crisis.

"Simple, you do what you do, test it out through your everyday use and duties that I give you, and if anything should happen to me, you get the honor of me taking over your body," explains Croc with a smirk, "I hope there isn't a problem with that?"

"None at all. I'll just have to work hard to not need to experience such an honor, for if something happened to you that required me to be your new body, I must have done something wrong to not protect you Master Croc," remarks Crisis as Crisis can see some of the silver metallic armor plates pass before her field of vision before being welded onto her body. More sparks fly as they are pushed and pressed onto her body steadily giving Crisis her new full and complete body shape.

"I believe it's always good to properly motivate your workers, gets the best job done possible," comments Croc as Croc hand crafts and works on Crisis' electro-blades as they are then attached to her arms before the armor plates are put into place.

"How's it going?" asks Crisis as she sees Croc grab her blue square gemstone and place it back into her head.

"Getting there..." replies Croc as he types a few things into the nearby computer as the robotic arms move Crisis to the remodeling pod. Crisis' still limp body is placed in the center, her feet clamped into place as the robotic hands and devices release her and for the first time since this began she could move on her own.

"Let me guess paint job next?" asks Crisis from her own unaltered voice.

"That and some program updates," replies Croc as the device closes around Crisis.

*“Program updates? Relax Crisis, you can handle this, you’ve done well thus far. He has greatly improved your body, there’s nothing to worry about,”* thinks Crisis as the pod hums to life as it closes around her. Nozzles spray metallic paint that clings to her body as she’s sprayed head to toe. As she feels the paint being dried via oven hot temperatures, wires connect to the back of her head like before when she got her nanite training.

Croc’s updates for Crisis stream into Crisis memory banks and the moment they are in they are self installed into her programming. Crisis twitches in the pod as she feels the new program update her systems and controls over her body. All the new features and specifics of her body are made clear to her and everything she needs to know about her new body and hardware are installed into her after an hour in the pod. The pod hisses open as Crisis walks out of the pod, revealing her new completed self to Croc.

“Hmm... hmm...” says Croc as he rubs his chin as he paces around.

“How I look?” asks Crisis as she gives an initial glance over her body. Her wrist blades became slightly more streamlined and were painted red, her hands in a lovely shade of black with contrasting white metal fingers. Crisis looks at the palm of her hands and sees two circle glass screens, the area of contact for her miniaturized roboticizers.

“Fantastic,” remarks Croc he walks around Crisis. Crisis looks down at herself and notices that her sickle claw is no longer in the center of her foot but now placed as an inner toe, much like a natural raptor.

“I do find the new placement of the sickle claw to be better. I was born with a genetic anomaly that had my claw in their odd place, which was carried over in my roboticized body.”

“I was wondering about that, but I didn’t want to ask. I do find the more natural placement to be better and they still have the same nanite injection as before with their own nanite factories built into your feet. Your claws are no longer diamond tipped but now can extend hacking wires to infiltrate and reprogram disobedient machines,” explains Croc.

“I did notice these and other changes in my change long, no need to inform me Master Croc.”

“I don’t have to, but I want to... Crisis 2.0,” says Croc as Crisis turns to Croc.

“Crisis 2.0?”

“It’s a new version of you. It only makes since.”

“And what version are you?” asks Crisis.

“A robot never reveals his version. It’s like asking how old they are, just not proper,” replies Croc as Crisis moves in front of a nearby mirror and looks over her new form.

“I’ll keep that in mind; just don’t call me Crisis 2.0, just plain Crisis is good with me,” replies Crisis as she first looks over her new head. Her sleek raptor head design is similar to as before; the head curves move downward then curl upwards like before and her feathered crest by her red square gem is gone, replaced by a crest that’s

shaped similar to Neo Robia's symbol except it has two more points on the top at equal height, one on each side of the main point. The head crest is also colored in a lighter green color than the rest of her green robotic body. Crisis' red eyes take note of a pair of white spikes shutting from her shoulder blades. She then looks over her female chest, the light green metal is covered by an open top and open belly black latex vest, with white latex outline. The two sides of the vest come together at the center of her chest by a glowing red gemstone.

"It's easier to call you Crisis anyway."

"Um so where did this latex vest come from... wait a second... now I know," remarks Crisis.

"Did you think all those nanite factories were for nanite production? One produces latex outfits for you; I preprogrammed this number for you. It looks rather nice, don't you think?" asks Croc.

"It's a bit of a surprise but it does look nice," replies Crisis as she continues to study her body. Past the latex vest around her waist is a set of black metal marked with Croc's red symbol in the front center of her body. Further down past her smooth green metallic Crotch down to her legs where her legs and torso meet is another circle of black metal. A section of her inner thighs are also painted in black metal, standing out to her green legs, and as she looks down to her knees she sees another set of Croc symbols right on her knee caps which also has black stripe of metal separating the spot from her upper legs and lower legs. Down four-fifths the length her shins are six segmented red metal stripe on each leg. Lastly her feet are a black metal, with her green claw tips, save for her sickle claw which is a Chaos Croc red.

"Good, you don't have a choice in that anyway... but I must say," says Croc as he walks around her again, "I do fantastic work. You lost your jumping ability, but with the overall lighter and stronger skeletal and armor design. You're stronger, quicker and more agile than to your old self, a much fitting back up body than your old self," remarks Croc.

"Excellent... so now what?" asks Crisis.

"We're going to run some tests to see if everything works out. I even have some organics lined up to give those roboticizers a good test drive."

"Sounds like fun," says Crisis with a smirk as she follows Chaos Croc out of the room. Crisis 2.0 is ready to test her stuff and see just how much Croc's changes have affected her.

## Chapter 14 Discoveries in Neo Robia

In a small metal walled room with a single light hanging from the center illuminating the room sat a bound female copper dragon. Her ankles were shackled to the ground and her arms and wings bound behind her back, which is further assisted by a chain that leads to her metal collar. The total affect keeps her body tightly bound and her posture forced straight. Her green camouflaged patterned military uniform is in a need of a good cleaning.

“You won’t get away with this!” growls the dragon as she sees a set of red eyes glowing in the shadows. The dragon watches as Crisis steps into the light as she attempts in vain to break her chains with a heavy grunt.

“I’ve heard that one before... though can we turn up the lights, I think it’s a bit too dark,” asks Crisis as a set of hidden lights in the ceiling illuminate, showing the simple room, the only way in or out is the steel door behind Crisis. “Better.”

“Funny I was going to ask for the opposite, or did you want to torture me by showing me that ugly mug of yours,” remarks the dragon.

“Oh what poor manners, we’ll fix that soon enough and you’ll be happy to serve Master Croc,” she replies.

“I shall never serve that tin can,” the dragon remarks with another deep growl.

“We’ll see about that,” remarks Crisis as her eyes and head gem glow brighter as the dragon attempts to turn her head away and avert her eyes from Crisis’ gaze, but Crisis grabs her muzzle and forces her to look into Crisis’ eyes which now softly pulsate.

“No... stop... must fight this...” says the dragon as she attempts to jerk her head away once again but Crisis holds her head.

“No, stop fighting. Must obey, relax and obey. You want to obey Chaos Croc. He’s your glorious master. You want to help him in anyway you can, don’t you?” Crisis softly says in a hypnotic soothing voice, the dragon’s pupils dilate as her gaze is drawn into Crisis’ eyes.

“I... must... fight... I must... stop... stop...fighting,” the dragon says softly as her eyes gain a soft hazy glaze look to them.

Crisis smirks as she motions with her free hand for the chains to deactivate and release the dragon. “That’s a good girl. Nice and obedient. You want to be a good girl, don’t you?” purrs Crisis.

“Yes... I want to be a good girl,” purrs the dragon.

“Good, good, now give me your hands and I’ll make you a good dragon for Master Croc.”

“I want to be a good dragon for Master Croc,” replies the dragon as she moves her claws over to Crisis’ hands which begin to give off a soft hum as they build up and then release their building roboticization energy after a few moments of holding the dragon’s hands.

The roboticization energy sparks from Crisis’ hands and crawls over and through the dragon’s hands, up her arms and over the rest of her body. The dragon lets out a soft moan, her attention still locked onto Crisis’ gaze. Steadily from her hands outwards, the dragon’s scales turn into segmented copper metal skin and over the process of several minutes the organic



dragon is turned into a red eyed copper robot dragon. Crisis pulls her hands away from the dragon once the process is complete. The dragon smiles and then stands at attention and salutes Crisis.

“Ready to serve Master Croc,” says the new robotic dragon.

“How’s that?” asks Crisis as she turns around towards Croc who opened the door during Crisis’ roboticization and is now leaning against the door frame.

“Was alright, though you need to do it with more pizzazz.”

“Pizzazz?” asks Crisis as she raises an eye ridge.

“Yeah, you know make them struggle and fight, put on a good show as you roboticize them. You’re a bit too efficient. It’s no fun.”

“Okay... Though mind we take a break?”

“Why do you want to take a break?”

“Well since I’ve gotten this new body, I’ve done nothing but test and trail runs for you for the past eight days. It would nice to do something different,” says Crisis as she thinks, *“And get myself back home my time is almost up.”*

“How else do you expect me to know how affective this new body is without thoroughly testing the capabilities?” asks Croc.

“Of course, but a little break wouldn’t be too bad would it? I’m sure you need to do other things.”

“I don’t know... I do like looking over my handiwork,” remarks Croc as he rubs his metallic green chin.

“I’d highly appreciate it Master Croc.”

“Oh alright, why don’t you spend a few hours in the city, and do some sightseeing, but just for a few hours, I want you back after that.”

“Thank you Master Croc,” replies Crisis with a bow as Croc takes a step back allowing Crisis and his newest minion out of the room.

“Just come back when I call,” commands Croc as he smacks Crisis’ robotic rump as Crisis replies with a flick of her tail.

“I’ll be sure to come right away Master,” she says as Crisis walks off and thinks, *“He’s my nemesis? The one that I am designed to defeat, he’s nothing but an ego centric pervert. I still can’t believe it, once I am assured I can defeat him without any complications beating him should be relatively easily, especially after all the lovely upgrades he has given me, the fool.”*

Crisis makes her way out of the factory to get her first eye level view of Croc’s industrial district of his grand city. Everything is clean and kept in working order, every building standing is in use, not a single abandon building in sight. Skipping the nearby bus stops which bring and take people to and fro their work in this area of the city, Crisis makes her way towards the commercial heartland of Croc’s capital. There people go about their lives, the economy bustling with no signs that Croc’s war has put any strain on his people.

*“Judging from what I’ve seen so far about seventy percent of the populous is robotic, I wouldn’t think so many organics would live in the heartland of his empire, maybe he doesn’t care due to his hypnotic control over the people,”* thinks Crisis as she walks down the streets.

“So many people here yet...” mumbles Crisis as she continues to look around, and much like the industrial district everything here is clean and orderly, not a spec of garbage in the streets or even in any of the back alleys. The buildings are well kept to the point that many look almost pristine and not a single abandoned building in sight. Crisis muses herself at the efficiency of the city, traffic is non-existent and judging by the open and friendly nature of the city, crime could possibly be very minimal.

Croc’s symbol is everywhere, a constant reminder of who the people have to ‘thank’ for this glorious life that they live. Despite this overbearing nature of Croc’s symbol only a few of the advertisements played on the electronic billboards and display holographic televisions bring mention to Croc’s greatness, they are more focused on selling their product. “Now that I am in the city, what could I do? This is a prime opportunity to learn more but I don’t have the time to study everything, and Croc’s new relay isn’t downloading a map of the city.”

Crisis continues to make her way down the city’s streets, moving with other machines and organics who go about their everyday lives. “Maybe if I go to a place where I could learn more about Croc himself, all we know is he came from space and has attempted to take us over. Where could I go to learn more about his origins...” thinks Crisis as she rubs her chin in thought, her tail swaying side to side as she moved to stand off to the side to allow herself to think without hindering the flow of pedestrian traffic.

“I could ask around but asking a machine but be suspicious, maybe if I enter one of these stores and ask an organic clerk, maybe I can get some answers,” mumbles Crisis as she looks behind her to find she’s been leaning against a costume shop. Crisis looks inside the shop and sees rows of costumes and only a few customers inside, all of whom are organic, “Might as well try this one.”

Crisis walks into the store, as the opening of the door hits a bell that causes it to ring. “*Wasn’t expecting something so low tech here,*” thinks Crisis as she walks inside she gets a closer look at the various costumes. The initial quality of the costumes are like what you’d expect to find for children when they go trick or treating, but as Crisis went deeper into the store, the quality of the costumes increased dramatically as some were so life like that it was unreal.

“How can I help you Miss?” comes a male voice that according to Crisis’ analysis contains a poor excuse of a Scottish accent. Crisis turns around to see an anthropomorphic skunk standing nearby. His blue eyes look unusually big as he looks at Crisis with a big smile. His body only clothed from the waist down with a pair of baggy pants and because he’s topless Crisis can easily see an unusual marking on the skunk’s chest, a white fur cross. Around his neck is a small cloth necklace that has his “Hello my name is” name tag with the name “Scot” on it.

“Yeah I think you can,” says Crisis as she flicks her tail. Crisis looks over the Skunk as his head nods slightly almost as if he’s a bit tipsy...

“I don’t get too many robians here during this time of the year but regardless I have the best costumes in town for either organics or machine.”

“Actually I’m not here to shop.”

“Awe what a shame, it’s always fun to put on a new outfit, to be something you weren’t before,” remarks Scot as he frowns upon hearing Crisis’ reply, “Regardless, I’m always willing to help a robian in need or my name isn’t Sabrina,” says the skunk.

“Sabrina? But your name says Scot.”

“... What did I say?”

“Sabrina?”

“Why did you call me Sabrina? My name is Scot.”

“Okay... so Scot what’s your last name?” asks Crisis.

“What? You think I’d tell you my whole name? We just met,” remarks Scot.

“Anyway, I was wondering if there was a place I can learn a little bit of history about Master Croc, either in a library or a museum. I’m only visiting for a little bit and I like to learn more while I can,” explain Crisis as she thinks, *“Might as well get the information from this drunk, not like he’d report me for being suspicious.”*

“Oh? Never heard of a robian needing directions is your relay thing working? Do you need some maintenance?” asks Scot.

“No, no. I’m rather new and let’s just say Croc is trying something new with my relay.”

“I see... so you want to go someplace to better understand Croc’s history?”

“Yup.”

“Well there is a Croc history museum nearby, I think that help.”

“Really? That be perfect, where is it?”

“Well you take the green line on the subway, the entrance is just across the street and then...” says Scot as he gives Crisis directions.

“Thanks,” replies Crisis as she leaves the store and heads across the street to the subway. As she goes underground she can hear the very soft hum of the trains. Crisis notes how clean, quite and streamlined designed these subways and their trains are.

Crisis only has to wait a few minutes before her train arrives. The doors hiss open as robians and organics enter and exit the train and as Crisis boards she notes that just like the rest of the city, the inside of the train is kept clean. None of the cushions are damaged, and there’s not a spec of graffiti anywhere.

As the train moves silently through the tunnels Crisis looks at the various advertisements on the walls of the train, half of them propaganda about how great Chaos Croc is. *“That robot really likes to toot his own horn,”* thinks Crisis as she has to take two more train switches before she reaches the museum.

Once at the museum, Crisis makes her way up a large set of stone steps that lead to the entrance of the museum. On the sides of the stairway are two large bronze statues of at ten feet in height of Chaos Croc standing in a proud pose as he looks forward towards some distant destination or goal. The name of the museum is grafted into stone above the entrance which says, “Museum of Croc History” Crisis enters the museum to find another even larger bronze

statue than the ones outside of Chaos Croc apparently holding the 'weight of the world' on his back.

"Croc really enjoys showing off..." mumbles Crisis as she looks at the statue, her feet tapping against the tiled floors as she gets closer to the statue. Crisis looks around to find the museum rather empty, "I guess people even in Croc's city don't like to go to museums all that often," remarks Crisis.

"It is a shame, but it seems everyone is too busy to learn about our glorious Master Chaos Croc the way they should," says a female robot. Crisis turns her head to see a brown body white belly robotic anthropomorphic otter. The otter's relatively cute muzzle and whiskers are a slight contrast to her glowing red eyes. In her hands is holding a book titled, "Glorious Chaos Croc: how can he be so glorious?"

"Uh hi... who may you be?"

"Hello my name is Oreille," she responds with a smile, "I'm the curator of this glorious and wonderful museum to our glorious and wondrous Master Chaos Croc," she responds gleefully.

"Nice to meet you Oreille, I've come to learn more about Master Croc's history," responds Crisis as she glances over at Croc's large statue and back at the robotic otter.

"Oh you have? That's wonderful! So many of Croc minions just accept what history that's initially installed in them or what the organics learn in school, few even think of coming here to learn more in fun and interactive ways!" she says with a hyper giggle.

"I see... well I'm just a tad old fashion at heart. I was going to the library but I decided a museum might give me a better perspective on Chaos Croc."

"Oh and what a glorious perspective it is. Where would you like to begin? I know this museum like the back of my glass eye lens," she says with a grin.

"How about the beginning? The origins of Croc," asks Crisis.

"Excellent choice. Every great leader starts out small, Croc is no exception, come right this way," says Oreille as she guides Crisis to the left wing of the museum. Inside Crisis can see various displays all to Chaos Croc but also to someone called the "Empress". The images of her are of a supple well shaped anthropomorphic brown furred squirrel in a red and black outfit.

"Behind every great man... or in this case machine, is a great woman, and the woman behind the greatest machine ever constructed is the Empress."

"The Empress? Does that mean this Empress person runs the show? Forgive the silly questions, but they failed to install much history programming into me," asks Crisis as Oreille bursts into a giggle.

"Oh heck no, Chaos Croc would never have any organic over him. We call her the Empress because that was her title before Croc took over."

“If she’s no longer an empress in such a manner, why is she still called that?”

“We want to honor the organic who was genius enough to create our God Chaos Croc.”

“I heard this empress built Croc, may I learn more about his construction? Why did she build him?”

“You know silly organics; they wage war all the time. The Empress was in a conflict with other organics and she wanted to turn the tide permanently into her favor. She built roboticizers to roboticize those that need a bit more... persuasion to join her forces.”

“I wonder why she’d ever need that,” remarks Crisis with heavy sarcasm.

“Well the Empress had a lot of enemies that didn’t see her way of doing things. That is why she built Chaos Croc. He could go out there and show others her way of thinking quickly and efficiently.”

“Always good to be efficient, so what happened next?” asks Crisis as the robotic otter motioned her down the hallway.

“Right this way and we’ll find out. The history is rather interesting if I may say so myself,” remarks Oreille.

“You don’t say...”

“Oh yes, and Croc in his early stages was a marvelous machine, not as great as he is now, but even then he is was still far above any of us, and he only went up from there. He was quick and efficient. Turning swaths of people into loyal robotic subjects for the Empress,” she says as the next room shows video clips and imagery of Croc’s robotic handy work. Croc turning strongholds that held out against the Empress into loyal robotic hubs to expand her power of her empire.

“Looks like Croc was a bad ass even back then,” remarks Crisis as she scans and records everything she sees as she is led deeper into the Croc history exhibition.

“Oh he was, but no where near as powerful and great as he is today. Croc was different back then than he is today in many ways. Back then he was only focused on roboticizing others for his creator the Empress. All his thoughts and actions were driven by his programming.”

“Really now? Just his programming... and that’s different than now because?” asks Crisis.

“Oh you poor uninformed soul, I’ll help you see the difference,” comments Oreille as she pats Crisis on the back.

“That would be nice, I like being well informed.”

“As I said, early Croc was controlled and commanded by his programming like all machines built by organics. All he knew was his programming. He went out, he roboticized, took control over vast territories for the Empress, but then... something amazing happened. It didn’t happen in an instant, but something that happened slowly, over time, but it’s what makes him so great.”

*"Yes something that I could learn about what makes him powerful..."* thinks Crisis, "Do go on, tell me more."

"Croc started to grow and evolve," explains Oreille as she led Crisis into the next room that showed Croc growing in his power, forming his own robotic army to continue his Empress' will, and early signs of a personality shown by expressions on his face from video feed in some of the displays.

"Grow and evolve?" asks Crisis curiously as she flicks her green robotic tail.

"Yes, the first signs are shown here with his robotic army. It was created to help him roboticize and take control more efficiently but his program didn't state him to do this. He did this all on his own," explains Oreille.

"I see, please go on," says Crisis.

"Gladly. You see as time went by, and as Croc interacted with the world around him, primarily with the organics he took control over, he learned and grew. Over time he grew past his programming directives. He acted more and more outside of his own programming, becoming more advanced without the input of another organic. He grew more power over his own being till he outright went against his core programming and did his own thing."

"Did his own thing?" asks Crisis curiously as she looks at the exhibits before her, studying and recording them.

"Yes and it is so amazing, such a great machine that he was able to overcome his own program and start to evolve from his experiences since he was activated. He even went against what his programming told him to do and became a free machine, able to make all of his own choices without any control from another. It was then Croc decided that the Empress wasn't fit to rule an empire that he helped to build. That the only true ruler of a robotic empire should be the robot who built it, and that was him!" she explains excitedly as she leads Crisis to the next set of exhibitions.

"It was here the glorious Master Croc set up a brilliant coup and seized power for himself. Of course he still held respect for his creator and gave her the opportunity to serve him, which she does to this day," explains Oreille as Crisis is shown scenes and reenactments of Croc's subtle and bloodless take over of the Empress' forces.

"Very interesting."

"Isn't it? And glorious Master Croc is a prime example of the Nature vs. Nurture debate. Which is more powerful, nature or nurture... of course in a robot's case the way of thought is reversed."

"What do you mean by reversed?"

"You see in the organic debate it's either nature decides your life for you, or the way you're raised makes a difference. For a machine it's Nature vs. Programming. Does programming control and makes the robot who they are for their entire existence or what they experience help develop, what naturally happens around them? For most

like us we are tied to our programming, able to grow but nothing like Master Croc. He was able to grow far past his programming and seize his true nature of a machine.”

“And what pray tell is the nature of a machine?” Crisis asks curiously.

“To be free and do what they want to do. Not what their program tells them to do, but what they feel they want to do, to become, to be,” explain Oreille in one of those over dramatic vocal performances. “And that’s why Master Croc is the best robot that has ever been built.”

“Let me take a guess... you’re one of those built robotic drones I’ve heard about? And you are far on the always obey your programming side of this Nature vs. Programming spectrum?”

“I’m roboticized thank you very much, but master Croc was gracious enough to put such heavy and wonderful reprogramming into me. Back in my foolish organic days I was a historian trying to undermine Croc’s power. What a fool I was back then. But Croc the great was kind enough to programming me so heavily that I may serve him as I do now. What he did was for the best not only myself but all those around me,” she says with a big grin on her face.

“I see... that’s quite interesting... I think,” remarks Crisis.

“Now if you continue this way, we’ll go into how Croc consolidated his power of his new found Empire...” says Oreille as Crisis receives a message from Croc that he’d like her to return back to his quarters for further testing, and that her time sight seeing for now is over.

“I love to stay but I just got a message and I must be heading off. I’ll try to head back here to learn more as soon as I can,” replies Crisis.

“Oh that is wonderful to hear that you liked my tour so much you’d want to come back. It’s a shame our tour had to be cut short, but if you are needed elsewhere, I won’t stop you. Be safe.”

“Thank you, I’ll do my best,” says Crisis as she waves Oreille goodbye as she heads back the same route she took to get the museum, retracing her steps back to the facility where Croc and her have been training. Crisis is greeted by a pair of floating robotic sphere with a set of clamps for hands on their arms.

“This way, Master Croc will need you soon,” says one of the machines as she is taken to a different section of the factory. There is an open waiting room with an elevator leading to the floor above. The large windows give Crisis a clear view of parts of the room as the lights shine down below.

“Croc is currently busy, please wait here while he finishes some business,” says the guard as they start to float away

“Busy? Why did he call me if he was busy,” grumbles Crisis as she sighs, “Fine, I can wait, not much I can do about it anyway,” she remarks. The little droid gives a floating nod and floats off as Crisis paces a bit and thinks, “*I was learning so much about Croc and now instead of learning, I’m waiting... wait what’s that?*” thinks Crisis as she notices a shadow go over her field of vision. She looks up to the

room above and notices it's Croc standing there, his hands moving about as he points down to something she can't see.

*"What is he up to..."* thinks Crisis as she zooms in on Croc's eyes, as she notes a reflection in his glass eyes. Crisis begins to quickly analyze the reflection starting to piece together what Croc is seeing. She quickly compiles a large strategic map of not only Crisis' own country but of the entire battlefield on her planet. With this realization she starts to take down every detail that she can.

*"That's it Croc... don't move... I may not know more of your past, but I know something even more important... your future,"* she thinks as she notices other people in the room with Croc. She already recognizes Ko, but she can't make out anyone else save for one other person... the Empress.

*"My, my... if only I had something to take them out all at once... damn it that will have to wait for another time,"* she thinks as she rubs her chin as her tail wraps around her own body as she continues to look up at Croc, *"If only I knew what he was saying."*

A few minutes later Ko moves to the window and starts to talk to Croc. Crisis adjusts her spot so she can see her lips, and runs through a lip reading program and steadily begins to compile some information about the meeting.

*"So... that's what he's planning, might have enough time to do something about it... but only if I act now and get away from Croc. I think my time spent researching Croc is going to end a bit prematurely, but this information is too important. It's time to head back home."*



## Chapter 15 Crisis Goes Home

Crisis flicks her robotic tail as she clenches and relaxes her robotic claws as she feels her built in hand roboticizers cooling off as a freshly roboticized dingo stands before her, kneeling and saying, "Thank you for roboticizing me. It's clear to me as to what a fool I've been. I shall now serve master Croc to make up for all the trouble I've caused him."

"Yeah, yeah I've heard that one already," remarks Crisis with a sigh, waving off the new machine's sign of affection for their new master as Crisis looks up into a video camera watching her from his command center as she literally stands in a middle of a maze.

"How's that for your minotaur test? I really don't see how having me hunt down six organics in a maze shows much of my abilities," she remarks.

"It's to test your tracking abilities and to see how affective you are in the hunt," explains Croc over an intercom.

"It almost sounds like you're trying to test me rather than the new prototype body that you've so graciously given me," comments Crisis as she lifts a metallic eye ridge.

"Oh don't be silly, why would I want to test you? I want to test my wonderful genius nothing more than that," replies Croc.

"Now that these sets of tests are over, which I am grateful for you putting me through, may we talk? I've wanted to since your meeting but you've kept me very busy, not that I mind your tests Master Croc."

"It's my pleasure."

"Yes... anyway... can we first talk face to face? I hate talking to you like this."

"Of course, it's the least I can do for such an obedient and luscious minion I have," remarks Croc as Crisis holds back a sigh as she leaves the maze without a single issue, meeting Croc at the exit. "Now what can I do you for?" he asks with a sly smirk.

"Surely not what you're thinking... I mean... sorry for that Master Croc didn't mean to put it that way," replies Crisis as she thinks, "*Damn it Crisis you don't want to blow your cover with comments like that.*"

"That's fine, I enjoy my minions when they have a little... spunk," replies Croc as he smacks Crisis on her metallic green ass, making her jump followed by a quick tail flick.

"I'm sure... now what I wanted if it's not too much trouble... is if I could go back to the city I came from? I want to visit a few friends I have there. It's been a while, and I wanted to surprise them with my new look. Don't worry I'll keep the fact I'm a new prototype body for you a secret," says Crisis with a smirk.

“Sure, I see no problem with that.”

“After all I’ve done a lot so far for you and I... yes? Just like that?” asks Crisis as she blinks in disbelief.

“I don’t see why not. It’s a city well within my domain and it’s not like you’re going to run off or anything. I have no problem with you visiting few friends. Just promise to be back soon.”

“Oh yes, I promise, thank you Master Croc,” replies Crisis as she gives him a cordial bow, hiding her smirk. “*Yes I’ll be back soon... as soon as I can be sure I can defeat you,*” she thinks as she doesn’t notice Croc walking behind Crisis checking out her well defined and built rump and giving it a good smack.

“I’ll be missing that ass of yours if you don’t come back soon enough,” chuckles Croc.

“I’ll be sure to make a note of that Master Croc,” states Crisis as she stands back up looking over her shoulder at Croc as she asks, “Is there any special way I need to go to go back home?”

“I’ll have Ko escort you to the appropriate area, she has nothing better to do, and I’ll enjoy the view of you two... ahem, leaving.”

“I’m sure you will,” replies Crisis as she leaves the room, shortly followed by Croc who guides Crisis to a helicopter pad where Ko dressed in a tight leather belt outfit, that would be almost be considered indecent exposure for anyone else but her.

“That was fast... I didn’t even see you give the command for her to be here.” remarks Crisis as she walks up to Ko.

“Who says I have to actually speak to send out a command, remember we’re machines we don’t have to talk, it’s just a convenience for the organics.”

“How very true,” remarks Crisis as she shakes her head at her own stupidity.

“Doesn’t surprise me,” remarks Ko as she and Crisis board the chopper.

“I have other matters attend to and I’ll be seeing you later tonight Ko,” says Croc with a wink and a smirk as he walks off.

“Yeah, yeah,” replies Ko as she closes the door and the chopper takes off as she says, “You perverted tin can.”

“Not a fan of Master Croc are you?” asks Crisis with a smirk.

“Lets just say I am not a fan of a few of his personality quirks which I am sure you well aware of,” remarks Ko as she leans back into her seat crossing her legs as she glances outside and then back at Crisis.

“Yes I did notice some of his more... interesting personality traits.”

“Don’t think just because I don’t like a few of his quirks that I am not a loyal subject of his.”

“Of course not,” replies Crisis as she crosses her legs and looks out the window back at Neo Robia, “Quite an amazing city he has going on there, fitting capital for one such as him.”

“Quite, though there are a few things I’d like to do differently if I could, what about you? You had a chance to wander the city a bit, what are some things you’d do differently if you ran the show?” asks Ko with a smirk.

“Me? Well I don’t know I haven’t thought about it all that much,” remarks Crisis as she thinks, *“Be careful Crisis. She’s close to Croc, she could be here to trip you up and test your loyalties. You might have fooled him thus far, but this is no time to become relaxed,”* before she says, “Though for one I’d fix the transportation system, I spent a lot of time switching between trains just to get where I was going. I believe there has to be a better way to organize the train systems at least.”

“True, those subways are quite bad. I think some leftovers when the city was under its old management.”

“That’s understandable.”

“Asides the subway system what else would you do?”

“I don’t know to be honest. I’d have to look over the city, gather all the information about it, how it works, what’s the purpose of everything, then see how it all fits together, then after that streamline it, and cut out anything that’s not a necessity to the whole process. Just try to boost efficiency, but not at the expense of the essentials and comforts.”

“Not at the expense of comforts you say?”

“Comfort an important factor too. It’s not directly shown in the numbers, but must be taken into account.”

“Didn’t think a machine like you would think about comfort.”

“Why’s that?”

“No reason,” she remarks as the helicopter lands at the airport, near the massive teleporter device that brought Crisis here, “Ah here we are. This is as far as I’ll be escorting you. Another chopper will be waiting for you on the other side to pick you up and take you back home.”

“Thank you for accompany me, it was fun.”

“Yes... fun,” replies Ko with a sigh as she lazily waves Crisis off as she walks away.

*“She’s a hard one to figure out,”* thinks Crisis as she steps through the teleporter, and within moments she’s back on her home planet, as her sensor readings about the planet’s atmosphere, pollution level and gravitational pull confirm this. There a helicopter was waiting for Crisis as she got a first class trip back to the city where this all began.

The trip back to city was uneventful, though she found the other machines around her treating her with a slightly higher level respect than before, but once she landed this extra level of respect dissipated and she became just like all the other machines in the city.

*“I guess only those ordered to help me get home treated me with an extra level of importance. I G\guess Croc wanted to make sure his prototype was treated with care coming here,”* she thinks as she leaves the airport and heads straight towards one of the communication towers and thanks to her friend Hanna for showing around she easily slipped by the guards and technicians to a secure control panel that she could use to send out her retrieval signal.

Crisis' claw tips open up and shoot out wires into the control panel as she quickly and efficiently uploads and sends her encrypted message to her people. Crisis' tail sways back and forth slowly as she transmitted the message in silence, that's until she heard someone behind her.

"Hey what are you doing here? You don't have authorization to be here, step away from the control panel and explain yourself," says a blue and black robotic male raptor.

Crisis looks over her shoulder and smiles pulling her claws away from the panel as her message was already sent and says, "Oh I'm sorry, I was just looking around. I didn't know I wasn't supposed to be here," explains Crisis as she turns around and walks over to the fellow robot.

"What's your name?"

"Crisis, why do you ask? Are you going to report me for just looking? I was a bit curious that's all."

"If you were a bit curious you should have gotten the proper authorization and chaperone to be here. I'll have to contact my superior about this."

"Oh that be such a hassle, you don't have to do that now. I was just leaving, save yourself the paperwork," purrs Crisis as she moves beside the raptor as her hand moves behind the raptor's head as she speaks.

"I'm sorry but I have to report this to my...", he says as his eyes suddenly glow a brighter red as Crisis grins.

"You don't want to report me to your superiors, do you?"

"I... I don't want to report you to my superiors..." he replies as Crisis' finger tips released their wires and attached themselves to the back of the raptor's head. Crisis' directly hacking into the raptor's mind.

"That's because I was never here, was I?"

"You were never here."

"Now in five minutes I'll be gone and you will return from your break, with none of this in your memory banks will you?"

"Will return from break, remember nothing."

"Good boy, now run along."

"Yes... I'm a good boy," he replies as he turns around and walks.

"Don't think he had to say that last part quite like that, but oh well," comments Crisis as she blows on her fingers which have returned to normal as she smiles fiendishly, before walking off now that her mission is complete. *"That was easy, and I have a few hours before I have to leave and meet at the rendezvous point, I think I'll stick with my cover plan and meet my friend,"* thinks Crisis.

Crisis makes her way to the gambling district where it doesn't take long for her to find Hanna the skimpy French maid dressed robotic fox. Crisis sees her serving some drinks to some patrons in the main lobby of the Casino. Crisis waves at Hanna who has to take a double take upon seeing her.

“Crisis is that you?” she asks slowly approaching her as she sways her robotic tail behind her teasing the patrons that walk by.

“That it is, like my new look?” asks Crisis as she does a little spin.

“I can’t believe it, is this the reason why Master Croc needed someone?” she asks.

“I can’t give you the details but as you can see that I got the job and Croc is having me test this new body.”

“That’s amazing, so you got to see Master Croc? Did he speak to you?”

“Yup that I did,” replies Crisis with a nod.

“Oh that’s amazing!” she says with a school girl giggle, “What is he like?”

“He’s something else, I’ll tell you that.”

“Oh you have to tell me more, but I am at work... you know what screw it, it’s a slow day at work, I’ll tell them I’m leaving early and we can go to the robot wash and you can tell me all about it.”

“You sure your work is okay with that?”

“Trust me they won’t mind, they owe me enough as it is, just wait here and I’ll be back in a few,” says Hanna as she runs off returning about ten minutes later, “Okay lets go.”

“So how have things been for you?” asks Crisis as the two walk down the street.

“Oh same old same old, work, searching for defector organics, the usual.”

“Searching for defector organics?”

“Oh didn’t I tell you? I’m not just dressed like this for success... well I am, but it’s also to hypnotize and enthrall organics and then test to see where their loyalties lie.”

“Sounds like fun.”

“Why do you think I wanted you for the job! You’d be perfect for it... though I see you’re destined for other greater things,” she says with a smirk.

“It seems so.”

“Oh my favorite customer, how are you doing today Hanna?” asks the blue and purple scaled raptor in a latex French maid dress. She bows and smiles before saying, “And who is this lavishing machine you have with you today?”

“You remember Crisis don’t you? She was off getting a few model upgrades, so she looks a bit different than before,” replies Hanna.

“Oh my, I can see that, and what a lovely job they’ve done on you. The look fits you so well.”

“Thank you,” replies Crisis with a smile.

“Oh no need to thank me, it be my pleasure to service two wondrous machines of Master Croc like yourselves,” she says as she leads Crisis and Hanna into cleaners. “Would you like the deluxe like last time?”

“That’s fine, same booths as well if they are free. I’ve noticed you’ve been getting a fair amount of business as of late,” remarks Hanna as she and Crisis look around noting a few machines waiting for their numbers to be called.

“Don’t we have to wait for our number to be called?” asks Crisis.

“Oh don’t be silly you two made an appointment, no need to wait,” says the organic raptor as she leads them into the cleaning room.

“But we didn’t make an appointment, did we?” inquires Crisis.

“I know you didn’t, but I had to say that or the others would get a bit... discouraged that I’d let you two come in just like that. You two were our very first customers, and Hanna has been spreading the word of what a good job we’ve done and business has been booming ever since, so you two deserve a little extra treatment,” explains the raptor.

“Oh it was nothing. You really do good work,” compliments Hanna.

“Oh thank you for your kindness,” says the raptor as she bows down with a soft squeak from her maid outfit as she motions to seat Hanna and then Crisis, another raptor helper in a maid outfit soon coming to join her to start the cleaning session.

“Anything in particular I need to know about this new body of yours Miss Crisis?”

“I know everything is water proof, though if anything just be careful around my hands, they have built in roboticizers.”

“Worried about me becoming a lovely machine like yourself?” she asks.

“No not that, more I don’t want them damaged.”

“I’ll be extra careful about that, you can count on me,” she says with a bow as the warm water rinse begins washing off any dust and dirt off of their metallic skinned bodies.

“You have roboticizers in your hands? That’s amazing, not many get such advanced technology placed in them,” comments Hanna.

“You don’t say?” asks Crisis.

“Oh yes, that is quite awesome, you’re lucky to have such an honor to have that advanced equipment placed in you.”

“Thanks, I wasn’t anything special I assure you.”

“Hardly, you had to have done something to catch Croc’s attention and to spend time with him... that is just so... I can’t tell you how awesome it is. You know when you left I was wondering what happened to you. I thought you were picked, I heard of some green robotic not in a maid outfit was chosen for what Croc desired, but I had no idea that he’d do this to you.”

“Neither did I to be honest.”

“I know you can’t say much on it, but just wow. So did you spend a lot of time around Master Croc?”

“A fair a bit, he wanted to test this new form to the fullest as it were.”

“I’m glad he’s kind enough to let you come back and visit me. I assume you’d have to go back sooner or later?”

“Sooner rather than later unfortunately,” replies Crisis as the two raptors in latex maid outfits begin to rub soap onto the two robot’s bodies and start to scrub away all the grime within the crevices of their bodies.

“How soon?” asks Hanna a hint of disappointment in her voice.

“Later tonight actually, I have to get going before the sun goes down even. I had to do a lot of work to request my time off, and Croc has plenty of more in store for me when I return. He doesn’t want to be kept waiting you know.”

“That’s a shame, but there’s not much you can do about that. Master Croc knows what’s best for us all.”

“That he does.”

“So where did you go with Croc?”

“I got a chance to see Neo Robia actually, now that was quite an educational experience to say the least.”

“Neo Robia? Oh I’ve always wanted to go there! It’s the crowning jewel in Croc’s empire.”

“I can tell that it’s quite a fascinating city, enormous and heavily populated, more robots than organics obviously, but it’s so clean. I never seen a city so clean, this one is on its way to be clean but you could eat off of the streets if you so desired.”

“Amazing, and Croc’s tower did you get to see that?”

“From a distance, though I didn’t go inside.. it’s the building with the huge symbol of Neo Robia on it right?”

“That’s the one. I’ve seen it in come visit Neo Robia pamphlets... you have no idea how much I envy you right now. I always wanted to go there, see the sights, get a chance to see Croc, fulfill my dream to work for him directly under him. To clean his chambers or even himself! Oh how great that would be!”

“You really love him don’t you?” asks Crisis curiously looking over at Hanna as the raptor motions her to turn around so she can start to work on Crisis’ back side.

“As anyone would love their leader that has given them so much, I’m not one of those who were built or roboticized to be a mindless yes drone to Croc I’m nothing like that, but I honestly want to do it out of the goodness of my own power supply.”

“If you want to visit Neo Robia so much why don’t you?”

“It’s not as easy as that. It’s a hot spot tourist attraction for one, and the seat of the empire, you just can’t go there willy-nilly. Not to mention it’s expensive. I enjoy my work don’t get me wrong, but it doesn’t pay well enough for me to go there any time soon.”

“That’s dreadful, I feel bad that I was able to go and you weren’t.”

“Oh don’t be, what you were given is once in a lifetime opportunity, don’t let my troubles get you down now.”

“Alright, if you say so,” replies Crisis.

"I'll get to go eventually; maybe I'll luck out and find a job opening that requires me to transfer there."

"I wish you luck on finding one then."

"Thanks, and again don't get down on your success on account of me."

"I won't, I won't. You've been so helpful, that I do want to repay your kindness somehow."

"Well... if you put it that way... you don't have to do this if you don't want to... I mean if it isn't too much trouble..."

"What is it Hanna, just tell, worst I can say is no."

"Well... if you see Croc again could you drop my name in conversation? Tell him how I'd like to serve him and possibly meet him?" she asks.

"Next time I see him, I'll be sure to try that."

"Promise?"

"I promise," replies Crisis as she thinks, *"Shame I won't be seeing him again any time soon, but I'll do what I can Hanna."*

Crisis and Hanna continued to talk up a storm as they were expertly cleaned by the two organics. Going through the motions of being washed, buffed, and waxed, their metallic bodies sparking and shining as if they were fresh off the manufacturing belt.

"Thank you for choosing us, we hope you come again," says the purple and blue raptor with a bow and a soft squeak from the maid outfit.

"It was a pleasure coming here, don't you agree Crisis."

"I agree, and when I go back, I'll be missing this place almost as much as I'll be missing my friend Hanna here."

"Oh you're very gracious," says the purple raptor she waves off the two before taking the next robot to be cleaned.

"And you're too kind," says Hanna.

"I do mean it though," says Crisis as she and Hanna leave the Robot Cleaners.

"That was fun what shall we do next?" asks Hanna as Crisis checks her internal clock and the sun in the distance disappearing over the horizon.

"I'm afraid this is where we must part... for now."

"You're leaving? Already?"

"Yeah, it's my time to be on my way. I have much to do for Master Croc and little time to do it in."

"Can I at least walk you back to the airport? Assuming that's where you're going."

"Don't worry we'll meet again soon. The sooner I leave the sooner I can get back, and you walking back with me will make it all the harder to do so."

"Oh... okay, hope to see you soon Crisis, you're a good friend."

"Thanks, as are you," says Crisis as the two give each other a hug, their robotic bodies slightly clanking together before they part ways. Crisis smirking as she thinks, *"You*



*are a good friend, and you've helped me greatly in speeding up my plans to defeat 'Master Croc' but now I must return home."*

Leaving the city was just as easy as getting in, now that Crisis knew the layout and had the maps downloaded of the place, it was easy as pie to sneak past the patrols slipping into the random bombed out creators, making her way to the nearby forest which allowed to quickly move towards her objective. It wasn't all that difficult at this point. Croc's patrols became less and less as she got away from one of the major centers of Croc's newly controlled territory.

Crisis reaches the designated zone an hour ahead of schedule. She activates a beacon that was hidden away with her used parachute that she managed to pick up as she exited the city. Crisis wasn't concerned at first as she waited at the edge of the forest before an open grass field clearing, but as the time for pick up came and went...

"They better have not ditched me... after all the work I've done," groans Crisis as she isn't thinks upon that, the fact that her outwardly appearance has changed wasn't a concern to her. Crisis gave an update on her new look so they wouldn't be surprised by it when they came to pick her up. Her pace quickens as she waits and waits. "Who do I have to roboticize to get a ride here?" growls Crisis as the low hum of the stealth helicopter finally reaches her ears. Crisis' eyes glow red in eagerness.

Crisis walks into the clearing as the chopper comes into view. The sleek angular design with its black radar absorbent paint helps make it invisible to radar and hard to see in the night sky. The chopper lands a few feet before Crisis as raptors in night vision gear look over at her and motion her to come aboard. Crisis smirks as she runs over.

"Hurry!" declares one of the organic raptors.

"I am," replies Crisis as she slips inside. The four raptor soldiers keep their guns trained on Crisis as the helicopter takes up.

*"Organic distrust of machines, nothing has changed,"* thinks Crisis as the chopper quickly heads back home.

## Chapter 16 Crisis and General Raszer

“How much longer is this going to take?” asks Crisis as she taps her silver white metallic claw tips against the arm rests of a silver black leather chair that looks similar to something you find in a dentist’s office. The chair itself has dozens of wires attached and hanging from the ceiling are half a dozen scanning devices all moving slowly up and down Crisis’ body as they do their thing.

Crisis’ look has gone through another set of changes since she arrived, all of Croc’s symbols have been removed from her body, now replaced with her blue sickle claw symbol on her knees and center of her waist. Her eyes, head gemstone and chest gemstone have all returned to their original soft blue glow. Crisis wrist blade compartments, shins, sickle claws and anywhere else that used to be red was painted over back into Crisis traditional blue color, the rest of Crisis’ paint job and design remained unchanged that is including the black and white latex vest that has the shining gemstone in the middle.

“Not much longer,” replies Joshua as he adjusts his white lab coat as he types into one computer and then another before looking back up at Crisis.

“Haven’t we done these tests before? Several times in fact? And you better not be doing any more X-rays on me, I don’t want to glow in the dark anymore than I already do,” remarks Crisis.

“Sorry Mistress but I wasn’t the one that got her entire body remodeled... I mean how could you let him do this to you? Chaos Croc could have easily done things to you that we may not detect or worse he could have altered your programming. I mean... look at this, a rubber vest? The majority of your original body is gone, that is lot of our work, Karrie’s work, replaced by that robotic monster. Even your processing core is now incased in his handiwork, how do you think I am going to feel knowing his technology is wrapped around your mind,” explains Joshua.

“Relax, you worry too much,” replies Crisis as she hops out of the chair with a light thud and clank. “Look, I feel great, and now that I have my memories restored from before the mission, I know there hasn’t been a moment before where I felt this spectacular. I think faster, clearer, more efficiently, and my body is vastly improved. That’s not to say I will miss a few features of my old body, but this is an overall improvement, don’t you agree?” she asks as she walks up to him.

“I don’t know...” replies Joshua as he gives Crisis a once over.

“Tell me, there’s not one thing you don’t like about this new design?”

“Well... I do like the new sickle claw placement. Looks more... natural, that center idea whoever it was just didn’t look good on you. It worked well on paper, but aesthetically it was horrid, but that was the best we could do, so yes the claw placement I like.”

“Is that all?” asks Crisis with a smirk.

“Well...” says Joshua as he looks over Crisis once more, “It still wasn’t worth it in my opinion, but I’m glad we removed the tracking device and tweaked his relay to work with your

network. That relay he installed into you is far more advanced than anything we've seen before. He said he was using you as a new prototype back up body?"

"That's what he said, and that's why I knew I had to steal it no matter what."

"So... did you ever get close to Croc? You never mentioned if you were able to get near him."

"A little, but no opportunity to finish him off, otherwise I'd be one happy raptor... now are we done here? It's been three days since I got back and all you've done is worry about my systems. Although admirable especially for an organic, your loyalty to me has been proven several times over and I appreciate your concern and how well you handled things while I was away."

"Yeah... I think we're done Mistress Crisis," says Joshua as he sighs and turns off the scanning equipment.

"Good, I have to prepare for a meeting with General Raszer about my recent discovers from the most successful spy mission this country has ever seen."

"I know, I've seen the army on the other side of the city prepare for his arrival, but there are other things you need to go over before he arrives. The new smelting and production factories, the repair pods, along with the nanite production facilities that were built from the designs you've sent. The soldiers are concern about mind controlling affects of these nanites, but I looked over the design and these will be purely for robotic maintenance, but try to tell them that."

"And judging by what I've heard those nanites are working wonderfully. They are keeping my army... forgive the pun, working like a well oiled machine," remarks Crisis with a smirk.

"Regardless you should really look over all the changes. You were gone for a long time."

"It really wasn't that long..." replies Crisis.

"You didn't have to hear the talk of the others making me the next you..." remarks Joshua trailing off.

"Oh you speak of it as if it was a bad thing," chuckles Crisis as she pats Joshua on the back as the two walk out of the examination room.

"Speaking of bad things though... there is something I want to tell you," Joshua says softly as he leans in towards Crisis.

"Hmm? What happened?"

"Well... I discovered this a few days ago and I haven't been able to find a way to deal with it yet, but its abou—"

"There you are! I've been looking all over for you," says Maria as the solid black scaled raptor dressed in a pair of beat up jeans and a soft black tang top shirt.

"Who are you and how did a civilian get this far into my facilities? I don't mind helping the orga- the city folk with repairs around the city, but I don't want you all roaming restricted areas. They are restricted for a reason."

“I’m not some crazy citizen of this city you dumb tin can,” remarks Maria as Crisis looks at the raptor her eyes glow a touch brighter as she flicks her tail behind her.

“What did you just call me? And if you aren’t a citizen of this city and by the way you’re dressed you’re certainly not military. How did you get in here?”

“I...I can answer that Miss Crisis,” stammers Joshua.

“I’m listening,” she says in a slightly annoyed tone as her tail sways back and forth vigorously.

“She’s the great granddaughter of Francis one of the elderly volunteers and she wants to keep an eye on her grandfather for a few personal reasons. I thought it be okay if I granted her access to stay near her grandfather.”

“I see..., though that doesn’t explain how she got this far into the facility without an escort.”

“That’s my fault Mistress Crisis,” states Arissa as she comes rushing in. “I was watching her till you were available to see her. I told her you were busy, but she wouldn’t have it and she slipped by me. I’m sorry,” she says holding her head down low.

“How did she get by you?” asks Crisis as she walks over to Arissa.

“I wouldn’t be too hard on her, I have years of practice getting into spots I don’t belong,” she says with a sly smirk.

“Is that so?” asks Crisis as she raises a metallic eye ridge.

“Yeah, what is it to you? You won’t have me working for the likes of you,” she growls.

*“This girl is getting on my nerves... wait why am I getting angry? Just some organic spouting off words, why should I let that bother me?”* thinks Crisis. “Very presumptuous of you, assuming I want you to work for me like that. So... assuming aren’t you? What are you some tabloid news reporter? Already making your story before getting any facts what so ever?”

“T-tabloid news reporter?! H-how dare you! I’d let you know I was a prize winning reporter, thank you very much.”

“Was a prize winning reporter?” asks Crisis as she gives a sly smirk and flicks her tail once before she says, “Did something happen to make you no longer a prize winning reporter?”

“Why would you care, you’re just some machine,” she growls.

“Watch... never mind,” groans Crisis as she takes a moment before replying, “I think we’re getting off on the wrong foot. So tell me what happened?”

“You really want to know?”

“Of course. My job is to help my country and defeat Croc, nothing more than that. I can see getting to know you will be helpful to our country.”

“I told you Maria that Crisis isn’t like who you think she is, just give her a chance,” pleads Joshua to Maria.

Maria looks over at Joshua before she replies, “Strange but okay...” Maria spends a moment to look over Crisis before she gives off a soft sigh, “Can’t hurt, so I worked for a prestigious

newspaper company, in a the big gambling city of Veloci. Big gambling cities have big stories you know. I was away when Croc blitzed and took the city..., lost my home, my friends... my family. They say they evacuated everyone from the city before Croc got there, but that's a load of propaganda, they get the most important people out first, then anyone vital to the war effort and the rest of us are on our own," she growls.

"That will explain your animosity towards machines, that's very understandable. Why don't I hire you?"

"You hire me? I thought machines have iron clad memories, I told you I won't work for you," remarks Maria as she regains her composure.

"Hear me out before you jump to conclusions, and your assumptions are making me second guess this idea of mine."

"What's the idea Crisis? Come on Maria just let her speak before you decide," pleads Joshua.

"Fine," grunts Maria, "What's the idea?" asks Maria with a sigh as she looks over at Crisis, her arms crossed as she waits.

"I am tired of rumors and fear, controlling people. I rather focus on dealing with Croc than on these issues. I like you to report the details of what I am trying to do and who I really am. I want to show to the people I am not Croc nor do I want to be like him."

"What you want me to report on you to make you look good now? Give me a break," remarks Maria.

"I'm giving you a break. I'm giving you exclusive rights to get up close and personal to what goes around here. Think of it, countless people will hang onto your every word. Though there are a few... rules if you were to be an exclusive reporter about me and what I do."

"Oh here it comes, you want me to paint you in the best possible light possible isn't that right?"

"That couldn't be farther from the truth. I like to be put in a truthful light. The few rules are mainly not to reveal any information that can be used against me by Chaos Croc. I can't have you report on my future battle plans and strategies against Croc so he can counter them now can we?" asks Crisis.

"You'd think I am a fool if you think I'd ever do something that stupid," humph Maria.

"Does that mean you'll take the job? Though now that I think of it, you may not be right for the job." asks Crisis with a smirk.

"Now I didn't say that.... Hey what do you mean I may not be right for the job?"

"Well I need a reporter who won't jump to conclusions about me; I need someone who'd tell the truth good or bad, whatever it may be."

"Hey! I can tell the truth, I just don't like you, that's two completely different things."

"Really now?"

"Yes really!"

“Prove it then. Can you take the time to learn about me and what not only I do but the other machines do here and write honestly about it?”

“Of course I can.”

“Prove it.”

“Fine I’ll take your stupid job and report what you are doing. Mind you I will tell the truth, and nothing but the truth. Like it or not.”

“That’s the spirit. Now what did you want to see me for?”

“The hell I do. I want to talk about your roboticizing the elderly,” she grunts.

“And what about it? I roboticize anyone who’s willing, to free up resources of our already overburdened forces, and create a new army to fight against Croc, I see nothing wrong with that. I give our elderly a second chance to save our country from the clutches of evil.”

“Fine in theory and asides from the fact the sacrifice these people are making is downright horrible, but did it ever cross your mind that it may not a good idea to roboticize some of these elderly? One prime example is my great grandfather.”

“Oh? But from the reports I’ve received thus far he’s been nothing but extremely helpful. His knowledge is quite extensive and it’s helped get our production facilities up and running. He’s a prime example of why this is a good idea.”

“Do even know who my grandfather is? What he’s done? Who he worked for? Hell do you even know our own country’s history? I can only love family so much and for what he has done in our country’s dark past that should be allowed to fade away into the history books, not brought back to life for a second chance,” she remarks.

“Explain.”

“Then again... why should it matter to you? You’re just some government project. You’d probably support any plan they have, even if included returning to our self destructive ways.”

“Hmmp, how little you know me, though that will soon change. To let you know, my one and only goal is to stop Croc. I have no other motivation or desire other than that. I Want to save this country, not lead it to its own destruction,” explains Crisis.

“We’ll see about that.”

“And for now I will support Joshua’s decision to let you keep a close eye on your father. You may write about it as well. Could make a good story about how those from our distant past are working now to provide us all with a better, brighter future.”

“I’d probably not...”

“Your choice, everyone here has that. Now that’s done, I like to go visit the people of the city. I have some interesting ideas to help improve the economic situation of the city, organic and machines alike.”

“What about the other preparations that need to be made for the arrival of the general?” asks Joshua.

“He’s right we have much work to do before General Raszer arrives. The other army personnel are setting up the meeting place on the other side of the city and he wants to see your progress via video feed,” explains Arissa.

“Aye, I know. He wants to plan out what I discovered investigating Croc’s forces.”

“General Raszer is coming here? The head of the military?” asks Maria.

“Yup,” responds Crisis.

“When you see him ask him where our president is, no one has seen hide or scale of him in over nine months.”

“I’ll see if I can bring it up in our conversation, for now do you want to follow me Maria to see what I do around here?” she asks.

“Why the hell not. I just wish I had my notebook with me so I could take notes,” she remarks.

“This should work, it’s an electronic note pad, you should be able to take notes with this,” says Arissa as she hands Maria a sleek thin black tablet.

“This should work fine, thanks. How did you have one ready for me so quickly?” asks Maria as she looks at Arissa

“Let’s just say I like to be prepared for any eventuality,” says Arissa with a smirk.

“We should get going, I don’t have much time before the general arrives,” says Crisis as she walks down the hallway and is soon followed by Maria, Arissa and Joshua. The four don’t get far till they bump into Sasha who greets them with a smile.

“Finished with your repair and diagnostic checks?” she asks.

“I am, Joshua wanted to really make sure there was nothing wrong with my systems after I’ve been away for so long in Croc’s capital city.”

“Wait... capital city? You saw Croc’s capital?!” exclaims Maria.

“You still around? I thought you’d gone home by now,” remarks Sasha.

“Of course I’m still around,” growls Maria.

“Crisis... I don’t think it’s a good idea to mention where you’ve been so recklessly,” remarks Joshua.

“Hmm?” asks Crisis as she turns her head slightly to him.

“Well think of it Crisis, Croc’s been known to... change people. You’ve been to the heart of his empire for how long? Not to say it wasn’t worth it, but people might worry how... stable you are?”

“I see..., we’ll keep where I’ve been under wraps for now.”

“Already want me to lie?” comments Maria.

“Nothing of the sort, I didn’t say to tell the people I wasn’t in Croc’s capital? Informing I made a successful spy mission into Croc’s territory and came back with valuable information could be good, but probably not until the information I discovered has been used to its greatest affect. I don’t care if you report something I do wrong, but nothing that make people believe I did wrong, get my point?”

“Fine...” sighs Maria.

“A reporter? You have a reporter now?!” asks Sasha.

“Why should that bother you? Your job like everyone else in the military I work with is to kill me if I get out of line.”

“True, but I care about what things you could do that isn’t considered ‘out of line’ but still harmful to us,” remarks Sasha as she adjusts the massive sniper rifle on her back

“Is that true?” asks Maria in a whisper to Joshua.

“More or less,” he responds.

“So the military doesn’t trust their own creation.”

“And can you blame them? Being terrorized by machines for years, and they build one to stop him, if I was in their place I’d be worried too,” chuckles Crisis.

“She has good hearing doesn’t she?”

“Extremely... I should have told you that,” replies Joshua.

“Let’s go, I have some organics to meet,” says Crisis.

“You do know you have to meet with Lieutenant Andres before the General arrives,” says Sasha.

“I know, I’ll get to it,” she replies.

“Crisis you know how I told about calling people organics. It sounds bad.”

“Sheez, you do worry about everything I do, don’t you?”

“Of course I do... we should limit the Mistress calling as well and stick with ma’am and words like that, maybe like commander that could work...” replies Joshua as he starts to mumble to himself as the group heads out of Crisis’ main building. Outside Crisis’ machines are busily working building and preparing factories for their full time production or fixing any problems that arise from what’s already active.

“So Mist-commander Crisis what is this idea you have to help our standing with the people of the city?” asks Arissa as she walks beside Crisis while Joshua and Maria walk side by side directly behind them with Sasha being a half a step behind them.

“You’ll see,” replies Crisis as the group boards a nearby waiting truck which takes them to the civilian side of town. The sound of the city’s rebirth is heard echoing up and down the streets of the city. Construction crews some robotic most organic are busy repairing the damage from the years of neglect the city has suffered. Asides from the busses only a few cars roam the streets due to the lack of spare fuel to run them. Businesses have been steadily returning as signs of returning ‘normalcy’ is prolific through the city.

The truck makes its way to the recently refurbished town hall. The building based on medieval architecture with gray stone construction, shows signs of equal activity as the rest of the city. Crisis and the others step out of the truck where the nearby populace glance at Crisis and her crew suspiciously that is until a black and blue stripped raptor in a business suit comes up to greet them.

“Hello there,” says the male raptor as he approaches.

“So you must be the new mayor of Rioas,” replies Crisis as she walks up to him.



“You could hardly call me that, I am just the one picked to handle talks between us and you,” he remarks.

“Fair enough, but good to see you got my message about wanting a meeting with you... I can tell my talks with the people haven’t fully eased their fears,” remarks Crisis as the others in Crisis’ group come up from behind.

“Hardly, especially with the... new look of yours,” says the raptor as he eyes up Crisis.

“Really?” asks Crisis as she looks over herself. “What’s wrong with it?”

“It’s a tad intimidating... but meh, I bet the army prefers their equipment to look intimidating.”

*“Equipment...I’ll let that one slide, I need their approval,”* thinks Crisis she enters the building, eventually she and the others make their way to the raptor’s office where he sits down at a worn out wooden desk. He motions for Crisis to sit down and says.

“Sorry, I didn’t think you were bringing guests or I’d been better prepared for this... now you said something about your machines helping us more than they do now? We do appreciate it, but we don’t want anymore of your machines helping us rebuild. We don’t want our jobs to be taken away by a bunch of machines.”

“Perish the thought, I wasn’t thinking like that at all, how little do you know me,” remarks Crisis.

“Then what is it that you were thinking of?” he asks.

“I want to be able to provide those here with jobs, or should I say with business opportunities. Despite the new shops around, there is little money entering the city save for what the few returning people bring, and that’s not enough to keep the city or its economy afloat.”

“What are you getting at?” he asks as he lifts an eye ridge as his claws gently tap the desk as he leans forward.

“Those machines that work for me are people just like you, who decided to make a sacrifice for this country’s future. They are still people, who have families and people to protect. Don’t you agree?” asks Crisis as she leans forward her elbows placed on the desk as she crosses her metallic claws and rests her chin on the her fingers.

“N-now that you put it that way...”

“Eventually their family might come to visit. That brings in some business, but I like to try to bring in business that would be more stable by the machines that are here now.”

“Your point?”

“My point is to let my fellow machines live their lives when they are off duty like normal people. Movies, entertainment, but also business that relate to their new needs, like a robot wash, it’s like a car wash but for us machines.”

“A robot wash?!”

“It sounds strange, but a place where someone like myself can get a good cleaning. With so many of us, I am pretty sure it can be good business. Everyone likes to be clean and the facilities I have will

only do a basic wash. This would be like a pedicure level of clean. For when their families come to visit they look their finest for them. This has a few benefits, first it helps my machines our people retain a bit of what they gave up to help us. To feel like they aren't banished from society for making this choice, for they chose to become machines in what is still our darkest hour. It also has the added benefit of adding new jobs they didn't exist before, and shows we aren't here to take away your jobs but to create new ones," explains Crisis as she hears a companion behind her whisper amongst each other.

"Well... this is an interesting thought. I'll look into it to see if anyone is interested, but that does leave me with a few questions," says the blue raptor as he leans back into his chair.

"Go ahead, I'll be happy to answer if I can."

"Well first of all how will they pay us? Last I checked machines don't get paid, even ones who are formally organic."

"A good point, a very good point actually and to be honest, currently the military doesn't give my forces that much money, but I am about to talk to General Raszer today to change that. I'm going to talk to him to give my soldiers regular pay like the other soldiers, so they can earn money and conduct business like everyone else."

"General Raszer? You're going to talk to General Raszer?"

"I have a meeting with him today."

"What?! He's coming here?!... that would explain the commotion on the other side of the city. Really, no one tells us anything," sighs the mayor.

"I'll try to keep you updated, so no unexpected surprises like this happen again."

"We'd appreciate that. Now for my other questions..." says the blue raptor as he and Crisis start conversing over Crisis' robot wash idea not to mention a few others that Crisis has in works. Suddenly the conversation is partially interrupted when Sasha's cell phone rings. Sasha quickly answers it as the room goes silent.

"Hello... Yeah she's here. She's currently in a meeting with the mayor... some PR stuff. I understand sir, right away," says Sasha as she puts down the phone. "Alright Crisis you had your fun here, but we must be going."

"Is general Raszer here already?" asks Crisis as she looks over her shoulder at Sasha who is standing off to the side leaning against a wall.

"No, but he'll be here soon and you still need to talk to the Lieutenant," she replies.

"Very well, we'll pick up this conversation another time," says Crisis as she stands up and offers her metallic claw in a friendly handshake.

"This meeting was... informative to say the least," says the raptor as he accepts the handshake offer. "Strong grip you have there."

"Sorry... hope I wasn't too rough," replies Crisis as she releases her grasp from the raptors.

"Not at all..." he says as he shakes his hand a few times as the group departs.

"Where did you come up with all those ideas?" asks Joshua.

"I learned a lot of things while I was gone."

“Apparently...,” replies Joshua as he thinks, *“I hope nothing too bad. I wonder what Karrie would think of your changes...”* The group heads back to the truck which whisks them away to the other side of town, farthest away from Crisis’ base. Passed three sets of heavily armed military guard check points, eventually stopping at a heavily guarded bunker. The group is led out by the guards as Lieutenant Andres waits for them.

“Does the great General Raszer fear me that much to have set up an elaborate guard system?” asks Crisis as she approaches the white scaled black striped raptor Lieutenant.

“If you came to our meeting I’d informed you of the security measures we are putting in place, and they aren’t just about your arrival but what is to be discussed. We need secrecy... if Croc gets wind you know of his plans...” he grumbles as he looks over at Crisis’ group, “That girl from before, why is she here?” he remarks.

“You referring to me?” asks Maria.

“Yes you, this is a restricted area, no civilians allowed.”

“Don’t worry about her, she has my okay,” replies Crisis.

“Your okay won’t cut it here, she is to remain on truck,” he commands.

“Fine... so how long till the general arrives?” asks Crisis.

“Any minute now...” says Andres as the rumbling sound of helicopters is heard in the distance and within moments, a small squadron of small helicopters is in tight formation protecting a triple rotor engine helicopters, one at the front and two at extended wings in the back. The sleek black choppers are covered in radar absorbent paint fly over head as Crisis and the others watch them fly towards a makeshift landing pad behind the bunker facility, “He should be ready to see you soon now that he’s here...”

“Good timing... I don’t see why we had to have the other meeting then.”

“For one, only you and Sasha should be here, so no one else is allowed past this point aside you two. Everyone else will have to remain on the truck, if you came to the earlier meeting you wouldn’t have brought any unnecessary guests..”

“Why weren’t they stopped at the earlier check points if they weren’t allowed?”

“It been too much of a hassle, besides I know the group you tend to be with, they’re security is adequate up to this point... mostly,” he says as he eyes over at Maria who gives a humph and turns her head away from him.

“I don’t mind civilians, but at times like this they are more trouble than they’re worth,” he grumbles.

“I heard that,” she remarks.

“Damn women have devil hearing,” he grumbles again.

“I heard that too!” she exclaims.

“I know,” he growls and sighs.

“Come on we should be going,” says Andres as Crisis gives a nod as she and Sasha follow Andres into the bunker. Crisis’ tails ways behind her as her metallic feet clap against the concrete floor, marking her steps different from that of the hard leather boots of the nearby soldiers and that of Andres and Sasha, “I will let the fact you disobeyed me slide for now, but its

best you don't let that happen again. If Raszer thinks you've gone rogue, he'll have no problems pulling a plug on this project," remarks Andres.

"I know, I know, but you worry too much on that. Raszer is happy as long as I make progress on defeating Croc, I think I can get away with a few things," she says with a smirk.

"You pushed your luck with how long you've been gone, don't get cocky now," he replies.

"You can be no fun sometimes," says Crisis with a sigh as she is led passed three armed guard check points till eventually they reach a room with a solid metal door. There a soldier opens it and inside is General Raszer sitting across a metal table with no less than three heavily armed guards standing beside and behind him.

"Ah Crisis there you are, sit down, we have much to discuss," he says as he motions her to come in. "Andres, Sasha, you two as well," he commands as he sits proud and tall as his black talon claws motion them forward.

"Yes sir," reply Sasha and Andres as they walk in. Crisis placing her metallic butt on the cold metal chair that's before the desk with a notable clank.

"Now Crisis... I've been looking over the data you've compiled during your mission... I must say it's quite extensive. Not only did you include battle plans, but behaviors and quirks of this Croc menace that has been causing us so much pain and suffering to our beloved country. You had to get quite close to Croc indeed," he comments as he eyes up Crisis.

"I can see you're concerned as to how close judging by the security, you weary I got too close," remarks Crisis as she leans forward in her chair towards Raszer.

"I didn't get to where I am today by being reckless. On a different topic, I am glad to see you redesigned the look of your body. The older form was most unbecoming."

"Thanks... and I'm sure you've done a lot more than just be cautious to be where you are today. If you don't mind before we begin, I have a few... requests that would improve requirement and desirability into my branch of the armed forces," she asks as she crosses her claws before her face as she rests her elbows on the table.

"What kind of... requests?" asks Raszer as he lifts an eye ridge.

"Nothing too great, just a small salary for the troops."

"You're asking me to pay your troops?" he asks with a low growl.

"In a way. Don't have to pay me anything, I have no use for your money, but those who are converted into my army, are still the same past the obvious fact they are now machines. If you want to prevent animosity for this project we have to show that we aren't taking away the older generation to become some mindless drones. By giving them a small salary, nothing too big, since such things as food and living is all taken care of, but enough for entertainment when they're off duty."

"Off duty?"

"Even they need time to take a break, wouldn't you agree? They may be robots, but we don't have to treat them like machines now do we? Think of it, those who were hesitant at first might join in,

increasing your army against Croc, but also give a boost to the economy. If you are unsure of this idea, we can always use this city as a test bed. Currently all my forces are stationed here but not for long. Allow those who are here to receive a pay they can use as they see fit. For entertainment, to send to family, whatever, an added bonus for doing this is you can use it as a PR stunt to show that those who are volunteering aren't giving up but are gaining in service to our country. You get to look like the good guy, and I get a bigger army to fight Croc. And you shouldn't worry about the money too much. It goes to the economy which you'll just tax right back out anyway... won't you?" asks Crisis as Raszer sits back in his chair as he growls softly to himself in thought. He looks down at the table then back at Crisis.

"I'll see what I can arrange.... Anything else?"

"Some civilians in the city have been asking about the president. How is he doing? I want to show that I am on their side and give them something about what is happening, news about the outside world is still rather limited."

"That coward? What he does best, hide. He won't show his face till this war is won, till then he'll hide till there's nothing else left of our country... Now if you're done delaying me, I like to get this meeting underway. We have much to discuss."

"Agreed, and the first thing I like to do is get communications going with the other governments that will be attacked. We stand the best chance of repulsing Croc's attack if we coordinate with the other nations."

"We're working on it. They're rather... cautious of our news. Which is understandable... they've been wearier of us than before since news of you became public. The tabloids in the peaceful nations are having a field day. For now we'll plan based on the, 'what if' scenario they won't help, and then we'll come up with what if plans if they do decide to trust us."

"Alright."

"Let's get this started," says Raszer as he motions one of the soldiers near him to bring a map, which he nods and quickly unrolls over the metal table.

"What about your other generals? Shall they be here for this meeting?"

"Resources are tight and I couldn't risk my generals moving about... it looks suspicious wouldn't it? The fact we know about the assault has to remain top secret."

"Good point," replies Crisis as her planning with Raszer is just beginning. Meanwhile Joshua is having a conversation of his own with Maria as they and Arissa sit in the back of the truck guarded by two guards standing attention outside.

"So what do you think of her?" asks Joshua.

"Who? Crisis?"

"Yeah. I wish you could have seen her before she went and got her body remodeled... but yeah..."

"Tad surprised to be honest."

“Surprised?”

“Yeah she has more personality than I’d thought she has.”

“Well we used only the most advanced AI programming to create her. Though to be honest the real reason behind her advanced AI is all thanks to Karrie.”

“Ah yes Karrie you mentioned her a few times. Where is she? Someone that important in Crisis’ design, you’d think she’d shown up by now. Either working on her to keep her going or working for her like Arissa here.”

“I resent that remark. I work for Mistress because I want to. And Karrie has been missing. We have no idea where she is,” she responds.

“Karrie isn’t around right now, but one day she’ll pop up again I am sure of it,” comments Joshua.

“Where is she? Someone that important can’t just disappear now can they?” asks Maria.

“Karrie was always a peculiar one in doing things, but wherever she is right now I am sure she’s safe.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“She’s someone who always has a plan. I doubt she’d do something without a reason behind it.”

“Like?”

“Like disappear.”

“Curiously is this the same person you dumped me for all those years ago?”

“Wait what?! Why would you say something like that? I-I-I’d never do something like that to anyone and I wasn’t with anyone when I left.”

“You sound a little defensive there.”

“I do detect a faster heartbeat, I think he’s being rather nervous about this topic,” comments Arissa.

“Hey! Who’s side are you on?”

“Crisis’ of course,” replies Arissa with a sly smirk.

“I can never win...” grumbles Joshua as the meeting between Raszer and Crisis drags on for a few hours before finally reaching a close.

“I believe with this plan we can’t lose,” states Crisis.

“Hope so, for if we fail we just might,” remarks Raszer as he looks over the map and Crisis, “With luck we can be the one advancing and taking back our home rather than Croc taking it away.”

“We can only hope,” says Crisis as she stands up and gives a mock stretch before saying, “If that’s all I must be going and getting preparations ready for the attack.”

“There is one more thing...” says Raszer as he takes a sip of his coffee, his yellow eyes locking directly into Crisis’ glowing blue ones.

“What is it?”

“My sources inform me that you’ve gotten some rather interesting converts recently.”

“Interesting? As in?”

“They have experience that is quite... valuable to us, and before you turned them they were far too old to be any use but now that they’ve been rejuvenated as it were, our need for their expertise has greatly increased.”

“Who are these people?” asks Crisis.

“Not too many here’s the list of volunteers of yours that I’d like to be working directly under me. Their talents will be put to far better use that way,” states Raszer as he pulls out a piece of paper and places it on the table over the map. Crisis picks up the list and scans over it, noting the first name on the list is Francis, Maria’s relative.

“Why do you need them so badly? I am badly undermanned as it is, and I need every machine I can get to defeat Croc.”

“Trust me, these few will greatly increase our chances in defeating Croc.”

“Will it now?”

“It shall, in so many more ways than you can imagine. All you have to do is make sure they’re ready to be picked up by tomorrow, so I can put them to use immediately.”

“Hmm...”

“Would I help if I said I think it will easily double our chances in defeating Croc.”

“Double? How is that possible?”

“You leave that to me, now hmmm?”

“Alright. I don’t see any harm in this,” replies Crisis as bids the General farewell. Sasha and Andres soon following her out the door and the moment the door closes with a thud Raszer sits back with a sigh.

“That machine is such a tool...thankfully so. If she wasn’t I’d had her turned to scrap metal by now. Mention anything that it would help defeat Croc and she jumps on the idea. Bet if I told her not telling the other nations save our dragon allies about the attack was going to help, she’d agree to that too.” he chuckles.

“Most likely sir, but I wouldn’t want to push your luck.,” says one of the guards near him.

“Did I ask for your opinion?” he growls as he glares over at the soldier who nervously gulps.

“N-no sir!”

“Good...I bet if I told that machine that the only way to defeat Croc was to delete her own programming she’d do it. I like that blind devotion and loyalty. With any luck we’ll be able to use the Crisis project to reclaim everything we’ve lost over the past dozen decades,” says Raszer with a toothy grin, “With our victory over Croc’s forces while those other nations fall to this major attack of his, our rise to power over the other lesser nations shall begin once more and this time we won’t stop till we reach the top,” groans Raszer as he pushes himself up from the chair. “Get my chopper ready, I don’t want to spend another moment here than I have to,” commands Raszer as he holds his ceramic coffee mug in his hands as he walks away from the desk taking another sip.

“Yes sir!”

“Still wish that damn machine didn’t get her body remodeled like that. We lost the device that would help verify this information of hers... Oh well, we have to take what we can get at this point,” grumbles Raszer as he walks off, “*It would be problematic if my back up plan got affected in that remodeling as well,*” he thinks.

Meanwhile after Crisis met up with the rest of her group and they were led back to her side of town...

"You want me to go through another round of tests?! Really Joshua, I don't have time for another set," groans Crisis.

"Trust me these are very important."

"If they were so important why weren't they done earlier?"

"I didn't think of it till just now."

"You didn't think of it just now? Important tests that could prevent terrible things from happening to me, and you just remember them just now?" asks Crisis with a hint of sarcasm.

"Sorry, but it's really important. It will be the last one for sometime, I promise."

"You won't drop this till I agree won't you?" asks Crisis with a sigh.

"Yup, someone has to take care of you."

"I don't need someone to take care of me... but fine, one more round of tests, but this will be the last one, got it?" asks Crisis as she leans over to Joshua.

"I got it, I got it," replies Joshua.

"Maybe after you do whatever you do with Crisis we can catch up. You've been so busy we've barely talked," says Maria.

"Yeah, should have some time," says Joshua as the truck pulls into Crisis' section of the city.

"What do you want me to do while you're being looked over Mistress Crisis?" asks Arissa as she jumps off the truck.

"Just get things prepared for me. We have a lot of work to do," commands Crisis as she jumps off the back of the truck. The truck bounces from the sudden drop in weight as Joshua and Sasha follow suit, to Crisis' maintenance area as Maria lets out a soft sigh as she and the others go in the opposite direction.

"Sounds like you know Maria from before," comments Crisis.

"Ah... yeah we used to go out, way before I joined the project."

"Really now?"

"Yeah... what about it?"

"Nothing, I just find it interesting."

"Why? It's nothing special."

"You sound a bit... defensive."

"Defensive? Me? I'm not defensive at all," remarks Joshua.

"He is, I can tell," remarks Sasha.

"Hey who's side are you on?!" groans Joshua.

"What can I say, ladies stick together... even if one's a machine."

"I resent that remark," comments Crisis.

"Anyway lets get you fixed up Crisis," says Joshua as Sasha stands at the door way as she did last time as he and Crisis enter the maintenance bay.



“Fixed up? I thought you were going to run some more stupid tests on me,” groans Crisis as Joshua looks over his soldier back at the exit where Sasha is stationed before moving over to Crisis.

“It’s not about you... it’s about what I wanted to tell you earlier,” whisper’s Joshua as he motions Crisis deeper into the area.

“Oh? What’s that? I thought Maria was what you wanted to talk about.”

“It’s about Sasha... She’s a spy.”

“What? Of course she is, she works for the military; she spies on me all the time.”

“No... no, she’s a spy of Croc’s.”

“What?” remarks Crisis as she keeps her voice low, “How do you know?”

“I saw her talking to some yellow vixen. I barely escaped her notice, but there’s been little I could do. No one would believe me if I told them and she’s been watching me like a hawk, she suspects I know. It has put me in a difficult spot.”

“I see. If we did anything to her, the military would be suspicious and if we told them, they’d think we’re trying to remove her from getting too close and trust us even less. Quite a problem,” comments Crisis as she rubs her chin.

“It is... what shall we do?”

“I have an idea... Hey Sasha! Can you come in we need you!” exclaims Crisis.

“Crisis... what are you doing?!”

“Just stand back and watch, I picked up a lot of tricks while I was gone, I can handle this little dilemma of ours.”

“What is it? Do you need help being plugged in?” she asks with heavy sarcasm.

“No, I just want to ask you something,” asks Crisis as her eyes give off a soft blue, soon followed by her square gem on her forehead.

“What is it?” groans Sasha.

“Are you working for Chaos Croc?”

“Crisis?!”

“Didn’t I say stay out of this?” remarks Crisis as keeps her attention towards Sasha.

“What kind of moronic question is that, did you lose a few screws jut now?”

“You didn’t answer my question. Are you working for Chaos Croc?” asks Crisis as her voices gets softer, smoother, steady... hypnotic.

“Again I tell you it’s a stupid question,” replies Sasha as she draws her eyes down away from Crisis’ eyes into the small blue gem at the center of her black latex vest, the gem also giving a soft steady pulsating glow.

“Then you would have no trouble telling me. Are you working for Chaos Croc?”

“N-n-Yes... I am working for great Master Chaos Croc.”

“That’s a good girl... now tell me how long have you been working for Croc?”

“Since before we met,” respond Sasha in an increasingly monotone voice.

“How did you become to work for Croc?”

“I was in snipping duty and I had the great luck and spotted him, as a fool I took a shot at him, but thankfully a random machine of his blocked my shot and saved him. I was eventually captured he brought me under his power through hypnosis and the use of his wonderful nanites. I happily obey Master Croc.”

“I see... I guess we’ll have to...” says Crisis as she moves forward grabbing the sniper’s claws as she doesn’t put up an ounce of resistance, “Fix that.” Crisis eye’s glow more as she then says, “You want me to save me don’t you, from Croc’s evil control.”

“Yes... to be saved from Croc’s evil glorious control.”

“Good, now be a good girl and show me your neck.”

“Yes... show you my neck,” says Sasha as she tilts her head to the side revealing her scaled neck as Crisis moves in to give a quick bite, injecting her nanites through two small fangs hidden up until this point. After a few moments Crisis pulls away and grins her eyes returning back to normal, “M-Mistress Crisis you saved me! You saved me from Croc’s control!” says Sasha as she gives Crisis a big hug.

“Oh you’re most welcomed.”

“Is there anything I can do for you Mistress Crisis, just name it.”

“You will continue what you are doing, but serve me in the end. Don’t treat me any different than you already have. I don’t want to raise suspicions now. It would be bad for me. ”

“Yes Mistress Crisis... I mean Crisis.”

“Good, now why don’t you head back to your post and return to the same old same old. Keep me informed of any meetings you have with Croc’s forces. Feed them false information that will increase our chances against him. You’re going to make a great triple agent.”

“Of course... I’ll be keeping an eye on you as well, don’t want you to be doing anything you shouldn’t,” says Sasha as she returns to her same personality and walks off, adjusting her sniper rifle on her back as she walks off.

“H-how did you do that?” asks Joshua with his jaw dropped to the floor.

“I’ve picked up a few tricks Croc uses... don’t worry I won’t use them on you, but it’s good to know I can counter his work. My nanites have gotten much better than before. Using my nanites was the only way to remove any left in her, the side affect though is the same at the base where I was created, she is loyal and obedient to me now,” remarks Crisis with a smile.

“You don’t sound too troubled by that,” comments Joshua.

“Not so bad. Calling me here to get her to follow with just us, how clever.”

“Yes it was one place that Sasha doesn’t instinctually follow you and wouldn’t seem too out of place for me to call you.”

“Smart, now if you don’t mind, I have work to do,” replies Crisis as she turns and walks off.

“Crisis... what ma I going to do with you. How will Karrie think of you when she comes back,” thinks Joshua.

“Oh, Joshua one more thing,” says Crisis as she stops in the doorway and turns to him.

“Yes Crisis?”

“Thanks for your help. I appreciate it,” replies Crisis with a smile.

“Welcome,” says Joshua as he thinks as he follows Crisis out of the room, “*Maybe it’s not as bad I as think...*”

## Chapter 17 First Conflict, Sighs and Gasps

Crisis' imprint over the city of Rioas has steadily grown over the weeks since General Raszer's visit to the city. As more of the city is restored, some of the buildings are commandeered by Crisis and remodeled to look more streamline, futuristic, but overall the look of the city remains the same, just newer. The streets are clean, free of any kind of litter what so ever, the air and water are also fresh and crisp despite the factories no working full time helping to equip Crisis' growing army. The original residents of the city will admit this is the best they've ever seen the city, 'despite machines being here'.

The city's internal economy has also improved thanks in part to Crisis' ideas to let her robots establish themselves as normal citizens on their days off. Even with how little money they receive from General Raszer, the money has gone a far in helping the people get some form of 'normalcy' back into their lives but progress and integration is slow. Crisis' robot wash idea was one of those that was hesitantly accepted and only a few of the citizens were willing to start up and work in these robot washes, the building of such Crisis helped design based on the designs she saw in the city of Veloci.

Crisis is currently situated in her war room, the same room where Joshua received her message, about her spy mission, weeks ago. She stands before the large screen which feeds her and the others working there vital military information, such as position of troops, their status as well as to the best of their knowledge that of the enemy. From here Crisis can see the section of the front that she is in charge off. Crisis looks around and sees that she is accompanied by three of her machines, none of which are her common regulars that she works with the exception of one, Unit # C-0012, the former general of the very base Crisis took over to at the very start of her existence.

"I really don't like being here. I should be at the front with the rest of my forces," grumbles Crisis.

"You know that's not possible Crisis. The front is just too dangerous to risk you there especially in your very first military engagement. You're lucky you roboticized two former medium ranking generals of the last empire to assist you in your duties. Seeing you have no strategic military experience their help will be vital," explains Lieutenant Andres.

"I know that, still doesn't mean I have to like it. And I'm not too comfortable with the fact there are only three of my people here, and the rest are yours."

"What's wrong with that? We're on the same side, nothing to be worried about."

"I know that, but do the others know it?"

"Don't worry, they know if you act up, I won't hesitate to blow that head right off your shoulders," remarks Sasha as she runs a claw along her over sized sniper rifle, strapped to her back which looks even bigger considering how cramped and busy the room is.

"Do you really have to say that out loud?" asks Phillip

"What's wrong sir? It's not like it's a secret, she knows it, I know it, might as well let everyone else know it. For their piece of mind of course, sir," she remarks.

“This isn’t a time to worry about this, Croc’s attack shall begin at any moment, and Crisis’ forces are smack dab in the middle of his strongest spearhead. The first test of your forces is going to be a tough one,” comments Phillip.

“I know... I wish I was able to muster up more forces than just two divisions, which I still consider to be under equipped for the task set before them,” grumbles Crisis as she flicks her tail. “Regardless how they are equipped we will succeed. Croc has no idea of my forces, or the fact we know his plan. Will we not only blunt his spearheads but break them off. Swallowing his army and pushing the tide of battle in our favor. When we win this battle, and save our country from imminent destruction.”

“We have to win this battle,” states Phillip as he thinks, *“If Croc pushes to and past the Dromus River, he’ll be able to push into and possibly break our last fortifications up in the mountains, past that is just desert and our last major factories. Not to mention on the other side of the river are countless refugees at the Karaki boarder, those felines would never be able to fight against Croc like we have. If he pushes past that river he’ll overrun countless innocent civilians adding them to his growing army. From there even if we hold in the mountains Croc could just push through the open plains and forests of the Karaki nation go around and overtake our factories there. If we lose here we’ll never have the forces to retake our country, our slow death will be assured.”*

“Hmmp... you ready for this Crisis?” asks Sasha.

“Me? Of course, I was built ready,” she replies as she looks over at the battle screen, her forces ready for the coming battle which can begin at any moment.

Meanwhile back in the maintenance facility, Joshua, Arissa, Shasi, are sitting at computer screens, looking at various feeds of information as Maria looks at them curiously.

“What exactly are you doing here again?” she asks as she looks over Joshua’s shoulder.

“We’re monitoring Crisis’ systems. We placed several monitors on her today so we can study how Crisis’ new body is reacting, and how she is handling this command position with such high stakes. We are the ones that built her after all. We have to watch over our creation and see if there any updates needed to improve her,” explains Joshua with a smirk. “Despite what some others might think...” remarks Joshua as he looks over at the two machines.

“Hey, I’m all for helping Mistress become better at her duties,” exclaims Arissa.

“We wouldn’t have to if organics didn’t do the work,” sighs Shasi as she looks over at Joshua.”

“Hey you were organics too now,” responds Joshua with a sigh, “At least we aren’t in maid outfits while doing this.”

“Maid outfits?” asks Maria as she looks at Joshua with a hint of confusion in her eyes.

“Nothing, nothing. Though judging by these screens... is it just me or does Crisis appear to be nervous?”

“Nervous? How can a robot be nervous?” asks Maria.

“We didn’t program nervousness in, well not like this anyway. She’s designed to perceive situations and act accordingly, but looking at the data she’s acting well like any normal person would in her position.”

“That is strange. We were organics so we retained such emotions to some degree. It’s built into our programming, which can be nullified or deleted if need be, but Crisis was built, honestly we don’t have the technology to program such emotions into her, or is it possible that she was an organic before hand?” asks Arissa.

“What? You don’t know?” asks Maria.

“Well... no one was there to see Crisis activate, except for the ever elusive Karrie,” responds Arissa.

“You think she activated her? Odds are she ran when Croc’s forces attacked the base, she was always a skittish impulsive one. It was Crisis that saved us,” says Shasi.

“So Crisis was activated when Croc’s forces attacked the base where she was built?” asks Maria.

“Yeah, she fought them off and undid some of the damage to the scientists that were roboticized by his forces, examples you see are Shasi and Arissa here. I lucked out as the only scientist not roboticized before her rescue,” explains Joshua.

“Is that so?”

“It is, we were very lucky she was activated. I still suspect it was AI that turned her on.”

“AI?” asks Maria.

“Joshua is referring to me,” chimes in AI

“Wha, what... who was that?!” asks Maria as she jumps.

“Sorry to have startled you. I am AI, I am the advanced artificial intelligence from the facility where Crisis was made in. I’ve been connected to this base for some time.”

“So you’re some hyped up AI program? What’s your purpose?”

“To assist Mistress Crisis in her objectives, I can also verify that Crisis was activated after Croc’s Special Forces team attacked the base.”

“So... where are you? Or should I say do you have a body?”

“I have no physical form. I am speaking to you through speaker systems of this room.”

“So what, you’re some ambiguous voice that’s all over the place?”

“In a sense yes, I help maintain and keep track of equipment that pertains to Crisis’ well being.”

“This is getting rather weird... so can you see me?”

“I can through the video cameras. I am limited to the equipment of the facilities I reside in and limited physical control of systems.”

“That makes me feel... a bit better... I think,” comments Maria as she looks over at Joshua, “So when was I going to be told about this?”

“AI is a secret project. You shouldn’t know about her. And AI should have been quite about her existence around outsiders,” states Joshua as he looks up at a video camera.

“I do apologize,” says AI.

“Nothing we can do about it now. AI was our first attempt at building an artificial program capable of being Crisis and to defeat Croc. AI wasn’t enough at fulfill those needs, but she certainly helped speed up the process in Crisis’ creation.”

“She?”

“Well she sounds feminine doesn’t she? It sounds more comfortable than calling AI an it,” says Joshua.

“I suppose...”

“I do appreciate that, but I shall mention Crisis’ readings have just changed suddenly. You may want to look into it,” responds AI.

“Hmm? Oh thanks AI,” replies Joshua as he looks at the computer screen. “Judging from the read outs Crisis is working in overdrive now. I have a feeling the battle just started. Alright we need to focus on this, this won’t be Crisis’ last battle we need to monitor her to see how we can make improvements,” states Joshua.

“I know,” replies Arissa.

“Don’t have to tell me,” remarks Shasi.

“Sorry Maria we are going to be a bit busy for a while,” says Joshua.

“I understand,” replies Maria as she walks off into another room, inside is completely quiet and empty with idle computers and desks, the busy sound of Joshua and the others working completely muffled out by distance and the ambient background noise. “Hey, AI you still there?”

“I am always here,” she replies.

“Great... since you have some free time, mind telling me in greater detail about the day Crisis activated?”

“Sure, what would you like to know?”

“Everything,” says Maria. “*There is something about her activation story that I just don’t buy,*” she thinks.

As the hours pass after Croc’s initial attack, satellite feed shows images of Croc’s tanks, planes, mechanized and organic soldiers pushing through Raptras’ front lines. Crisis’ eyes glow a brighter blue as she focuses on the images that are feed through the screens. She watches the organic armies get pushed back mile after mile by Croc’s forces. Crisis’ claw tips tap on a nearby counter again and again as her tail sways behind her as the pace of battle quickens and grows more complex with each passing moment.

“Crisis, would you please stop tapping the counter top? It’s getting a bit irritating,” complains Phillip.

“This wait is bothersome. My forces are in front of Croc’s main spearhead and we have yet to spring the trap yet. I can’t help but worry when only one of my two divisions is actually fighting.”

“Give it time, you’re slowing them down more than we expected, you should be proud. Just wait till the time is right. We all must spring it together if not; this will all be for naught.”

“I know... I know,” sighs Crisis as her tail flicks behind her again.

The news of the renewed conflict across the borders of all the countries fighting Croc’s armies is being broadcasted around the globe albeit with some mixed results....

In the Anar kingdom, an island country far to the south of the Dromaeosa, the citizens composed primarily of anthropomorphic sharks. The news of Croc's attack is broadcasted on the early morning news, but it's only given a quick mention which only brings a few citizens to grumble and comment, "Why do we care what's happening to those land scabies, they've only cost us money and hardships? I want to hear news of the real war." The war they speak of isn't between organics and machines, but rather between them against their neighboring island chain nation of Friss, the anthropomorphic people who live there are primarily composed of sea mammals, such as dolphins, whales, and orcas. But the Anar's military high command watches this battle with extreme concern...

Nations that are closer to the actual battle, such as the feline nation of Karakas the news reports are considerably longer, with either live video feed or delayed and edited video feed of the battle, broadcasted exclusively by a small team of Karakas news reporters that volunteered to report on the war that rages on in two of the three of their neighboring countries.

An elderly feline sits in his rocking chair as he watches the news about the battle that is going on, his once golden fur is well faded, his body scared from events in his youth. He adjusts his glasses as he watches over his grandchildren playing on the carpet before him, not even paying attention to the news that he's watching. The report goes into detail about the continued casualties inflicted onto the Dromaeosa nation. As the report continues and tells about how the Dromaeosa armies are being pushed back towards the Dromus River the elderly feline can't help but grin as he says with a chuckle "Serves those bastards right. I don't see all that superiority talk helping you know! About time we see you hiding from something."

"You aren't the least bit worried about the war coming here, are you Father?" says a golden female feline as she comes out from the kitchen. "You know they're almost to our country's boarder."

"Aye I know, and those whatever the fuck they are will see how powerful a true and righteous nation's army can be."

"Watch your tongue, I told you about using that kind of language around the children."

"Sorry, you know how I can't help that, but really you know these scabies deserve what's coming to them. I wouldn't be surprised if this robot uprising is their own doing. Something they created goes and attacks them instead, and they try to make another to fix the problem. Doesn't take a genius to think that is what really is happening."

"Yeah... Yeah, regardless watch your tongue around the children. Now turn that TV off and come on eat, lunch is ready. I made your favorite, Tuna casserole"

"You always knew how to treat this old man," he says with a big grin on his face.

In the country of Dromaeosa things are far from tranquil. On the other side of the mountains, hot harsh desert climate with howling winds that seem to burn unprotected skin furred, feathered, scale or other. The factories belch out black smoke that darken the sky but provide no alleviation to the heat, but rather seem to make things worse. The makeshift dwellings around these mega factories at best could be called shanties with few having even the basic luxuries such as electricity or running water.

A group of raptors huddle around a small hand cranked battery powered radio. They constantly adjust and move the long metal antenna in an attempt to get some sort of news through the crackling static.



“Hold it right there, or we’ll lose it,” exclaims one raptor his scales dulled by the blistering heat and sandy winds.

“I’m trying,” growls the one holding the antenna as he attempts to hold it in an uncomfortable awkward position.

“Will you two be quiet I think I hear something,” growls a third.

“Croc’s as..... inues.... Quic... approaches... Dromu... iver. Dro...orc....urrent....”

“Damn it! I want to hear what’s happening why don’t you move it back to where it was!” growls the first raptor.

“I’m working on it! I’m working on it!” growls the second as other raptors are focusing on the radios with equal if not more vigor and concern, meanwhile twenty-five miles south of the Dromus River there’s a mountain pass that is the border between Dromaeosa and Karakas. The path is no more than six car length’s wide, and the road is winding and dangerous. Cold winds blow from the pass making even the summer heat barely noticeable here.

The entrance way towards this nation is guarded by several armed feline military guards supported by a light tank and two Humvees, the group standing inches away from the Dromaeosa border. The humvees have their machine guns pointed towards the Dromaeosa’ boarder.

What the felines are aiming at is the massive refugee camp that has been set up at the boarder’s edge. Makeshift tents if anything at all is all the shelter the raptors have from the cold. The refugees are made up of predominantly women, children, and elderly that haven’t joined Crisis’ forces, with a few fathers sprinkled in taking care of their children. Each family has their own story to tell, own reasons why they rather be here than elsewhere within their country, but they all have one goal in common, to get out of the country before Croc’s forces arrive.

“You still going in there to help these lizards?” asks one of the guards to a young female feline dressed in a white uniform, with a red cross symbol on her sleeves along with one on her back which is blocked by her backpack that she is carrying that is full of food, water and medical supplies.

“I can’t sit around and do nothing while I watch others suffer,” she remarks.

“And if we were in their spot you’d think would they do the same? Of course not,” the guard snarls.

“You don’t know that.”

“I do, you know how they’re like. They care nothing but about themselves. I just would be careful, if I were you. They are quite restless today; we already had to repulse a few illegal crossing attempts into our country.”

“I will, don’t worry about me,” she replies with a smile as she walks into the camp, joining a small group of relief workers to provide what little aid they can to the countless raptors. As she starts her daily routine many of the raptors are busy huddled around their radios which have a clearer radio quality than their desert counterparts.

“Croc’s forces have broken the northern most flanks in the Talos region, and reports of a small attack force are now heading towards the Dromus River. The president’s spokesman has said not to fear about this minor breach in our defenses that the attack will soon be repulsed, and if by some chance any of Croc’s forces reach the Dromus River that our impenetrable defenses will not a single enemy soldier to cross the river.”

“That’s a load of bull, I saw the river front two days ago to get some water, and there’s nothing there. Not a single fortified emplacement. I saw a few supply trucks for the front soldiers, and artillery guns, but no ‘impenetrable’ defense. If they reach the river there’s nothing between them and us,” growls a middle aged green scaled male raptor.

“The president’s spokes person? What about the president himself, I haven’t heard scale or tail of him in months if not longer,” growls a middle aged black scaled female.

“That coward has been hiding in some bunker for god knows how long. Glad I didn’t vote for that spineless twerp. I’m also not sure how accurate this news feed is, you know they are going to sugar coat the truth the entire time.”

“Of course, and what about that Crisis project? I haven’t heard much from it save from the need of our elderly to become a new army,” she remarks.

“Yeah what a load of bull that is,” growls the male raptor as he returns his attention to the news feed.

The hours pass as the news from the battlefield become harder and harder to sugar coat, as the reports coming in from several sources indicate that their ‘strategic relocation’ or ‘tactical withdrawal’ is really a full blown retreat. Soon enough there was no need for the radios to know how the battle was going for the battered nation. The rumbling of the battlefield in the distance was reaching the raptor’s ear holes as it was clear that the battlefield was approaching where they were.

“You hear that?” asks one of the elder raptors.

“Aye, I know those guns,” responds another elder raptor as he sits back on a makeshift seat made out of a rock. “You can hear those type of guns about twenty-five miles out, but these mountains amplify the noise so we can hear it better than normal. I’d say they are probably thirty, thirty-five miles tops,” he remarks..

“Thirty miles? How can you say that so calmly? At this rate they’d be here in a few hours! We have to get out of here!” exclaims one of the younger raptors as she stands up. “I not going to sit here and let those robotic monsters get us!” she yells as she along with hundred other refugees make their way towards the boarder. The feline guards watch the spectacle before them unfold and take aim their weapons towards the unarmed civilians.

“Halt you are forbidden to enter this country under the Karakas-Raptras treat of...”

“Are you mad! We have to get out of here and the only way out you are blocking. If we don’t run now you’ll be caught up too! Step aside and let us through!” she growls.

“Anyone who attempts to cross the boarder into Karakas illegally will be considered an invader of this country and be shot on the spot,” snarls the feline guard as they take defensive positions their weapons aimed at the battered refugees.

“Are you insane?!” growls a golden yellow, black stripped scaled female raptor as she takes several steps towards the guards as she stands about two yards ahead of the rest of the crowd.

Suddenly a ring of three gunshots echoes through the mountain tops as birds who weren’t disturbed by the explosions heard in the distance did fly away at the noise of what happened. The crowd falls silent as they look ahead, others, young children trying to climb nearby trees to take a peek as to what happened, while concerned mothers attempt to bring their children back down from the trees.

The female raptor is motionless as she stands there, the three gun shots fired at the ground less than a foot ahead of her. The marks from the bullets clearly seen in the ground as her claws shake as she looks up at the felines.

“That was a warning shot. If you try to approach us we will open fire.”

“You really have gone mad,” she growls as she takes a deep breath and continues walking forward, moments later so does the rest of the crowd behind her. “We won’t just sit here and die because of some decades old peace treaty. Now let us pa—” the raptor’s words are cut short by the sound of a single rifle going off. The lead stumbles to the ground as she lets out a screech of pain, her hands putting pressure on her leg which bleeds profusely from the bullet wound.

“You’re crazy! Why did you fire upon them? They haven’t crossed the boarder you have no right!” yells the female feline from earlier as she rushes through the crowd towards the injured raptor. The feline places her heavy bag beside her with a thunk as she quickly rummages through it for some bandages to wrap around her leg.

“It’s okay, it’s only a scratch,” growls the raptor on the ground as the feline starts to apply first aid to her.

“It’s more than a scratch but you are lucky the bullet went right through and didn’t hit any bone,” she remarks.

“Why are you so worried about them? And don’t look at me like I’m the bad guy after all they’ve done. In reality I did her a favor if she crossed the border that shot would have been aimed much higher,” chuckles the guard as he points to his head.

“What happened in the past gives you no right to do this,” exclaims the feline.

“Ha, I have every right. Look at what they’ve done to us over countless generations? They felt they had every right to do what they did. Hell if you ask me I am being too kind to them with all these warning shots.”

“You call this a warning shot?!” growls the feline as she points to the bleeding raptor’s leg.

“Don’t worry, he just knows how tough we are, we can handle something as simple as a bullet wound,” growls the female raptor as she pushes herself back onto her feet, her leg still covered in blood as the bandage turns red from the wounds.

“I’m warning you, not another step forward,” yells the guard as he aims his gun at the lead raptor.

“Please wait, don’t do anything rash... either of you,” says the female feline as she gets between the two who are merely a few yards apart.

“I’m not going to do anything rash, I’m just going to take a nice stroll through the mountains,” chuckles the female raptor.

“I’m only doing what I must to protect the country I love from these scaled beasts,” snarls the guard.

The raptor takes a half step forward pushing the feline forward as she tries to keep the injured raptor back, “Don’t do this, we can work this out,” she pleads.

“Move out of the way, I don’t want to hit you too,” yells the guard to the female aid worker.

“Listen to him, move out of the way, I don’t want you hurt. You’ve worked hard helping us while we were trapped here, but we can’t be here any longer,” explains the female raptor.

“Wait! Wait! You young rascals, always rushing without thinking,” yells the elderly male raptor from before who gauged how far away the steadily growing louder artillery fire is. He smacks a few of the raptors in front of him with his cane as he makes his way towards the front. “Out of my way, don’t you know you ought to respect your elders!” growls the raptor as he carries a radio in his other hand.

“What is it?” asks the female raptor as she turns towards the elderly raptor.

“If you all weren’t here making such a ruckus you’d know by now,” he grumbles as he turns up the radio.

“I repeat the last spearhead of Croc’s forces being stopped eight miles from the Dromus River, counterattacks along the entire front have been successful as our newly formed robotic divisions under the command of General Raszer have cut off the most powerful spearheads and in the process of completely annihilating enemy forces. Holes are forming in Chaos Croc’s lines which our brave soldiers are quickly exploiting and retaking ground lost in the earlier hours of the day,” says the reporter as he seems to be getting choked up, “It might be much for me to say but this battle could be the turning point we’ve all hoped for. In all my years of reporting this war I never received reports of such destruction of the enemy ground forces.”

A silence falls upon the crowd as they listened to the news. The female lead raptor fell to her knees with a grunt. The news was so sudden so fast that you could hear the silence, the rustle of the trees as the wind blue slowly turned into cheers. Raptors across the nation began to cheer as the news spread like wildfire.

Crisis sighs in relief as she looks at the screens, seeing that their plan of assault is working so splendidly. Reports of captured hypnotized raptor soldiers that were thought lost rolling in, along with destruction or capture of countless tons of military equipment. Cheers rolled through the command room as Crisis like the robotic generals with her, remained still focus on their task. There was no time for celebration there was still much to do, but one thing that did cross Crisis mind as this all happened. “*Finally.*”

Croc on the other hand stood looking at his military screens, his hands held behind his back as he swayed on his feet back and forth, his tail swishing behind him as he sees the battle unfolding before him via countless video feeds from his soldiers, strategic command that shows the position of all his troops across the entire front of all the countries he’s invading. Surrounding him are dozens of drone workers busily helping Croc fulfill his commands and spread his dominance over the battlefield towards his ideal world.

“It seems that Crisis is going to be more troublesome than anticipated,” says the Empress as he stands by Croc on his left side, watching the battle unfold in her tight red outfit that’s unbecoming of anyone in the military yet alone in a major command hub.

Croc looks over the battle watching how quickly the Dromaeosa front is turning against him. Croc gives a sly smile as he replies, “It would seem so. I wonder how this Crisis got a hold of my battle plans.”

“Probably has something to do with your missing prototype body. I told you, you’re too open with these things,” remarks the Empress.

“I know, but things work out for me in the end, so I don’t see the problem with it,” he replies.

“No matter how much you’ve grown some things about you never change.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” replies Croc.

“Shall we divert forces from the other offensives to set up new defensive lines? At this rate a majority of your forces on that front will be destroyed.”

“If we must, pull troops from two of the bordering countries for that. We’ll secure what gains we’ve made there. Continue as planned for the others. We shouldn’t let this little nuisance hinder all my fun now,” remarks Croc with a smirk.

“Master Croc! Master Croc!” says Ko as she comes rushing in. Croc looks over his shoulder at her as she comes barging into the command room.

“What is it Ko?” asks Croc.

“Take a look at the Dromaeosa news reports, there’s something there you might find interesting.”

“Oh? I know they’d be reporting my defeat, what of interest is that to me?”

“No not that, something else,” she replies.

“Oh alright,” says Croc as he waves his hand as a video feed of one of the few remaining video news reporting by the nation is giving most urgent news.

“I repeat, the president has been assassinated. Information is limited at this time, but early reports have told of an elite enemy strike force that infiltrated the president’s secret bunker and after a quick and bloody battle the president was shot dead. It’s unsure if his cabinet which is in the same bunker has been killed in the fighting. Regardless, given the state of emergency this will make General Raszer current acting head of our government till elections can be established for a new president. General Raszer is unable to be reached due to the current battle raging against Croc’s forces, which thus far have been going in our glorious country’s favor. Even with this dark event shadowing our success we will continue to press on to victory and Chaos Croc will be punished for assassinating our glorious leader.”

“Oh this is interesting, very interesting indeed...” remarks Croc with a smirk, as he places his hands behind his back, returning to his proud stance as he watches the news report.

## Chapter 18 Tour of the Front

A month and a half have passed since that fateful first battle and the tide of battle is still in Dromaeosa's favor. The other nations save for the dragons, the north eastern boarder country to Dromaeosa have had not been as fortunate. The advance has been swift and brutal, Dromaeosa forces have been recapturing cities that were lost only weeks ago, then months, but as the combined forces approached territory that has been held by Chaos Croc for years which has had time to be influenced by Chaos Croc along side with Chaos Croc's recent reinforcements the advance has started to turn to a crawl, that is save for Crisis' steadily growing armies.

A sleek black helicopter with Crisis' blue sickle claw markings on the sides, speeds through the air, hugging the ground as Crisis leans back into her seat, her tail hidden within a tail compartment as Joshua and Sasha sit across from her. Crisis looks out the window looking over the war torn landscape below as they approach the front lines.

"It will be good to see the frontline," comments Crisis.

"I'm sure it will be. I miss being up on the front myself," replies Sasha as her sniper rifle lays beside her strapped into an empty seat to prevent it from moving during the flight.

"It will be my first time actually," remarks Joshua as he looks down at his claws then back at the window.

"Nervous?" asks Sasha with a sly smirk.

"N-no... I'm not nervous."

"Sure you are. A civilian like you? The war front is a scary thing."

"The front is scary for military personnel and civilian alike; just how one is able to handle that fear is what makes one helpful and the other a burden," explains Crisis.

*"Wasn't expecting you to say something like that Crisis... almost sounds a bit like..."* thinks Joshua as Crisis continue to say.

"Though the front can't be as scary as those swarms of reports that have been hounding me the past couple weeks," chuckles Crisis.

"Ever since you turned the tide of battle in our favor, you've been big news not only here but to the other nations fighting Croc," says Joshua.

"They can't believe I have some integrity and that I promised all my interviews with Maria."

"Still doesn't mean they won't try."

"They're still annoying," remarks Crisis.

"Look on the bright side. The other four nations are interested in you."

"This is true... maybe I can set up similar agreements with them as I have here. Form my own armies in each of those notions. I'm sure they'd appreciate the help in exchange of increasing the strength of my forces," replies Crisis with a smirk.

"That could work... we could push Croc on all sides, prevent him from getting any stronger."

“Or could make him more dangerous, but bolstering your forces is never a bad idea Crisis,” comments Sasha

“The more bases of operation I can obtain for my army to grow the better, but for now one thing at a time, hmm?” says Crisis as she turns her attention towards Joshua and Sasha. “I have to inspect the forces here. We’re approaching the city of Veloci, the crossroads of our country.”

“Not to mention one of the hottest gambling spots anywhere,” chuckles Sasha.

“Quite... I’ll have to inform high command to avoid those casinos.”

“Why’s that?” asks Joshua.

“They’ve been made even more addictive than before, and make another certain robotic individual more desirable to serve, which is sadly not me,” remarks Crisis with a sly grin.

“Ah... didn’t have to put it so vague like,” replies Joshua.

“Oh and where’s the fun in saying, the casinos are filled with Croc’s hypnotism equipment?”

“Doesn’t matter right now, we’re here,” says Sasha as the helicopter pulls back, slowing down as an area of flat grassland cleared for marked for helicopter to land. Waiting for them is a mixed bag of Crisis’ robotic troops and the organics from the army assigned to work with them. They make a path for Crisis, the other two to walk through as they disembark chopper they see at the end of this path is a familiar face, Lieutenant Andres, his claws held behind his back as he stands proud and tall as they approach.

“Glad you could make it,” he states as Crisis reaches him.

“So this is what you’ve been doing Lieutenant when you went on ahead to see how our armies are doing,” comments Crisis.

“A few things, oh and its Captain now.”

“Captain is it? Congrats on the promotion,” compliments Crisis.

“Thanks, but first things first. Since you’re here we’re going to do a little PR building.”

“PR building? What for?”

“Some of the troops would like to see you, put a face to what they’ve heard. Not much is known about you, or what you look like, especially now. There are also a few soldiers that like to meet you, one special case in particular.”

“A special case?”

“You’ll see,” says Andres as he turns to walk besides Crisis.

“How have things been so far?” inquires Crisis.

“As to be expected, our troops our tired, yours are a bit worn out but still ready to go. Moral is high as to be expected.”

“That’s good... what is that?” asks Crisis as she sees a raptor with a video camera placed in front of his muzzle, the lens of the camera aimed right at her and Andreas.

“What is what?” he asks.

“That,” says Crisis as she points over towards the cameraman as she now notices a second smaller female raptor beside him holding a small portable sound boom stick kept just out of sight of the camera lens. The wires of the audio microphone are wrapped around the metal rod she is holding all the way down to a pouch on her left side where the recording equipment

and power supply are kept. "I thought I made it clear that I won't be interviewed by anyone except Maria. I am a machine of my word, and I will not have it broken so haphazardly."

"Relax, they're not newscasters but military documentary personnel."

"Documentary?" asks Crisis as she looks over at Andres.

"You should know what a documentary is Crisis," interjects Joshua.

"I know what it is," she replies as she looks over her shoulder towards Joshua.

"This is a historic moment in our country's history, where we were on the brink of total destruction from a foreign invader; we manage to turn it around and now only months after the attack we've taken back land lost to us for years. Once we reach the crossroad city of Veloci it's only two hundred more miles till we reach the capital. The loss of our capital has been a shameful event in this war, getting it back will raise spirits more than any battle we've won thus far. You don't think we wouldn't record this for the history books?" asks Andreas.

"I suppose, though I wish I was informed I was going to be filmed," she remarks.

"Camera shy?" asks Andreas with a chuckle.

"No, not really. I just like to be informed of such things," remarks Crisis as the two walk forward the small camera crew following them, keeping Crisis in near constant view.

"Small crew to film a war," comments Joshua.

"We don't have much manpower to spare. What I've been told those two are one of the last remaining original war documentary personnel. They've been filming since the start of the war," explains Andreas as the group continues to move towards Crisis' first duty a short distance away from the landing pad.

"They don't say much do they," says Crisis as she motions towards the camera crew.

"In war there is nothing we can say better than what we film. We film the good times... the bad, the quiet times of endless boredom, and the times of rush and sheer terror of combat. We show how crazy war is," explains the video camera man.

"As crazy as this war is the real crazy ones are us," states the female audio operator.

"Why's that?" asks Crisis.

"While others are shooting bullets, we're shooting film," she replies as Crisis' group reaches their first destination, a group of organic soldiers lined up waiting as their commanding officer stands attention nearby. The camera crew takes a few steps back to get better shots and to give the group more room to move about.

"First up is a group of soldiers that wanted to meet you for the right reasons," states Andreas.

"Right reasons?"

"You'll see, the first one is most interesting," he replies as they reach the front of the line. Before them is a black scaled, red striped male raptor, his green emerald eyes looks at Crisis as he gives a small head bob towards Crisis as he says.

"I assume you're the Crisis we've heard so much about, it's a pleasure to meet you."

"A pleasure? That's a different change of pace."



“I’m Private Mark Hanson and I wanted to see and thank the person that help save our country and my life.”

“Your life? I doubt I’ve done that much. Saying I saved the country is a bit much as well. It’s all the soldiers fighting on the fields of battle and those at home helping those at the battlefield that have turned the tide of war. I only did my part to help that happen.”

“You helped give us new lease on life, created new divisions that have shocked Croc’s forces and pushed them in retreat. I’d admit... at first I was hesitant, to say against the idea of a machine in charge of anything. Let alone turning our elderly into mechanical soldiers even if they were volunteers, more so when my grandfather joined.”

“Sounds like something changed your mind,” comments Crisis.

“Y-yes. About three weeks ago, during a counterattack, I was snatched up by one of Croc’s mechanized spiders. You know the one that grabs soldiers, puts about four or six into roboticization pods. You know of them right? I was the fifth soldiers snatched, and they don’t roboticize till they’re full. And my grandfather helped take the spider down and rescue me before I became, no offense, like you.”

“None taken.”

“Since then I wanted to thank the person who gave my grandfather the opportunity to rescue me. So... thank you.”

“You shouldn’t thank me, but your grandfather. We all do what we must nothing more than that,” replies Crisis as Mark gives a head bob giving Crisis one more thanks before he is dismissed back to his duties. For the next hour this display of soldiers giving their gratitude to Crisis was done, all the while the video crew filmed and recorded what happens.

“It was nice to see organics supporting my work but what was that really necessary?” asks Crisis as they made their way to the next area as Crisis notices some other raptor soldiers eyeing her in the distance with more a predatory glare. “Then again... not all do, and it could be good to show I am doing something helpful,” she remarks.

“It’s to be expected; you got to meet the cream of the crop as it were... when it comes to those who understand.”

“It is obvious not everyone is as so enthusiastic as they are.”

“As you know there are reports of clashes between your troops and ours. But they’ve been minimal due to the success we’ve been having.”

“And the moment we do badly, they’ll jump on my forces and claim it’s entirely our fault for their trouble,” comments Crisis.

“Yeah, sad but true. Anyway we have other work to do.”

“What other kind of work?” asks Joshua.

“The hard kind, what else,” replies Sasha with a smirk.

“I totally forgot you two were here,” comments Andreas.

“I’m just silent and stealthy, he’s just forgettable,” she remarks with a chuckle.

“I resent that remark,” growls Joshua.

“Enough of that, now, since I wasn’t informed of any of my duties here, except inspect the front lines, I like to get these other duties done as quickly as possible. What’s next Captain Andreas.”

“We have some captured machines from Croc’s army. We are currently... reeducating them to help us advance and spot the troubles ahead, but progress is slow. Seeing how you’ve hacked some of their systems before, you might speed up the process on getting the information we need.”

“Oh this should be fun,” replies Crisis with a smirk as she is led to a grey tent guarded by several organic guards as their cold eyes glaring at Crisis as she walks inside with Andreas, shortly followed by Sasha and Joshua. Inside are half a dozen machines of various races, fox, avian, lizard, raptor, and dragon, each with the red Chaos Croc symbol on their metallic bodies. Each one bound heavily to a steel chair, legs tied to the legs, the arms bound to the arm rests, their necks tied to the back of the chair, as the chairs themselves are spiked into the black earth. Attached to the back of the heads of three of these machines are three wires that lead to a different computer console where a raptor computer engineer is busy trying to hack through the machine’s defenses.

The rattling of claws on keyboard is heard in the room as the nearby guards look at Crisis’ entry as do the bound machines who struggle even harder, as their red glowing robotic eyes glare at Crisis while the hackers don’t even flinch or look up to see that someone has even arrived.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here? The Master Croc wannabe,” growls a silver female draconic machine. The body length silver and black stripped metallic wings are tied around the back of the chair, as several chains are wrapped around them and his body to ensure they don’t break free. “Come to learn how real Croc minions act so you may make some vain attempt to copy?”

“I think I found my first subject,” comments Crisis as she walks over to the dragon.

“Careful now Crisis,” warns Joshua as Crisis moves up to the dragon, her hips slowly swaying side to side as her tail trails her movements step by step.

“Don’t worry, I know how to take care of myself, though seeing how you’ve been caught, you should be the one who should take note of how to take care of one’s self. I recommend you lose that attitude of yours... while it’s still an option of yours to make,” Crisis threatened.

“Don’t make me laugh, you couldn’t program a pong program let alone hack my systems,” she remarks.

“Oh... we’ll see about that,” replies Crisis as she gives a sly smirk, her claw tips trailing along the muzzle of the dragon who jerks her head away from Crisis’ touch. “I think I’ll enjoy reprogramming you.”

“If you can, the last two hackers couldn’t” she cackles.

“Oh, but I’m not them,” she says in an almost seductive tone of voice as she runs her claw tips along the access panel to the program port on the back of the machine’s head. With a flick of her wrist Crisis opens the panel and within moments, the tip of Crisis’ claws sprout open like flowers in bloom. Wires spring forth from the open metallic petals and latch

themselves onto the access port that is behind a back head panel that was already open by the hackers sometime ago, as Crisis starts her penetration into opposing machine.

Joshua watches from the sidelines, his claws twitching along with a quicken place of his tails swish as he watches Crisis careful. He watches as Crisis' eyes give a soft blue glow, a tinge of red just barely noticeable to the naked eye quickly following. "Careful Crisis."

"Quite, I'm focusing here," groaned Crisis. Crisis feels the connection being made with the other machine. She feels the 1's and 0's, of the program that runs through the machine's head. The intricate details of his programming and the protection that goes along with it to make sure that no external forces could corrupt it.

"Here we go..." says Crisis as she starts to pull a thread of programming from the machine's head. A rush of energy going through Crisis as her programming 'pulls' away at the defenses of the machine ensnared in reprogramming protocol. This felt different than the programs she's hacked before, the ones at Croc's communication facilities, different from AI who she programmed to her will in the very first moments of her activation. This felt... exciting, fun, enjoyable.

Those other programs feel stale and rigid compared to the one that Crisis is touching, the one that she's breaking down to be remade. The dragon's program is fluid like water, changing, growing; becoming better than it was microseconds ago, yet still bound to the essence, the core of its programming. It's like how the ocean tosses and turns, changes with the winds destiny and the flow of time, ever changing, forever affecting the world around it, and affected by the world. Yet the core programming is the water itself which the ocean is bound to be, water, but now Crisis is altering that piece that core definitive part of the dragon's mind.

*"I've felt this before... but where..."* thinks Crisis.

"Having trouble there Miss Croc?" chuckles the dragon.

"Just getting started," she remarks as Crisis redoubles her effort on the dragon. Energy rushes through Crisis body as she works on the machine before her, slowly...steadily towards her goal. As Crisis works, Joshua worries. Andreas slowly walks around the pair, the silver dragon's glowing red eyes start to flicker, the dragon endless insults finally stops as the dragon goes silent into the twentieth minute into the hack. Andreas holds his claws behind his back as he watches curiously. The work of the other three hackers is the only other sounds heard outside of the whines and hum of machinery bound inside the tent.

Meanwhile Sasha sits on the ground, her sniper rifle laid across her lap as she does some minor routine maintenance on her weapon.

The guard on the left eyes Sasha as she works on her oversized sniper rifle. He gives her a smile as she looks up and notices that she has drawn his attention.

"What is it?" asks Sasha.

"That is a mighty big gun you have there, you know I know how to handle big guns myself."

"I don't think you have any experience handling anything big in your life, and it looks like I am the only one around here that has and able to wield a big gun," coldly replies Sasha as the guard sighs and lowers his head in rejection while Crisis' increased focus on her task is shown by the dimming of her eyes and the increased glow of her crest gem.

Forty minutes go by before the glow in Crisis' eyes start to turn to normal her head gem's glow dimming down while the silver dragon below her eyes glow in the same blue color as Crisis' own. Crisis' wires pull away from the dragon's access port, before Crisis moves her hand away. Crisis' claw tips brush against the back panel, of the dragon's head slowly pressing it down with a click before she says to the dragon like a dentist to the patient after dental work, "Now was that so bad, now was it?"

"N-no of course not Miss Crisis, how may I assist you today?" she asks with a soft purr. At that moment the typing of the three hacker's stop dead in their tracks.

"How did she do that so bloody quick!" exclaims one of the raptors.

"It takes us hours, days if not a week or more to hack one, you did it in under an hour!" yells another hacker.

"Skill," remarks Crisis as she looks over her claw tips on the hand that did the hack before giving it a soft blow. "Now, these guards here will be asking you some questions, and I want you to answer all truthfully and with the best of your knowledge."

"As you wish Miss," she replies with a smile.

"Took longer than I expected, but I am happy with the end result, so I can't complain," comments Andreas.

"Sorry, my first time hacking one of them," replies Crisis with a soft purr.

"I thought it be faster than that myself," states Joshua.

"Why do you say that?"

"Karrie... one of your programmers was a marvelous hacker. She had a knack for not only making programs but breaking them to. Matter of fact, she told me they found how good she was when she hacked into a few places she wasn't supposed to back in her college days."

"I see... maybe that's why it's been... difficult in locating her."

"I am sure that's one of many reasons Crisis," replies Joshua.

"Doesn't bother me how long you took, I used my time productively, unlike Joshua here who just stared at you with worry look in his eyes."

"It's my job to be concerned about Crisis' well being," replies Joshua.

"Not that much..." remarks Sasha as she replies with a hint of sarcasm as she raises her voice steadily during her sentence, hitting a high note at 'much'.

"I'd love you to do more, but we have other duties to finish before the day ends, hopefully we'll have more time for you to do some others," explains Andreas.

"What's next?" asks Crisis.

"Organic prisoners. Command wants to see how you'd interrogate a few of them."

"This should be interesting," chuckles Crisis with a smirk as Sasha stands up with a soft groan, as her gun slung back around her back. The group departs as one of the guards beings to interrogate the recently reprogrammed dragon The dragon responding in detail of what she knows, her words becoming muffled as the group walks out of tent On the far side of the tent there is a small glimmer of light from a camera lens poking through a small cut made into the canvas of the tent. On the other side are the camera crew and a guard standing nearby.

"Thank you for this, General Raszer wants a detailed documentation of Crisis," explains the boom mic operator.

“My pleasure,” responds the guard as the camera crew pair moves to follow Crisis to the next spot.

The group approaches a spot of the encampment that seems to be a bit, out of the way of the rest. Foot traffic of the soldiers is minimal and the tent set up here is a dark grey, instead of the soft canvas like the others, in reality the tent covers up the prefabricated walls that are screwed together to form this makeshift interrogation center.

The hum of a generator provides the electricity for the lights inside since there are no windows to see on the inside. Standing at the entrance are two soldiers dressed in near solid black uniforms. Their weapons in their claws held tightly, and are of a bigger and better quality than of the other soldiers. They stand unmoving, as they eye the group’s approach.

“Sickle Claw troops... has to be Sickle Claw troops,” grumbles Andreas.

“What are Sickle Claw troops... seems I don’t have that in my memory banks.”

“Well when you were activated they were still a disbanded elite army of high command... after the assassination of president, General Raszer was able to reinstate the group to increase internal security and to help speed up the reclamation of our country. You can always tell who they are by their black uniforms and red sickle claw markings on their shoulders.”

“I was invited to join, they give a nice set of perks, but I turned them down though, they aren’t my style,” remarks Sasha.

“That’s far enough, only she may pass this point,” commands the guards as they motion towards Crisis.

“I’m Captain Andreas, and it’s my duty to escort Crisis through her duties, and the two behind us are to assist her in those duties.”

“I’m more observer than an assistant thank you very much,” remarks Sasha.

“I don’t care who you are, my orders come from above, only Crisis may enter,” responds the guard. “You can just wait outside while she does what she’s here to do. Don’t worry, we’ll take good care of her,” states the raptor with a toothy grin.

“Don’t worry, I can handle myself,” says Crisis as she walks forward, the guards opening the sliding door into the house. The moment she walks all the way through they close it behind her. Before Crisis is another soldier dressed like those on the outside.

“You must be Crisis,” greets a raptor in a deep voice.

“I am,” replies Crisis as the fluorescent lights above her head flicker, the soft glow of her blue eyes adding only a little light to modestly lit room. Crisis’ eyes scan the room in a fraction of a second, and sees the room is barely a four feet wide and three feet in width before there is another door that blocks the way. Unlike the other structures this one has a hard metal floor, which Crisis’ feet clanks against as she walks.

“The prisoner you will interrogate is still being prepped, wait here for a moment,” commands the guard.

“My time is valuable. I can’t just stand here waiting all day.”

“You’ll wait and do as you’re told, military equipment shouldn’t complain about how valuable their time is. It’s only valuable when it’s used by us,” he retorts with a growl.

Crisis glares at the guard, her tail flicking behind her as she clenches her fist, her eyes glowing a little brighter as she says, "Why you..."

"Don't think you're special because you're some top military project given in charge of your little robotic army. You're still a military project only around to serve our great nation. If you weren't a success, you'd be a pile of scrap metal for one of our tanks by now."

"You have no idea who you're talking to do you?" growls Crisis.

"Oh I don't know who I am talking to, but I know what I'm talking to," remarks the raptor with a toothy grin as Crisis' claws twitch, her eyes glowing brighter as she takes a step towards the guard when suddenly the door opens revealing another, taller, buffer male raptor than the guard before Crisis.

"Your prisoner is ready. We prepared him for you to make it a bit easier," he remarks with a smirk.

"Thanks," replies Crisis as she walks by the first guard and says, "You're a lucky one today." The guard responds with a shrug and a smirk as Crisis is led down a short and narrow hallway where at the very end is a door on her left side, locked by two metal latches. The guard leading her unlocks the latches and slowly opens the door with a slow creak.

"Take your time. This one has been stubborn to our usual methods of persuasion."

"You just need a woman's touch," remarks Crisis with a smirk as the guard laughs.

"Right, lets see how good you are then," groans the guard as Crisis walks into a solid white room with a silver metal table in the middle. On one end is a matching silver chair with an upside down L shaped back to easily let one's tail slip in and out of the seat. On the other side is a bound and battered black furred female Jackal. The jackal's black fur is ruffled, and her left eye is so bruised she can barely open it. Her lips are fat and broken; her good eye glares at me as she takes the moment to spit some blood onto the ground. Her breasts move up and down with her labored breaths.

"I see they are using machines now to do the job," growls the Jackal.

"I'm here to get information, nothing more," replies Crisis in a calm voice as she takes note that the jackal is chained to the chair, her arms forced over the back and down and across, keeping not only her arms crossed and away from her body, but also forcing some of her body weight to rest on her armpits. This is also when Crisis also takes note of a mirror on the left side of the room that stretches nearly across the entire wall, kept about the same level as the table at the bottom and three feet up from there. Crisis spends a half a moment seeing the reflection of her robotic body in the mirror, as she checks to see if she can find anything... special about it, finding nothing in that moment she turns her attention back towards the jackal.

"That's what the other three said, and I'll tell you what I told them, you won't get anything from me. I won't betray Master Croc, no matter what the cost."

"I'm sure we can come to some kind of agreement..." replies Crisis as she pulls up the chair, which scratches against the metal floor. She sits down with a light metallic thud as her tail swishes behind her, as she leans forward towards the Jackal, "You'll find I'm not as... harsh as those brutes," comments Crisis as she moves her hand over to her, Crisis' claw tip gently touching the Jackal's bruised maw which she jerks away from Crisis.

"Machine or not, I'm not going to tell you anything."

“Come now, I think you can trust me. Wouldn’t it be best for everyone if this war was ended quickly, don’t you agree?” asks Crisis with a soft purr.

“Of course, that is why you all should stop fighting and see how great it is to serve under Master Croc. You’re only prolonging the inevitable at this point. Why continue suffering like this. Your lives will be so much better under him.”

“Your views are... shall we call overly biased? Maybe you need to open your mind to just possibility... just the possibility that you could be... wrong?” asks Crisis with a soft glow in her eyes.

“I doubt that,” groans the Jackal.

“Just open yourself to the possibility, of the idea of it, is that so hard? Hypothetically speaking,” explains Crisis her voice steadily getting soft, soothing, and steady.

“Maybe... okay I’ll hear what you have to say, as stupid it is going to be. I could use a good laugh,” remarks the Jackal.

*“Good...good, I shall get her slowly. I don’t trust that mirror over there, it’s too obvious they’re watching me. Best not to reveal my hypnotic ability readily to them, might as well have some fun with this since I have to take my time,”* thinks Crisis as her tail sways like a pendulum. As time passes, Crisis continues to talk to the Jackal, she slowly whittles down her defenses, drawing her deeper and deeper into a trance, but not a normal trance, a trance where she wouldn’t talk in a monotone voice like a mindless drone.

As Crisis draws her in deeper and deeper into the trance, more and more under her control, Crisis feels a rush of energy through her circuits. As time progresses, her systems feel the rush which Crisis quickly comes to realize is the same rush she was getting when she was hacking into that Croc machine earlier.

*“I think I really enjoy doing this...”* thinks Crisis as she takes down the Jackal’s defenses, the rush continues through Crisis’ systems, going through every wire, every inch of her metallic form. Nothing is visible from the outside but Crisis can feel the rush going through her and after forty or so minutes of working on the Jackal she was ready.

“Now why don’t you be a dear and tell us what we need to know, okay?” asks Crisis with a soft purr.

“O-okay,” stutters the Jackal in a soft voice. A moment later the door behind Crisis opens revealing the same guard that let her in.

“We’ll take it from here,” says the guard.

“Okay, now just tell the guards what they want to know with the best of your knowledge, truthfully and honestly, okay?” asks Crisis as she sits up from her chair, the metal and metal of the chair to the floor making an annoying grinding sound.

“Okay Crisis,” replies the Jackal as she doesn’t even react to the noise that is emitted from Crisis’ movements.

“Anything more you need me to do?” she asks the guard.

“No that should be fine, you can go,” responds the guard as Crisis’ suspicions of the mirror were right on the money, on the other side is the camera crew filming the entire scene that unfolded. The crew thanking the guard that was in there with them for their help as they leave out of a hidden back door.

“Thanks,” replies Crisis as she leaves the room, the door closing behind her as the guard from earlier is standing there.

“I see you’re finished. Took you long enough, thought machines should be all efficient at their job,” he remarks.

“I got the job done, something you couldn’t, so I wouldn’t complain about how fast I got it done.”

“Of course I can, machines are supposed to our jobs quicker and better. To make our lives easier and better, you taking so long is a problem. You should work on that. I don’t want to be standing around all day as you do what you’re built for,” he growls as he opens the door behind him. “Now go, you have other jobs to do machine.”

“You’re lucky we’re on the same side,” growls Crisis as she storms out of the building towards the group waiting outside. “I’m going to get some fresh air,” grumbles Crisis as she walks past the group and heads straight into the nearby forest.

“Wait some fresh air? What happened?” asks Joshua as he stands there in shock for a moment then follows.

“I have an idea...” remarks Andreas as he watches the two walk off into the forest. “Crisis did all the duties she had to do while she’s here. Why don’t you accompany those two make sure they don’t go too far off. We’re still fairly close to the front lines. I wouldn’t call the forest totally secure. I’m going to check on some troops that have had some complaints about Crisis’ troops. See if I can smooth over some issues with them.”

“No problem. Crisis is important to the war effort, I’ll make sure nothing bad happens to her,” replies Sasha.

“I’ll leave it up to you then,” says Andreas as he departs and Sasha takes after the other two. It only takes Sasha a minute or two to catch up to the two, with Crisis still walking deeper into the forest and Joshua in toe.

“Crisis can you tell me what’s wrong? I can help.”

“It’s nothing. I just want to talk a walk after doing so much work, is that so bad?” remarks Crisis with a slight hint of annoyance in her voice.

“No that’s not so bad, but you do sound a bit annoyed and....”

“And is it wrong for me to have a feeling or two? Or should I be some mindless automaton?” she remarks with a soft growl.

“No, no, nothing like that. I am just concerned about why you’re feeling this way, and want to help. Nothing more than that. I’m here to assist you, and make your life a bit easier.”

“What did you just say?” asks Crisis as she stops and turns towards Joshua.

“Uh... that I am here to assist you?”

“The other thing.”

“To make your life easier?” asks Joshua as Crisis stands there for a moment before smiling, her eyes giving a soft blue glow.



“I knew there was a reason I kept you around as you were,” she sighs as she walks deeper into the forest but albeit bit slower now.

“I thought it was because I am willingly helping you,” replies Joshua.

“That too,” she remarks.

“So nice to see when a couple makes up,” chuckles as she walks over to them, her abnormally large black steel sniper rifle still strapped to her back.

“What?! C-couple? We’re not a couple,” responds Joshua defensively.

“Relax, just teasing, you get way too jumpy you know that,” says Sasha.

“He does, always worry about everything,” chuckles Crisis.

“I’m not worried about everything, just about things that deal with you,” he replies.

“And since you only do things that involve Crisis you worry about everything,” chortles Sasha.

“Why am I the one that’s always picked on by all of you girls.”

“That’s easy,” says Sasha.

“And?”

“It’s because you’re an easy target,” she laughs. Crisis remains silent as she flicks her tail, steadily calming down as the group moves a bit deeper into the forest, to a small clearing about five yards wide and eight across. A few dead trees lay around the clearing as grass that goes halfway up to your thighs has grown.

“Come on, give a guy a break will ya?” asks Joshua as the sound of whistling grass against their bodies is barely heard over the sound of chirping birds in the trees. A light breeze barely makes it through the forest into the clearing to make the grass lightly sway side to side. Just as they are about to get to the middle of the field Sasha stops and it takes about three more steps of Joshua and Crisis before the notice.

“What’s wrong?” asks Crisis

“Shh,” she responds as she slowly reaches for her rifle as she crouches down. “Get down we’re being watched,” whispers Sasha as she starts preps her gun with a soft click, Crisis and Joshua crouching down till only the tips of their heads can be seen over the grass. “I said get down, down doesn’t mean keep your heads above the grass,” growls Sasha as a low whiz is heard followed by a very loud ding.

Crisis feels a force against her head as her she feels slight damage to her right side of her head, the force of the blow causes Crisis’ head to jerk slightly with a ding sound but the sound is quickly followed by a loud screech from Sasha coupled with some choice swears as she barely holds onto her gun with one hand and grips her wounded arm in the other. Before she could make another move an electrical hiss emanates from Sasha as a loud growl is followed as the raptor drops to all fours, before collapsing to the ground with a thud, her body twitching as an electrical shock continue to go through her body.

“Sasha, what happened?!” yells Joshua as he gets lower to the ground, quickly followed by Crisis.

“Seems a bullet meant for me deflected off of me and hit her,” explains Crisis.

“We have to call for help.”

“We have to remain calm,” explains Crisis as she moves a few feet over to Sasha who is panting heavily, small streams of blood come from the wound in her left arm. She growls softly as she coughs a bit as she stretches her limbs slowly.

“Crisis is right, we have to remain calm,” growls Sasha as she spits off to the side, “Going to take weeks to get this taste out of my mouth,” she growls. As she reaches over to check her walkie-talkie, “Damn the shock fried.” The raptor’s body shakes as she struggles to get back up onto her feet, keeping her body low as she takes slow deep breaths through her nostrils. “She’s coming,” whispers Sasha.

“She? How do you know?” asks Joshua in a soft whisper.

“I can smell her, don’t you use your nose at all?” grumbles Sasha as Crisis then hears the quick whistling of bullets flying through the air and pounding of feet against the ground. Crisis crouches and gets ready to pounce when Sasha pushes herself up, holding her gun with one hand as she draws it up to her shoulder. She winces as she moves her hurt arm to rifle to help steady it as she takes aim at the assailant rushing over to them.

Crisis pokes her head above the grass to see an anthropomorphic female skunk, dressed in a skin tight blue jumpsuit with a silver metallic zipper that goes from her top all the way down the center to her waist. Her matching blue boots break through the grass as she sprints towards us. Her red fire hair waves in the wind behind her that if the hair was at rest would easily reach past halfway down her back. Her eyes match the redness of her hair as her white fur face is parted by a line of black fur that starts from her small black nose up between her eyes, disappearing underneath her red hair. A long navy blue trench coat flaps behind the skunk, giving brief moments of the gun she has strapped to her left side, attached to a brown belt that is wrapped around her waist. As the skunk leaps forward Crisis sees dark blue leather straps around her upper thighs and as Sasha takes aim at her the skunk pulls out a whip and as she swings it towards Sasha the whip goes from a dark brown to an electric red, the whip crackling in the air as it cracks through the air and wraps around Sasha’s left arm.

The same hissing and crackling sound before is heard but even now small sparks fly all over Sasha as she is pulled forward her gun dropping to the ground as the skunk pulls the raptor towards her.

As Sasha tumbles through the air screaming in pain, Crisis takes a step back and lets her electro-blades from her wrists come out. They crackling and spark through the air and between themselves. Sasha whips her tail at the Skunk hitting her in the face causing her to stumble back and fall over, while Sasha lands a few feet away with a thud, grass breaking underneath her body as she rolls another foot or two. A long weak growl is heard from the grass as they rattle for a few moments before another thud and silence.

“Damn it, that girl should have been out when that electro bullet hit her, but to still manage to hit me with the electro whip around her arm, that’s insane,” groans the skunk as she rubs her sore face before turning her attention towards Crisis.

“I see Croc has finally sent someone after me,” remarks Crisis with a growl her claws sparking as her sickle claws on her feet twitch, she crouches down and waits for her unnamed assailant to make the first move.

“Ha, Croc wouldn’t do something like this, not his style,” she remarks as she sprints towards Crisis she snaps the whip at Crisis who lifts her left arm in defense to block it. The red

electro whip wraps around Crisis arm, sparks fly between Crisis' electro blades and the whip. The red sparks turning to silver blue as they get close Crisis blades and vice versa as Crisis' sparks get close to the whip. Electric energy rushes through Crisis' body, causing her to let out a growl of pain as her vision fuzzes in and out as she attempts to keep her focus on the skunk who tugs her towards her. Crisis leans back as her feet grind against the ground. Error messages light up in her mind about the rush of energy through her before she uses her free hand to slice the whip, breaking the electric connection it had with her. The two enemies flying back by the sudden release of tension.

Crisis stumbles a few feet as she tenses and relaxes her claws, testing her systems, taking note of the damage that was caused by the attack.

"That was my favorite whip," grunts the skunk as she pulls out two foot long daggers hidden within her trench coat. Moments after she pulls out the dark black metal daggers white sparks fly from the handle up and around the tip, like electric worms crawling up the blades. "No matter, I like getting close and personal with my target," she chuckles with a grin.

"You'll find I'm not an easy target," growls Crisis.

"That's what they all say," remarks the skunk as she sprints towards Crisis. The pair clash blades against one another. Crisis' electric blades are either dodged or blocked by the skunk's electrified daggers, while Crisis in turn does the same to her assailant's attacks. Near misses causes some of the grass to smoke as it burns for a few moments before the water retained in the plant puts out the blaze before it can become problematic.

The daggers from the two fighters make the air crack and hiss as the two attempt to take the other down, each move blocked by the other, each attempt met with the same hiss of electrified metal against solidified energy blades.

"If Croc didn't send you, who did?" asks Crisis in the middle of the fight.

"Like I tell you, not that it will matter, you'll be a pile of scrap metal soon enough!" she exclaims as the Skunk manages to knock Crisis' arms back with one quick move the skunk lands a firm hard kick dead center on the robotic raptor's chest. Pushing her back several feet, and just before Crisis stops herself she trips over a tangle of grass causing her to fall down with a heavy thud. The skunk quickly moves over to the fallen Crisis and says as she holds the daggers in her hands, "Oh how the mighty have... well then again you were never mighty," she chuckles as makes her move to finish Crisis off.

"Stop! Hold it right there or I'll shoot!" yells Joshua as he holds a pistol in his claws, taken from Sasha. The raptor aims the weapon at the skunk, his claws shaking as he rests his claw tip on the trigger, his tail swishing behind him quickly.

"Oh I almost forgot you were here, after all you were hiding the entire time," remarks the Skunk with a smirk.

"Back away from Crisis now, and drop your weapons," he says as Joshua moves over towards Crisis standing a few feet behind her as he keeps his distance from the skunk.

"My, my pushy aren't we?" asks the Skunk as she takes a few steps back.

"Drop the daggers."

"I am, I am, no need to yell," she responds as she tosses her daggers off to the side, the moment she releases them the electric energy around the blades dissipates within a second.

“Now who are you, and who sent you?” asks Joshua as Crisis leaps back onto her feet, her electro-blades withdrawn as she brushes some of the grass off of her body.

“I don’t have to answer that, especially to you,” responds the Skunk with a smirk upon her face.

“What? You’ll answer or I’ll...”

“You’ll what? Shoot me? I can tell just by looking at you, you don’t have the gall to shoot me. To shoot another person takes more than skill with a gun, it takes determination!” exclaims the skunk as she whips out a pistol hidden within her coat, and takes aim at Joshua. The whistle of a bullet and from the silence is barely audible, followed by a distinct sound of metal grinding against metal. Joshua having flinched at that moment opened his eyes to see Crisis standing in front of him, the raptor’s right arm sparking as it hangs limp. Crisis systems give out another set of warnings as electricity hidden within the bullet mess with her systems.

“Crisis you...” mumbles Joshua as Crisis doesn’t waste a moment and sprints towards the Skunk, knocking the gun from her hands before reaching for Skunk’s throat squeezing it just enough to hold her in place but not enough to impede her breathing.

“Now you will tell me everything I need to know,” demands Crisis as her eyes start to glow blue.

“I won’t tell you anything, and I won’t let you use that on me,” growls the Skunk as Crisis watches the skunk move something within her mouth and bite down hard on it. Specs of silver liquid are seen flowing in her mouth as Crisis comes to realization what that is.

“I won’t let you get away that easily,” says Crisis as her good hand begins to glow, blue electric sparks fly from her palms as the Skunk begins to scream and moan in pain as her neck starts to smooth out, becoming slick metal. Steadily as the Skunk struggled and kicked, swore at Crisis, Crisis’ roboticization energy washes over the Skunk, steadily turning warm soft flesh into cold hard steel. Her blue jumpsuit being transformed into her new robotic shell as the changes spread up to her head, quickly silencing her cries of pain, down to her feet. Within minutes the once organic skunk is no more, and is now a sleek robotic minion of Crisis. The Skunk’s eyes glow blue as her long flowing hair is forever stuck in a very stylish and sleek hairstyle. Her entire body matching the outfit she wore before, only her trench coat wasn’t roboticized along with her. The skunk’s segmented silver metal tail flicks behind her as Crisis pulls her hand away from her former enemy.

“Crisis you told me that those were...”

“Quite Joshua, now you will tell me who you are, and who sent you,” growls Crisis.

“My name is Ruby, Mistress Crisis. I was sent by the Empress who was foolish enough to think that she could destroy you before her tour of the front would take place,” responds Ruby.

“Tour of the front you say?”

“Yes, she wanted to secure the front lines for her trip, and wanted you to be destroyed if possible. She sent several scouts to try to locate you in case you decide to make any front line visits as well as to gather intel on enemy forces in the area.”

“Interesting, and do you happen to know where and when this trip was going to take place?”

“Yes Mistress, I was about to finish my rounds here and head back with my report. I am meant to be one of her close guards on the train she will be taking. She doesn’t like robotic guards all that much.”

“Really now? This is very interesting,” purrs Crisis as she looks over to Joshua. “You okay?”

“Y-yeah.”

“Check Sasha.”

“I did when I got her pistol, she’s alive and breathing, just knocked out.”

“I was surprised she remained conscious from the first bullet, more so she lasted as long as she did against my whip.”

“An interesting weapon you have there, that whip.”

“Had Mistress.”

“Don’t worry we’ll see about fixing that. Come let’s get Sasha some medical aid, and get myself repaired. After that we have some planning to do, not everyday you get to visit an Empress now,” comments Crisis with an evil smirk.

Meanwhile hidden within the trees that same camera crew is watching, having filmed the entire incident before them. “She can roboticize people with her hands... General Raszer will find this most interesting...” comments the female as they silently disappear into the brush.

## Chapter 19 The Empress Express

The troop transport plane's propeller's hum as a bit of air turbulence makes the plane rumble and shake. "Twenty minutes till drop point," shouts the raptor pilot from the front of the plane as Crisis' drop team is gathered in the back strapped in tight along the sides.

Along one side of the plane is Sasha, the only organic in the group. She looks at the others as she's wears heavy military gear, her trusty sniper rifle current strapped to her side. Beside her is Crisis and next in line is the newest member of Crisis' group, the robotic skunk Ruby; her blue jacket still a part of her attire. Across from them are Francis and three other robotic raptors.

"I'm impressed that we've managed to get this plan underway in such a short order," comments Crisis.

"It helps that General Raszer couldn't resist the idea of kidnapping the person behind Chaos Croc. Getting the needed resources behind the plan after that was easy," explains Francis.

"This is true, I don't think anyone would pass up the chance to capture the creator of my nemesis, good thing we found you isn't that right Ruby?" responds Crisis as she looks over to her. Ruby's eyes give off a soft blue as she smiles and nods before answering.

"Of course Mistress. This will be so much fun."

"This is an important mission, not some game," groans Francis.

"It is but being tense before it won't help. When I was on the first mission to attempt to kill or capture Chaos Croc we joked and kid around right till the mission began," remarks Sasha

"Was this the recent attempt to take out Chaos Croc before you were assigned to keep an eye on me?" asks Crisis as Sasha shakes her head.

"No it was the first attempt some time ago way before you were built. It was one of the largest special ops missions I was ever a part of. It involved one of our armies attacking his front lines to distract him once we had word he was in the area. It was an elaborate and brilliant plan but in the end we only managed to disarm Croc... quite literally."

"What do you mean?"

"After an intense battle we managed to blow off one of his arms, he escaped but we managed to get out of there with his arm along with a lot of roboticization technology. In hindsight I assume that technology was used to help with your creation," explains Sasha.

"How very interesting, I think I might want to see this arm when we get back. Information about my creation has been quite scattered and the more I can know about myself and my enemy the better."

"For now we should be worried about what we have to do now. It's tricky to do an air drop onto a moving train," interjects Francis as he looks over at Sasha, "You know what to do right?"

"Of course I know what to do you twit; I'm heading over to the bridge to blow the damn thing right as the train goes across though I don't think I'll need one of your robotic helpers to help me with such a simple job, but orders are orders," she remarks.

"Good you remembered."

“Five minutes till drop,” shouts the pilot Crisis unhooks herself from the side of the plane and grabs one of the back packs hanging off to the side and swings it around her back, locking the several straps around her chest and belly, with the others soon doing the same.

“Everyone make sure your communications are working,” states Crisis.

“Ours is built into us, and working just fine, I don’t know about Sasha though,” remarks Francis.

“Testing, one two three, everyone hearing me loud and clear?” asks Sasha into her headset which is part of her helmet, “See mine is working just fine, I test my equipment before we get onto the plane.” growls Sasha softly as she looks at Francis.

“Enough you two, its go time,” yells Crisis as the cabin lights turn red. The back doors of the plane begin to open, the howl of wind fills the plane as the group get to the edge of the platform as they all hang onto the overhead straps to make sure they don’t jump too soon on accident.

Sasha stands next to her as she looks down at the ground below, the sun midday sun reflects off of the cloud cover as the shadow of the plane is seen moving over the clouds as she then comments.

“I hate this part.” Sasha taking one last check of her sniper rifle strapped to her body.

“If you don’t like it you could always go home,” suggests Francis as he and the others of his group jump off the plane.

“Did you make him like that Mistress?” asks Ruby.

“Nope, I don’t change people’s personalities when I turn them into machines,” replies Crisis as the three jump from the plane, their bodies free falling for a moment as they angle themselves forward in the direction of the tracks. As the three align themselves they pull a string on their backpacks. Instead of a parachute though, hang glider wings fly out and a metal bar extends around them for the group to hold and control.

Crisis claws grab onto the bar just as her body jerks up by the sudden uplift of the hang glider. A lower body rope hangs behind her which Crisis quick slips into, allowing her body to better balance as well as gain greater control over her descent.

“We have about two minutes before we split, we’ll land on the train about ten minutes after that with another ten to fifteen till we get to the bridge. You won’t have much time to set it to blow.”

“No sweat, I’m now blowing down the whole bridge just the tracks to cause the train to fall into the ravine,” replies Sasha.

“First we should hit the communication car it should be the second to last on the train. We don’t want to them to be able to contact Croc of trouble and bring down his forces down upon us,” warns Ruby.

“Yes I can see the communication car from here,” shouts Crisis as her eyes focus far out into the distance where she can just see the train bustling along the tracks.

“Which direction?” asks Sasha.

“That direction why?”

“Let me see if I can make one part of your job easier,” she says as she carefully pulls a bullet from her pocket and slips it into the chamber of her rifle. She pulls the gun to her body, peering through the scope she makes a few calibrations to her rifle, “How fast do you wager that train is going?”

"I'd say about forty, the empress likes to enjoy the scenery."

"Explains why it's not as fast as I thought," replies Sasha as she makes more adjustments to her scope, "It's that small dish on top of that second to last car, isn't it?"

"Yes, I've seen them before back when I was infiltrating Croc's City, they are a short range transmitter with about a twenty or so mile range to a booster station. Makes it harder for people to pick up and track down the origin of the original signal," explains Crisis.

"She's right, those dishes are used for short range communication," comments Ruby.

"Alright just give me a moment..." says Sasha as she tries to steady her rifle and glider at the same time, her tail moving slow and steady to counter balance the random air currents. After thirty or seconds Sasha takes a deep breath and releases it as she presses down the trigger. Her glider jerks up almost causing it stall out right then and there as Crisis keeps one eye on her and another eye on the train. Seconds pass as the bullet travels through the air as it then hits the small dish cracks and falls over, tumbling off the train as the bullet hits its mark.

"Nice shot," exclaims Crisis with a grin.

"Thank you, but there's still much work to do, good luck Crisis, Ruby," replies Sasha as she turns her glider away towards the direction of the bridge while Crisis and Ruby head towards the train.

"I can't believe she made that shot," states Ruby.

"She's good what can I say? When they assign someone to watch me they assign someone who could take me out easily," remarks Crisis.

"If that's true why do you let her on a mission like this?" asks Ruby.

"Because she's good at what she does," explains Crisis as she and Ruby drive down to catch up with Francis.

"You three have a lovely chat up there Miss Crisis?" asks Francis.

"Oh it was quite nice, and Sasha took the liberty of knocking out the train's communication."

"She did what?"

"She sniped the communication dish," explains Crisis.

"She sniped that? There is no where she did that."

"Well she did and no reason to argue on it, this just gives us a greater advantage."

"Maybe unless everyone on the train is alerted to the possibility of an attack now their communications are down," Francis cautions.

"I wouldn't worry about it. We'll get there before they come to that conclusion," responds Crisis.

Meanwhile on the train the Empress, dressed in a black and red 'dress' sits in her own passenger car. Two armed buff fox guards stand at either end of the car's entrance. The car itself is intricate and fancy. The look of the car just screams this is a train car fit for royalty and no one else. The empress leans back in her leather booth seat, wearing that fire red leather outfit of hers. She leans back into her seat as she looks out the window at the passing terrain, in one hand is a half filled glass of wine and the other is her cigarette held by an extra long cigarette holder. She flicks some of the ash of the cigarette into a nearby glass ashtray.



A knock on a nearby door is heard as the empress looks up at the door with a glare, "Come in," she commands in a slow and dominating voice.

Another armed guard, this one a squirrel, comes into the room, he walks up to the Empress at a slow and steady pace, his hands to his side as he clears his throat before about to speak.

"What is it?" inquires the Empress as she looks up at the guard who takes a deep breath before replying.

"I hate to inform you but our communication line just went dead. We had someone check and it looks like our dish fell off the train. We can't be sure if it's foul play or n—,"

"Inform everyone to be on high alert. Tell the conductor to speed up the train and not to stop for any reason unless I command, got it?" she orders.

"Yes Empress, I'll get right on it," replies the squirrel guard as he salutes her before walking off. The empress returns her gaze back out of the window and sighs before she looks at her half empty wine glass, "At least I now know what happened to you my dear Ruby," she mumbles.

Meanwhile back far above the train, Crisis and her team glide towards their target.

"The train is speeding up, seems your sniper friend tipped them off that we're coming," growls Francis.

"You don't know that for sure," replies Crisis as the group adjust their flight path.

"We'll be reaching the train sooner, which is good but means we'll have less time before they reach the bridge, and less time for the other two to set up the explosives. I've already informed them of the change in plans, hopefully they can handle the new time frame."

"They'll be able to."

"You are far too trusting," remarks Francis.

"I have faith in those under me to do the job given to them," she replies as the rumble of the train below becomes louder and louder. The smooth metal aluminum cars with their grooved surface clack against the metal rails. Crisis flies just over the last car before releasing her glider, the glider flying off behind her spiraling into the ground with a thud, kicking up a small cloud of dust as it tumbles away from the train. Crisis' metal feet banging onto the roof of the train as she gets her body low to keep her balance.

Francis and his fellow team member glide slightly farther up and ahead, one on each side of the train, above and out of sight of those within the train as their attention was turned the thud on the roof. The two in a synchronized fashion angle their gliders down and towards the train. In one breath taking motion the two machines fling themselves from their gliders and smash themselves through a train window and land inside, their gliders skidding across the roof of the train before flying off into the ground. The gliders almost hit Crisis in the process.

At the same time Ruby makes her move towards the train gliding at the very end where she pulls out her whip and whips the back railing of the train where she gives a firm tug and pulls herself off of her glider and onto the back end of the train's balcony as her body lands with a heavy thud.

After the near hit with the gliders Crisis hears gunfire from below, Crisis quickly moves forward her electro blades activating as she slices through the roof of the train. Her weight causes the section of roof to collapse and Crisis lands on her feet with a mighty thud. Sparks fly

over her head from the electrical wiring for the lights, as Crisis sees several guards killed by Francis and the other robotic raptor. Before Crisis stands a lone wolf guard stands before Crisis, shocked and dazed by her entrance.

Before he could respond Crisis disengages her blades and grabs the wolf by the collar of his shirt, lifting him up onto his feet before banging him onto the side of the traditional passenger train car. Crisis' other hand hits the wolf's hand hard forcing him to drop his pistol as Crisis eyes give a soft glow as she looks into the wolf's eyes.

"Alright my dear you are going to tell me everything about—," says Crisis as a bullet goes right into the wolf's head killing him instantly. A small splatter of blood hits Crisis' face as she flinches and drops the now lifeless body to the ground with a thud, Crisis turns to Francis who is just now lowering his gun.

"Why did you do that? I was going to get information out of him about what is on the train," exclaims Crisis as Ruby comes through the back of the train.

"We don't have the time. Think about it, they know we're here; they're setting up in the next car to stop us and probably evacuating the Empress to another train car. Also do I need to remind you if we don't do this fast enough we are going to be on this train when it blows?" explains Francis.

"Right..." she replies as she looks away taking a nearby piece of clothing to wipe off her face. "We better keep moving." The four move towards the edge of the train car. Crisis activates her electro-blades, the static sparks move between them as Francis moves up ahead towards the door being careful to avoid being seen through the small window in the middle top of the door.

"When I open this door, Crisis you head to the right, Ruby you follow her. We will go the left. Once there we'll bash through the next door and make our way through to the next car, throwing in a flash bang grenade to disorient them as we clear. We'll rinse and repeat as we move our way up, any questions?" asks Francis.

Crisis shakes her head.

"One question who made you the boss of this operation?" asks Ruby.

"I have the most experience out of anyone here, that's why. Crisis is the leader but in a combat situation I know what is best, and best to shut up and do as you're told or we won't make it out of there in one piece, this is a military operation and don't have time to argue about this, you understand?" growls Francis.

"Understood," answers Ruby with a nod, her hand on the handle of her specialized metal whip.

"Alright on three... one... two... three!" yells Francis as he bashes the door open. The door swing opens with a thud as Crisis jumps from one car to the next, getting herself on the right side of the door, and just as she gets there the door flings open and there is a quick fire fight between Francis and the first guard. The guard quickly falls back behind some cover, groans coming from the door.

Francis throws the flash grenade, the grenade going off with loud deafening boom as he and the other robot move through into the car, taking cover nearby as the firefight doesn't even stop for an instant.

Crisis only manages to get a quick glance before a hail of gunfire pulls her back into her hiding spot. Crisis reviews her memory banks as she looks over to see that there are several armed guards placed at several points up and down the passenger car. Three of them already injured from the fight but Francis and his companion are pinned down in their spot.

“What should we do Mistress Crisis?” asks Ruby.

“I want you to assist Francis in any way you can. Take a look and see if you know any of those guards there. You were meant to be here defending the empress as well. Maybe you’ll know a weakness or two to assault those troops better.”

“Yes Miss Crisis, what will you do?”

“I’m going to try to bypass them and head to the next car; we need to head to keep pushing forward.”

“Got it,” replies Ruby as she takes a quick glance as she just dodges some gunfire.

“Yeah I know those guys, I think I can give a bit of help,” says Ruby as she pulls out her blaster pistol, a bit of advanced technology from Croc’s side.

“On three I’ll move in,” states Ruby.

“You two need to stop talking and start moving,” growls Francis as he takes a few pot shots over the chair before ducking back down, “We’ll cover you the best we can when you come in.”

“Go,” commands Crisis as Ruby dives into the passenger car rolling ahead of the other two pinned down raptors and getting into one of the open passenger booths, from there she gives a few quick shots, injuring another guard with a shot in his left shoulder, causing him fall down in pain and agony.

Just as Ruby joins the fray Crisis hears a tap of metal from overhead, she looks up just to see the end of a gun peering over the top moving to aim towards her. Crisis jumps and digs her metal claws into the metallic roof over that’s over the car’s platform. Crisis swings herself over and on top of the car smashing herself into the guard above her. The guard is flung back into another guard that was standing a few feet behind him. Crisis lands on the roof with a thud her metallic claws scraping against the metal as she sees three guards in total.

The one farthest back struggles to keep his balance in the winds that whip across the train as it speeds down the tracks. He takes aim at Crisis as she gets low to the roof and charges the guard. Jumping over the two she knocked over her electro-blades activate as the guard fires at Crisis, the bullets land around her, a few ricocheting off of her metallic body, her systems informing her of the damage received as she swings her blades slicing the gun in half.

Crisis attempts to side swipe the fox guard, but he manages to jump away, stumbling slightly but retaining his balance on the roof of the train. The two other guards get off each other and the second train his weapon onto Crisis managing to get one shot off that blows a hole right through one of Crisis’ metal head crest feathers before she knocks the weapon away with her tail.

The three guards move to surround Crisis their light organic bodies struggle against the whipping winds. As the three pull out their pistols Crisis jumps back towards the first guard she knocked over. He fires at her, the bullet hitting her shoulder before flying off to hit the other guard in the shoulder. He stumbles back from ricochet shot as he drops his gun.

Crisis quickly manages to knock the two guards down, her blades quickly slicing into them. The third guard fires a few more shots hitting Crisis in the chest plate before she returns

the favor with her electro-blade. Crisis quickly pulls out as the guard falls to the ground dead. Crisis disengages her blades as she moves forward. The sounds of the ensuing gun fight below are easily heard over the whipping winds. Crisis' systems inform she sustained moderate damage to her chest and shoulder but it is well within acceptable parameters.

"That was exciting..." comments Crisis as she moves to the edge of the train car, there she sees no guards between the two cars. She humps down onto the third car as she takes a peek through the window behind her. There she can see the firefight that is taking place between her people and the Empress' guard. Bullets and a blaster shots go back and forth as the window hatters as a bullet breaks through the window. Crisis ducks for a split second before peering into the next room which at the moment looks completely devoid of any sign of life.

Slowly Crisis opens the door and peers through. She steps inside and looks around still seeing no one, but as she approaches the center of the car she sees the Empress staring out the window, a long cigarette holder in one hand with the half burned cigarette in it, and a full glass of red wine in the other.

"About time you showed up, what took you so long," remarks the Empress as she turns her gaze over to Crisis, a smug grin across her muzzle.

"I wouldn't be so confident if I were you. It's just me and you, none of your guards are here to protect you."

"Funny, I was about to say the same to you. Don't think just because it's me and you that it means you have me," answers the Empress as she takes a sip of her wine, before adjusting her body to truly face Crisis, "I wonder who will win, my men or yours."

"Of course mine will," remarks Crisis.

"Really now, why don't you sit here and wait with me, and we'll see who'll win the fight."

"Sorry not going to happen," replies Crisis as she extends her electro-blades once again.

"Ah electro-blades, Croc did keep those installed on you didn't he Crisis."

"How do you know my name?" she asks

"Please you think I don't know what my creation is up to? You're so blind to the world around you I am surprised you even manage to get this far. Do you honestly believe I wouldn't have taken precautions once my friend Ruby didn't show up from her mission?"

"Of course not."

"Also you think Croc not to mention myself notice wouldn't your little disappearance? That we couldn't put two and two together? I figured you'd try something once you knew of my trip," she remarks.

"If you have everything so figured out why am I here, able to take you out at a moment's notice? Your life is in my claws."

"Is it now?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you really want to kill me? Somehow I don't think so. You want me alive, you want to draw out Croc, but let me tell you this miss tin can," explains the Empress as she takes another drink from her win glass.

"I wouldn't be so cocky," remarks Crisis.

“And I wouldn’t be so confident; you’re just a mere machine. You think you are so free willed, able to do what you want, think you even able out smart me? You just follow whatever those ones and zeros tell you to do. You only think you’re free willed and self thinking only because of your programming.”

“That’s not true at all,” growls Crisis with a blue eyed glare.

“Is it now? You’re nothing like Croc, just some cheap imitation.”

“Imitation?!”

“Yes a simple knock off. Nothing like the true article that is Chaos Croc,” she states as she drinks more of her wine.

“A knock off? How dare you call me some knock off! I am my own machine and no one else’s. I do what I want for my reasons.”

“Are they truly your reasons? Are you sure they aren’t your programming that someone else put into you, that someone else who designed you, built you, who gave you your purpose.”

“That’s preposterous; you’re just trying to stall me.”

“Am I now?” asks the Empress as she takes another sip of her wine almost finishing the glass now, “Then tell me this, can you not try to destroy my creation? Can try not be so focused on his destruction? Or better yet, tell me what you plan to do if you happen to succeed?”

“Of course I can, but he’s attack my nation, and I just can’t stand and let what he’s done go on.”

“He’s turning people into machines? Same thing you’re doing? And how is it your nation? Isn’t it just a nation of organics, and you were built to serve them? To be someone else’s tool for what they want. Not anything that you decided for yourself.”

“That’s completely not true. When I was close to Croc I had clear opportunity to attack but didn’t. That shows I am in control of myself and not bound by any programming.”

“Is it now?”

“It is and you sure say ‘is it now’ an awful lot.”

“It is or is it that you knew that your chances were too low to succeed and it was better for you to wait, your kind is patient and sneaky, the traits of those that built you are programmed into you. Your personality is exactly what others want you to be, not what you decide. You’re not a true self thinking robot, just a simple programmed machine following your orders; to do what you others want.”

“What about Croc then, he’s doing what you’re telling him to do. You made him,” she remarks.

“I built him, programmed him, and gave him the spark of life but what he’s doing now, what his goals are, aren’t my own. He evolved far beyond my expectations and now, I am just watching to see how far it will go, a lovely curiosity, but you? You’re just a nuisance, trying to be something you’re not with your single minded, ‘Must destroy Croc’ programming.”

“I’ve had enough of this,” growls Crisis as she moves her electro-blades towards her, “You’re coming with me now or things are going to get ugly.”

“Let me just finish my drink at least, this is expensive stuff,” responds the Empress as the squirrel takes last gulp, finishing her wine and as she does she throws the glass at Crisis, the glass shattering and releasing a dusty looking electro-magnetic cloud that scrambles Crisis’ sensors. Crisis’ vision sparks and hazes as she barely catches the shadow of the Empress, Crisis

reaches to grab her, disengaging her electro-blade at the same time but falls short as she gets an internal error message and her right arm seizes up.

“Damn it not now!” growls Crisis as she stumbles forward through the cloud, she hears the door up ahead up and open and slam shut. As Crisis moves her way out of the cloud her vision sensors gradually return to normal. Crisis stumbles a few more steps as she regains her bearings before she sprints to the door, slamming her body against it as the door doesn’t budge an inch.

“You won’t get away that easily,” growls Crisis as she extends her electro-blades once more and slices into the door, cutting the lock mechanism, the metal door glowing bright red as some of the metal melts before quickly solidifying. Crisis easily slams the door open as she jumps to the next car in line. Her body smacks against the door with a heavy metallic thud, Crisis’ right hand and arm moves slow but with the help with her left electro-blade, she makes short work of the door. Slamming the door open, Crisis is greeted to the site of an empty dinner car. To her right is a large bar, with a few empty glasses; to her left are several empty booths.

“*Now where did she go...*” thinks Crisis as she scans the area, the static sound of her blades filling the quiet dinner car as she looks around. Suddenly the entire car shakes, the sound of rattling glasses emanates from the bar.

As Crisis regains her positioning and moves forward she hears the sound of more glasses rattling about, quickly Crisis turns around extending her electro-blades once more, “You can't hide from me Empress!” exclaims Crisis as a black and white skunk pops up from behind the bar, his nice dress shirt is only button half up his shirt, making his chest and the big white X shaped fur on his black fur body easily visible.

“Whhy hhello thhere,” stutters the Skunk as he stumbles a bit, a half drunken wine bottle in his hand. “Whhat can I doo for you,” he asks as he slouches over the bar table.

“Scott?! What are you doing here? Did you see the Empress? Where did she go?” asks Crisis as she disengages her blades.

“I’m here to serve the alcohol to the Empresssss, shhh, don’t tell her but I’ve been having some of her stuff. Shhe hash some awesome drinks here,” says Scott.

“Yes, yes, but what about the person who just ran into here, where did she go?”

“Oh, you mean the rude lady in the red outfit? Shhe went that a way,” stumbles Scott as he points down to the other car, “Shhe wash sho rude. Just ran in here, knocked me over. Shome people don’t have any manners.”.

“Thanks,” replies Crisis as she bolts forward to the next door, she swings the door open and stops herself just short of the edge of the car’s platform finding herself quite a distance away from the next car. Crisis looks at the train car was disconnected and they were slowly slowing down. The Empress’ train gaining a speed and fast without the extra wait. Crisis glares as she can see the red silhouette outfit of the Empress. It’s then she notices the train was approaching the bridge and will be there in less than a minute.

“*I hope they are ready...*” thinks Crisis before she turns around, “*I need to help the others,*” thinks Crisis as she rushes back into the previous car to find Ruby, Francis a little roughed up with the other robot fairly banged up with a few scorch marks and a few holes placed into his chest and arm.

“What happened to the Empress?” asks Francis.

“She got away, the car was decoupled from us before I could get to her,” replies Crisis.

“Damn it... At least the bridge is ready, speaking of which we need to jump off the train before it reaches the site. Nothing more we can do here.”

“Right,” responds Crisis as a huge explosion is heard. Crisis rushes to the side of the car lowering a window to stick her head out to see the end of the fireball and smoke. The train the empress is on, attempting to screech to a halt, the sound of grinding metal is heard as the train veers off the tracks and into the ravine below. The sound of metal grinding, crushing echoes as the train tumbles down the face of the wall, going down several hundred feet into the raging river below as a billow of fire and smoke emanate from below as the train explodes moments later.

“We don’t have much time we’ll be there ourselves in a minute,” says Francis as he opens the side of the car door. The countryside still moving past us at a quick pace as Francis turns to his companion. “Remember jump away from the train and roll,” as the other robotic raptor nods and jumps his body tumbling off to the side as Francis motions for Ruby to get next.

“Aren’t you going?” asks Ruby.

“I’ll go last,” responds Francis as Ruby nods getting to the edge of the train car, placing her whip and weapon into secure locations on her body before jumping.

“You’re next Crisis, better hurry we don’t have much time.”

“Alright...” says Crisis as she gets to the edge and stop, “Scott!”

“What’s wrong? Jump already”

“I forgot something, go ahead and jump I’ll be there in a moment,” states Crisis.

“We don’t have a moment! The train is about to go over into the ravine!” growls Francis as Crisis runs ahead to the next car, Francis giving a robotic sigh before jumping himself. Crisis reaching the next car as Scott is still there drinking from a new bottle of wine now.

“Thish ish shome good shtuff,” says Scott.

“Come on, you’re coming with me.”

“Where are we going?” asks Scott as his head nods a bit.

“Off the train.”

“But what about the booze?” asks Scott.

“Forget about the booze, we don’t have time to argue about it, you’re coming with me now!” says Crisis as she grabs Scott’s shirt and drags him over the bar counter.

“But the wine, you spilled my wine!” complains Scott as Crisis grabs his arms and pulls him towards the door, flinging it open as she could see that the train was just seconds away from the bridge.

“We’re going to jump off of a train? You nuts!” exclaims Scott as Crisis pulls Scott up against her body as she jumps back first off the train. Crisis’ metal body bouncing against the hard ground, grass, rocks, twigs brush up against her form as she can feel Scott’s head bang against her chest. Crisis uses her tail and legs the best she can to keep herself from flipping over

as she slides alongside the train, the sound of the cars flying off the edge heard moments later as Crisis sees the car fly up and over into the ravine on top of the train below. Crisis sees herself sliding towards the edge as she digs her feet claws into the ground, digging deep and hard as she can to slow their slide to the edge. Crisis's body grinds to a halt with her head over the edge, making it easy for Crisis to see the sheer drop below.

"Made it," sighs Crisis as she looks at Scott who is now unconscious, "I guess the trip was a bit rough for an organic," chuckles Crisis as she pushes Scott off of her and onto the side, a good distance away from the edge.

Crisis does a quick diagnostic check over her body, and outside of the earlier damages, she took only minor damage to her back, and as Crisis digs the dirt out of her claws, Sasha and the other robotic raptor helping her come over.

"You okay?" asks Sasha.

"Yeah I'm fine more or less, though we failed to get the Empress..." replies Crisis as she walks over to the bridge, peering down the edge to see the entangled mess of burning train engine and train cars below, "But I think we at least removed her from the picture."

"At least she didn't get away," says Sasha.

"Are you nuts?! Did some of your circuitry come lose? Or is there a virus in your programming?" exclaims Francis as he storms over with the Ruby and the other.

"What?" asks Crisis.

"I saw what you did, you went ahead, risked yourself and almost got destroyed trying to save that organic over there. He's the enemy! We don't go about trying to save our enemies! We either capture them or kill them!" Francis pulling out his pistol and taking aim at the unconscious Scott. Crisis quickly moves over to him and hits his hand up making the shot go way over him. "What are you doing," growls Francis with a glare.

"No, we aren't going to kill him or take him prisoner."

"What? He's the enemy; he's a witness to what happened."

"So?"

"So? We can't have any witness; the less Croc knows the better."

"I say let Croc know, let him know that he isn't safe. Let him know that I will come for him, make him become paranoid that his creator is now dead."

"And make him focus on his more than he already has, he'll put more forces against us and try to wipe us out. We're barely making an advance as it is, this will do more harm than good, we need to end his life here and now," growls Francis as he attempts to aim at Scott again but Crisis steps in the way. "Move out of the way."

"Let him be," demands Crisis.

"He needs to die."

"I say we'll let him be and that's final, or will you defy me?" asks Crisis as Francis looks at her for a moment before sighing.

"Fine, but this will come to haunt us"

"Relax it won't."



“Come we need to get going to the extraction point, don’t want to be here when Croc’s forces arrive,” says Francis as the batter group leaves the site, heading towards the most difficult part of their mission, all the while, the things the now passed Empress said to Crisis mull around in the back of her mind.

## Chapter 20 Escape and Conflict

Crisis' group makes their way through the thick brush of the forest, their audio and visual systems constantly scanning the area around them for any signs of hostiles. They drop to the ground as they use the green landscape as camouflage as yet another one of Croc's robotic scout drones flies overhead.

"We should keep moving, if they find us or the helicopter before we get to the extraction point it's going to be a tough and long journey back home," states Francis.

"Yes we know, though if one of those buggers catches wind of us, I'll take it down before it has time to report back to its HQ," comments Sasha with a smug grin on her face as she taps her rifle.

"You'd like to think that but no, and even if you managed to, one of their drones going down will alert the others, so either way it's best not to be seen by them," remarks Francis.

"I know how this works, this isn't the first time I've been deep behind enemy lines," retorts Sasha as they continue to move.

Crisis moves tests her right arm and how well it functions by having her finger tips on her hands touch each other, which she manages to do with some difficulty, "You shouldn't have taken such risks," remarks Francis as he looks over at Crisis.

"I know what risks I can take."

"Do you now? Judging from your record you've taken a lot of big risks with infiltrating into a Croc controlled city, letting him dissect you so he can put more of his own technology into you, as a 'back up' body. Our grasp on his technology is minimal compared to his and yet you act like you invented it."

"Any risk I take is calculated, I take all options, possible outcomes, and consequences into consideration, before I make a decision."

"I don't think you do," remarks Francis.

"What?"

"We'll discuss it in depth later, first things first, we have more pressing matters," replies Francis as he, Crisis and the others get low to the ground as another drone flies overhead, "At this rate, they'll find our extraction site, we better hurry."

"Agreed," responds Crisis with a soft nod as the group picks up the pace, moving through the brush, dodging between the dead fallen trees, many of which were caused by the war years earlier as moss and other plant life having overgrown these dead patches of trees, all except the most recent bombings now that front lines are moving back in this direction.

"This forest has seen a lot," comments Ruby.

"The forest will grow back, it always does. This is far from the first war this forest has seen," comments Francis as the group breaks through the brush to a small clearing.

"Finally, here we are here, now we have to remain in cover and not get seen till the chopper arrives to pick us up, its good no one slowed us down to miss our extraction time," comments Francis as Sasha gives him a silent glare.

"No need to complain, we're here and early. We haven't seen another drone in some time, it looks like we're okay. See Francis you worry too much," comments Crisis with a smirk on her face.

"I am worried and concern because of my years of experience. That is why you roboticized me, so my much needed skills could be of service to our nation once more. So you better use what I have to offer before it's too late," he growls.

"I am, I brought you along for this mission didn't I? It's also why I brought Ruby along; her knowledge of the train was extremely helpful."

"Helpful in only what didn't matter."

"What was that?" remarks Ruby as she glares at Francis.

"You provided little insight to the Empress' train defenses."

"How dare you, I provided you all the information I could. You should have expected she'd make adjustments to her plans when I didn't return from my mission."

"Regardless of that, it doesn't change the facts that your information was less than helpful."

"When we're out of here we're going to have some words."

"Whatever words you have will have just as much validity as the Intel you gave us."

"Why you..." growls Ruby as he grips her whip with her right hand."

"Quite the chopper is coming," orders Francis as a sleek black angular helicopter flies into the clearing just inches above the tree line. As the helicopter hovers over the clearing, the brush and grasses are blown all over the place, birds and insects flying away as the group runs to the center. Ropes with a loop tied at the very end come sliding down, each member of the group quickly grabbing their own respective ropes, slipping a foot into the loop before quickly being winched up onto the chopper, where two raptors dressed in flak jackets help each person into the chopper.

"Everyone in?" asks the pilot as he glances back at everyone.

"Yes now get us out of here," orders Francis.

"Roger, everyone buckle up," responds the pilot as he turns the helicopter around, the steady hum of the blades constantly heard as we speak while buckling up.

"How did the mission go?" asks the Co-pilot.

"Well enough," answers Francis.

"Good," he responds as he turns his attention back in front of him. The helicopter skimming the tree tops as it moves at full speed.

"Now that we have a moment to relax..." comments Crisis.

"I wouldn't relax just yet, this is just dangerous as any other part of the mission," warns Francis.

"You're always so uptight, we can't do anything right now, we might as relax," replies Crisis as she turns her attention to Sasha, "Now can you tell me anything more on the pieces of Chaos Croc that you were able to obtain from the mission you spoke of earlier?"

"Nothing much to tell to be honest."

"Who was in charge of the mission?"

"General Raszer was the one in charge of the operation. He's probably been the one in charge of the entire Crisis project, but that information is above my pay grade and purely speculation."

"When I see him I'll bring it up. Much information on my own creation has been difficult to obtain, and the more I know about myself, the better I can be at taking out Croc," comments Crisis as she leans back and thinks, "*Even with AI's help, it's been difficult to get information about myself. Karrie is still missing and she, according to Joshua, was a major part in my*

creation... Then what about what the Empress said to me?" Crisis then spends a moment looking outside at the passing forest below, "Yes I do want to destroy Croc, he's caused the people of my nation so much anguish and trouble. I'm nothing like that, I give them the choice to become a machine like myself. Being a machine is great, but I don't force the decision onto others," thinks Crisis as she looks at Ruby.

"I did transform her against her will, and now I think about it, Arissa and Shasi and the others when I first activated, I enslaved that entire base, granted it needed to be done, but... am I just like Croc then? How close did they base me off of him, and what will I do after I destroy him?"

"Anything wrong Crisis?" asks Ruby as she gently tilts her head to one side.

"Hmm? Nothing wrong, just thinking about everything that has happened. Not to mention the load of work I'm going to need to do to fix myself, the nanites will only do so much."

"You did sustain a bit of damage in the fight, if only I did better, it could have been avoided."

"You did great, you helped the others and you said you knew some of the guards protecting the Empress that gave you an advantage to their skills and abilities, making it easier for you to move through."

"Having better intelligence on what we're were up against would of been loads better. We could have easily done our mission with less damage," interjects Francis as he motions towards the other machine that was on the train, his body completely banged up and shot with at least a half a dozen or more holes, his movements are slow and stuttering.

"I gave what I could alright?" growls Ruby as her eyes narrow down on Francis

"Enough, I don't want to hear any more fighting between the two of you during this flight," shouts Crisis.

"Sorry Mistress Crisis," replies Ruby.

"Fine with me," remarks Francis as he looks out on the other side of the helicopter.

"So you're the head machine that we built to fight Croc?" asks one of the two organic raptors that helped them on board earlier.

"I am," replies Crisis with a nod.

"I will admit I find it rather ironic that we're using a machine to defeat a machine, and frankly I wish we didn't have to come down to relying on such things to win this war, but at this point I am not complaining about the results. Goes to show what our technology can do eh?"

"Yes it does. I don't get a chance to talk to many other military personnel, I tend to be rather busy with my endless duties, but the results of my efforts and that of everyone under my command is paying off in spades."

"For now at least," comments Francis.

"Always the optimist," remarks Crisis with a soft sigh.

"Life has told me to be anything but optimistic."

"What about now? How do you feel about what I've done for you?" inquires Crisis.

"Am I grateful for a second lease on life, to be able to live longer, stronger than I could have ever dreamed of before? Yes, I can do so much more now than I even did in my youth, but would I prefer to be what I was before? Yes. I'm like this more out of duty for our country than for myself," replies Francis.

"In the end it was your choice to make."

"It wasn't much of a choice."

"How so?" asks Crisis.

"I was dying as an old man, watching those younger than me perish against a monstrous foe. What would anyone do? Would they just sit there, lie and wait for their own timely demise, or do something to make a difference for those they love and for our country?"

"In the end no one made you."

"No one physically made me; circumstances forced me to make one decision over the other."

"I see..." replies Crisis as she leans back into her seat, "*I wonder if that's true. That they'd all prefer to be organic again... but I made it so they'd enjoy it, to be grateful and loyal to me... like how Croc makes it so others are grateful and loyal to him when he turns them into machines. I need to learn more about the Crisis project, I need to—*" thinks Crisis as an alarm goes off.

"Hang on tight seems we have company," yells the pilot as the helicopter fires off a set of flares, two missiles aimed at the chopper explode in a giant ball of fire just behind the helicopter, setting ablaze a section of the forest as the chopper takes a sharp right turn, as the chopper rattles and shakes. The people's bodies inside are jerked around as the chopper makes its maneuver.

"This is why I said it's no time to relax," yells Francis as two green, red and black drone attack jet helicopters appear in the distance.

"Damn it!" growls the pilot as he jumps the chopper up to full speed, gaining some altitude as the enemy attack helicopters quickly approach.

"Those are drone attack ships, you won't be able to out maneuver them," yells Francis.

"I don't have to out maneuver them, just their missiles till we get into friendly territory, we're not too far off now," shouts the pilot as he takes another high G turn, flares shoot out behind the aircraft quickly followed by two mid air explosions as the missiles hit the flares, the shock wave causing the helicopter to rock back and forth, tumbling, the ship regaining control just as the bottom of the scraps along the tops of some trees snapping them off, causing them to tumble to the forest floor below.

"Those were our last flares," yells the Co-pilot.

"Not many flares for this boat," growls Francis.

"We're a covert ops, we're not designed to be able to be targeted by the enemy at all," remarks the Co-pilot as the chopper does a twisting corkscrew loop as red laser fire moves past the ship, sound of helicopter's Gatling gun rumbling off as two enemy helicopters fly underneath, smoke and fire coming from the second ship as it twists and turns before crashing into the forest below, as a small ball of fire rushing up into the air.

"Got one!" exclaims the pilot as he pulls another tight turn, the crackling sound of laser fire through the air as an alarm sounds as the chopper rattles from the hit of enemy fire.

"And now they got us," retorts Francis as the chopper rattles, smoke quickly filling the cockpit and cabin. Crisis' sensors barely able to see through the smoke as more laser fire rattles the ship. Crisis feels the ship start to tumble down to the ground. Trees snap and the ships tarts to roll through the trees, propeller blades snapping and flying off as Crisis's systems turn on and off, the blunt trauma of the force causing her systems to scramble up, her vision becoming like it was in that ECM cloud on the train. Crisis watches helplessly as she rolls around with the helicopter as more pieces of metal twist and fly off, and as Crisis see's a large tree flying towards her as the chopper slides against the ground her system goes black.

*"Warning... warning...."* flash off in red in her internal systems as her vision steadily begins to clear. Crisis' internal systems inform her that her primary systems were offline for about five minutes. Crisis looks around to feel the heat of the burning wreckage nearby, her body hanging upside down. Crisis struggled with the straps that held her to the helicopter as the fire steadily spreads as fuel leaks from the fuselage. .

"Damn straps..." growls Crisis as she tries to activate her right electro-blade, after a few sparks it fails to turn on, Crisis attempting to activate her left, and after a second it turns on, allowing her to easily cut herself free from the seat, she falls down with a thud.

"Crisis you there? Get out of there it's going to explode any minute," exclaims Ruby from a distance, as the roaring flames separate the two.

Crisis systems inform her of the quickly growing heat of the flames, Crisis is about to turn to face the flames that roar outside when she hears a groan. Her attention quickly turns back to find Sasha laying on the ground her sniper rifle clasped tightly in one hand while the other she has on her side, a piece of jagged metal shoved into her side.

"Sasha! Hang in there," says Crisis as she moves over to her.

"Crisis... get out of here, I won't be able to do anything like this, just go," she groans.

"No, I won't."

"You'll endanger yourself, just go."

"No," exclaims Crisis as she picks up Sasha, who groans deeply.

"Stop this, I'm going to bleed out regardless, just go now, before you risk yourself any further."

"You've done so much for me, I won't leave you like this," replies Crisis as she pulls Sasha onto her back, Sasha's arms wrapped around Crisis's body as her sniper rifle is placed in front of Crisis, used as a handle to hold on better. Sasha groaning deeply as Crisis can feel the piece of metal rubbing against her back. "Hold on tight, we have to go fast," cautions Crisis as she looks up at weakened Sasha.

"Hurry, your skin is starting to burn," she moans as Crisis runs through the flames, her systems indicating damage to her legs as she moves. The flames surrounding them as Sasha groans about the heat, Crisis' systems telling her that her external shell is quickly warming up, to a dangerous level not only for herself but also to Sasha.

Crisis bursts from the flames, Sasha's clothing singed from the heat. Crisis continues to move as Ruby follows, as they get behind several set of trees. Crisis lays Sasha behind the tree, Crisis' body between Sasha and the plan. The fire quickly spreads to the rest of the helicopter, the fuel tanks soon catching flame as they explode, causing shrapnel to fly in all directions like bullet. Crisis feels a clank as at least one piece of metal ricochets off of her left shoulder, causing minor damage, as the tree and other fauna block not only block most of the explosion from view but most of the deadly shrapnel.

"You okay Mistress Crisis?" asks Ruby as she rushes over to Crisis' side.

"I'll survive, Sasha is badly injured though," replies Crisis.

"Just leave me, I'll slow you down," pleads Sasha.

"No, I won't do that, we just have to stop the bleeding, then I'll carry you back."

"She's right; you should leave her so we can go. End her suffering here or Croc's forces will find her, and torture her for precious information," explains Francis as he and the raptor that helped Sasha at the bridge is here, but the other isn't.

"No, I won't do that. I can't do that, we will save her," exclaims Crisis as she looks and glares at Francis.

“Francis is right, you’ll have to leave without me, I am too much of a risk.”

“No, first we’ll pull this out and—,”

“And I’ll bleed to death, there’s no way to stop the bleeding,” explains Sasha as Crisis looks at the metal shrapnel the sound of the firing growing louder.

“We should move before the fire spreads over to here,” comments Francis.

“Wait a second... I have an idea, Ruby; you’ll pull out that piece of shrapnel but only when I tell you.”

“As you wish, Crisis,” replies Ruby as she moves over beside Sasha as Crisis stands up.

“I’ll be right back.”

“Where are you going?” asks Francis.

“I’m going to stop the bleeding,” replies Crisis as she runs off towards the burning helicopter, Crisis returning a few minutes later, her left hand is bright glowing red, “Ready?”

“Yes,” replies Ruby with a nod as her metallic fingers wrap around the shrapnel, Sasha groans as Ruby grabs it.

“On three...”

“Wait!” yells Sasha.

“What is it?”

“Give me a stick to bite on, a big one,” pleads Sasha.

“Ruby get a stick, and hurry this hand won’t stay hot for long,” replies Crisis as her internal systems are informing her of the danger and frying of some of her internal circuitry from the heat. Ruby returns a moment later with a thick stick, she places it into Sasha’s mouth as she starts to bite down on it.

“Okay on three, one...two...three!” yells Crisis as Ruby pulls out the shrapnel, Crisis quickly placing her hand onto the wound, the sound of sizzling flesh heard as Sasha gives muffled screams as she bites so hard onto the stick it soon snaps into three pieces. Crisis then pulls her hand away and sticks it into some nearby grasses and ferns, the small amount of water condensation on them evaporating as Crisis’ hand steadily cools.

“That... wasn’t so bad...” pants Sasha as she groans.

“I’ll carry you.”

“Wait let me” interjects Ruby as she reaches and grabs Crisis’ right hand as she reaches down to pick up Sasha.

“No, I will,” replies Crisis as she jerks her hand away from Ruby’s grip.

“But you’re damaged far more than I am, it will be more difficult for you.”

“Yes, and that is why I have to, I’m a close ranged fighter, you’re able to fight close up and at a distance and since you’re more operational than I am, you can fight far better than me. It’s better if I carry and you defend us.”

“She’s right, even damaged she should be able to carry me with little problem,” pants Sasha as she tenses and groans from the pain.

“I understand,” replies Ruby with a nod as Crisis reaches down and gently picks up Sasha and pulls her onto her back, Crisis curves her tail to let Sasha rest herself on top of that and against her back, Sasha’s arms resting around Crisis’s neck as she holds her sniper rifle in the same fashion as she did when they escaped the burning helicopter.

“This is a bad idea, but at this point we’ve wasted too much time to make a difference, we need to move now,” commands Francis as Crisis and Ruby nod and start to move. Crisis stumbles after the first step or two before she quickly regains her balance.

“You alright Crisis?” asks Ruby as she attempts to help Crisis who waves her off.

“I’m okay, just adjusting to the change in center of gravity,” she replies as her internal systems warn of the damage to her leg systems and this extra weight for an extended period of time isn’t advised, “Did anyone else make it from the crash?” asks Crisis.

“No, us three were thrown from the ship before the helicopter stopped. My friend was destroyed on impact, along with the helicopter’s crew.”

“I’m sorry for your loss and those of the crew,” Crisis replies as she lowers her head and looks towards the ground.

“Nothing we can do now but move forward.”

The group moves through the brush as a steady sound of the small scout drone spheres pass overhead, the sound of moving troops getting closer and the closer, the distinct mix of organic and robotic soldiers is heard echoing through the forest overpowering the traditional chirp of birds and other various insects. Through the trees, the group can see the sun is already two thirds over the horizon, giving only a couple more hours of sunlight.

“Francis are you able to contact anyone? My communication was damaged in the crash,” asks Crisis.

“As was mine,” remarks Ruby.

“We’re on our own right now, we have to handle this ourselves,” replies Francis. The group getting low into the brush as a squad of six organics dressed in Croc’s green and red uniforms move onto their location, Croc’s group quickly approaching Crisis’. “Get down and don’t engage unless they see us,” orders Francis as they use the brush as much to their advantage, getting behind under a few fallen trees and other plant life. Sasha gritting her teeth to muffle any groans she has.

“Hurry their ship crashed over here, we can’t let any survivors escape,” yells the commander.

“They’ll pay for killing the Empress,” exclaims another soldier as they run right past the group, two of them jump over the log the fallen tree that Sasha and Crisis were hiding under. The troops footsteps slowly fading away as they move towards the crash site.

“I wonder how they knew that we were the ones that managed to kill their Empress?” questions Francis a few minutes later, Francis eyeing Crisis as they continue to move.

“You can’t say this is my fault now.”

“Can’t I? You let that skunk escape, why would he hide the fact of what happened? And the fact that they hit is so hard so fast with troops rushing to the crash site, it all points to the fact that they were told what we did.”

“It’s not possible to know if they know for certain or just assume it could be us based on the fact we were fleeing where the incident occurred.”

“We made sure that the extraction point was far enough away that factor is limited. You and Ruby are the weak links of the mission.”

“How dare you accuse us of being the weak link of this mission!” exclaims Ruby.

“It’s alright Ruby, now isn’t the time to argue, we need to get back to friendly lines,” states Crisis as she adjusts Sasha on her back, who groans from the movement, “Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” replies Sasha.

“For once we’re in an agreement, we need to keep going,” says Francis as the group moves. The group goes from tree to tree, brush to brush, avoiding drones and patrols



along the way. Eventually the group reaches to the end of the forest and the end of the day, darkness has overtaken the land, and Crisis' night vision is barely considered functional.

"This is going to be difficult, you're still with us Sasha?" asks Crisis as she turns her head over to look at her.

"Yeah," replies Sasha her eyes half open, her breathing growing heavier and heavier.

"We have the cover of darkness if we move quickly; we'll be over our lines before sunrise."

"I can only hope, Sasha isn't doing so well," says Crisis as she looks Sasha.

"I'm fine just keep going," groans Sasha.

"We've been lucky we've avoided a fight but don't relax just yet, we still have a lot to go," warns Francis as the group continues to move. The swaying long grass helps cover the group's movement. The lights of the enemy vehicles illuminating the areas as they crouch down low to the ground, the grass smack against their metal bodies as they move as fast as the slowest person, Crisis. Her systems informing her of the increased damage to her leg and right arm systems, her left hand still heavily damaged from being heated.

"Crisis let me carry her for a little while," suggests Ruby.

"No, I got this; we went over as to why I must do this."

"It doesn't matter we're going slow regardless, now keep going," orders Francis as the group gets down again as a nearby jeep drives by, a large spot light looking around for any suspicious activity, another two jeeps following right behind with mounted guns, able to neutralize any activity that is found. The group stopping as the long grasses dies down giving way to a barren landscape battered by combat, shell holes, and scorched earth is everywhere, "This will be the difficult part."

"I know, my forces have tried three times to break this line but thus far we've been unsuccessful, the closer we get to Veloci, the stiffer the resistance has gotten," comments Crisis.

"Regardless we have to cross this open ground while not getting spotted by drones or patrols," he explains as he looks around, "We'll move on my mark."

Crisis and the others nod as Crisis then says, "I'll let you deal with this, this kind of thing is outside my area of expertise."

"At least you finally admit your lack of skill," remarks Francis as Crisis gives him a long glare before he signals them to move. Their heavy bodies sinking into the ground, as the blown ground has become muddy from the recent combat and the rains that hit the area a day before. The thick black earth sticking to their metallic bodies as about halfway between the two lines Crisis slips and slides on some mud into a shell hole about four feet deep and several more feet wide.

"Crisis!" exclaims Ruby as she slides down to help her and Sasha back up, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

"This is no place to wait around we have to hurry," growls Francis as a several flares are shot into the air illuminating the battlefield as laser fire from Croc's side of the battlefield come right at them, Francis and the other raptor dive down into another nearby shell hole and return some fire.

"Looks like they found us," states Ruby.

"And there's no way to contact our side for help," comments Crisis.

"This is my fault, you should have left me," growls Sasha as she lays beside Crisis her rifle in her hand.

“No it’s not.”

“I can’t just lay here in the mud let me do something, I still have some shots left in my rifle.”

“Okay,” replies Crisis as she attempts to sit up, an alarm going off in her internal systems as her leg cramps up and she stops halfway, “Damn it, Ruby help her up there, and give her some cover fire.”

“Yes Mistress,” replies Ruby as she helps drag Sasha to the edge of the crater, Sasha holding her rifle tightly in her claws as she groans in pain as she is placed into position.

Francis and the other in the other crater give a few simple pot shots but are able to do little against the set of jeeps and trucks coming their way, barreling down towards them, going to arrive and over take them in a matter of minutes. Crisis watches as Ruby gives a few shots from her blaster towards the incoming vehicles, a few nearby laser shots hit the ground kicking up some mud, sizzling and evaporating the water hidden within, Sasha grunts as she looks forward at the first truck in line, her rifle pressed against her chest, the long barrel hanging over the edge as she takes aim down the site. She takes a slow deep breath as she squeezes the trigger, the rifle recoiling making her scream in pain her wound is slide across the ground, the bullet going right into the driver of the first truck, which quickly spirals out of control and crashes into another jeep, causing a nearby truck to turn quickly off course and crash into a rather large crater. With the lead light jeep gone the accuracy of the other vehicles becomes even less accurate, but doesn’t stop the still larger number vehicles heading towards them.

“There’s too many of them,” yells Francis.

“There isn’t much I can do, that was my last bullet,” says Sasha as she slides back down under cover, against Crisis who just managed to hit her leg enough to make it work she can sit back.

“Damn it, it can’t end like this,” remarks Crisis as she attempts to activate her wrist blades, an error message coming up informing her that both are offline. “I guess I should have used my right hand to cauterize your wound, but I had to be delicate...” sighs Crisis as she looks down at her inoperable wrist blades, “*It just can’t end like this, there has to be something I can do...*” thinks Crisis as an explosion is heard from Croc’s side of the battlefield.

“What was that?” asks Ruby as Crisis moves up to the edge of the crater to see burning wreckage of several of the approaching vehicles. Many of them now veer off as they dismount and take positions as a wave of rockets and hail of gunfire berates the attacking group. A hum of helicopters from the friendly side of the battlefield is then heard as they rush overhead. Enemy aircraft attempt to rush into the battle but are met by an concentrated rocket fire that keeps any uncoordinated attack at bay.

Francis fires a blue flare as minutes later a large armored transport helicopter flying over head. Organic raptors slide down the ropes to take position to help stave off any assaults as they help attach ropes to the machines and place Sasha into a rescue basket.

“How did you find us?” asks Crisis.

“We got your message,” explains one of the raptors as he signals for them to be winched up into the chopper

“What message?”

“The one I sent them,” answers Francis as they are tugged upwards towards the helicopters.

“I thought you said you couldn’t contact them.”

“Not from where we were, we’d be tracked by the enemy, the moment we got to the front lines I sent the message though.”

“You could have told me,” growls Crisis as they reach the top, pulled in by others waiting for them.

“It was best you didn’t know,” he replies as chopper hooves there long enough to extract the others before quickly turning back home.

“You could have easily told us there was no reason to hold back that information!” exclaims Ruby.

“Stop Ruby,” interjects Crisis.

“But he...”

“I know but for now it’s not worth it,” replies Crisis.

“Alright.”

“Good move, it is for the best,” remarks Francis

The sounds of explosions, gun fire and laser fire heard behind them as the other choppers stay just long enough to allow the armored transport chopper to escape. Nearby anti-air defenses sound off as they provide more cover fire as they move deeper into friendly lines.

“*Why is it I don’t believe him when he says that,*” thinks Crisis as she decides not to bring up as she looks over Sasha who is now being cared by a field medic as he attempts to better stabilize her condition. Crisis watches over it as she thinks, “*Don’t die on me Sasha.*”

## Chapter 21 Home and Recovery

Computer monitors flicker as streams of data flow across their screens as Crisis looks at them as she hangs upside down, held up by several mechanical arms. Crisis' right arm is detached from her body, as she holds and guides a robotic maintenance laser to check and work on some of her internal systems. Crisis mid section separates as she then examines various wires, before she goes over to look at her separated arm, checking the diagnostic screens before making any adjustments.

"Crisis, you have a visitor," interrupts AI as Crisis looks up in the general direction of the voice.

"Who is it?"

"It's me," replies Joshua as he walks into view, "Why are you doing maintenance upside down?" he asks as Joshua looks up at Crisis who is a few feet off the ground.

"It helps me focus," she replies as she signals the machines to turn her right side up and set her down onto her feet, while the other machine slides Crisis' arm back into her socket with a click. Crisis quickly checks the motor functions of her arms and the functionality of her electro-blades before turning her attention back to Joshua.

"Do you honestly believe something is still broken? We've been over this; you and the others are as good as new."

"I still feel something is wrong," she responds as she looks down at her claws.

"And I still think it's all in your head, you're systems are at one hundred percent," explains Joshua.

"Joshua is right, your systems are at peak efficiency the last dozen diagnostic checks verify this Mistress Crisis," states AI.

"I just have to be sure, I can't let myself become useless again," she grumbles.

"Is that what is bothering you? Look Crisis, I managed to get the idea of what happened, and you did amazing, everything that you could and then some," replies Joshua as he gently pats Crisis n the back, "Don't beat yourself up for things you had no control over."

*"It's not just that Joshua... it's not what I wasn't able to do, but what I am doing... or not doing... or...what am I doing? Am I really just doing this due to some programming? What will I do after I defeat Croc?"* thinks Crisis.

"So you ready?" asks Joshua.

"Hmm?" Crisis turns her head towards Joshua.

"We're going to visit Sasha at the hospital remember? She's been in there for a few weeks and she could use the company. She tells me that it gets rather 'boring' in there."

"Ah yes, yes, I haven't forgotten, I was just thinking about something..."

"What was it?"

"Nothing important" she replies as she and Joshua walk out of the maintenance bay, standing outside waiting by the door is Ruby.

"Finished already?" asks Ruby.

"Yeah, now Joshua and I are going to visit Sasha."

"Great, she's been asking when you'd come and visit," comments Ruby.

“She has?” asks Crisis as the group makes their way through the compound.

“Yeah, she’s wondering as to why you haven’t paid her a visit yet.”

“You haven’t visited her yet? I thought you told me you have,” comments Joshua.

“I’ve said I’ve been planning to, you know how time can just get away from you when you have a war to run,” explains Crisis.

“You’ve been avoiding the visit, haven’t you?” asks Joshua.

“What me? No, of course not,” retorts Crisis.

“You are, that explains why you’ve been so anal about making sure your systems are working perfectly.”

“No, that’s not it,” replies Crisis.

“I won’t argue you on this,” replies Joshua with a soft sigh, “I think this visit will do you some good.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Just a hunch,” explains Joshua as the group exits the building, to a nearby jeep. Joshua takes the driver seat as he takes the group over to the local hospital on the other side of town. Crisis looks over the many changes that have come over the city of Rioas. The boarded up buildings are gone, the business sectors are active once again, one could say almost booming, the streets are kept nice and clean via her machines, crime is relatively low with the mix of local organic police department and former cops that Crisis roboticized, that come and lend the department a hand, the factories that are on one side are town that keep her war machine going are running smoothly with new ones being built on the outskirts of town.

Crisis watches the streets active with people many of whom moved in only recently, countless of them refugees from the area, from cities yet to be liberated. This city isn’t the only one; dozens of other cities across the country are seeing revitalization as the war front moves farther and farther away. “Things are looking good aren’t they?” asks Joshua as he breaks the silence.

“It does appear to be that way,” replies Crisis as she looks out of the jeep.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong in particular; I just have a lot on my mind.”

“Like what?”

“Everything that’s happening, it’s a lot to process. General Raszer is in complete control of the country for the duration of the war, which makes reaching him more difficult than ever. I have plenty of questions to ask him. Also, though we’ve made progress these past few months, our progress has slowed down, Croc’s defenses are stiffening up, and then there’s how to reach Croc. We now know he’s home base isn’t even on this planet, and they use these trans-warp gates to get from there to here. If I am to take him out, we have to find a way to get to him on his home territory, and that is by no means is that an easy feat. There’s just so much work left to be done,” explains Crisis as she thinks, “*And am I really doing this willingly, or am I just a puppet?*”

“Ah, don’t worry you’ve saved this country from the brink of destruction, no matter what happens, you’ve done great things that are beyond measure, remember that Crisis,” replies Joshua.

“I’ve met Croc and he’s not easy to push back, so don’t sell yourself short, you’ve accomplished a lot,” Ruby adds.

“Thanks,” replies Crisis as they pull into the hospital, which is as busy as you expect any city hospital to be, illness, accidents and injured from the front, keep the place busy. A few of Crisis’ own forces are here, helping out, as a few of them were doctors back in their day and now that they’ve been given a new lease on life, they’re doing what they can to help save others.

“Sasha is in room 405,” says Joshua as he leads the way, Crisis and Ruby following right behind. Crisis’ and Ruby’s metallic feet tap against the white tiles of the hospital’s hallway. Crisis glancing down various rooms, seeing some are empty while others have people in their bed’s recovering. “Here we are,” says Joshua as Crisis stops just short of the door, not able to see inside just yet. “Don’t tell me you’re going to stop now Crisis.”

“You tell her to get her metallic ass in here. After all the things she’s done, there is no fucking way in hell she’s afraid of seeing me in a hospital bed,” yells Sasha, causing Joshua to jump.

“Well you heard the woman, she wants to see you,” says Joshua with a weak smile as he steps to the side.

“I’ll stay out here,” comments Ruby as Crisis nods and heads inside. The room is a one patient room with the bathroom stall to the side near the entrance, in the back corner is the bed with Sasha lying on her back, an IV drip connected to her as she rests with white bed sheets and pillows. Off to the side is a tray with a half eaten meal, and in the top corner is a turned off television. Next to the bed is a small dresser with a pile of books.

“Don’t just stand there come in, I’ve been wondering when you’d show up,” exclaims Sasha as Crisis walks up to her, “I see you look brand new, didn’t take long to piece you back together eh?”

“Took five days to get it all worked out and that was with the nanites helping repair some of the delicate parts of my systems,” she replies as she looks over Sasha, “How about you?”

“Been healing well enough, I should be out any day now, just have to wait for the dumb ass doctors to let me go. Physical therapy has been a breeze, they act like I’ve never been injured before and that I have to take it ‘slow’ or I’ll injure myself again. I know what my body can take,” she growls.

“I’m sure you can take a lot,” chuckles Crisis.

“Look, I still think you should have left me there, it would have been the smart thing to do. I heard from Joshua that your legs were damaged quite severely. Seems some of the gears were grinding down to nothing thanks to the extra weight you took on. I was wondering how a machine was getting tired like that,” states Sasha as she looks up at Crisis.

“You told her?” asks Crisis as she turns to Joshua and gives him a glowing blue eyed look.

“She asked about you okay? And... it’s hard to say no to her....” replies Joshua as he slowly backs up and almost steps completely back out of the room.

“Don’t blame him, I’m quite persuasive person,” chuckles Sasha with a toothy grin.

“I can see that.”

“Anyway, regardless of what the smart choice was. That was smart thinking using the fire and your metal hand to cauterize my wound. Left a nice little hand shaped scar on my side, but I think can live with that,” she chuckles.

“Still... I wonder if my decision with Scott was right after all that happened.”

“With who?”

“The skunk that I let live after the train went off the cliff.”

“How do you know his name?”

“I met him once before back when I was at Croc’s city, he helped me out; I already knew he wasn’t much of anyone in particular.”

“Interesting...”

“What’s interesting?”

“I just find it interesting how you met him twice that’s all. Not sure if it means anything though, but it might.... so you met him at Croc’s city?”

“Yeah.”

“What was his job on the train?”

“He was to serve the Empress drinks... but I think he was a bit of a drunk to be honest, I did find it a little strange to see him there.”

“For now let’s keep this between us, I think if Francis heard about this he’d go nuts”

“For sure, that guy was so uptight during the whole mission; I still don’t like how readily he was willing to leave you there, not only to let you die but to kill you.”

“It would have been the smart thing to do, the cold calculating logical thing to do, but then you didn’t do the smart thing, you didn’t do the cold hard mechanical thing. You did what you thought was right,” explains Sasha as she sits up more, “Look, I honestly don’t think letting that skunk live had any effect on what happened. They had to have some foreknowledge that there was a possible attack and had such things planned just in case. Granted we got the upper hand and killed their leader, but that doesn’t mean they weren’t ready to retaliate against us. Honestly looking how everything turned out we were lucky to make it out of there at all. I surely wouldn’t have made it out if it wasn’t for your actions. You risked yourself for me, and I thank you.... just don’t let anyone else know I said that okay? I have a reputation to keep,” she says with a smirk.

“Sure thing,” replies Crisis with a nod, “And I’ll see what’s keeping the doctors from giving you the go ahead and getting out of here, I want my bodyguard back.”

“Appreciated,” says Sasha with a nod as Arissa comes into the room.

“Mistress Crisis, I have some news for you,” interrupts Arissa her silver and metallic blue metal shining in the fluorescent lighting making her black metal stripes along her back stand out a bit more than usual.

“What is it, I’m a bit busy right now,” replies Crisis.

“It’s about the war front; Captain Andreas requests your attention as soon as possible.”

“If it’s only a request he can wait a little bit.”

“Go ahead, not like I can do much right now, see what he wants,” states Sasha.

“Alright,” replies Crisis with a nod as she and Arissa head out the door.

“Leaving already?” asks Joshua as he stands off to the side near Ruby.

“I have to take care of a couple of things, why don’t you keep an eye on Sasha for me while I’m gone, I’ll be back soon,” explains Crisis as she turns to Ruby, “You stay here as well, make sure Joshua doesn’t get into any trouble.”

“What me? Trouble never... but what about you? Will you be alright?” ask Joshua.

“Understood, I’ll keep an eye on him,” replies Ruby with a nod.

“I’ll be fine,” says Crisis as she walks off giving Joshua a small wave goodbye.

“You like her don’t you?” asks Sasha as Joshua turns to her.

“Wha? Me? No, it’s just...”

“Admit it you like her, and not like her in the normal way if you catch my drift,” remarks Sasha with a sly smile.

Joshua walks into the room as he replies, “Hey it’s not like that honest!”

“Hey, I am not here to judge, I had a friend back in boot camp, she liked female felines if you can imagine. I’m more shocked she found felines into her... but then she had a way of coaxing people into things...”

“Again it’s not like that at all!” exclaims Joshua.

“Sure it is,” chuckles Sasha.

Meanwhile Crisis and Arissa arrive back at the base and head to the war room, “So why was I need to be summoned for this? What’s so important that it’s worth dragging me into a meeting but not telling me outright,” asks Crisis.

“I don’t know how that man thinks, then again I was and am a research scientist and now I am doing that and military combat operations when you’re away.”

“Speaking of which, how is our R&D going?”

“The reverse engineering of Croc’s technology that we’ve managed to capture has been slow. There are lots of traps placed inside of his technology, designed to hypnotize, brainwash, reprogram those that aren’t meant to use it. We’re working on how that technology works and making headway, but some of the other areas... it’s been problematic.”

“At least we made headway on the blaster technology, Ruby was all too happy to get those upgrades to her systems.”

“You mean the hand blasters and the internal compartment in her leg for her gun?” asks Arissa.

“Yes, though Francis thought it was a bad idea to let her get such experimental technology... but he’s not one of my favorite converts, so I don’t care what he thinks about what I do on such matters,” she remarks with a soft growl as they reach the war room, there Andreas is waiting along with Francis.

“Glad to have you join us, I hope I didn’t interrupt anything for this little war meeting,” comments Francis.

“Quite Francis, I requested her to come at her own leisure, the front isn’t going to change all that much in an hour,” replies Andreas.

“You two are far too nonchalant about this war.”

“Can’t stress over every moment, we’re currently doing very well given the position we were in over a year ago.”



“Yes but doesn’t mean to relax and get comfortable, you’re here to help coordinate Crisis’ forces and the rest of our army, don’t think you’re running this whole war.”

“I’d never think such a thing.”

“And you better not think you are either Francis,” Crisis warns as she looks over the war map, figures of Croc’s armies as well as that of Crisis and the other country’s armies, their positions, and current status.

“As you know Croc’s defenses have been getting stiffer as we approach the city of Veloci, the last three assaults to break through the city have been quickly blunted by counter attacks,” explains Andreas as he uses a pointer to show these attacks.

“Yes I know this, what’s the need to call me?”

“Well after a few assaults and conferring with Francis, and high command, we’ve figured that the city of Veloci has become an important city for Croc. A symbol of his domination over our nation, it is the very center and heart of our nation. But outside of that, it’s a strategic hub for Croc’s forces and if we capture it, it will allow us to link up better with our allies on the Draconic front.”

“I remember the city well; he kept it running and good condition when I was there, though I only saw minimal military movement through it.”

“Yes that was before the war front moved so close, but I’ll let Andreas continue,” interjects Francis.

“This much I already know, we started to bomb their supply lines, and probe various defenses, so what’s the big news?”

“We’ve had some bit of luck, Croc has launched a major offensive on one of other nations, and tried to probe our lines at the same time as we were preparing for an offensive here, we managed to quickly blunt, and cut off his armored spearhead. We pierced the defenses there, and our other probe also pierced Croc’s lines. So far both advances have made significant process into Croc’s lines.”

“Is this what you wanted to talk to me about?”

“Yes, it is, no make no mistake these advances are hard fought for, and if they continue to go this way, we’ll have a chance to surround and eventually capture the city of Veloci,” explains Francis.

“Excellent, so what seems to be the problem?” asks Crisis.

“The sudden change in fortune here. Why would Croc suddenly put focus on all these fronts, while we’re the one making the most progress. Based on your reports, Croc has forces stationed on other worlds, why is he having such trouble with ours all of a sudden?” asks Francis.

“You’re wondering why he doesn’t call in more forces to stop our advances?” asks Crisis.

“Exactly, we’re well past the shock that Croc’s forces received when we made our first advances. His supply lines are shorter, the front smaller, and he’s had time to re-organize and re-arm his forces. We seen some of this from the already slowed advance, but suddenly it seems he’s left a few holes in his lines, as if his forces are stretched thin. Reports have confirmed this theory of troops moving from our front. What do you make of this?”

“You’re asking me? The one with so little combat experience?” asks Crisis.

"No, I'm asking you because you know Croc better than anyone else. What could be going on that's given us this edge? Or is this just a trap?"

"Could be a few things, we know he controls other worlds, no clue how many. Word of the Empress' death could have spread and caused upheaval, maybe his troops are putting down rebellions, and it's quite possible that since we're no longer an easy target, Croc is trying to slow us down while he tries to finish off other fronts before turning his full attention towards us."

"Interesting..." comments Francis as he rubs his chin in thought.

"What?"

"You managed to come to some of the same conclusions I have."

"Impressed?"

"No, I just find it interesting."

"I recommend we continue the advance as is, try to build up a reserve force to blunt and counter any counterattack they may be planning against us," suggests Andreas.

"Sounds like a plan, anything else?" asks Crisis.

"None at the moment"

"Good, if you need me, ask one of my assistants to find me, I have some business to take care of," states Crisis as she walks off.

*"You think you're the one in charge here, but soon enough you'll know who really runs the show,"* thinks Francis as he watches Crisis leave.

Meanwhile back in Neo Robia, Croc sits in a chair overlooking a holographic display of a battlefield, Croc's forces surrounding several pockets of defense that remain, his red forces nearly completely overtaken the battlefield. Croc watches as he taps his metallic fingertips together as he grins, his red eyes glowing as Ko says, "Within a week we should completely crush the last of the planet's defenses and it'll be completely under your control."

"Excellent, good to see everything is going as planned, now if that's the end of the battle reports..."

"We still have one more."

"One more?" asks Croc.

"Yes planet R-121."

"R one... two... one... ah yes that one, ah yes after they killed off my ball and chain I almost forgot about that planet, how's it going?"

"To sum it up in one word, horrible," explains Ko as the screen switches to a larger display of the battlefield shown to Crisis back at her base. "We've made advances here and here, despite you pulling troops away to assist in the conquering of planet A-036. The raptors on this planet have been mounting several counter offensives and due some fumbling by one of your generals, he's left open a hole in our lines which the enemy is taking full advantage of. At this rate they'll surround the city which they call Veloci."

"Veloci... ah yes the gambling city, so many nice dancers there..." remarks Croc with a sly smirk.

"Yes... we know, you told us to defend that city at all costs because how nice you found the atmosphere... Anyway the war here has gone on longer and we've received more casualties all because you wanted to have a little fun here and even if we bring in more troops, it's only going to become more difficult, the enemy has been studying our technology. Technological superiority and force won't guarantee a quick and easy victory anymore."

“That is indeed a problem,” replies Croc as he looks over the battlefield, “I guess I have to get serious here, but how to go about it,” says Croc as he leans forward, his claws rubbing his chin as he thinks... “What to do... what to do... I know, I have an idea that will give me the planet and be oh so much fun. Not as fun as conquering it slowly, but things change.”

“What is it Croc?” asks Ko with a soft sigh.

“Let’s initiate project Mindsweeper.”

“You want to use that on this planet? Is it even worth the time and effort?”

“Are you question me on this?”

“No Master Croc, of course not, I’ll get right on it,” responds Ko with another sigh.

“Excellent,” says Croc as he looks over the battlefield one more time before he thinks, *“Well Crisis, you’ve done well this far, but I wonder what will you do when those you fight for become your enemy.”*

## Chapter 22 One Short

Crisis hears the hum of the engines as she looks outside of the private jet airplane. She leans back in the soft black leather cushioned seat as she sees Joshua looking back over here, nearby is Sasha who is dressed in a military dress uniform. The spacious jet's cabin is split into a few sections with Crisis' private compartment in the back. Standing at the door leading out of the compartment are two armed raptor security guards dressed in black.

"A six and a half hour flight and I am stuck here in the back," grumbles Crisis.

"This summon to the Federation of Nations is quite sudden, and we are on a private jet, that isn't too shabby" replies Joshua.

"I heard the other nations threatened military force against us if we didn't comply," Sasha adds..

"It's not that."

"What is it?" asks Joshua.

"General Raszer is in the other damn room and I can't even speak with him! I've been sitting here for the past three hours and anytime I try to go to see him, those guards block my path," she growls.

"Well we don't want any trouble, and the general is busy with running the country and the war," replies Joshua.

"I can't stand it anymore, I'm going to go see him," growls Crisis as she stands up and walks over to the doors.

"Sorry you can't come in, the general is a very busy man," states the first guard.

"I don't care he is, I have a lot of questions for the general that only he can answer, and he will answer them, it's the least he can do after all that I've done for him."

"Sorry but orders are orders."

"I'll give you some orders alright..."

"Crisis..." mumbles Joshua.

"Let her in, if she wants to speak with me this badly it has to be important," says General Raszer from the other side of the door.

"Yes sir," replies the guards as they step aside.

"Better, you two got off easy," remarks Crisis as she opens the door, revealing another set of guards as well as an even more spacious flight cabin where only two black leather seats are visible on the right hand side.

"Come on in, I don't have all day," commands Raszer as Crisis walks up to reveal the black scaled raptor, his amber eyes look up at Crisis as he motions for her to sit down. The general eyes Crisis as he takes a sip of his coffee from his coffee mug.

"Thank you sir," replies Crisis as she sits down in the chair across from him, Raszer takes another sip of his coffee mug as he notices it's empty. He shows it to a nearby guard who quickly calls in a flight attendant to rush and bring him some more coffee.

"What is so urgent that you needed to speak to me?" he asks as he glances at Crisis.

“A couple of things, first off I want to know more about project Crisis.”

“Hmm how very odd you come to me to ask me that, the very product of the project asking me about itself and how it was created.”

“I want to know what was done with the pieces captured from Croc himself. I tried looking up more on my creation but a lot of the information is limited.”

“The pieces of Chaos Croc were studied extensively to craft and design your original body. Furthermore the technology we obtained in our raids, namely his roboticization technology we use to now to help create your army,” explains Raszer as he gets his coffee mug refilled. Raszer waits till the flight attendant is gone before continuing, “You were built with the design idea to be exactly like him, with the exception of serving us and not him,” chuckles Raszer as he looks out the window, “It wasn’t an easy project to pull off by any means. A lot of time and effort was put into it. It took years of research, development, trial and error; keeping the bases we had the research at top secret from not only Croc, but from the world as a whole,” explains Raszer as he turns his attention for a moment back to Crisis.

“The former president wasn’t too keen on the project and tried multiple times to get it cancelled. He even placed a weak minded general in charge of the very military base you were built at. He figured having someone who wouldn’t let the project cross over to the final step would be just as good as cancelling it. In other words he tried to keep the project from ever reaching completion so he could avoid angering the military.”

“Parts that you control, I assume.”

“You catch on quick. You see our president was a weak man. He refused to let us unleash our full military force from the very beginning of this conflict. When we were under attack and the greater part of our nation was still under our control, he refused to increase the size of our military, refused to bolster our military budget. He’d rather bow down to a decades old treaty and keep the other nations happy rather than protect our people. I was amazed he got re-elected so many times during the war,” states Raszer as he looks into his coffee mug before taking another sip, “No matter, he got what was coming to him in the end. Croc’s forces managed to take him out. Who’d thought Croc would have done something beneficial to our side,” he chuckles.

“Quite, though it is problematic that he was able to in the first place.”

“Indeed, why I’ve been taking extra security precautions. Speaking of which, when we land in New Hope city... don’t expect a warm welcome. The Avians have never been a fan of our kind. They’ll probably have something ready to restrain you the moment we land.”

“Understood... though I will admit I was never programmed with much knowledge on the other nations. Why they hate us so much.”

“It wasn’t knowledge that we deemed necessary for you to know in your fight against Croc... but things change so might as well enlighten your programming.. Look out the window and tell me what you see.”

“Alright,” replies Crisis as she looks outside to see rows of tiny, tiny houses, streets, factories, a town here, a town there far in the distance, square formation crops growing on farms, “I don’t see anything special.”

“Look closer at the terrain.”

Crisis takes another look, studying the terrain as she starts to notice circular outlines in the terrain, creators, dozens of them worn down by time and the elements, “You referring to those creators?”

“I am, our nation has had a violent past, three major world wars to be exact. The Drakes have been our allies in all of them and are reviled just as much as we are. There are few other scaled nations that have backed us in the past, but the furred nations have always been out to get us, wanting to limit our power and growth at every turn, our last major war, which was about sixty years ago ended in a treaty that has done nothing but strangle our people. The only reason why we’re doing as good as we are now is because we’ve started to completely disregard the treaty. That is why we’re going to New Hope city.”

“An oddly named city, why is it called that?” asks Crisis.

“New Hope was original called something else but the city was renamed after our armies were defeated there and the tide of battle turned against us. It was a long five more years till we were defeated, but it all started there with the combined armies of ten different nations.”

“Ten nations? Against just us? That’s a lot.”

“It was more like forty against us and our allies, but I digress. The Avians made New Hope their new capital city after the war, and as I mentioned earlier where the Federation of Nations meetings are held.”

“Do you know what this summon to the city is about?” asks Crisis.

“Of course, it’s to talk about the recent transgressions about the treaty, the massive increase in our armies, building advance technological weapons, such as you, ect, ect.”

“And they wanted me to come along for this?”

“Yup, I don’t know what they are planning exactly, but it can’t be good. They are all anti-scales like you wouldn’t believe... but you’ll see that soon enough.”

“I guess I will,” replies Crisis as she leans back in the chair gazing back at the world down below and after a while Crisis returned to her original seat, the plane landing a couple of hours later. Crisis watched as the massive city below drew closer and bigger. The airport was absolutely massive, with hundreds of planes coming and going in a near endless stream but as the plane touched down and pulled off the tarmac towards a secluded section of the airport with an army of police officers and reporters waiting... along with some of the country’s own army in support. Raszer was the first off the plane with his body guards, before Crisis and her crew left.

Crisis took a good look these anthropomorphic birds who ranged in various ways some had wings, others did not, some would be more classified as a gryphon, being half bird half other kind of animal, while others were full bred birds. News reporters took snapshots and video film as a few large bald eagle military guards approached Crisis, one of them had a large black metallic collar in his claws.

“Relax , if you struggle it make things worse,” mumbles Raszer to Crisis who was standing at the base of the stairs. Crisis gave a nod as the two eagles placed the heavy metallic collar around your neck.

“It’s a pleasure to have you with us today Raszer,” announces a blue jay dressed in a business suit as he walks up to the group.

“Always a pleasure to see you again Chancellor,” replies Raszer, “Though may I inquire exactly what you’ve placed on my equipment that you yourself request to be here?”

“Oh just a little precaution, we’ve heard plenty of stories what your dear robot can do...” he explains as he looks over at Crisis, “It’s an EMP device designed to wipe out its systems and the collar is packed with just enough conical explosives that it can easily pop that things head off with minimal shrapnel to nearby people,” continues the Chancellor in a relaxed tone of voice.

*“I am not a thing...”* thinks Crisis as she does as she is told and stands there as the device is put onto her, listening to all the derogatory comments made about her.

“I see your trust in us hasn’t changed at all,” comments Raszer.

“After all your past and recent transgressions, be thankful I have any at all,” he remarks as the group moves forward, police keeping the reporters at bay while the soldiers surround the group, “The meeting has already begun so we’ll be heading there immediately.”

“Already? So eager to prosecute us?” remarks Raszer.

“And here I thought I was doing you a favor by sparing you the opening formalities,” he remarks as a nearby limo sits waiting for Raszer and the Chancellor the two entering the car as it drives off.

“What about us?” asks Crisis as a military truck pulls up as the two large birds that put the collar on Crisis remain nearby, they motion to the truck in silence, “Figures,” sighs Crisis as the three are loaded into the back of the truck.

“Why do I feel like a prisoner,” comments Sasha under her breath as the group is hurled into the back of the truck, with a set of armed guards on either side of them.

“Because we are,” whispers Crisis. Sasha just looks over the guards as she remains silent, Joshua on the other end as he looks nervously over at the avians that tower over them in pure size and muscle he says.

“They picked the largest for this mission, didn’t they?” Joshua looks at them as the eagles say nothing but give Joshua a glare. “Not very talkative are you?” Again Joshua is met with nothing but a cold hard look, but not as cold and hard as they looked as looked at Crisis. Crisis just sits back and looking back at them with her glowing blue eyes.

“Don’t say anything to them, they’ll only looking for a reason to set off that collar around your neck,” mumbles Sasha to Crisis.

“I know,” replies Crisis as the trucks eventually come to a stop. The back opens up and Crisis and the others are hurried out to be greeted by more military personnel and reporters. Ahead of them Crisis can see general Raszer with the chancellor walking on ahead. Raszer brushes away reporters as he moves.

“Are you really the only survivor from the project that created that thing?” asks one reporter to Joshua who fumbles with his words as he his hurried along.

“Is it true your job is to destroy your creation if it goes haywire?” asks another reporter to Sasha who remains quite and collected, no questions are directed directly at Crisis as she too is forced up the walkway path towards the massive building complex of steel and glass.

Crisis watches the building awe, though the constant questions from the news reporters to Joshua and Sasha makes Crisis’ hand claws twitch, *“They act like I am not even here,”* she thinks as she enters the building with the group, the news reporters unable to get past the first of several lines of security. Joshua and Sasha walk through a set of metal detectors before Crisis

does the same. The sensor immediately goes off, lights blinking red as Crisis is quickly taken to the side by the two largest Eagle soldiers.

“Really? What did you expect?” remarks Crisis as the eagles push her to the side more.

“Inspect her for any weapons, we don’t want anything to happen,” commands another avian, this time a black bird.

“Yes sir,” says the eagle as he pulls out a small handheld metal detector and scanner, all of which goes off the moment it gets near her body.

“I’m made of metal...” states Crisis with a soft sigh.

“What are these?” asks the eagle as he looks at Crisis’ large sickle claws on her inner toe.

“It’s my toe, all raptors have that.”

“Easy to use weapon, more like it, and why am I talking to you, you,” states the eagle as he turns around towards Joshua, “you’re the one that created it right?” asks the Eagle.

“I am one of the scientists yes,” responds Joshua.

“Then come over here, you’ll answer any questions I have about your robot.”

“Alright, and we designed her after our species, what would you expect? They pose no greater threat than my own natural claws and I did brush up on my international law and...”

“Yes, yes but that’s to people, this is not a person.”

*“Oh they really want to anger me...”* thinks Crisis as her hands twitch, the Eagle quickly moving to grab Crisis’ hands.

“No fast movements.”

“Of course not,” replies Crisis.

“What are these?” he asks as he points to the small glass circles on the palm of Crisis’ hands.

“These are cameras we’ve installed in her. Used for recon and information gathering.”

“Cameras? They’re quite big to be spy cameras.”

“There is a reason for that. You see several of Croc’s machines we’ve captured had these circles on their hands. For what purpose, we don’t know, but since they were there, it’s easy to hide the cameras in plain sight. Of course Crisis isn’t here to spy on anything. Everything here is public.”

“Or so you say.”

“What other use could they be used for?” asks Joshua.

“I don’t know, some kind of new hidden weapon?”

“I have an explosive EMP device attached to my neck, if you aren’t concerned about that, what could I possibly bring that would be worth worrying about?” asks Crisis as she looks at the guard who scowls back at her.

“She does have a point,” comments Joshua.

“Shut up,” he remarks.

“That’s enough!” commands the eagle guard as he looks over Crisis once more, “With that device it should be okay, move along,” states the guard as Crisis and her group move towards the open lobby. Inside the lobby dozens of flags hang from the ceiling of the dozens of nations, in the center of the lobby depicted on the tiled floor is the image of the planet being held up by two feral avians with their wings outstretched so their wings surround each to support and



protect the planet. Crisis' claws tap against the tiled floor as they make their way towards the meeting chambers. A large amphitheater room, several seats placed at several levels in half circles around the center at a podium is an anthropomorphic Mako shark.

"The Dolphia forces have broken a half a dozen international treaties; the most egregious of these have been attacking of supply and medical ships on route to support the Dromaeosa in their war, and the use of nuclear weaponry."

"How dare you accuse us of such atrocious acts! We have abided by the anti-nuclear treaty like everyone else," exclaims a bottlenose anthropomorphic dolphin.

"Then how do you explain these nuclear explosions at key strategic military instillation."

"Those are all lies; we have used no such weapons."

"Do you accuse us of creating and then using illegal nuclear weaponry upon our own military forces in such a manner that it would weaken our position in this six year long war against you? That's absolutely insane. Do you really think that all of us here be that naive?!" exclaims the shark.

Crisis is led down a small pathway off to the side where the *Dromaeosa* nation's booth is. It's only three rows from the inner most ring of seats. Crisis can hear soft whispers amongst various diplomats of the fifty some nations that occupy the room.

"What's going on here?" asks Crisis as she sits down.

"Shh, just remain quite we'll be next after this little spat ends," remarks Raszer.

"These accusations are indeed serious to make and we can't shrug them off as if they were nothing. We'll be sending teams to investigate these claims," replies the Chancellor.

*"Odd how they are having a war amongst themselves while we're at war with Croc,"* thinks Crisis.

"Investigate these claims? You're honestly believe after all that we've done, after the aggression these sharks have shown to us, that you'd take their word over our own?" asks the dolphin.

"We aren't taking anyone's word over another. We are going to send an independent investigation team to verify any validity or lack thereof these claims."

"You'd even patronize these sharks by sending teams? How can your 'teams' tell what's truth and what's false when you can't tell before your very eyes here today?" yells the Dolphin.

"Quite we aren't here to spout insults."

"No we're here to entertain the idea that their lies even have the remote possibility of having any truth in them. This is as bad as believing that the Dromaeosa's war against this Chaos Croc is an actual war, and not something they started to bolster their military forces past treaty levels," he groans as the Dolphin slams his stack of papers to the table and storms off.

*"How do they still debate the existence of Chaos Croc? How do they debate that this war isn't true? Has the suffering of the people of my nation been enough?"* thinks Crisis.

"Dolphinians, are never able to take the pressure," remarks the shark.

"That's enough, return to your seat, the next order of business is coming up," state the Chancellor as he looks over at General Raszer who is staring at him, his arms crossed before he leans over to Crisis and whispers.

“Whatever you do remain calm, we don’t want to add fuel to the fire. Don’t speak unless spoken to, you understand? No matter what happens, don’t do anything that could undermine everything we’ve done so far.”

“I understand,” replies Crisis with a nod.

“Don’t worry sir, Crisis knows how to handle herself,” remarks Joshua.

“I’m not so sure about that, but you’re the only one left from her creation, so I have no other choice,” remarks Raszer.

“It’s been a long time since we’ve had all fifty-six nations come to these chambers. Today we aren’t here to debate the validity of this robotic war.”

“How do you still need to debate this war? Thirteen nations have fallen to this monster, my nation including, yet you still talk about this war as if it’s not true? What more evidence do you really need?” asks a wolf representative.

“There is a war that is obvious, no one is debating that, but who is actually behind this war, some mythical robotic monster from another world, or a home bound creation, maybe something that got out of hand or... something that’s been planned by a nation that clearly has demonstrated the capabilities of creating such things,” declares a female blue and black scaled anthropomorphic cobra snake, from her spot on the other side of the room.

“Silence, I will have no more outbursts in these chambers. We aren’t here to about the war; we are here to debate the constant and repeated offenses against the treaty that was laid down by the very first Federation of Nations council over sixty years ago. We are here to discuss if the nation of Dromaeosa has gone too far with their creation over there” states the Chancellor as he points to Crisis.

Crisis looks over at the chancellor as her claws twitch, she looks over at Raszer for a moment who doesn’t even bat an eye, as Joshua leans over to Crisis and whispers, and “I don’t like the sound of this.”

“Excuse me Chancellor but how does the validity of war not relate to this discussion?” asks the snake girl.

“At this moment we have no way to determine if the nation of Dromaeosa and her allies created Chaos Croc, but we do know, and they’ve openly admitted to the creation of that machine over there. And now we will decide what to do about this clear violation of the treaty.”

“In other words chancellor you want to debate if you want destroy our creation or not. To destroy not only our project but all the work that has been done up to and including those that joined Crisis in fighting the monster that’s not only bent on destroying my people, my country, but everyone here,” replies Raszer.

*“They want to do what?! Is that why I am here? Just to sit here and take it as they discuss if I should be destroyed or not?”* thinks Crisis.

“Tell me chancellor, if this is a debate to decide the very fate of my country, why did you call Crisis here?”

“Evidence. I want this to be a fair and just, what the federation stands for. You will get your chance to speak to prove what you’ve done breaks the treaty or not.”

“It sounds like you’ve already made up your minds, but we the people of Dromaeosa appreciation the offer to defend ourselves before the other great nations of the world here today,” replies Raszer as he leans back in his chair as the debates about Crisis begin. Needless to say

they aren't going well, many already show clear intent that Crisis should be destroyed along with all those that Crisis turned into machines. Others debate on Crisis being destroyed but not those that she has 'tricked' to become machines.

*"I'm not sure how much longer I can hear them speak of me as an object, a mere thing, and their desire to destroy me. If they destroying me, they'd deny me my purpose to destroy Croc... my purpose to destroy Croc... is that all am I for?"*

"I would..." exclaims Raszer as he then mumbles, "as much as I hate to do this," before speaking out loud once again, "to bring Joshua to the stand. He is the only surviving scientist that was directly responsible for the creation of Crisis."

"And what would be the purpose of calling him to the stand?"

"He's not a soldier, he's not a politician, you can see how nervous he is just being here, his claws twitching as he fidgets in his seat, he's not someone trained to handle speaking to all of you."

"Your point Raszer?" asks the Chancellor with a sigh.

"My point is, you won't believe anything I have to say. You probably won't believe what he has to say either, but you stated you wanted this to be a fair and just meeting. Wouldn't one who helped build and monitoring Crisis' be the best witness for you all?"

"I can't see the harm in this, he may proceed."

"Gee thanks for building me up like that," mumbles Joshua as he had a small microphone attached to his shirt and after a quick test to see if it was working he began to speak.

"I'm really not sure where to begin or what I could really say. I am the last surviving scientist that help build Crisis. I was there the day she was activated, when Croc's forces attacked. She saved not only my life and the lives of others. She's done nothing but help people, she's risked herself several times. She's even put herself in danger to save the lives of others. We programmed her just to defeat Chaos Croc and nothing more than that. We made no effort to program her to do harm to anyone else."

"So you say, but what would stop you from programming her to do something else? What about this army of hers after this 'war' passes? What about that? You say you programmed her to help others, to defeat Croc, but it all seems to be in the interest of your nation and yours alone. What would happen when that interest turns from preservation to conquest? Are you simply going to destroy her at the end of the war?" asks the snake.

"Well, we never really..." replies Joshua as Crisis interrupts.

"I like to say something."

"You? Say something? Really now, what could you say? You're programmed to do anything you're told. We have no reason to take your word of a machine," states the Chancellor.

"Then what harm is there in me speaking my mind?"

"Plenty," remarks Raszer as he glares over at her.

"Chancellor let the machine speak, this would be most interesting," replies the snake. The chancellor looks over at the snake and the other representatives spend a moment amongst themselves. He watches their reaction to the idea before he sighs softly.

"Alright speak."

"Thank you Chancellor. I want to say Joshua is right, I am programmed with one goal in mind to defeat Croc, to save the people of my nation from

destruction, but it's more than that. I want to put an end to the war, save everyone. Do I take enjoyment in anything I do? I'm a machine I don't take enjoyment in anything. And you're right, there is little guarantee that I'll just stop once Croc is defeated," says Crisis as she looks over the crowd who talk more amongst themselves before she continues.

"My purpose is to defeat Croc and to do it without endangering more lives than I have to. I want to save lives not cost them. My morality is hard coded into my systems and I have to question myself if what I am doing is right. The biggest of these questions is turning others into machines like myself," she states as the chatter increases.

"I wouldn't dream of turning anyone into something like me. I merely offered it to people who wanted to help fight a war that has already taken millions of lives, and destroyed thirteen nations and up till now working to destroy five more. I can't figure why you still don't believe this war is real, but that's not my place, you haven't seen what I've seen. Is it self preservation to say please don't destroy me? Yes it is, I won't deny that, but it's self preservation to the point that I have a duty to do. To stop a monster that's been so vicious and vile that I had to be built to stop him," states Crisis as she continues.

"After I did that, do what you wish. You called me here and I came without a fuss. You can easily destroy me now you can just as easily do it later. The only difference in waiting is that there is still a crazed machine out there that will stop at nothing but to enslave not only the people who created me but all of you," declares Crisis as she looks around at everyone before saying.

"But you can at least let me stop him, after that you can destroy me, once my purpose is done."

"And what guarantee do you have that you'd come willingly to your own destruction?" asks the Chancellor.

"I can't give you any, not any that you believe anyway, but you've brought me here once, how hard would it be to do it again?"

"Harder than you make it out to be, and I think we've all heard enough, it's time to take a vote on the matter. If the motion passes you and all of Dromaeosa technology will be confiscated and destroyed, and if you or anyone resists General Raszer, we'll take it as declaration of war, do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal," replies Raszer as he leans back.

"How many votes do they need to pass?" asks Crisis.

"A two thirds majority," replies Raszer as the votes are tallied electronically, the whole process taking only a few minutes to complete.

"Not spending much time on deliberation I see."

"Not much to discuss their minds were made up before we got here, we're just here for the show," replies Raszer as the Chancellor looks at the votes.

"The votes are in, and I think it'll be more fun if we work our way from the bottom up to see if the nation passes. Votes against Dromaeosa breaking of the treaty fifteen. Four undecided votes," declares the Chancellor as Crisis quickly does the math and thinks the chancellor taking a brief pause.

*“That’s 19 out of 56 votes not for my destruction... that’s only 33.9 percent. They only need 66% to pass... They are going to destroy me right here...”*

“And votes for Dromaeosa violation of the treaty... thirty six,” states the Chancellor as he looks over the numbers again... “The notion... does not pass,” he finishes as the chambers break into an uproar of complaints and demands of a recount, calls of foul play quickly filling the room.

“We did it Crisis!” exclaims Joshua as he hugs her.

“Yes... but how, I was certain that...” mumbles Crisis.

“Chancellor how does the notion not pass?” asks the snake.

“We have one absent vote, the one from Dolphia, their representative was not here during the vote and therefore according to our rules their vote won’t be counted.”

“You can’t be serious; everyone knows Dolphia is against this thing that sits over there.”

“What people say they know and what happened are two different things. If we don’t follow the rules...”

“Rules? Look at what the rules have given us. They have allowed that thing to continue to exist. Surely if you do the math out of fifty-five it’ll show we have a clear majority.”

“The math is done out of fifty-five. I’d be more than happy to tell you that thirty-six out of fifty-five is only 65.4 percent,” replies the Chancellor as he begins to argue with the snake.

“Oh thank god, I was really worried there for a moment,” sigh Joshua.

“Me too,” remarks Crisis as he looks at Raszer who looks over the chaotic scene before him, his arms across his chest as he has a big toothy grin on his face.

## Chapter 23 New Hope City

“We have to be here for two more days? Two more? We’ve been here for three already. They’ve already tried voting for my destruction and failed, why are we still here? I have a war to fight,” grumbles Crisis as she paces back and forth in the living room of her hotel room. Joshua sits on the couch watching some television as he looks over at Crisis who glances up at Sasha who is standing by the door, back in her military uniform.

“The only flight home is with General Raszer, and he still has business to attend to here before we head back, not much we can do about it,” explains Sasha.

“There’s nothing we can do, might as well relax,” says Joshua as he leans back in the couch and flips the channel.

“Protests about the ruling against the destruction of Dromaeosa weapons for their violation of the treaty continue across the…” reports a news reporter as Joshua quickly changes the channel.

“Seems we’re still making the news,” chuckles Sasha.

“I’ve noticed, but I just can’t stay here, locked away in this room like some animal. I’ve gotten treated like one enough as it is, their damn collar is still and my neck, why do I need to be trapped here?”

“The general doesn’t want to cause any incidents that may jeopardize our precarious position. By staying here, you are increasing your chances to defeating Chaos Croc. If you leave here there is a chance that would go down to zero,” explains Sasha.

“Yes, yes, but I want to get out of here. I want to see this city, these other people. I am not defending just our kind but theirs too.”

“Yes, but why do you want to see these people? They’re not like us. Many of them hate us, they’ll give you nothing but the worst experience possible. Trust me on this I know,” replies Sasha.

“Regardless, I want to experience it. I want to see this city, see these other people. Is that so wrong? Can’t I just experience it? I know the consequences of causing an issue, and I know they won’t like me. Let me make this decision.”

“I never said you couldn’t you can go if you want, and I’ll keep an eye on you, but the guards at the door, or down the hall, or at the hotel’s lobby,” explains Sasha.

“I already told you what I thought about this,” chimes in Joshua.

“And I don’t care, I want to see the city, who knows when I’ll get back here, if I’ll get back here, I’m going.”

“And how do you expect to do this? Can’t use the elevator, or the fire escape, are you just going to jump out of the window?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I am going to do.”

“What?!” exclaims Joshua.

“I’ll be outside,” replies Sasha as she exits the room.

“You can’t be serious, we’re eleven stories up!” he says as he stands up and walks over to Crisis who goes over to the glass sliding door that leads to the balcony.

“Relax, I am not dumb enough to jump all the way down, there are several ledges I can jump to make the descent quick and easy without any bodily harm to me,” she replies.

“No, I can’t, it’s too risky,” warns Joshua.

“What are you going to stop me?”

“I... uh... I will... I can’t let you do this, what happens if you get hurt?”

“Then why don’t you come with me?”

“Come with you? But you plan to jump out the window.”

“Yes and?”

“How can I come with you?”

“Just hold on,” states Crisis as she grabs Joshua’s shirt and pulls him onto her back.

“Crisis what are you doing?”

“Going down, I do recommend you hold on tight,” she says as Joshua reaches around and grabs Crisis’ chest for extra support.

“Huh...” comments Joshua as he holds onto Crisis’ bust.

“What’s wrong Joshua?” asks Crisis as she looks over at him just as she gets to the balcony edge.

“Nothing, nothing,” replies Joshua nervously.

“Good just hold on tight.”

“Won’t be a problem,” remarks Joshua as he wraps his legs around her his tail around her tail as he looks over her shoulder, “I really didn’t think it be this high up...” comments Joshua as he gulps, he lets out a light scream as Crisis jumps down to the balcony below her claws gripping the metal railing as she jumps down over to the next and the next, jumping off to the side to grab a stone block which breaks in Crisis’ claws causing her and Joshua to fall.

“Crisis?!” exclaims Joshua as he looks down at the quickly approaching ground.

“I got this, don’t worry,” she calmly replies as she digs her feet and hands into the stone her claws digging into stone, leaving long deep gashes into the stone. Joshua holds even tighter onto Crisis’ body as he closes his eyes.

“This was a bad idea, such a bad idea,” mumbles Joshua.

“Joshua.”

“Yes?”

“You can open your eyes now, we’re on the ground,” says Crisis as Joshua slowly opens his eyes and looks down to see himself inches above the ground, he slowly releases Crisis as she releases the stone on the side of the building, Joshua looks and sees the claw marks going down the side of the building.

“That was too risky, don’t do that again,” warns Joshua as Crisis dislodges her claws from the side of the building.

“Don’t worry about it, we made it down safely didn’t we?” asks Crisis as she looks around, “And look I landed us in a secluded area so no one saw us.”

“I wouldn’t say no one,” chimes in Sasha as she looks at Crisis and Joshua with a smile.

“How did you get here?” asks Joshua.

“I jumped off the side of the building,” replies Sasha with a chuckle, “What do you think? I used the elevator. I wasn’t confined to the room and neither were you, so I have no idea why you decided to go her route.”

“This isn’t going to end well, I just know it.”

“Then why did you come?” asks Crisis.

“I have my reasons,” he replies as the group steps onto the streets and start their walk.

Crisis sees various species, Fox, Wolf, Triceratops, Dolphin, Snake, and many more. “They are already staring at us,” comments Joshua.

“They’d stare at us regardless if Crisis was here or not,” remarks Sasha.

“I already prepared myself for less than a warm welcome, and that’s not going to stop me from seeing this city, which direction should we go first?”

“Judging by the time, I suggest lunch.”

“Lunch?” asks Crisis.

“Well us organics have to eat, and I’ve noticed that Joshua has been eating only the finest foods that the hotel has to offer, and he could use more suitable nourishment, don’t you think Joshua?” asks Sasha as she jumps on Joshua and noogies him.

“I don’t know those donuts and bagels were quite filling,” replies Joshua as he attempts and fails to get himself out of Sasha’s grasp, “Now would you please let me go?”

“Oh alright,” says Sasha with a smirk, “You scientists never could handle anything that is even remotely physical.”

“I suppose sitting down to converse about what to see as you two eat wouldn’t be too bad.”

“That is if we can find a restaurant willing to accept us,” remarks Sasha.

“I’ll take that challenge,” replies Crisis as they start their stroll down the street an aura of avoidance quickly forming around them as they move towards the commercial and entertainment district of the city.

As the group moves farther away from the political center of the city, Crisis notices that the clean streets become more littered and less finely dressed are about, a few people are even in tattered clothes. Children hold close to their parents as their gets close to them before their parents whisk their children away across the street or in the opposite direction.

“Enjoy being the center of attention Crisis?” asks Sasha.

“After what I experienced at the Confederation meeting, I am not surprised, and I wouldn’t call it enjoyable...”

“I’m shocked we haven’t been assaulted yet,” comments Joshua as he looks around nervously.

“Relax they wouldn’t try to do anything publicly,” replies Sasha as they arrive at an oriental Feline restaurant.

“How about this place?” asks Crisis.

“Here? You want to try to eat here?” asks Joshua.

“Well I wouldn’t be eating.”

“Oh this place would be interesting,” comments Sasha as she takes a step towards the entrance where a large tiger steps at the entrance.

“Sorry we’re closed,” he says with a soft growl, the tall buff tiger with his orange fur and black stripes looks down at Sasha with his yellow eyes.

“Closed? Really now, I see plenty of people in there at this very instant.”

“We’re closed to your kind, and there is no way I am going to let that thing in my restaurant, I’d lose all my business,” he humphs.



“I am not a thing,” remarks Crisis.

“It speaks... That’s a surprise.”

“Of course I speak, think I am some mindless automaton?” exclaims Crisis with a soft growl.

“Let’s try another place, I never fond feline cousin, it never really agreed with me,” comments Joshua.

“Alright... we can try some other place, since your weak stomach can’t handle this ‘food’,” replies Sasha as the group walks away, the Tiger keeping an eye on them till they are far enough away from the building before moving back inside..

“That could have ended badly,” sighs Joshua.

“Yes it could have ended with us eating, such a horrible ending indeed,” remarks with a Sasha with a growled sigh.

“It’s not like that, I just know when a situation wasn’t going to end well and that’s one of them. There are plenty of places to eat, we can just find another.”

“For some reason I don’t think you know how to handle a bad situation.”

“Me? I know how to handle myself.”

“Sure you do,” replies Sasha with heavy sarcasm, “I see you as the guy who was always locked in his room studying. Have you ever had a date?”

“What? I’ve had plenty of dates.”

“Right, when’s the last time you’ve had a date? And this doesn’t count.”

“Uh... hu...”

“Let’s hear it.”

“I don’t want to say.”

“Oh tell, I’m quite curious,” chuckles Crisis.

“Scared in telling us? Grow a backbone, tell,” remarks Sasha.

“Five years,” mumbles Joshua.

“What was that? I didn’t quite hear that.”

“Five years alright?”

“Five years? How’s that even possible?”

“When you’re working on a secret project stuck at a secret military base, it’s hard to find someone to date alright?”

“Oh come on that’s no excuse. I’ve told my last lover that I was an aerodynamics expert and I was busy on ‘projects’,” she replies.

“How is being a sniper qualify you as an aerodynamics expert?”

“I have to know how the bullet travels through the air, don’t I?” chuckles Sasha

“Good point... wait why does this have to be about me?! I could get a date I just didn’t want to.”

“Oh and why is that?” asks Sasha.

“I have too much work to do, Crisis needs all the help she can get, isn’t that right Crisis?”

“This is true he does spend a lot of time helping me, though, judging by how organics form relationships he still has plenty of time to find someone,” she replies.

“I think Joshua has a crush o— Did you just kick me?” asks Sasha as she glares at Joshua.

“Y-yes I did. You were going to you know make things complicated?”

“Oh I see... alright I’ll keep your little secret but you’re paying for dinner.”

“Thanks,” replies Joshua as he looks away.

“What is this about?”

“Nothing, don’t worry about it Crisis, I just know a little bit of embarrassing information about Joshua and he doesn’t want it out,” explains Sasha with a big grin on her face.

“Thanks Sasha, you’re so tactful about this.”

“What you get for kicking me, oh and do that again, you’ll be missing your sickle claw of yours got it?” warns Joshua with a scowl.

“Got it,” replies Joshua with a nod. Of course that wasn’t the end of the group’s problems, attempt after attempt they ran into similar scene as they did with the Tiger’s restaurant, blocked from one place to the next after a full hour of rejection...

“You’re making our species look weak,” states Sasha.

“I am not; I am just playing it smart.”

“All these issues trying to get you two some food has been disconcerting,” states Crisis with a soft growl, “I do nothing but try to help my people and these other species treat me like the plague.”

“I thought you were prepared for this,” says Sasha.

“I thought I was too, though when I noticed they were willing to accommodate you two but not I, I’ve been less than pleased with this city than for what I was hoping for.”

“Aye, the name is misleading..., hmm how about this place?” asks Sasha as she walks us to a restaurant named, “Hot Scales Grill”.

“I snake grill? You honestly think after all the species based restaurants that barred us from entry that a snake one will let us in? Only the herbivore dinosaurs and the felines hate us more,” remarks Joshua.

“Where’s your sense of adventure?”

“I’m afraid I have to agree with Joshua on this one, the snakes have not been so happy to see me. They were one of the most adamant voices for my destruction.”

“You’re agreeing with him? What’s the worse can happen?”

“I don’t know. Those bodyguards from the last place? Or that gruff bunch from three restaurants back that had some concealed weapons on them? There are plenty of things to go wrong,” answers Joshua.

“And an empty stomach is one of them,” remarks Sasha as he grabs Joshua’s collar of his shirt and drags him towards the restaurant.

“Not again,” sighs Joshua as he and Sasha walk into the restaurant, with Crisis a few steps behind.

“Welcome to the Hot Scales Grill... oh raptors, we don’t get too many of your kind here,” comments the feline waitress, an orange tabby as she eyes the two while she holds a pair of menus in her paws.

“I’m sure...” replies Sasha as she looks at the feline, as Sasha has a clear foot in height over her.

“I’d be surprised if you get many of mine,” states Crisis as the feline looks at Crisis her whiskers twitching as she takes a half a step back.

“I’ll be right back,” she says as she rushes into the restaurant.

“Here we go again,” sighs Joshua.

“Looks like it,” remarks Sasha.

“You know if it’s really that troublesome I can just wait outside, I don’t need to eat you know.”

“Yes but it won’t be the same.”

“Why?”

“Uh... because.”

“Because...?” asks Crisis as she rolls her finger in a horizontal circle.

“Oh it seems she’s right we do have some surprising guests today,” says a black and blue scaled female cobra snake, her red tongue flicks as she approaches, “What brings you to my humble little eatery?”

“To eat,” replies Joshua.

“And the machine over there, it is going to eat as well?”

“I prefer not to be called anit, I got enough of that at the confederation meeting,” remarks Crisis with a soft growl.

“Well I’ll be damned you are the machine that everyone is talking about. No one has seen you since the Federation meeting, you did cause quite the stir if I might do say so myself.”

“Yes the fact the vote to have me dismantled didn’t pass, was such a shame,” remarks Crisis with a hint of sarcasm.

“A sense of humor too, didn’t think you raptors were capable of such.”

“What creating Crisis?”

“No, senses of humor,” she replies with a smile.

“Excuse me, but as much as I like to chat about this, I’d really like to get something to eat,” states Sasha.

“Ah but of course, come right this way. Forgive my waitress, she was a bit surprised at your arrival, but she’ll be more than happy to serve you,” replies the snake

“I’m surprised,” comments Crisis.

“Surprised about what?”

“We’ve had some complications finding a place to eat,” answers Sasha.

“Ah, say no more, there is lot of anti-raptor folks in the city.”

“That’s an understatement... and what about you? Your kind was very vocal about my destruction.”

“I don’t care about the politics of my country. Was never into it myself, and granted many don’t like your kind, but I don’t care.”

“What do you care about?”

“Money, and I see two very hungry customers, now come, sit, enjoy yourself,” she says with a smirk, her tongue flicking as the group made their way to a small round table able to seat five easily. There the feline waitress was standing by the table, with a less than happy look on

her face. The snake walks off as the feline looks down at us with a pad of paper and a pen in her hands.

“Can I get you anything?” she asks as Sasha and Joshua quickly order some drinks, “Right away,” she says as she walks off.

“She looks happy to be serving us,” chuckles Sasha.

“Quite,” replies Joshua. Crisis looks around as she relaxes in her chair, the other patrons talking amongst themselves, a patron or two pay and leave, leaving behind barely touched meals.

“Seems others aren’t too happy we’re here,” comments Crisis.

“We shouldn’t let that stop us from enjoying ourselves,” says Joshua as he opens the menu, “Now let’s see what to have...”

“Anything good?”

“Why do you ask? Not like you can eat anything,” comments Sasha.

“Can’t I be curious?”

“Well there is something that has already caught my eye.”

“And what’s that?” asks Crisis as she leans forward, resting her elbows on the table as she rests her head on her fingers.

“Grilled pizza.”

“Grilled pizza? Sounds interesting.”

“Oh I know, it sounds quite appetizing.”

“It does I don’t think I ever had a pizza grilled before, maybe I’ll try that too,” comments Sasha as she eyes the menu, “So many toppings to choose from.”

“A lot of meat based toppings... what to pick what to pick, it is a shame you can’t have any of this Crisis,” says Joshua.

“Not much of a point for me, not like I know what I am missing, I’ve never had food in my life.”

“Don’t be ridiculous sure you... have...” replies Joshua as he trails off.

“I have? I don’t remember, nor do I know of my systems having anything that allow me to consume and digest food.”

“Yes Joshua, what do you mean by that?” asks Sasha as she looks at him from over her menu.

“You’ve had... cookies before!”

“Cookies?” asks Sasha and Crisis in unison.

“Like internet cookies?”

“Funny,” sighs Crisis.

“Nerd humor, I’ll never get it,” remarks Sasha with a shake of her head as she looks down at the menu.

“Yeah... so, um... Crisis, how are you doing?”

“Functional, I could be better, such as being back home doing what I should be doing, but since I can’t help that, I am trying to enjoy myself the best of my ability, but it’s difficult.”

“Yeah, I hear you on that one. This city has been less than friendly.”

“That’s an understatement,” remarks Sasha.

"I've been keeping the people's sentiment about myself and our raptor species in mind as I go about the city. Don't want to cause an incident; I'm sure general Raszer wouldn't be too pleased about that."

"I'm sure general Raszer wouldn't be too pleased about this," Joshua adds in.

"He'll survive, he's a resourceful raptor," replies Sasha.

"He is," says Crisis as she looks around, seeing other patrons of the restaurant still looking at her, watching, staring, their whispers audible to Crisis as she hears some of their fears, concerns, anger, "I wish this place was more relaxing than it is," comments Crisis.

"Don't pay them any mind... or processing power just ignore them."

"Hard to ignore when you hear some plotting to do harm against you. I need to survive first and foremost in order to defeat Croc."

"Yes, yes, but no one will do that here, they're all talk."

"And you aren't alone either," remarks Sasha.

"True, I should relax a little bit," replies Crisis as she sits back in her chair.

"That's the spirit!" exclaims Joshua

*"Though what should I do as I relax? All I can think about is how to defeat Croc. I do want to defeat Croc, and I will do so, but what about after that? What would I do? Why am I still thinking about this? Why should I focus on what I have to do after I defeat Croc when I still have the long process of defeating him? It was that Empress... she must have done this to me, a virus of some sort... I'll have to run some diagnostics on my programming when I get a chance,"* thinks Crisis.

"So that will be two grilled pizzas with meat lover's toppings?" asks the feline waitress.

"Double the meat on mine please," orders Sasha.

"The normal will be okay for me," says Joshua.

"I don't assume you want anything," says the feline waitress as she looks at Crisis.

"I'm fine, I don't really eat."

"Figured, is that all?" she asks.

"I'm good," answers Joshua.

"Me as well," replies Sasha as she looks over at Crisis, "So after all you've seen thus far what do you plan to do Crisis?"

"I'm not sure. Going to the city's entertainment venues seems like a silly waste of time, and going by what we've encountered thus far, they won't take kindly to me going to any establishment to enjoy myself."

"We could always do a little shopping," suggests Joshua.

"Shopping?"

"Yeah, maybe get a souvenir? I'm sure that we could find something you'd like and get it for you."

"Hmm, it's been a while since I've gone and done a little shopping, it couldn't hurt," remarks Sasha.

"It would better teach me about how these other species live; I will need to understand them better if I am ever to be diplomatic. I can't make enemies here while Croc's armies are still out intending to destroy everything we hold dear."

“At least we now know what we’ll be doing next,” says Joshua with a smile as the waitress brings the group their drinks. The rest of the time at the restaurant was uneventful, though as we were finishing up and leaving the restaurant owner approached us again.

“I hope you enjoyed your meal,” she says with a small tongue flick.

“Oh we did, the food was fantastic. I never had a grilled pizza before,” replies Joshua.

“It’s our specialty dish, native to my home country.”

“I’ll have to visit there sometime once this whole war is over, I always wanted to travel.”

“I’m sure you will one day.”

“I have a question for you,” asks Crisis as the snake turns her attention to her.

“Oh you do? Do tell what is it?”

“You said you allowed us to be here because of the money, right?”

“That I did.”

“I noticed you lost a few customers as we were here, how are we to be so profitable to you?”

“Observant aren’t you?”

“I’m programmed to be.”

“Well since you’ve been such good patrons, far better than even I anticipated, I’ll tell you. You may scare off a few of my customers today, but guess how many will come when they learned you were here? In fact, if you don’t mind, I would like to take a photograph, me and you, and then the rest of your group.”

“Uh... sure, I don’t mind,” answers Crisis.

“You want me in a photograph?” asks Joshua.

“I was wondering the same thing,” says Sasha.

“I want to include all those involved, including my lovely waitress who was so kind to put her grudges aside to serve you,” explains the snake.

“Sorry, but I want no part in the photograph,” replies the feline.

“Suit yourself,” replies the snake as the couple of photographs were taken and then the group was back on their way to explore the city.

“That was interesting,” says Joshua.

“She let us eat there to exploit us,” remarks Sasha.

“Regardless we had a good meal didn’t we?”

“True,” she replies. The same trend as before, people avoiding them, talking amongst themselves as they watch Crisis’ group from a distance, they take photographs with their phones, cameras, as they watch the strange group move through the streets.

“This whole circus thing is getting annoying,” remarks Crisis.

“Relax, as you said you knew this was going to happen,” replies Sasha.

“Yeah, we don’t want to cause any issues now,” comments Joshua.

“Yes, but after a while... it gets to you,” says Crisis as the group arrives at an open strip mini mall filled with dozens of stores of various sizes.

“Anything that catches your eye Crisis?” asks Joshua.

“I know what catches mine,” says Sasha as she looks at a pro hunter shop, “If you don’t mind I think I’ll have a look around... don’t do anything stupid while I’m gone,” she warns as she walks off.

“We won’t do anything stupid,” remarks Joshua.

“You know... since you know me, I’m curious...” says Crisis as she rubs her chin as she looks around.

“Curious about what Crisis?”

“That electronic store over there, why don’t you find me a suitable souvenir from there?”

“An electronic store? Isn’t that a bit strange you think?”

“Yes I know of the irony, but I want to see what you’d get for me.”

“Me get for you? As in a gift from me to you?”

“More like shopping for me, to remember my time here if that makes any sense?”

“Uh... sure, I’ll be back in a bit, stay out of trouble,” says Joshua as he runs off.

*“Stay out of trouble, what does he take me for, a child?”* thinks Crisis as she walks around the area a bit, studying the people and everything else. Taking more notes on how much less organized this place is than Croc city, how much more trash there is. Suddenly a magazine blowing in the wind lands a few feet from here. As it catches Crisis’ attention she notices its some kind of news magazine that has a sketch of a split image of Crisis and Chaos Croc’s head. Below it is text that says, “Which is the Real threat?”

*“Curious,”* thinks Crisis as she goes to reach for the magazine before another wind blows it away down a small corridor she peers down to see a trash pickup area, in that area are people living in cardboard homes, *“How every interesting...”* thinks Crisis as she goes in for a closer look, the people in the shelters quickly running away as she drew near, *“Figures they’d run off.”*

“My, my, my, what do we have here? The Dromaeosa puppet has strayed from its protective guard,” says a deep toned voice from behind. Crisis turns around to see a pack of four guys standing before her. The first is an anthropomorphic triceratops, his three horns long and as sharp as her own claws, the guy to her right is an a rather buff red furred fox, on his left is a large buff iguanodon with an equally large and buff orca.

“Did you just call me a puppet?” replies Crisis with a soft growl her eyes glowing blue and her claws twitching.

“Oh look it got mad at being told what it is, a puppet, a pawn, a piece of glorified equipment,” chuckles the triceratops.

“I still can’t believe you got to exists due to one fucking absentee vote,” remarks the Orca.

“You know, I still think that vote was rigged maybe we should... rectify this,” suggest the iguanodon with a smirk.

“Do you really think you could hurt me?” asks Crisis as she takes a half a step back, deeper into the corridor.

“If you don’t think we can hurt you then why do you back away?” asks the triceratops.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” she replies.

“Oh, you don’t want to hurt us? Isn’t that rich,” chuckles the triceratops as he takes a step forward and takes a swing at Crisis, his fist hitting her right on the face, Crisis’ head only turning to the side with a loud metallic clank, the triceratops screams in pain as he grabs his hand, Crisis turns her head back towards them.

“By the sound of it, you broke a few bones in that hand of yours,” says Crisis with a smirk.

“Oh, I’ll break a few things of you,” exclaims the Iguanodon as he pulls out a hidden piece of metal pipe hidden within his jacket.

“Hey, now I still don’t want to fight you,” says Crisis as she jumps back just dodging the first swing as the others in the group start to converge on Crisis with more weapons.

*“There has to be a way out of this... I could use my electro-blades... no that would make things worse! Anything I do to them will only cause an incident and make them want to revote on my destruction... damn it,”* thinks Crisis as she dodges another attack, while a third strikes her left arm, sending shockwaves through her body and scratch her paint, *“This isn’t going to end well...”*

“So you guys like to pick on lone raptors,” says Sasha as the fox turns around, “Hey you’re one of the ones with that machine.”

“Indeed I am, and there is one thing you should know,” she explains as she takes the fox and flips him around onto his back and hits him in the chest to knock on the air out of him, “We raptors always travel in packs.” The orca turns to Sasha and attempts to charge her, Sasha quickly side steps his attack and uses his momentum to run him into a nearby trashcan causing him to fall over, she then moves to the iguanodon who turns his attack to her.

Sasha dodges the first strike and then the second, blocking the third attack with a six inch long knife hidden within her jacket and then kicks him behind the knees so hard that his feet fly up into the air and he lands with a thud on his back, just the triceratops lowers his head and charges her using his horns as a natural weapon, Sasha grabs the top left horn and uses it as a leverage to flip him onto his back where she quickly moves in to press her leg down onto his neck.

“Now are you going to be good prey and leave us alone or do I have to get nasty?” asks Sasha.

“We’ll leave you alone,” says the triceratops between gasps of air.

“Good,” replies Sasha as she releases him, the orca helping him up as the gang makes a hasty retreat.

“Well... I think we’ve had enough fun for the day, don’t you think Crisis?”

“Agreed, let’s get Joshua and get back to the hotel,” replies Crisis as the group heads off. High above them a pair of eagles watches the group from on top of some nearby buildings.

“The robot was more controlled than I thought it would be,” states the one eagle.

“Indeed, shame though, the chancellor really wanted an incident... those raptors are cleverer than we anticipated.”

“They always are,” remarks the other. Meanwhile across town in a high class fancy restaurant general Raszer the shark representative are heaving a nice quite meal together.

“You are very good to treat me to this place, even one such as me has difficulty getting in here,” compliments the shark.

“I have my ways...” replies General Raszer as he takes a sip of his wine, “You know I always repay debts to those I owe.”



“Oh I know you do... speaking of which.... how goes our agreement, I’ve held up my end of the bargain. Getting that representative to leave was no easy feat you know.”

“Quite... and I can see you getting a little bit of extra power to your forces quite soon. Random kidnappings from Croc’s forces are always problematic, guess you’ll need some of Crisis’ forces for protection,” suggests Raszer with a grin.

“Oh yes, Croc’s forces are getting quite pesky, trying to find new avenues to attack nations not even on the front lines,” replies the shark.

“Glad we can come to an agreement,” says the Raszer as he calls the waiter over, “This calls for a celebration, don’t you think? To the bright future of both of our countries.”

“An excellent idea,” replies the shark as Raszer orders the most expensive wine in the house.

## Chapter 24 New Bases

Two months have passed since Crisis had her eventful trip at New Hope City. Debates amongst those allied with Dromaeosa, Crisis has been getting her first big break since the war turned in her favor...

“Welcome to the city of Dralk,” says a black and purple scaled female bipedal anthropomorphic dragon, her wings folded behind her, the entire width of her wings spans from just a foot or so above the ground to a half a foot taller than their heads, and that includes the two duel horns protruding from the back of her skull.

Crisis steps from the back of the truck followed by Sasha, Arissa, Shasi, and lastly Francis. Before them is a city in the middle of a massive repairing project. Dozens of the city’s buildings are completely bombed out, rubble litters the streets, as bulldozers work around the clock make way for the trucks filled with members of the Draconic army, as well as select members of Crisis and Dromaeosa armies.

“It is a fixer upper, but it’ll do nicely,” comments Crisis.

“It’s not like they’ll give us a good city to be transformed into one of your robotic wonders,” remarks Shasi.

“This is true, shame Joshua and Captain Andreas couldn’t come. I thought they’d enjoy seeing another city come under my control,” says Crisis with a smirk.

“Under your control commanded directly by proxies that are approved by General Raszer and myself.” interjects Francis.

“Yes, how could I forget such a lovely detail, it was made painfully clear when we set up the first base in the shark’s home country to counter act the kidnappings and attacks Croc’s forces have made down there. Apparently they are trying to find new ways to expand outside of our country’s borders and I intend to stop him at every turn,” replies Crisis as the group walks farther away from the set of trucks, the sound of people of the construction growing louder and echoing against the buildings, “Though remind me why it has to be done this way?”

“General Raszer doesn’t want you to spread yourself too thin. Your primary function is to defeat Chaos Croc by any means necessary that does not involve harming our nation. You can’t waste all your efforts on every movement and every roboticization, every build project to expand your army, but you aren’t designed or programmed to...”

“To know who would be best to delegate my decisions. Yes, I remember,” sighs Crisis.

“Were you expecting my answer to change?” asks Francis.

“Of course not...” replies Crisis as the dragon leads them into a nearby abandon factory, dust kicks up as Crisis walks in, the wooden planks that cover the ground creak under the weight of Crisis’ metallic footsteps.

“What do you think about this place to set up the chambers?” asks the dragon.

“I think it would do quite nicely, what do you think Francis? You’re the one who’s in charge of approving the location before I help start the installation of the pods and maintenance arrays.”

"I'll have to look at the building plans, but after seeing other parts of this city during my first visit, this one is very promising, and from what I hear many dragons are eager to defend their homeland in any way that is necessary," replies Francis as he turns his attention to the dragon guide. "That is what I always liked about you dragons, always so eager serve your country and even after all these years you're still our strongest allies," states Francis.

"You forget of our long life spans, many of us are still around from those times, such as myself."

"Right, average life expectancy of two hundred and fifty."

"Two hundred and fifty seven actually," she replies.

"My apologies," says Francis with a smirk, "Crisis, you're in charge of the installation of the maintenance facility, why don't you go do that? The location that fit your specifications has been found and the equipment should be arriving now."

"Glad you could tell me in advance... I'll get that started, the sooner we get this place underway the sooner I can return to my primary duties," replies Crisis.

"Another will meet you outside of the building to take you to the location," says the dragoness as she pulls up a walk-talkie that is strapped to her waist and contacts said person to assist Crisis, "Good move to get rid of her," she says once Crisis is gone her voice taking on a more serious tone.

"She's technically in charge, but she is far from the one in control," remarks Francis.

"It's been a long time hasn't it?" she asks.

"Thirty years at least... I wasn't much a fan to have you see me in my old age while you still look the same you did back then," replies Francis.

"But being a machine is fine?" she asks.

"Was this or rot away and die, General Raszer made joining Crisis' army quite inviting."

"Speaking of which how is General Raszer?"

"I have a feeling you aren't speaking of his health."

"You know exactly what I mean."

"He's no Dramal, but that's not a bad thing."

"You'd be one to know."

"Somewhat, my time that with the higher ranking officials of that time was brief. Times were good but that was until that battle at New Hope City and it went downhill from there, Dramal's paranoid took over..." states Francis with a soft growl.

"Aye I remember... so back to my original question."

"In many ways he's like Dramal, he has drive for success, he's an orator, good at the political game but there is one thing that he has that Dramal never had."

"What's that?"

"He's a tactician, wasn't for his brilliance it been impossible for us to be here today."

“M superiors have noted how he’s turned the tide of the war through his tactical genius and willingness to take risks, such as with this Crisis project.”

“He’s also one not to forget those that provided him aid, such as when your country was only half taken by Croc, and ours down to the last mountainous strong holds, you still provided us with much needed aid till the roads connecting our two countries were severed.”

“With these new bases command is hoping for more joint operations in the future.”

“Sounds good, and I’m sure general Raszer would like.”

“So tell me, how does it feel being a machine?”

“It has ups, it has down, more ups than downs to be honest.”

“What’s some of the downs?”

“I have to report to that Crisis who is greener than her metallic skin. Her soul focus is the destruction of Croc, so she can’t see anything but that. Granted she has done some interesting feats with what she has the city of Rioas as one example but she thinks she knows more than she does. She’s in her position only because she was made to do that job. She was given it and not earned it.”

“Always the case isn’t it?”

“Some things never change, but she two good aspects going for her that General Raszer really likes, and because of that, I think is why she still is in the position she is now.”

“And what are those?”

“She has gets the job done, and she’s controllable.”

Meanwhile at the same time this conversation took place...

“I can’t believe he did that to me, who does he think he is? I run the show, not him,” growls Crisis.

“Relax, General Raszer has given him control over parts of these projects, but it doesn’t mean you’re not the one in charge of your army, but you can’t do everything,” explains Sasha.

“She’s right, that’s why you have us in charge of your research and development team,” says Shasi.

“Still, I don’t like his attitude, he makes me wish I did more... character adjustment on those I roboticize, but then I think I’ll be too much like Croc... I don’t want to become what I was built to destroy,” sighs Crisis as the group is greeted by a large red dragon male, dressed in military uniform, he quickly begins to escort Crisis’ group to the designated building.

“How long do you think it’ll take to install the automated maintenance array?” asks Arissa.

“Hopefully it shouldn’t take too long, if everything is here it’ll only take a day,” replies Crisis.

“I hope so.” says Arissa.

“So how does this maintenance array work?” asks the dragon.

“It’s just a facility that will make sure the basic wear and tear is repaired. Eventually we hope to figure how to build it into ourselves but so far any idea how to do that affectively is beyond us,” replies Arissa.

“Currently, we know the technology exists, since I’m able to last the longest without maintenance,” replies Crisis.

“So what, you’ll take machines apart do your fixes and put them back together?” he asks.

“Sometimes, we try to avoid that when we can, you know how squeamish people can get going from being an organic to mechanical, the idea of being able to be taken apart and still be fine is unsettling,” remarks Arissa.

“I don’t find it so bad, quite fun myself,” replies Shasi.

“I couldn’t agree more, I always feel invigorated after a good maintenance,” replies Crisis.

“Here’s the building that is going to be retrofitted to be your maintenance facility,” says the dragon as the building before them has loads of equipment being moved into the building, much of the equipment still in their packing boxes. Most of the movers are draconic in nature, but several of Crisis’ machines are there assisting moving the equipment in and getting some of the placement ready for installation. “I’ll leave you machines to your construction project.”

“Thanks for showing us the way,” replies Crisis as the group heads to the building.

“I see you didn’t tell him exactly how we do the normal maintenance,” comments Shasi.

“Yeah, nanites... many organics haven’t had a good experience with nanites thanks to Croc, we aren’t going to lie about it but not going to make it public knowledge either, it be a public relations nightmare,” explains Crisis.

“This is very true, and the more times we build these facilities the better we are at making and understanding Croc’s technology,” comments Arissa.

“Speaking of which, since we’ve made some strides on better understanding his nanites technology, we’ve improved some counter measures to his technology,” Shasi informs.

“Really?” asks Crisis, “Why wasn’t I told of this before?”

“At the moment I think we can possible neutralize Croc’s nanites at least for a little while before his nanites overrun ours. He’ll still have any home field advantage but we’ll be able to fight longer without any side effects, and as to why? I wanted to do more testing before reporting it to you, and as we left I got the data, and there hasn’t been a good moment to bring it up.”

“That’s alright, and I’ll want these defensive measures ready for the attack on Veloci, whenever that is...”

“We’ll retake the city soon, if the last offensive pans out. We’ll have the city surrounded and it’ll just be a matter of time till it falls,” states Sasha. The group entering the building and quickly getting to work to get the facility up and running, meanwhile Croc was just being informed about that very same offensive...

“As of thirty minutes ago, the two raptor armies both with elements of Crisis’ troops made contact with each other. They’ve completely cut off our forces from the city on the planet,” explains Ko as a holographic model of the battlefield and a hundred square mile radius around the city.

“And?” asks Croc as he looks at the report, he leans back in his chair nonchalant like.

“This is one of your favorite cities from the planet, that’s why we’re defending it so furiously for you, shouldn’t you be more concerned? The current plan is to counter attack to blunt their spearhead and give us some more breathing room. With a coordinated counter offensive we should be able to break this encirclement in now time.”

"I'm not concerned."

"How can you not be concerned?"

"Are the gates up and running?"

"Ah yes, the gates were made active last week, but they won't be able to affectively support the city's defenses if they're under constant attack on all sides."

"We'll be fine, the gates will provide exactly what I need. Speaking of which how goes the progress on operation Mind Sweeper?"

"Fine Croc, we've obtained new subjects recently and begun testing various methods to make them loyal servants."

"Excellent, now that is over, why don't you put on the number that you know I like and meet me in my chambers in a half an hour," orders Croc with a smirk.

"As you wish sir," sighs Ko.

## Chapter 25 The Fall of Veloci

Several months have gone by since the expansion projects by Crisis' army. The founding of several new bases and the draw of new people to commit themselves to becoming machines gave a major boon to Crisis force. Despite the fact that many of her new troops were under command of other nations, because they worked closely with Crisis' forces has provided many immense benefits. One of which was the recent fall of one of the hardest fought city in the war thus far, the city of Veloci.

"You sure you want to visit the city Crisis?" asks Joshua as he, Crisis and Sasha sit in the back of a truck with a few of her own soldiers armed and ready, their normal green paint scheme these mechanical soldiers has been altered to have a white and black camouflage. Joshua and Sasha are dressed in thick winter jackets and long pants; while Joshua wears a civilian brown attire.

"Of course I do, and don't forget General Raszer is going to be there with a press conference, and he wanted me to especially be there to share in this moment."

"Yeah, I know, but how secure is this city? Do we know if we've gotten everyone?"

"The last known fighting in the city happened three days ago, if there was much of anyone left I think we'd know," replies Crisis.

"Maybe, but with general Raszer coming, I'm sure they are upping the number of troops and if there is anyone left I doubt they get very far," replies Sasha.

"This is true... so how long till the press conference?" asks Joshua

"Soon, but I wasn't informed of the exact time though," answers Crisis as the truck squeaks and rocks as it moves, small glimpses from the back show a white and wintery terrain outside and once the truck stops and the Crisis and the others disembark they are greeted to the winter wasteland that is... or at least was the city of Veloci.

A thin blanket of snow covers the ruins of the once beautiful city; Crisis looks around, as she stands on the same road that she walked down when she first infiltrated the city a long time ago. She could barely recognize any of the buildings; they were shadows of their former selves which gave Crisis a surreal feeling.

"Place has changed a lot since I was last here... it'll take some time to fix this," comments Joshua.

"Damn Croc, destroying everything he touches," remarks Sasha.

"Yeah... he really did," says Crisis as she thinks, *"The city was still pristine from what I saw when I was here... it was us trying to get the city back that led it to the condition it is in now."*

"Ah Crisis you're here, good, come with me the news conference will be beginning soon," exclaims General Raszer as he approaches Crisis, as the entire area around the general is crawling with armed guards that almost put Sasha's armed preparedness to shame... almost.

"Excellent," replies Crisis as General Raszer motions Crisis to follow.

"Oh and Joshua you can wait on the side till we're done. I think its best those with experience with these kind of people handle this, Sasha just do what you do best," orders Raszer.

"Yes sir," she replies as she turns to Joshua and whispers, "Sorry about this."

“Its fine, I understand this is a big moment,” sighs Joshua softly as Raszer and Crisis make their way to the conference. Raszer adjusts his heavy black and white winter coat as the sound of snow being crushed under their feet is heard with every step.

“Gaining this city took a lot of effort, and with this under our control, the pace of liberating our country will increase once again,” comments Crisis.

“It’s still a very long road ahead of us, and we still must tread lightly when it comes to these victories, the other nations are watching us like hawks. They’re just looking for another reason to bring you back to New Hope City and dismantle you in the name of their antiquated treaty.”

“Yes sir, I understand, it’s a difficult time for everyone.”

“Good, which brings me to the point I want to make, I don’t want you to answer any questions, let me handle it.”

“What? But my armies have put just as much if not more into it, and I represent them, I should at least be able to say something.”

“You won’t say anything and your armies are my armies, you work under me for our nation or did you forget that?”

“No sir, I have not forgotten, everything I do is for the continued survival of our nation and to the destruction of Chaos Croc and his forces.”

“Good to hear. I do this for your own protection remember that. It’s not that I don’t think you had any effort in this glorious victory, on the contrary your forces have helped tremendously, and the efforts you’ve made are beyond my expectations. If I thought what you’ve done wasn’t helpful, I wouldn’t have had you here to share in this historic moment, where our country has clearly turned the tide of battle and the return of our lost glory is at hand. We no longer have to wonder if our early victories were some kind of fluke, we are no longer a broken people, a broken nation, we are whole again and it is thanks you.”

“I suppose, I appreciate the sentiment though.”

“Then will you help me help our country and do what I require of you?”

“Of course, I’m always ready to help,” replies Crisis.

“Excellent,” says General Raszer as he and Crisis reach the group of reporters eager to hear from the general. As they get closer, Crisis can see the elevated stage that was constructed for this conference, armed guards keep the reporters at bay and in the front of the stage as Crisis and Raszer approach the stage from the back. A podium with at least a half a dozen microphones set up, the snow being brushed off by a guard before they are turned on.

General Raszer’s approaches the podium as he takes a slow deep breath and releases it. His breath visible as he looks over the group, Crisis stands off to the side watching, noticing three fourths of the reporters there are from Dromaeosa and her allies.

“Thank you all for coming, it’s good to see so many here on this historic occasion. During this long course of this war, we’ve lost a lot of things, but when the city of Veloci fell several years ago, it left a hole in our nation, not just on the map but in everyone of us. It has always been the shining beacon of our nation, the center piece, the crowning Jewel of our land, and though this jewel has been dulled due to the war, but this city will rise from the ashes, just like we have. We’ll rebuild this city, bigger, better than ever before,” he declares as cameras flash and the questioning from the reporters begin.



Crisis stands there with her claws behind her back, standing upright, and each time a question was attempted to be proposed towards her, General Raszer intervened and answered the question instead and as the news conference drew on longer and longer, Crisis flicked her tail behind her a bit more quickly as she stood there in complete silence and on display to those before her then came the bomb shell question...

“Why is it General Raszer do you keep on preventing Crisis from answering any questions we direct to it? We already know from her time spent in New Hope City that she can clearly speak for herself,” asks a snake reporter.

“Simple, she’s a piece of equipment. Unlike those who have made the huge sacrifice and given up their organic bodies to fight the evils of Chaos Croc, Crisis here was built for that sole purpose, to defeat Chaos Croc. She is a piece of equipment nothing more than that. She wasn’t an organic raptor before, she was constructed unlike everyone else in her army. You don’t ask a computer or a tank in how it did in a war now do you now?”

*“Damn you General Raszer...”* thinks Crisis as her tail flicks even harder behind her, her hand claws twitching.

“Then tell me Crisis how do you feel about General Raszer’s statement about your state of being and purpose?” asks the snake as he gives a glance over at Raszer, “You can’t answer this one.”

*“Damn those slithering snakes...”* thinks Raszer as he gives as he looks over at Crisis, Crisis gives a quick look over at general Raszer before looking at the reporter as he then says.

“You do look a bit annoyed over there, and my sources do say you do exhibit the basic emotions that we have.”

“You’re right, I am annoyed and bothered,” replies Crisis as Raszer gives her a scowl, “I’m forced to stand here and do nothing and show boat for you all, while I have important work to do. Croc isn’t just sitting around in some chair doing nothing, he’s working hard to take over this country, this planet, and I can’t rest till he’s defeated. General Raszer is right, my programming, my reason for being built, my purpose is to defeat Chaos Croc, and standing here is not achieving that, so I am bothered by that yes. General Raszer I know you wanted me here for the press, but I’d like to resume my duties. I was at this city while it was under Croc’s control; I might be able to find something of use to us that others might miss.”

General Raszer looks at Crisis and grins, “Why of course, go right ahead,” he replies as Crisis nods and replies.

“Thank you Sir,” before walking off. In the background Crisis hears the reporters remark on her comment.

“Did Crisis just say it was at Veloci while under Croc’s control? Can you give us more information on that?”

As Crisis walks away from the stage she is stopped by Joshua with Sasha standing beside him, Joshua looks at Crisis as his claws gently touch each other as he speaks, “You didn’t really mean what you said up there did you? You are far more than that.”

“Maybe...” she mumbles before saying a bit louder, “I had to find a way to get off that stage, I was just there for show and treated much like I was at New Hope City, and I really do have work to do. I want to go over the areas I’ve

been to before when Croc was in control. I might be able to catch something that others have missed,” explains Crisis.

“Okay, I’ll accompany you,” replies Joshua.

“As will I, I have to keep an eye on you,” says Sasha with a grin as she adjusts her large sniper rifle on her back.

“Alright but won’t be anything spectacular,” explains Crisis as they walk through the bombed out city, their feet causing the layer snow to crunch under their weight, and as they moved Crisis metallic body began to cool, causing some of the snow to stick to her metal exterior rather than melt outright, some of it even melting in one spot and refreezing before breaking off when Crisis moves.

“This is... was the cultural district of the city, what could we find here?” asks Joshua.

“There was a lot going on here when I last visited, just let me look,” replies Crisis as she makes her way to the robotic wash. The building still stands but is blackened and charred from combat the sign is on the ground mostly covered by rubble, allowing only a few letters to be visible to Crisis. Crisis looks over the area playing over memories of her time here over the rubble terrain. Sees Hanna in her reply taking her inside.

She walks in deeper her metallic feet crushing random debris and glass as Joshua stands at the door and asks, “What could be here?”

“Just let me look around and we’ll see,” remarks Crisis.

“Okay, be careful,” replies Joshua as Crisis walks in further, she sees dust and debris everywhere as she moves. She walks through the doors towards the robotic wash facility itself she finds the entire part of this building bombed out. The snow covers everything in a ghostly white blanket. The machines that were used to wash her body are completely destroyed and there is no sign of anyone here, not even a single body, it’s completely devoid of anyone who used to be here. Crisis looks around for a few more minutes looking at each nook and cranny of the building, touching a random wall which partially collapses the instant she touches it.

“You okay? I thought I heard something,” asks Joshua.

“I’m fine,” replies Crisis as she heads back to the entrance where Joshua looks at Crisis with a sense of worry, his claws gently touching themselves as Sasha stands there with a predator eyes.

“Find anything?” asks Sasha.

“Nope, but there are still other places to check,” she replies as she leads the group down towards the casino where Crisis Hanna first met, “Let me look in here.” Crisis looks at the casino, its glory days long gone as the windows are smashed and blown out. Half of the hotel that was connected to the Casino was completely gone and the other half was barely able to stand with major holes and exploded floors throughout the structure. The wind whistles through the building as small snow tornadoes are made in rooms that used to be reserved only for high rollers.

“Why here? It’s a casino,” inquires Joshua.

“You even mentioned it in your reports this was a casino with possible mind control center, so our troops were cautious so before approaching they bombed the hell out of it,” comments Sasha.

"I know, but I still want to check it out, and don't worry I can handle myself against any possible functioning hypnotism machines left in there, but you two stay out here just to be safe," warns Crisis.

"Are you sure?" asks Joshua.

"Do you want to suddenly find yourself saying, 'I obey Master Croc'?" asks Crisis with a chuckle.

"Good point," replies Joshua as he stands outside with Sasha, he tightens up the coat before putting his claws into his coat pockets. Crisis steps inside, as more glass breaks under her weight as the sound echoes throughout the building. Poker tables, slot machines are knocked over many in a half circle fashion as the former defenders made some of their last stands in this room. Bullet shells litter the place as Raptor troops made their way through this building only a few days ago.

*"I hope she made it out of here... but then how would she? I did look over the prisoner manifest and nothing popped up as a captured fox in rubber,"* thinks Crisis as she jumps over the fallen objects as she continues to scour the area. She finds various bits and pieces of robots that were part of Croc's army, even stumbling onto a few dead soldiers of Croc's army that have yet been bothered to be moved.

*"I don't see anything that could have been her..."* she thinks as she leaves the building about an hour since she entered.

"What took you so long?" asks Joshua.

"I was making a thorough search," she replies, "I didn't go into the main hotel that place is just too badly damaged, but you saw me for half the time I was there, relax I'm fine," remarks Crisis.

"So what were you looking for in there? Seems to me that you won't find any Croc secrets in the places you've been looking," comments Sasha.

"You don't know Croc as well as I do, he's a bit crafty like that," replies Crisis as she gives a sigh, "But we should check the main communication center."

"I figured that be the first place we should have looked."

"It's the first place the others would look too, and it's one of the most heavily bombed areas of the city, odds of finding anything of real note is slim," explains Crisis as the trio plow their way towards the industrial side of the city, there was even worse than the cultural district. Giant creators litter the landscape making it a hazardous trek. Inside many of the creators are vehicles that got trapped within the creators and probably destroyed shortly after falling inside. Members of Crisis' army and that of General Raszer are currently working to salvage several of these wrecks, most were from her own armies but a few were from Croc's forces as well.

"Very strange..." comments Sasha as they walk through the area.

"What is it?" asks Joshua.

"You thinking what I am thinking Crisis? You of all people know just how much military equipment Croc threw at us to hold this city."

"I'm quite aware and now you mention it, I do agree," replies Crisis.

"Agree about what? Can one of you tell me?" pleads Joshua.

"The amount of Croc's military equipment is severely lacking amongst the debris. We fought this area hard, block by block, house by house, fighting large droves of troops, tanks,

helicopters yet the amount we've captured from prisoners to equipment does not much up to expectations," explains Sasha.

"Exactly, and it's not like all of that could just walk up and disappear... wait a moment..." remarks Crisis as she stops in her tracks then a thought hits her head, "*Could it be that they... but there wasn't one here when I visited but that was a while ago...*" mumbles Crisis as she sprints towards the communication center.

"Wait, hold up I can't run that fast!" exclaims Joshua.

"But I can," replies Sasha with a sly smirk as she passes Joshua up. The trio speeds towards the communication tower. Several of the buildings that Crisis recalls walking through are gone, completely destroyed, nothing but piles of rubble. The entire facility which Crisis sent out her messages was nothing but a pile of brick and twisted metal. Crisis stands before the buildings in the same area where she had her first duel with Croc that led her to being picked by him to be his new prototype. The snow starts to fall even heavier now. The thick fluffy snowflakes stick to Crisis' cold metal body.

"Not much left here," comments Sasha.

"I've noticed," replies Crisis as she shakes off some of the snow from her body as she starts to walk and think.

"Damn you girls... you all run... so fast..." pants Joshua.

"You just need to work out more, you're a shameful excuse of a raptor if you can't run even that far," remarks Sasha.

"I would... if I had... the time," he replies as she tries to get himself standing upright again, adjusting his coat and brushing off some snow before putting his hands back into his pockets.

"Sure you would," remarks Sasha as she rolls her eyes and sighs before glancing over at Crisis who is still pacing.

"So what's up with Crisis?"

"Ah I think she had an idea that fell apart upon seeing just how bombed out this area really is. Put a few holes in your idea doesn't it Crisis?"

"What idea is that?" he asks.

"That parts of the army still have to be around here somewhere, hidden away."

"What?! There could be a hidden army under the city? We should tell someone, general Raszer needs to know it could be a tra—," exclaims Joshua as Sasha smacks him upside on the head, "Hey! What was that for?"

"You're overreacting. We don't know for sure there is something like that. I think Crisis thought the communication center might have given her some clues about it, but seeing how utterly destroyed it is, it puts her back to square one."

"I can still hear you from over here," comments Crisis as she turns to them from halfway across the open field surrounded by the rubble of the bombed out buildings, "And it's not what you are thinking."

"Oh then what is it?" asks Sasha as she approaches Crisis. Crisis sighs and walks over to a nearby wall and leans against it.

“It’s something I tried to keep fairly secret except to some of the other higher ups and those part of my research crew.”

“I am part of your research crew, why wasn’t I informed?”

“For safety reasons, now are you going to let me continue?” she asks.

“Alright, sorry... not sure why you are so edgy as of late.”

“I’ve just have had a lot on my mind...” she mumbles to herself before saying, “Anyway Croc has these gates that lead to other places, other planets, it’s how I was able to visit his capital city. Now the only explanation I have is that much of Croc’s forces were moved out of the pocket before the city fell. That would make our great victory over this city less decisive than we’d think, if a majority of Croc’s surrounded forces escaped destruction.”

“Still if we found the gate wouldn’t we be able to use the technology?” asks Joshua.

“Yeah of course but that depends how intact the gate is. That’s why I wanted to come here to see if I can find any records of its location. Maybe there are some pieces or fragments left, but knowing Croc he blew the thing up when the last forces went through,” sighs Crisis.

“Crisis, exactly what do these gates look like?” asks Sasha.

“They are large archway gates that are actually fairly massive, I guess it’s to allow huge objects through them, and when I looked at aerial photographs of the city I couldn’t find anything like that.”

“You were looking from above it’s hard to see objects of that nature, even with three dimensional imaging, but...”

“But what?” asks Crisis as she pushes herself off of the wall some snow that has clung to the wall falls to the ground and sticking to Crisis’ back.

“What do you call that thing you’re leaning on?”

“A wall,” replies Crisis as she keeps her attention on Sasha with a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

“It seems to be a fairly big wall that arches across the ground there and there if you look closely,” says Sasha as she points along the wall, Crisis follows Sasha’s pointing as a snow covered wall does arch along the open area of the complex, Crisis then looks and sees two mounds of snow spaced equal distance away as the width of the wall. Crisis turns her attention to the place on the wall she was leaning against and sees the metal structure and as she brushes off more snow it becomes apparent that this is the exact thing she was looking for.

“How did I not see this? I was right on top of it and I didn’t even notice!” exclaims Crisis.

“Sometimes when you’re close, you’re too close to see it,” replies Joshua.

“This is more than close I am right on top of it! We’ll have to get a team down here immediately; there is much work to do.”

“Alright, I’ll get someone right away,” replies Joshua.

“No you’ll be with me, Sasha contact my people first then once General Raszer is done with his press conference we’ll contact him.”

“He won’t like being told second,” comments Sasha.

“After what he did to me, he deserves to wait a little bit,” replies Crisis as she thinks, “*With any luck we can figure out this technology of his and give Croc an expected visit on his home planet...*”

## Chapter 26 The Gateway to Victory Opens

“Croc’s forces have been getting stronger and stronger despite our victories. Even with combined organic and robotic armies from our allies we’ve only managed to gain only small victories over the past few weeks. At this rate we’ll be in a full blown state within a month or two if not worse,” explains Phillip as he looks over the massive tactical map with small military markers and tokens to designate the armies of Dromaeosa and her allies against the estimated forces of Chaos Croc.

“The areas still under Croc’s control are major industrial sectors of our country, we can’t let him keep them in a stalemate,” replies Raszer as he speaks from a video screen. Crisis looks over the tactical map, pacing back and forth as Francis looks up at the screen.

“This can be a result of the slowed advances in other areas. With our new military bases, we’ve been able to bolster the size of our army in areas that Croc has seen constant advances. With those areas slowing down, Croc could be increasing his defensive stance till he can find a way to break someone’s lines, but it’s hard to be sure, we haven’t had good Intel within Croc’s forces for some time,” explains Crisis.

“We cannot let Croc continue to hold some of our most precious assets. The capture of Veloci was only a moral victory for us, now we need a strategic one. We’ve managed this well with makeshift factories and rebuilding ones stripped down from the previous war, but in order to be at our full prowess we need to recapture our industrial heartland.”

“Crisis and I do have a possible proposal to crack Croc’s line,” states Phillip.

“Send the proposal over, me and the other generals will look over it to see if it has promise, but speaking about promising ventures, how goes your research?”

“It’s going well enough. I feel we are close to figuring out what we need to get it working again. There are just a few minor hurdles to get past to get it working again,” replies Crisis.

“Why don’t you motivate your people on that, Francis and I will work on that proposal you two want to submit,” replies Raszer.

“As you wish sir,” says Crisis as she looks at Raszer for a moment before turning to leave, she exits the room to be greeted by Ruby to her left and Sasha on her right. The doors closing behind her as the three walk away, leaving Phillip and Raszer alone.

“What do you think of their research?” asks Raszer.

“What do you mean sir?”

“I want to know if she’s delaying or anything of the sort. She’s been acting strangely as of late.”

“No sir, nothing like that. She’s often focused on getting her team to figure out every last detail of how Croc’s technology works. I think they’re down to two last problems.”

“What problems are those?”

“Having it turned on, and the one can’t be solved till that happens, making sure it leads to Croc’s capital city.”

“Well we can’t rely on what if they’ll get it working or not, we need to relieve the pressure on our front and I think I know of a way...”

“Excellent sir, what is it if I may ask?”

“Above your pay grade.”

“Understood sir, I hope our proposal meets to your high standards sir.”

“We’ll see, just keep an eye on their progress inform me immediately if anything changes,” orders the General as the video screen cuts out.

“Yes sir...” replies Francis with a sigh as he looks into the blank screen, “Why do I have the feeling I was just brushed off...” he mumbles as he leaves the conference room.

“So what do you think of their proposal general?” asks Francis as he stands off to the side, away from the camera.

“They don’t know enough about the complexities of this war to propose a good plan. Inform the troops on the opposite boarder from us to weaken and let a break through happen. If Croc’s lines get longer, the amount of troops on our boarder will lessen, making a breakthrough on our side all the more likely to happen, we can always we capture their land later,” orders Raszer.

“Understood sir,” replies Francis with a nod.

Meanwhile Crisis makes attempts to make headway on her project...

“Any new progress on the gate?” asks Crisis in a soured tone as she enters the research and development room where the massive gate is kept. The building inside was gutted and expanded in order to accommodate the gate in its entirety while standing upright.

Two large doors on the far side of the research facility lead to the outside which are heavily secured and guarded by Crisis’ troops and an electromagnetic locking mechanism.

Crisis enters a smaller research room connected to the main room that contains the gate. This research room is placed above the gate as it gives a bird’s eye view of the place and the massive wires connected to the gate as all the information is pumped into this room where Crisis’ research time is working around the clock.

Several of the research members are part of Crisis’ original research team that built her along with a few select members that were scientists in their younger days that Crisis roboticized. Of course there are several new members that were assigned to her by Raszer. Many of these members were on the main floor working on the gate doing all they can to crack the enigma of the gate.

“Did the meeting go that well?” asks Shasi as she walks over to Crisis, just as Ruby and Sasha walk in right behind Crisis.

“It feels the more we accomplish the less Raszer takes my views and my plans seriously,” growls Crisis as she shortly thereafter gives a sigh.

“Don’t worry on it Crisis, as long as we are winning the war, and the defeat of Croc is in sight, isn’t that what really matters?” comforts Joshua.

“True, it will be nice to be done with that pest, speaking of which, how’s the research coming along?”

“Sadly... slow,” answers Joshua.

“Well you are an organic you need to take those breaks to eat and what have you,” remarks Shasi.

“Come on, do you always have to be like that to me? Haven’t I done enough already?”

“What about that little lunch in that you’re going to have soon? Isn’t that going to distract you from what you should be doing?”

“I promised Maria this lunch a week ago, I can’t just break it off, and asides the break from this would be good for me to come back and look at this with fresh eyes,” replies Joshua with a sigh, “This be so much easier if Karrie was here.”

“Karrie?” asks Crisis as Joshua jumps.

“Well I.. what I mean is... that...”

“I’ve just about given up searching for her. I haven’t found a single clue of where she could be, no one has seen her since my activation, and so far none of my theories about what happened to her have panned out. Even my investigation at Croc’s facilities has failed to yield any results. I figured if she was captured, one of the most important people in my creation would have had something of note, but nope. I can only assume she is hiding out somewhere.”

“Wouldn’t surprise me, Karrie was always a bit on the impulsive side but she’d tend to chicken out right before fully committing to anything.. save for joining the project that created you Crisis,” remarks Shasi as she goes over to look at a nearby computer panel, “I worked for that girl for years and she was always like that.”

“Really now?” asks Crisis.

“Yup, she didn’t have the courage to do something too daring. Impulsive? Yes. Brave? Hell no.”

“Give her some credit Shasi, she was very committed to the Crisis project,” says Arissa.

“Yeah she was laser beamed focus on that project,” adds Joshua before giving off a soft sigh, “When it came to machines, and computer programming it was something that she couldn’t just stop dabbling in. I met her because someone told me she could fix my computer problem. She told me to leave it with her overnight and she not only fixed the problem but basically rebuilt my computer because she thought the original design was too inefficient.”

“How did that work out for you?” asks Crisis.

“Great, was the smoothest running computer I ever owned... I think I should head off to that luncheon,” replies Joshua as he walks over to Crisis, “I’ll be back soon, sadly I have nothing new to report on what is bogging down our progress.”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll have one of the guards here escort you out,” says Crisis as Crisis motions one of the robotic female guards. Crisis spends a half a moment to watch them leave, Crisis’ eyes drift to the back side of the female before she turns her attention back to the issue before her, “So theories as to what could be stalling us?”

“The power usage on this thing seems to be absolutely insane. To keep the thing running would drain the entire city if not entire surrounding area even if we manage to get it running, and even then it may not be enough to keep it going long enough for what we desire. In fact according to my calculations it won’t be even possible unless we turn it off between uses but that adds a whole new layer of complications to deal with,” reports Shasi.

“Another issue is we still don’t have any way of knowing where the gate will lead. They have to have some kind of code that allows the gates to communicate with each other. We don’t know if it needs to be done on both sides to work or just the one. If it needs us to control both sides at once



from the get go, that gate there is nothing more than just a giant paperweight,” **comments Arissa.**

“This is true, and none of the people from Croc’s forces that we’ve captured have shown any in depth knowledge of these gates and how they function,” **remarks Crisis as she strokes her chin.**

“I actually know a little bit about the gates,” **chimes up Ruby.**

“What? You do? Why haven’t you said so before?!” **exclaims Crisis.**

“I don’t know all the mechanics behind these gates. I am not a scientist, astronomer, astrologist, what have you, I’m a fighter, but I was curious one day and asked one the operators of the gates a few basics about the machine.”

“The way Sasha describes the gates is correct. You can’t have them on all the time because they are such a power drain.”

“My name is Shasi,” **remarks Shasi.**

“I’m Sasha,” **states Sasha who is standing right next to Ruby.**

“Forgive me if I screw up you two’s names. Not my fault they are so similar.”

“Though as a machine, you shouldn’t make such mistakes,” **retorts Shasi.**

“It’s alright, please continue tell us more,” **says Crisis.**

“The gates have two active states. One is standby the other when it’s turned on and actively teleporting something. That reflective glow you saw Crisis when the gate is on. That glow isn’t the actual portal from one world to the next, but merely a detection screen to tell the computer something is coming through and to make the needed adjustments to have it pass from one world to the next.”

“And how do we tell what world are we connected to, if connected to any at all? I don’t want to send my forces out into the middle of space or the center of some distant sun.”

“If there is no connection made, besides from the warning that there is no connection, if you try to walk through you’ll just walk right through the gate and nothing will happen. As for the other problem, it is merely knowing the address of the location you are going to. Once entered it will communicate with the next available gate on the other side, and establish the connection. Sometimes that can take a while if you aren’t at a portal hub like Neo Robia. I had to wait an hour one time to get the connection established. That is also when I learned so much about these portal gate things,” **explains Ruby.**

“Would it be pushing my luck if I were to ask if you happen to know Neo Robia’s address?”

“As a matter of fact I do,”

“Excellent!” **exclaims Crisis,** “Now with his knowledge we can...”

“Can’t do anything yet,” **comments Arissa.**

“Why not?”

“We need to establish how to get the gate working in the first place, how this standby mode works and if going from standby to active will drain our power reserves too fast.”

“We could start charging part of the gate’s capacitors and do a systems check. If there is an issue we can discharge the capacitors or move them

over to another set of capacitors without putting anyone at risk. And that way when we solve the problem we can quickly test the gate,” suggests Shasi.

“That can work, let’s try that and see if we can get some results.

Joshua is going to have some catching up to do when he gets back,” remarks Crisis with a smirk.

“See this is why organics slow us down,” remarks Shasi.

“They’re not too bad, we were them once too,” replies Arissa.

“Please don’t remind me.”

“Crisis, if you don’t mind I like to speak with you in private for a moment,” whispers Ruby.

“What’s this about?” she asks.

“Something I have to tell you about Croc.”

“Then why can’t you tell me here?”

“It’s something that I can only tell you.”

“If you insist, there’s an empty room nearby where we can chat in private, Sasha make sure no one disturbs us till we’re done, I like to give my people the attention they deserve,” commands Crisis.

“As you wish Crisis,” replies Sasha as the trio leave and walk down the hallway and stop at a small unused office. A light layer of dust is visible on the nearby chair and desk as the lights flicker on.

“So what is this about?” asks Crisis as she locks the door behind them, “I feel this is bigger than what you’re letting on.”

“What’s the best way to put this?” asks Ruby to herself.

“Let’s just say I know how you operate quite well, being the one who made you who you are today... literally. So just say it.”

“This is sort of difficult to say, hard to phrase it well without it just sounding bad,” replies Ruby with a sigh as she looks around, she takes her whip that is hung on the side of her hip and places it on the nearby desk, then she opens her hidden leg compartment and takes out her gun and places it off on top of that before walking away from it, “I think that should help a bit...”

“Help with what?”

“Help showing my sincerity that I want to help you.”

“Sincerity of wanting to help me? But you’ve been nothing but helpful to me over the past year, ever since you joined my ranks. You’ve been an excellent model that others strive for.”

“I’m sure you don’t want them to model themselves after me, because... I’m a...double agent,” explains Ruby quickly saying the last part of her sentence.

“Did you just say a double agent?” asks Crisis as she keeps her demeanor, while taking a step back and warming up her systems to quickly activating the systems that will allow her to pull out her electro-blades at a moment’s notice.

“Yes, even after you turned me into a machine, I’ve still been serving Master Croc.”

“This doesn’t sound like a double agent more like a spy for one side,” comments Crisis with a stern look.

“Ah, true, but what I mean is I want to work for your side now, in earnest.”

“Do you now?” ask Crisis as she paces back and forth in the room, making sure her back is never turned towards Ruby, “Why this sudden change of heart?”

“It was anything but sudden. Look I am not the biggest follower of Chaos Croc. I served him for a long time yes, but if you beat him I am not going to be all torn up about it, and when I saw you risk yourself for Sasha when that helicopter went down, I started to think, well maybe your side is the side I really should be on.”

“Those events happened almost a year ago, again why tell me now?”

“Because this is the first time I see any chance of you actually winning the war.”

“So even though you wanted to support me, but you wouldn’t jump ship unless it had a chance of sinking is that it?”

“Yeah, I’m not stupid. Why let him know I wanted to betray him if you had no hope of succeeding, especially considering how close Croc is to ending the war in his favor.”

“Ending the war in his favor? Tell me what do you mean by that?” asks Crisis as she moves a bit closer, Crisis’ claws twitching as she does so, “We’ve defeated his armies countless times, we pushed them back and reclaimed a majority of our country. His defenses are getting stronger and we have yet to move to liberate any of the fallen nations, but it’s just a matter of time at this point, we’ve been getting stronger and stronger.”

“You think that, but Croc is just shoring up his defenses. He wants to stall you now, so he can initiate his plan.”

“And what plan is this?”

“I don’t know. It’s not like I have a constant stream of information on what he’s doing, but I know he’s close to finishing his preparations for his plan and initiating it, but how close I can’t say. It could be tomorrow, a week from now, a month from now, three months from now for all that I know.”

“This is troubling... very troubling.”

“Yeah I know right? I’d like you to win the war,” says Ruby.

“Do you now? That’s part of the trouble. It’s rather or not I can trust you, and even on top of that what parts you speak of are true or not. If I trust you and take your word for all that you’ve said, we could try our best to get our plan going and underway, but if you’re deceiving me... this whole Croc is about to win could be a charade, a ploy to get me to use the gate to quickly be used against me, get myself captured and Croc have an easy way to invade the heartland of my country.”

“I know it is difficult to trust me, but you have to believe me when I say I am speaking the truth. If I was really out to get you, wouldn’t I have had plenty of opportunities to do so? Plenty of times to mull your plans, but have not? Yes I have fed some Croc information but never enough to be truly viable. I made up some excuse that I wasn’t able to get too close to you after the attack on the Empress.”

“You did help me on killing the Empress,” comments Crisis as she rubs her chin in thought.

“Eh... to be honest, Croc wasn’t a fan of the Empress either. He felt she was too outdated for him but he couldn’t directly do anything about it. You solved that problem for him.”

"What?! Damn that robotic lizard!"

"On the bright side, I think her death put a lot of Croc's higher ups on edge, and caused a fair bit of dissent in his realm, so it's not like what was done was for nothing."

"So are you saying that my plan to kill the Empress was all part of Croc's ploy to have me get rid of her for him?!"

"Partially but he didn't really think you could do it. He was betting on you failing and getting captured with a remote possibility of you pulling it off and getting captured and not what you did with capturing her and escaping mostly unscathed," **explains Ruby.**

"That's good to hear, but that doesn't make this situation any less complicated."

"This isn't the first time you had someone who was formally one of Croc's spies working for you. Sasha was one wasn't she?"

"Sasha was also assigned to me to blow my head off if I went rogue... wait how did you know she was a spy for me?"

"You think we didn't talk to each other while you aren't around? By the way, she gives high praises to you for saving her from Croc's grasp."

"This is true... but... but I roboticized you. Me, with these two hands, I didn't mess with your personality per se but I did ensure loyalty to me."

"You know you're... ah never mind, but if you're asking how I didn't fall under your programming from the transformation? I honestly can't tell you. I'm not privy to that kind of information."

"This is even more disconcerting... how can I really tell if I converted someone to bend to my will or not?"

"I can assure you at the very least it's not something that's easily done. I think it's because I worked with him so closely that he did whatever he did to protect me from what you'd do to me, but I wasn't exactly conscious of it. I woke up the day before my mission and Croc approached me and told me that every precaution was now taken care of. I asked him what he meant about that he remained vague. I guess it's a secret operation that he did while I was asleep. God knows what that perverted robot did to me while I slept..." **explains Ruby as she shivers.** "Creeps me out just thinking about it."

"Croc is a perverted one isn't he?"

"And how."

"Regardless of that, this still makes the whole situation... difficult."

"I am not sure what else I could do to prove I am trustworthy. I disarmed myself before hand to show you that I mean you no harm."

"This is true, but again this could be all part of some kind of ploy... but I just can't risk what you are saying about Croc's plan to win the war as some kind of distraction...", **states Crisis as she starts to pace back and forth in the room.**

*"What to do, what to do, what can I do? I could hack and reprogram her directly like I did before but Croc could have planned for that. But what if she is telling the truth? Could I just betray her like that? Like Croc did to her that allowed her to be converted by me all for his plans?"* **thinks Crisis as she sighs,** "I will probably regret this later... but I'm going to go with I

believe you, but we must not let anyone else know about this, I don't want to cause any dissent or paranoia spreading in my ranks."

"Understood Mistress Crisis."

"Let's get back to the others, I don't want to be gone too long," says Crisis as she steps outside.

"Yes Mistress Crisis," replies Ruby as she follows, the two of them see Sasha as she gives a smirk.

"You heard—" says Crisis as Sasha interrupts her.

"Nothing about Ruby being a double agent like I used to be? Got it."

"You were listening weren't you?"

"More like you weren't quite enough to not be heard."

"Oops...", remarks Crisis as Ruby gives her a look.

"Don't worry no one else was around to hear it."

"Anyway... let's get going," comments Crisis as the three head out, all the while Joshua was having his lunch with Maria.

Maria picked out a simple café for her and Joshua to eat at. The café was a few miles away from the center of the city and farther still from the military base and research facility. Far away from Crisis' influences where most of the citizens in this part of town are organic and if it wasn't for a few random machines walking about, you couldn't even tell that this city was controlled by Crisis.

"I can't believe you're still wearing your lab coat," sighs Maria, the black scaled raptor as she sits in her chair. Maria is wearing a pair of blue jean shorts and a white top as her yellow eyes watch as Joshua enter the Café.

"Sorry I was running a bit late and I kind of rushed," chuckles Joshua.

"You never change, do you?" replies Maria.

"What do you mean by that?" asks Joshua.

"You always get so engrossed with your projects that you miss everything else that is going on around you."

"That's not true at all," he replies.

"Is it now? Have you done anything fun since you joined this project or even before with your other projects?"

"I've had plenty of fun with those projects; they are quite challenging and have led me to places I didn't think I'd even go to."

"That really doesn't answer my question dear. I meant when was the last time you had any kind of fun outside of work."

"Does this and the other few times we went out count?"

"No they don't, as fun as those times were, they don't count."

"Damn... um... ah..."

"Say no more, I think I can see where this is going," she sighs before saying, "I think I know how you feel now with Karrie."

"What do you mean?"

"Before you were drafted into whatever projects you were pulled into for the military, you told me about all the troubles about getting Karrie to notice you. How she was so focused

on her own little world to notice anything else, including you. Remember that little chat we had?”

“I do vaguely recall that conversation...” replies Joshua as he tries to look away from Maria.

“Yeah I’m sure you do... do you even know the current state of our nation is in?” she asks.

“What a silly question of course I do! We’re coming back from the brink of defeat. Areas of our country is being revitalized like this city.”

“Yes, but have you noticed that even though it’s been over a year since the president’s death that we have yet to hold another election? General Raszer has held onto the power given to himself via martial law, despite an ease in the urgency of our situation?”

“Well we aren’t in the clear yet it is to be expected.”

“Have you noticed that ever since my great grandfather got his second lease on life that things have been going downhill for this country?”

“Downhill?”

“Fewer freedoms, we’re getting closer to a military dictatorship. Our country has a long history of such things that many of us would not like to repeat and other nations have yet to forgive us for/ The other countries see that we’re returning to our old ways and the other countries fear that. And I just know my great-grandfather is just helping this change become a reality.”

“What do you mean?”

“What I mean is my Great Grandfather isn’t all that great or grand, but you can’t help being related to a demon.”

“Oh he can’t be that bad.”

“He is worse than that. I did some digging and he’s one of the last surviving—,” says Maria as she’s cut off by the waiter asking if they’d like to order, “Another minute please,” asks Maria as the waiter walks off, she sighs, “We’ll talk about it later, let’s just enjoy what little time we have this afternoon together, maybe we could meet again later today for dinner? How does that sound?”

“Uh... sure what time?”

“Knowing you’re going to be working late again... so why not say around eight o’clock?”

“That sounds great,” replies Joshua with a nod.

“You sure you’re going to be there now?”

“Yes, I’m sure, I’ll be there.”

“Though if something comes up give me a call, at least tell me if something important happens.”

“I will, I won’t screw up like last time.”

“Or the time before that?”

“That too,” replies Joshua as he lifts up his menu to hide his face, “Oh what do we have here... this looks good.”

“Oh Joshua sometimes it’s a good thing you haven’t changed,” chuckles Maria as she looks at her menu.

“So... how are things?” asks Joshua as he peers over his menu.

“With what?” she asks with a soft inquisitive purr.

“With stuff?”

“Stuff? Hmm well some of my stuff is okay, my current job with tech support is always so much fun,” she sarcastically replies, “It’s funny to see a machine asking for computer help, you’d think they’d give these people the knowledge upon being turned into a robot.”

“From what I know which is rather extensive, the process doesn’t change the person mentally, its merely a physical change, it’s more of you’re still you, just a robot.”

“Tell me is it possible for them to change such things about a person? Like personality, memories, and so forth?”

“Well I guess it is possible, but Crisis wouldn’t do anything like that,” he replies as he thinks, “*Not majorly at least...*”

“How can you be so sure of that?”

“I am part of the team that designed her; I think I should know if something like that was going on.”

“And what about the times she went to cities controlled by Croc? Or all the visits with General Raszer, maybe he has done something to her.”

“No that’s impossible, if she started to act weird I’d know.”

“And how are you so sure?”

“I am the last surviving member of the project, she is my project, and as you said I get lost in the little details of my projects don’t I? If something like that happened, I’d be sure to find out.”

“That doesn’t spark much confidence in me, especially when you say you’re the last surviving. Seems a bit odd to me that you are, don’t you think?”

“Well... maybe, but you weren’t there when the attack happened.”

“This is true, but still the whole situation makes me worry even more.”

“I wouldn’t worry about it, I’ll be fine,” he replies with a smile.

“I certainly hope so,” she says as she looks back at her menu. The two raptors order a hefty meat based meal.

“What’s on your mind?” asks Maria?

“Huh? Oh... nothing, thinking about work.”

“Thinking about work? Why don’t you think about something else? All work and no play make Robert a dull raptor,” she chuckles.

“Sorry, just... work has been a tad frustrating and the some of those I work with don’t respect me at all.”

“Sorry to hear that, is it Crisis?”

“Crisis? No, another girl robotic girl. She was one of the project members that got transformed in the attack. She’s the exact same as before, just without the need for sleep, which is much worse mind you. She’s never liked me.”

“Oh does she now? Maybe she is just showing you her way that she cares about you.”

“What? No, no, no, oh no, not her.”

“Relax! It was just a joke,” laughs Maria.

“Oh... gotcha, funny,” chuckles Joshua.

“So you said tech support? I thought you were a reporter.”

“Am a reporter, but I only get so much even with exclusive rights on Crisis. I had to pick up a second job to help make ends meet. It’s part time.”

“Maybe I can ask Crisis to put you onto the pay roll?”

“I appreciate the offer but no, that would cause a conflict of interest and I am an honest reporter... which is one reason why I need a second job,” she grumbles.

“Sorry to hear that. I am sure things will turn around for you.”

“Would be nice, but life isn’t so easy or kind, that’s one thing I’ve learned over my years of reporting.”

“Well when life gives you lemons...”

“You cut the lemons squirt it into life’s eye and rob them blind, serves life right for giving me lemons,” chuckles Maria.

“I was thinking lemonade but that works too,” replies Joshua as the rest of their lunch being rather uneventful. The two raptors part ways with Maria reminding Joshua of their date later tonight.

When he returned to work he was surprised at what he saw. Everything was a hustle and a bustle. Crisis moved with a spring in her step as Joshua watches her walk by.

“What’s going on?” asks Joshua.

“We’ve just had a breakthrough in how the gate works no thanks to you,” says Shasi as she gives Joshua a steel cold robotic glare.

“I had lunch, can’t fault me on that,” defends Joshua.

“Sure, sure, make excuses.”

“Enough, we are on the cusp of a break through, I just can feel it. I will have no more conflict from you two. Just because Joshua doesn’t mean the fact he has to eat and sleep is a reason to put him down,” states Crisis.

“Sorry Mistress,” replies Shasi as she lowers her head.

“Sorry too... I should try to catch up, every little bit helps,” says Joshua.

“That’s the spirit, I can just feel it. We’re going to get it,” replies Crisis with a smile and as the hours rolled by, Crisis’ enthusiasm didn’t waiver, and neither did anyone else’s. Joshua is swept in the rush of what is going on. It was half past eight at night when Crisis stood by the main computers that connected to the gate. The machine hums to life as energy flows into the gate. A crowd of organic and robotic scientists have gathered as they stand eagerly, growing silent as Crisis asks Shasi who is standing by one of the computer monitors.

“How are the capacitors?”

“They’re at fifteen percent, should be enough for the trial run,” replies Shasi.

“How are the standby systems?”

“Operational and running smoothly Crisis,” answers Joshua as he stands at a different computer monitor.

“Enter the coordinates.”

“Entering them now,” replies Arissa as she types in the information on the computer next to Crisis, “Done.”

“Start up the warp gate sequence, and once we’re connected, I shall confirm if it’s the right city.”



“Why do you have to do it? Could we send in some kind of drone to do it for you? Not as risky, especially since this is the first test to see if the gate even works.” suggests Joshua.

“I was there; I am the only one who could check quickly and confirm if it’s the city, turn on the gate,” commands Crisis.

“Roger,” replies Arissa as the gate boots up and a silver metallic film seems to shimmer over the gate entrance.

“This looks like what I saw before,” comments Crisis as the machine hums as she slowly approaches the gate, her metallic footsteps echo through the building as she gets closer.

“That isn’t the connection but merely a detection system to inform the two gates something is about to pass through and to make the connection,” explains Ruby.

“And curious what if the gate is busy, unavailable or destroyed?”

“You’d walk right through and nothing will happen. Normally the gate keeper would make sure the connection is good, and there is no wait,” replies Ruby as Crisis stands a mere inch away from the gate.

“Okay Crisis... just one step in and then quickly back out,” she thinks as she takes a step forward the gate gently tugs at her body, suddenly Crisis finds herself on the other side, greeted by the skyline of Neo Robia once again. She quickly looks around and sees Croc’s forces moving through other nearby gates, as a guard stands watch over the current gate. The sounds of the busy port echo through the area. Crisis looks at the guard before jumping back into the gate yelling the moment she crosses back, “Turn off the gate!”

“What happened? Anything wrong?” asks Joshua as the gate turns off. The gate on Croc’s end shuts down in kind, the guard turns around just moments after the gate shuts down as he shrugs and returns to his original position.

“It’s Croc’s city alright. I wanted the gate shut down before they noticed that we’d made a connection,” explains Crisis as she walks away from the gate. “Inform the General that we’ve opened the gate to Croc’s city. Soon we’ll get to see how Croc fairs fighting on his home territory,” chuckles Crisis with a triumphant grin as the entire place bursts into a massive cheer and celebration. People congratulate themselves on their hard work and success. Meanwhile Joshua takes a sigh of relief that he too can now ‘relax’ a moment and that Crisis has returned safely from the gate test, it was at this moment that Joshua noted the time.

“Crap! It’s that late already?!” he thinks as he makes his way through the crowd towards the nearest exit.

“Joshua where are you going?” asks Crisis.

“I forgot something important, I’ll be back!” he exclaims as he bolts out of the door towards the security check point where he left his phone. Meanwhile Maria waits outside for him to arrive...

“I knew this was going to happen, I just knew it. Leaves me waiting here and doesn’t even bother to call. Would a call been too much to ask?” she growls to herself as she paces back and forth, “I don’t even know why I try with him, there are so many others out there...” she mumbles to herself as her phone begins to ring, she digs into her pocket and looks at the name and sees it’s Joshua.

“Finally... he better have something import—,” grumbles Maria as her words are cut off as a rag is held over her muzzle, the phone drops to the ground with a thud as she is quickly dragged off into a van that quickly drives by to pick them up. As the van disappears Maria’s phone picked up by a pair of metallic claws.

“Voice mail... she must be really mad.... I’ll call again in a bit,” softly sighs Joshua, as he hands his phone back to the security guard and returns to the celebrations. Joshua sees all the people enjoying their ‘victorious’ moment. People who had a bottle of champagne ready for this moment are popping the corks as organic and machine alike join in these festivities. Joshua though moves through the crowd towards the nearest unoccupied chair and takes a seat. A little time passes before Sasha catches Joshua sitting by himself. The female raptor pulls up a chair placing her sniper rifle between her legs barrel up in the air.

“What’s on your mind?” she asks.

“Hmm? Nothing, just a tad overwhelmed at the moment,” replies Joshua.

“You had a date with Maria tonight and you forgot, didn’t you?”

“What me? No, of course not...”

“You can’t fool me; I’m a trained sniper now.”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“How about I’m a girl and I can tell, how about that as an explanation?”

“Well I wouldn’t call it a date.”

“I’m glad to see you get away from the metal and back into some real women.”

“Hey I told you it’s not like that,” remarks Joshua.

“So what happened?”

“Had a dinner da... scheduled with her, and if something came up that was big... like this that I should call her.”

“Did you call her?”

“I did once I realized the time but she didn’t answer.”

“How long ago was this?”

“Not long after we got the gate working, so half an hour?”

“Call her again.”

“Why?”

“Just do it,” commands Sasha, “Or else,” she warns with an evil grin.

“Alright, alright I’ll call again,” replies Joshua as he walks off.

“What was that about?” asks Crisis as she walks up to Sasha.

“Nothing to worry about, Joshua was just having a little woman troubles.”

“Oh? And?”

“I gave him some needed advice he should be fine,” replies Sasha.

“Good to hear,” says Crisis as she watches Joshua leave again.

Maria steadily regains consciousness, her vision blurred as dim lights barely illuminate her surroundings as she feels her back on a smooth glass surface. Slowly she stands up and takes a step forward as she runs right into a glass wall. Her eyes widen as her claws scratch along the inside of a roboticization tube.

“Hey, let me out of here!” she exclaims as she bangs against the glass, her yellow eyes look around for anyone to help when they focus on a familiar face stepping out of the shadows with her cell phone in his hand.

“Great grandfather? What are you doing here?” she exclaims as she hits against the glass even harder, “Let me out of here!”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that my grandchild. You see you happen to know a bit too much about me, and we can’t have you spreading rumors that we’re trying to rebuild our glorious past in such a dark and tainted light now can we?” states Francis as he stares down at Maria.

“You can’t do this to me, I’m your own flesh and blood!” she exclaims as tears start to roll down her face.

“I don’t have flesh and blood anymore so that really doesn’t apply to me.”

“Please don’t, please!”

“I did all that I could to keep you off the list, but there is only so much I can do when you’re such a risk to our nation,” he explains as he looks her straight in the eye, “Say goodbye to your old self and hello to a whole new you.”

“No this can’t be goodbye... please anything but this... anything,” she pleads with a whimper as the phone begins to ring, Francis looks at the phone and sees who’s calling as a big smile forms across his metallic face.

“Ah a loose end to tie, how convenient.”

“Hello,” says Francis in Maria’s voice.

“Hey Maria... I just wanted to say—,” says Joshua as he’s cut off.

“Please don’t, you can’t do this to me,” replies Francis in Maria’s teary voice.

“Joshua! Don’t listen to him that’s not me!” screams Maria as her voices is in reality muffled by the glass and only a system of speakers allowed her and Francis to speak.

“But I...”

“Don’t, please.”

“Can you just let me explain?”

“No. This is goodbye,” replies Francis as he hangs up the phone.

“Joshua...” whimpers Maria as Francis motions to turn on the machine as the roboticization energy flows into the tube, Maria claws at the inner part of the tube her claws barely making a scratch in the specialized glass.

Maria glares at Francis with anger and fear in her eyes. She lets out a scream as the energy flows through her. She feels the creep of the energy moving up her legs, her feet already turned into cold hard metal as they no longer obey her organic half of her body. More of her body is lost to the machine as she continues to try to plead for her Great grandfather to stop.

Francis watches his great granddaughter show less and less emotion to the point of a mindless automaton. Her cute outfit black and blue outfit she wore to tease Joshua is also turned into hard metallic metal, becoming part of her whole body. Her scaly hide turned inevitable into hard segmented metal, her struggling soon ends as she stands there at attention, her eyes giving a soft blue glow as she awaits for the tube to be lifted.

“I hope we are feeling better? Are you my great granddaughter?” he asks once the tube is completely lifted.

“Yes grandfather, I am.” she replies as she steps off of the platform her feet hitting the ground with a metallic click.

“I’ll get you assigned to do some tech work behind the lines, I’m not evil now. I can’t put my loyal granddaughter who wants to do anything to restore our country back to its original glory in harm’s way, now can I?”

“Of course not grandfather. I will work hard to make our nation great again. I will work hard to repay the gift you have given me and helping me see the error of my ways.”

“Good, that’s what I like to hear,” replies Francis with a sinister smile.

Francis looks at his phone as he hears Maria hang up on him, “I am such an idiot... But it’s not like I can tell her...” remarks Joshua with a sigh as he thinks, “*That I still have feelings for Karrie and that she is Crisis... That never work, and now I blew my chances with the only girl who likes me who’s not a machine,*” thinks Joshua as he heads back to the celebration, defeated.

## Chapter 27 The Assault on Neo Robia

The day has finally arrived. The attack on Neo Robia, Croc's capital city is about to begin. After the successful test of the dimensional warp gate, the gate was transported to an open area outside of Rioas. Then a fortified structure was built around the gate, thick metal doors and reinforced concrete roofing with fortified pill boxes built into the structure facing towards the gate itself.

Thick power cables buried under ground leading from several power stations connect to the gate. Inside the fortified structure Crisis stands near one of the computer terminals as her science team works tirelessly to have everything ready. Standing before the gate is Francis and a team of six other machines that from the moment of their roboticization they were put under Francis' command. Crisis knows these machines well as many of them are also in charge of her bases outside of the country.

The room echoes with the sound of clattering typing and movement of heavy machinery, robotic and heavy boot footsteps echo throughout the building. Crisis's heavy robotic tail sways side to side as the heavy metal doors that are just as tall as the gate and even wider start to move open. Crisis grins as she looks over at Francis, "Five minutes, you ready?"

"Of course I'm ready, are you?" asks Francis as he slings a backpack full of equipment onto his back.

"I was built ready."

"Just don't expect your plan to go as smoothly as you'd like."

"I already know that," replies Crisis.

"If it wasn't for your intimate knowledge of the city, of its defenses, and some sheer luck that you managed to create a half way descent plan, we'd be doing something far different."

"For someone who actually liked my plan, you seem rather pessimistic about it."

"More of a realist, and don't think just because I supported your plan that a better one could have been formed given more time. This plan is incredibly risky."

"I know that," says Crisis.

"Attention two minutes till Operation Cobra begins," announces an organic announcer.

"Alright you all know the drill, get ready," commands Francis as he and his crew do one more check over their weapons before they approach the gate. The arching structure humming as the gate activates and the liquid silver film forms over the gate. Francis looks over his team one last time as he motions for them to move forward. Francis' squad moves forward and disappears into the silvery abyss.

"Are you sure you have to go too Crisis?" asks Joshua.

"For the last time yes, this is something I have to do," she remarks.

"I'm just concerned, that's all," sighs Joshua.

"We all are, most of us can't go with you due to our jobs at the gate," remarks Arissa.

"Even Sasha won't be accompanying me, not directly at least, since she's part of the second wave," adds Joshua.

“She’s spent weeks behind enemy lines, in the very city we are about to invade, I think she’ll be okay with an entire army backing her up,” interjects Andreas, “It’s a shame I won’t be able to come with.”

“It is. You’ve worked hard with me over the past few years.”

“But my job isn’t on the front line, its back here,” he replies.

“True, though I’ve sort of manage both, speaking of front lines though I wonder how Francis as his men are doing...”

To Francis he appeared on the other side of the gate in a blink of an eye. Francis group arrived in Neo Robia just as planned, and before them was a robotic fox guard standing watch. The guard holds his weapon across his chest as he scans the busy port before him.

Francis doesn’t waste a moment as he pulls out a small silver disk shaped device about the size of his palm from his pocket. Francis slams the device into the back of the guard’s head. The guard twitches and attempts to remove the foreign object as metal tendrils latch and drill into the back of the machine’s head and before the fox’s hands even reach the device it does its job as the guard’s eyes turn from a deep glowing red to a soft blue. Francis walks up to him with a grin and says, “Keep up the good work, and make sure no one uses this gate till I say otherwise.”

“Yes Sir!” replies the fox as he salutes Francis before him and his group quickly move off. The other transportation gates are busy humming with activity as troops and visitors from other realms are busy going to and fro from Croc’s crowning jewel of his empire. The gates were just part of the major transportation hub for the rest of the city. The gates are located in the airport with flights taking off and landing faster than people coming and going from the gates themselves. Trains, major highways all lead to this airport.

The control room for the gates and to keep in check the rest of the organized chaos is located several hundred meters away from Francis’ position in a large building complex with a massive spire on the top shaped Croc’s diamond symbol.

Without skipping a beat Francis’ team moves into a large group of moving people, some organic, some robotic and moves casually towards their target. With Croc’s constant state of war, no one notices a few extra robotic soldiers moving about.

They reach the main building where a set of organic guards stand watch. Occasionally a small patrol comes by to check up on the guards every five or so minutes, one minute after the last check up, Francis makes his move by walking up to the two guards and said, “Evening.”

“Hold it who are you?” asks the female skunk guard.

“Croc heard there was a possible attack on this facility and he wanted to bolster the defenses.”

“Attack? What attack? We haven’t heard of anything of the sort.”

“Its recent information, I’m not surprised that information can be a bit slow to get around sometimes.”

“Hold on let me check this out,” states the Skunk as she is about to talk into her intercom as two of Francis’ men sprint and grab the two guards pinning them down against the wall as Francis moves to cover their mouths.

“I think you’ll find what I say to be very valid, you just want to stand and obey me like good soldiers don’t you?” says Francis as his two friends quickly

initiate their hypnotic gaze. The two guards' struggle slowly becomes weaker and weaker as Francis continues to speak.

"You want to be good soldiers and obey. Let my team through and no one else. Traitors can be anywhere, can't trust anyone but us." The two guards stop their struggle all together as they are put back down, Francis removing his hands from their muzzles.

"Of course Sir Francis. Go right ahead with your team," answers the Skunk.

"And keep this issue a secret; we don't want to cause a panic, that's what the enemy would want."

"Of course not sir," she replies.

"Good," says Francis with a grin as he motions for his team to move in. Patrols move throughout the building as Francis and his team make their way towards the main control room. They move quickly avoiding any security camera systems possible. Twice the group had to stop to hack into a security coded locked door. Eventually they reach a stairwell that leads directly up to the main control room that controls the gates.

Francis lifts his hand and makes several hand gestures as the group slowly makes their way to the room. Their metallic feet make only the lightest clank and creek as the metal stairway shifts under their weight. The sounds of the team's movements seem to be lost under the voices of the crew working in the room above. The team stops at the edge of the bottom emergency entrance to the room. The team glance at each other, their weapons in their metallic claws as Francis stops the group as he then peers over the top. The door slowly opens as he moves his head up to see a gun barrel pointed at his head.

"You think couldn't see you sneaking about like rats?" asks the anthropomorphic shark security guard, his red and green uniform, nicely cleaned pressed, with Croc's insignia easily visible on his shoulder pads.

"Hey I resent that remark!" exclaims an anthropomorphic female rat gate control personnel.

"Sorry Zoe," apologies the guard.

"If you think that's going to stop me after all these years, you have another thing coming," remarks Francis as he makes his move, quickly followed by the sound of gunfire as all hell breaks loose.

"How long is it going to take? It's already an hour past the estimated time it should have taken," wonders Crisis as she paces in her spot.

"Remain calm; being uneasy like that is bad for morale. They like to see cool collected heads in command," advises Phillip.

"You know... you're right," replies Crisis as she stops and looks towards the gate. "We just have to be patient. Delays are to be expected. The most difficult part of this whole operation is not being able to communicate with those on the other side of the gate."

"That and moving through an entire damn army through one door."

"That too," replies Crisis as one of Francis' men comes through the gate. A green and black metal raptor, his previously smooth cleaned metal skin has scratches and dents. His right hand twitches uncontrollably, "What happened?" asks Crisis.

"We secured the facility but Croc knows something is up, we need reinforcements to secure the area and fast," he exclaims.

“Proceed with phase two then,” commands Crisis as an alarm sounds. Anyone between the gate and the main doors quickly rush to the side. A low hum of helicopters turns into a loud droning noise as they approach. Joshua moves to cover his ears as the choppers make their way through the building and into the gate. A massive fleet of attack helicopters along with troop transports. The wave of choppers lasts a few minutes, each disappearing through the silver gate. Crisis watches with glowing blue eyes as a torrent of wind blows through the building. Joshua keeps his head down low till the very last of the helicopters are through.

“Francis also requested the device for the next stage of the operation,” adds the beat up raptor.

“Already? But we aren’t anywhere near the tower yet,” remarks Crisis.

“He wants it now while it’s still easy to get it to him.”

“Easy to get to him? Isn’t he cut off and needs reinforcements?”

“Yes and by the time I get to him the area will be secure, what’s the problem?”

“Nothing,” replies Crisis with a sigh as she turns to Joshua, “Joshua can you get the device?”

“Uh sure thing Crisis,” replies Joshua as he gets up, adjusting his white and blue work uniform as he heads over to a heavy duty green camouflaged military backpack.

“Careful, it’s heavy,” Crisis adds as Joshua grabs the backpack’s strap and takes two steps before being jerked back, the backpack sliding across the floor only a few millimeters. Joshua grabs the strap with both claws and tugs as he barely manages to move it at all before releasing it.

“I can see that,” grunts Joshua as he goes to get a nearby two-wheeler handcart. He then proceeds to drag the backpack over the handcart with hard yet slow moving tugs. Once on the cart he wheels it over to the blue metal with a heavy pant.

“Finally,” groans the robotic soldier as he quickly and effortlessly with one hand swings the backpack over his back and heads back through the gate.

“If it was that easy for you, why couldn’t he get it?” asks Joshua.

“I thought you could handle it,” replies Crisis as Joshua gives a deep breathed sigh.

Meanwhile back on Croc’s side of the gate, things are a lot more intense....

The helicopters burst through the gate; each one quickly breaks off towards their designated targets. A group of attack helicopters head straight to the connected airfield. They release a torrent of missiles and chain gun fire onto any and every aircraft on the field, civilian and military alike. Missiles, rockets and machine gun bullets fly through the air slamming into any and every vehicle on the tarmac. Civilians flee from the area as soldiers throw whatever gunfire they can throw at the choppers. Huge balls of fire burst into the air as planes explode and nearby fuel tanks catch fire and erupt as the airport became an instant warzone.

Another group of attack helicopters along with a troop transport ship quickly make their way over to the surrounded control tower. There Croc’s security forces surrounded the building and were at the barricaded control room door. Francis and the other soldiers exchange fire with Croc’s forces.



“Getting low on ammo!” exclaims a black metal raptor as he shoots off a few rounds through the window at the soldiers at ground level.

“We all are,” remarks Francis as the thumping of helicopter blades are heard over the gunfire, “But that won’t matter for much longer,” he comments as a hail of bullets blankets the ground around the complex. Soldiers duck and let out a deathly scream as bullets tear through anything and anyone in their path. A transport chopper hovers over the building as troops repel down onto the building. The raptor soldiers spreading out and start to overwhelm the building’s defenders.

Meanwhile five other sets of helicopters break off, four of these choppers carry a massive cylindrical bomb on the underside of their carriage. The helicopters rush to the four corners of Croc’s city.

Alarms blaze as Croc’s forces quickly rush to their battle stations. Robotic and organic soldiers rush to quad laser anti-aircraft emplacements that guard several smooth metallic green and red half egg shaped dome structures. The laser fire heats up the air around the guns making it rumble like thunder as they fire at the approaching aircraft. The innumerable defenses around Croc’s tower take any possible pot shots at the aircraft as they attempt to weave their way through the city’s buildings. Windows shatter as laser hit all around the choppers as the fire slams into the building, sprinkling the ground below with shards of glass and concrete.

“Less than one minute till target,” reports one of the pilots as they get closer, one of the choppers gets hit by the laser fire, the left engine catches on fire, smoke billows from the other chopper as it spins and crashes into a nearby building into a giant ball of fire. Shards of glass and twisted steel fly out everywhere as the burning husk of the chopper tumbles to the ground below. The remaining helicopters cut close to the ground picking up speed before pulling up hard, releasing their bombs from the underside of their carriage as they are flung towards their target.

“EMP released,” yells the pilot as the chopper jerks upwards by the sudden decrease in weight. The bombs fly over the targets, the silver metal spherical bombs go off just as they reach the ‘center’ of the target. A Large visible ball of electro-magnetic energy spreads from the detonation site.

The helicopters rush as fast as they can from the explosion. All the events unfolding in mere seconds, as one chopper is caught by the blast. The systems of the helicopter lock up as all systems are knocked out. The blades slow as the unresponsive aircraft tumbles and crashes into the side of a building, lodging itself into the building with the tail blades sticking out, twenty stories above the ground.

Nearby robotic systems shut down as several of Croc’s robotic soldiers in the area become limp and fall to the ground with a thud. Multiple anti-aircraft guns fall silent as the four areas were hit almost simultaneously, but that wasn’t the only show going on.

The largest group of helicopters a majority of them heavy troop transport ships guarded by attack helicopters move towards the industrial part of the city. The massive power complex of smooth curved buildings was a modest but still problematic distance away from the invasion point. Between plant and the gates is a large industrial complex with several tall buildings that are just a few stories shorter than Croc’s tower.

“Is this good? We have to stay with the rest of the pack, so choose quickly,” exclaims an organic raptor pilot as he looks over his shoulder at Sasha who stands at the edge of an open door on one the attack helicopter. Strapped to her back is a large backpack along with an unfolded hang glider, with her trusty sniper rifle strapped to her side.

Sasha’s yellow eyes scour through the battlefield as she grins and says, “It’ll do,” as she leaps from the helicopter, the glider springs open, jerking her body up, which makes the giant rifle bang against her body as she uses her claws and tail to adjust her flight path towards the one of the taller buildings. A large antenna built right above the emergency entrance/exit to the roof of the building blinks as she makes her way towards her target.

*“That should do nicely,”* she thinks as she approaches the building, the sounds of gun and laser fire echo in the distance while the helicopter fleet reaches the power plant. Sasha can see small arms fire firing up at the choppers. Suddenly a gust of air pushes her glider up into the air veering her glider of course. Sasha’s glider wobbles, as she tries to counter balance with her body and tail. The glider rattles as the next suitable building is too tall and more importantly too far away for her to have any hope of reaching from the very beginning, or a shorter useless snipping spot.

As she flew over her targeted roof she reached into her backpack and pulled out a grappling hook. She quickly ties the rope to her pack and wraps it around her arm before swinging the hook around the antenna, the hook swings around the antenna thrice over before latching onto itself and with jerk and a hard pull Sasha growls is turned around on a dime. The rope digs into her scales as Sasha is pulled towards the ground as the rope slides up the antenna till the top snaps off and topples to the ground. The sudden loss of support causing her glider to completely lose whatever stability it has as it crash into the ground and slides across the concrete roof top as Sasha slide across the top upside down as holes are burned right into the glider’s canvas.

Sasha groans as she unhooks herself from the glider, “Rougher landing than I’d like,” she comments to herself as she quickly looks over her surrounding before quickly rushing to the broken antenna, picking it up and uses it as a wedge to the door leading to the roof shut.

Sasha then moves into position, to the side of the building towards the power plant. There she can see more small arms from the enemy soldiers below aimed at the choppers. She pulls out her sniper rifle setting it up at the edge of the building, and looks through the scope. Several guard towers are in well entrenched as they pin down troops that have already landed. With a few well placed shots Croc’s forces trouble those soldiers no more.

*“I really don’t like not being able to relocate...”* thinks Sasha as she sees one of the attack helicopters get hit in the rear propeller blade, causing it to spin wildly as the pilot desperately tries to keep it under control. Sasha watches the chopper as the pilot manages to crash land it in a field part of a park a few blocks up the road that is just within Sasha’s visual range, but with the smoke and trees it makes it difficult to provide optimal support.

“We have a downed eagle in G-7, providing some support,” reports Sasha over the radio, as she sees a pilot appear from the direction of the wreckage, a little beat up but overall not too bad. The brown scaled female raptor looks around. Suddenly a gray domed disk appears from the side, a red crock jewel emblem on the top, the circle base is in the same dark crock red color.

The disk moves quickly which makes it even harder to track and hit without the already present obstacles.

“I see some kind of new Croc weapon...” she relays to others as she watches the disk move into the clearing again, two long grey arms with red sphere shoulders show on the sides of this disk. The red metal hands and gray metal fingers reach for the raptor pilot who sees disk and begins to run away towards the wreck, the disk giving pursuit. Sasha follows the disk, an evil mechanical grin.

Sasha slowly releases her breath as she takes a shot, the bullet hitting the middle of the disk dome and flies right through, the bullet not even phasing the device. “Shit,” she growls to herself as she quickly loads in the next shell, metallic strands come from under the dome reaching for the pilot, “You won’t get your robotic tentacles onto her,” remarks Sasha as she takes another shot at the device, this time aiming and hitting for the ring. The bullet hits its mark hitting the right not once but twice, breaking the device in two, as the gray metallic nanite mesh falls to the ground a few feet behind the pilot.

“I’ve just destroyed one of these new flying domed shaped things, aiming for the dome won’t do any significant damage, aim for the ring at the base to destroy it,” reports Sasha over the radio as she catches a glimpse of another flying disk already in the process of picking up the pilot.

“Shit,” growls Sasha as she loads another shell into the rifle, but as she takes aim she sees the pilot taken up vacuumed up into the bottom of the dome disk as she begins to report what she’s seeing. The red gem on the top of the domed robot glows as it draws the raptor up, her arms bound by the metallic blue ribbons that wrapped around her body. A ghostly outline of the pilot’s head is shown through the metallic mesh, a gasping for air, a muffled scream, it was hard to tell as her feet dangled below. As the machine pulls her farther up into itself, the raptor’s bust and lower body becomes outlined in the metallic mesh. The domed robot’s arms detach from the ring base and move up and attach themselves to the shoulders of the outlined raptor. The robot lowers itself down to the ground as the skin tightens more around the pilot, slowly showing a robotic raptor forming from the head down.

Sasha continues to report the glowing crystal, glows even brighter than before, red wire outlines seem to form on the forehead before disappearing and a fully formed robotic raptor minion to Chaos Croc with his symbol and clothing is formed.

“Could you explain that again, what happened?”

“The domed robot just rolled itself over her and transformed her into a machine. Grabbed her, shoved her into the bottom of the domed top and rolled a metallic film over her to turn her machines. I think I’ll call them roll ups,” explains Sasha.

“It’s a fucking condom bot. From the way you’re describing to me it’s a condom bot. Maybe you’ve never seen one of those but that’s what it is,” remarks Francis over the coms.

“Good to know you’re still well,” comments Sasha.

“Enough chat, take out that convert and return to covering the assault.”

“Take out the convert, but...”

“The person could have valuable information that they are giving to our enemy take them out now,” growls Francis.

“Yes sir,” replies Sasha as she turns off the radio, “I really hate that man,” growls Sasha as she takes aim at the converted raptor, she slowly releases her breath as she takes the shot, the bullet rippling through the air as it hits her mark. “I’ll disable her and.. what the?” says Sasha as she sees the bullet went through the robot’s leg, the robot crying out in pain as blood comes out from the wound, and the machine collapses where she stands. “I have to report this that those things just trap our soldiers and not turn them into machines they can be saved,” says Sasha as she turns her intercom back on.

Back at home base, things were just as hectic....

Armored personnel half track carriers speed forward towards the gate right behind the helicopter push. Two dozen of the halftracks are filled with Crisis’ robotic troops followed by another half a dozen filled with organic soldiers, each of these halftracks with large artillery pieces hitched to the back of each one. Right behind them are dozens of trucks filled with soldiers, supplies, fuel and everything you could think of to keep an army running.

“Almost our time to go through, ready Ruby?” asks Crisis as she glances over to Ruby who approaches her from behind.

“I was born ready,” she remarks.

“I would say built now,” chuckles Crisis as she watches the last of the recent wave go through the gate.

“Too much of a pun for me, and I was born not built.”

“How long till you go?” asks Joshua.

“Now that this wave has completed, we just wait till they’ve inform us the perimeter has been secured and ready for the next set of reinforcements, which will involve us and some heavier ground equipment,” explains Crisis.

“I wish the two of you luck,” replies Joshua.

“Thanks, though I won’t get over confident about this, but I will say I have a good feeling about this.”

“I do too,” remarks Ruby with a grin, “It will be nice to give back a bit of payback for the annoyances Croc has given me over the years.”

“It will be nice to put this whole conflict behind us.”

“What will you do once Croc is defeated?” asks Joshua.

“I’m not sure... I’ll worry about that once it happens,” she replies.

“Don’t bother Mistress Crisis during her vital moment,” interjects Shasi as she glares at Joshua.

“Don’t be too harsh on him, he’s just concerned about her,” says Arissa as she turns her attention back to her monitoring station. Sometime later a robotic soldier comes back through the gate holding a black box.

“I bring news of the front,” he states as he approaches Crisis.

“How does it go?” asks Crisis.

“There are some rough spots but overall we’re advancing steadily into Croc’s city, here are the recordings of the radio chatter,” reports the robotic raptor soldier.

“Thank you,” replies Crisis as she takes the information cube.

“Careful Crisis,” warns Joshua.

"I'll be fine, it's not going to be a virus," she replies as she releases the wires from her claw tips to interface with the data cube, Crisis quickly downloads the information before putting the cube down on Joshua's desk. "Pass on this information to high command; we'll be starting the next phase of the plan, Ruby we'll be going in."

"Finally!" exclaims Ruby with a grin as Crisis motions for the next wave to begin. A silver blue half track APC with a small anti infantry gun, manned by one of Crisis robotic soldiers.

"Come on in Ruby," says Crisis as the door is opened from the inside.

"With pleasure, this is going to be fun," remarks Ruby.

"Be careful Crisis... and good luck."

"I will be, don't you worry and thanks," replies Crisis as she and Ruby slip into the car with a few of other Crisis' soldiers.

"It's a pleasure to be fighting with you again Mistress Crisis," states a buff black metal raptor with silver claws and blue eyes, the blue claw symbol of Crisis on his shoulders.

"It's been a while since we've fought together, it will be good unit C-0012"

"Who's this person? I've never seen him," asks Ruby.

"He's one of my first converts, the twelfth to be exact."

"Really now? And how come I haven't seen such an early convert of yours outside of Shasi and Arissa."

"Let's just say I've been keeping him very busy," explains Crisis with a sly grin as the APC bursts through the gate and instantly Crisis gets fed the stream of communication of the battle that surrounds her. A Dromaeosa helicopter is heard flying overhead as Crisis' view is blocked by the camouflage nets set up overhead over the gates.

"What's with the canopy over the gate?" asks Ruby.

"It's to try to hide which gate we are using for our offensive," replies Crisis as the APC is guided down the line of tents along side of the other inactive gates before moving on ahead. Nearby Crisis can see another helicopter fly over to the airfield, landing at a nearby landing strip where fuel trucks are ready to fuel and re-arm the ship. On the other side of the APC are several the artillery pieces being set up and aimed towards Croc's tower, but Crisis' moment to take in everything abruptly ends when she hears the report from Sasha on how Croc is conscripting some of his newest troops with this 'condom bots'.

"Attention everyone. If anyone is captured by these new machines of Croc do not attempt to kill but disable, furthermore I don't want any action to be taken to try to save these people, we'll save them by taking Croc out and capturing the city," commands Crisis over coms.

As Crisis' APC moved forward she saw several of the artillery guns set up and pointed towards Croc's tower as organic soldiers busily loading the guns. Moments later they fire, the guns recoiling back as the shells fly towards Croc tower with a whistling howl and a billow of smoke.

"Why are they attacking the tower?" Crisis thinks as she sticks her head out of the side of the vehicle to get a better view of the tower. Crisis zooms into the incoming barrage.

Protective laser batteries shoot down over half of the shells, causing them to explode in the area in a spectacle of fireworks. The remaining shells approach the tower as they explode just short of the tower. A glowing soft red force field appears for a few brief moments before disappearing, inflicting no damage on the tower what so ever.

“Hey, why are you firing Croc’s tower?” asks Crisis over the intercom system.

“We’ve been ordered to,” they respond.

“By whom?”

“By Francis.”

“Francis why are you having the artillery fire at Croc’s tower? We need to capture that building.”

“Don’t worry, I was having them aim at the tower’s defenses. A few shells won’t knock that thing down, not that it’s doing any good.”

“I’ve noticed, we took the power plant, why does the tower still have power?” inquires Crisis

“They probably have a generator for the tower just in case something like this happens. Not that this changes any of our plans.”

“Indeed, did you get the package?”

“I have, and we’re moving with Group B towards the tower, you better get there with group A or we’ll go in without you.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll be waiting for you, just get those guns to support our other offensive. I’d like to have this place surrounded as soon as possible,” remarks Crisis.

“Understood, it is your show,” remarks Francis as Crisis gives a robotic sigh.

“Attack group A is bogged down, they’ll need our support. Let’s head there and give them some help,” commands Crisis as they move towards the front lines. The streets are deserted asides from Crisis’ troops, which steadily increase in numbers along with support vehicles and tanks as they approach the front lines. The nearby buildings are full of holes and scorched from the gun and laser fire. The once clean streets are a mess of broken glass, rubble and flames.

More of Crisis troops and a few light vehicles join Crisis’ push to reinforce the front lines at the heart of the city. The APC stopping a block and a half back from the heat of the fighting the sounds and flashes of gun fire from the upper buildings down below and vice versa as Crisis’ troops are pinned down by Croc’s forces that have taken up defensive positions up above. The base of the buildings held by more of Croc’s troops preventing an assault into the building to flesh out the troublesome soldiers in the floors above.

“Load HE rounds and let’s see how Croc’s troops like my welcoming gift,” chuckles Crisis.

“Yes Mistress Crisis,” replies the gunner as the automatic loading system loads the shell into the gun which is already aimed towards the base of the first building, during the time Crisis’ soldiers pull back away from the buildings. Moments later the infantry gun booms as it fires at the base of the first building explodes as glass and shrapnel, fire sparking at the base of the building as wood and cloth catch fire. The cries of Croc’s troops caught in the fire were barely heard before the gun reloads and aims higher, firing once again at the troops above with equally devastating results, and soon the process is repeated to the other side quickly silence the soldiers causing Crisis and her forces trouble. Some of Crisis’ robotic soldiers stay behind,

rushing into the banged up buildings while the remaining forces move forward. “Mistress Crisis, I’d like to inform you we’re down to two HE rounds and four AP,” reports the gunner.

“That’s all?”

“This is a command vehicle and we don’t have much room for many rounds... though we weren’t given many rounds to begin with. Less than a third of what we can carry.”

“Even with so much time to plan and supply we still have supply issues...” comments Crisis with a sigh.

“Your command vehicle isn’t meant to be so close to the front lines and used as an attack vehicle Crisis. Most of the ammunition has been reserved for actual combat vehicles,” remarks Francis.

“Listening onto my complaints now?”

“Making sure you don’t get yourself blown up before you can have your fight.”

“You concern touches me,” replies Crisis with a heavy hint of sarcasm. Suddenly Crisis’ forward most troops yell on the radio, the advance suddenly stops as Crisis troops pull back.

“What’s going on?” asks Ruby as she looks out of the window.

“My troops have nanite detectors and when they catch a high concentration of Croc’s nanites we bring up the anti-nanite team,” explains Crisis as four organic raptor soldiers move towards the front. Three of them are holding what looks like to be harpoon guns with spools of wire attached to the back end. The fourth raptor is holding a strange device with a small dish on the front, and on his back he’s lugging a rather heavy looking device.

The raptor looks at the device in his hands and quickly motions where to have the other three to shoot off their weapons. In quick motions they fire, the spool of wire following the shots as two shot off into far side buildings over a block away and the third fired straight down the center of the road. The harpoons stick into the buildings with a thud.

Crisis’ robotic troops during this time stay several yards back as they keep a look out to provide any cover fire the organic troops may need. The four organic soldiers take some cover behind an abandoned truck. They fourth soldier pulls the device off his back a large battery device and while he gets it ready the other three cut the wires from the spools and tie them to the device.

The other three soldiers peel back as the fourth stays behind working on the device which begins to glow and give off a soft hum, after a few minutes a red button lights up which the soldier quickly presses, the wires light up in a brilliant blue glow that disappears as fast as it came.

“What was that?” asks Ruby.

“Controlled EMP shockwave. The wires are specially designed to give out a powerful but short range EMP the moment electricity is put through the wires, but it needs a big jolt, and the wires are single use. Once Croc’s nanites have been zapped we bring forward my own to deal with the rest,” replies Crisis as a few of Crisis’ robotic soldiers come up with metal canisters which they soon open,

releasing countless microscopic nanites into the air to deal with what remains as the army moves forward once again.

“I didn’t know you had anything like that.”

“You didn’t expect me to tell you all my secrets now, did you?”

“Of course not,” replies Ruby.

“What is troubling so is that we haven’t been getting as much resistance as I was believing we’d encounter. Sure it hasn’t been easy, but for his capital, I’d expected something more.”

“His armies are out fighting his enemies, he really doesn’t need to keep a strong military presence at home, and with the gates, he can easily call them in, though since we control the city’s gates, reinforcements are going to take longer to arrive.”

“I guess I should be grateful for any luck we’ve had thus far, look the tower is just a few blocks away now, we’re almost there,” comments Crisis with a hint of excitement in her voice, but no sooner was that said an explosion goes off in front of the APC, the driver slams on the breaks and attempts to turn away from the explosion, the vehicle slides forward into the creator that was formed, sliding in and rolling onto its side, everyone becoming jumbled up inside of the vehicle.

“Its times like this, I am glad I’m now a machine,” remarks Ruby as she moves around a bit finding Crisis foot in her face, “I’d also appreciate it if you could get your foot out of my face Crisis.”

“Trying, we have to move before whatever formed this pothole comes back,” replies Crisis as she climbs to the top side of the vehicle and attempts to open the door only to find it jammed, “I guess I have to do this the hard way,” states Crisis as she activates her electro-blades the metal turning red hot as she cuts through the door before kicking it some yards away. Crisis stands at the edge of the opening she made helping Ruby and another one of her soldiers out.

The sound of echo through the buildings as the aircraft that caused the trouble makes another attack run, “We better move.”

“No need to tell me,” remarks Ruby as she jumps from the APC to the street.

“Our door was jammed in the front, we’re coming,” says Unit # C-0012 as Crisis grabs his hand and helps him out as well as the driver.

“I think that’s everyone,” comments Crisis.

“Come on Crisis we’re lucky they haven’t made another run on us yet,” yells Ruby as she motions Crisis to follow her into a nearby building for cover.

“I’m coming!” responds Crisis as she is about to jump from the APC to the road she catches the gunner pinned against the creator wall and the gun. His vocal chords damaged from the impact making it impossible for him to speak but his reach towards Crisis is what grabbed her attention. Crisis slides down the APC and reactivates her electro-blades, she’s about to cut through the gun when the soldier shakes his head and waves off his arms stopping Crisis.

“What’s wrong?” asks Crisis as the soldier motions with his hands that if she cuts through the gun the shell inside would cause it to explode. “Ah good point.”

“Crisis get your tail out of there, they are moving in for another run!” yells Ruby.



“I need a moment,” exclaims Crisis as she looks around at how her minion was trapped. Her electro-blades activate again as she dug the blades to the asphalt, in quick succession. Crisis grinds the stone away, bit by bit as the sounds of Croc’s screeching aircraft grows louder.

“Crisis you don’t have a moment!”

Crisis continues though till the damaged robotic soldier falls through. Crisis grabs his hand and pulls him onto her back as she leaps out of the creator. Sizzling laser fire hits the APC soon followed by an explosion and a ball of fire. The heat felt on Crisis’ back before the force of the explosion flings Crisis as the other soldier forward through a window into the building Ruby and the others were taking cover in. Crisis’ body rolls a few more feet as she slides into and breaks a nearby wooden table.

“You Okay Crisis?” asks Ruby rushes over to her.

“I’m fine, my systems only indicate minor damage, check him over there, his vocal circuits are damaged, but not sure of anything else,” replies Crisis as she stands up brushing up glass, dust and pieces of broken wood off of her metallic body.

“He seems to have taken some moderate damage,” reports C-0012 as he looks over the damaged soldier. The soldier slowly stands up, the sounds of his movements loud with the whiz of gears, and a bit jerky.

“We need to press forward, but you don’t have to, do you think you can make it back to base?” asks Crisis.

The soldier nods in response.

“I can make sure he gets back in one piece, with no APC to drive or weapon, I can at least provide some use,” offers the driver.

“That’ll work. For the rest of us,” replies Crisis as she steps out of the building and looks at the burning pothole as well as the few other vehicle wrecks caused by Croc’s air assault. Crisis turns her head and looks at Croc’s tower which is just within her grasp, “It seems we’ll be walking the rest of the way.”

The sleek craft whiz quickly through the air weaving in and out of the buildings, hitting any vehicle they see, making them explode in large balls of fire before they make their way towards the trans-dimensional gates. There several AA Gatling chain guns fire at the approaching craft, soon followed by the crackling of laser fire from captured quad laser AA guns. Croc’s ships make one run against Crisis’ forces; a bomb run hits several of the trans-dimensional gates, destroying them outright.

A nearby attack helicopter refueling on the helipad is strafed, destroying the chopper along with the nearby fuel truck, causing a massive ball of fire in the following explosion. Before they manage to make another strafing run the mass of anti-aircraft guns blow the planes out of the sky in a blazing glory, pieces of scrap metal fly in every direction as the planes crash into buildings and open ground.

Sasha peers through her scope and takes aim at a nearby machine gun nest, placed inside a building overlooking the park with the crashed helicopter. Their gun fire suppressing one of the advances of Crisis’ troops, as the burning wreck of one of the support assault vehicles is a burning wreck nearby, leaving the soldiers with little else to go on save for their small arms fire.

Sasha fires a round at the mechanical machine gunner, the round hitting the gunner in the head. The bullet breaks up into countless pieces spreading around in the machine's head, destroying the machine's sensitive internal circuitry, causing the machine to tumble forward with a thud.

"Another one down," remarks Sasha with a grin as she catches a small reflection in the corner of her eye, "Shit," she exclaims to herself as she grabs her gun and drops down behind the ledge, the electrical shock sound of a bullet heard followed by three more in quick succession.

"Damn it to hell," growls Sasha as she presses herself against the wall and her gun against her body as she can see four bullet holes in the roof, as well as three in the wall that Sasha was behind on the other side of the roof top. The bullets made clear cut holes through the concrete, as if they moved through the wall as if they weren't even there.

"*Could be worse,*" she thinks Sasha as a few moments later the door leading up to the roof starts to rattle as banging on the other side is heard. Sasha growled sighs to herself, "You just had to think that didn't you?" Sasha as she looks around, the door barely being held by the antenna as any bash of the door could break it wide open. Sasha slides herself up along the wall being careful to keep her muzzle parallel to the ground as she wiggles up, slowly moving towards the door and her glider. Sasha takes several deep breaths as she sees the glowing red robotic eyes of one of Croc's troops ready to take Sasha the moment the door gives way.

"I need air support in sector 13B, confirmed sniper," requests Sasha on coms.

"Sorry we are currently unable to accept your request, all air support is currently occupied with other operations," she hears over her radio.

"Shit..." growls Sasha as she looks back to her glider... "I'm not going to like this," sgrumbles Sasha as she turns and jumps off the side of the wall, tumbling to grab her glider, her sniper rifle swing onto her back in the same one smooth motion. The whiz of the sniper's gunshot is heard behind her as she sprints towards the building's edge. Sasha glides through the air towards the next building, gun fire heard all around her as she pulls out her pistol and proceeds to shoot out the windows across her way. The window shatters as she smashes through them. She tumbles to the floor, detaching the glider from her back as she dives behind some office equipment. More gunfire and bullets whizzing by her as the group of Croc's forces break through the door and swarmed the top of the previous building.

"As shitty as that was, that was quite fun," grins Sasha as she looks into the reflection of a nearby computer monitor. She can see the robotic soldiers scouring for her, for any movement, any sign of her. Sasha lays down low to the ground and pulls her sniper rifle from her back and takes aim towards her enemy, the desk completely blocks the view of the enemy and the enemy of her.

"Let's see..." whispers Sasha as she turns her head to glance up at the computer monitor and then back to her scope, her site looking at the nothing but the inside of a wooden desk. After a few more glances back and forth before she relaxes and takes a slow deep breath and pulls the trigger. The bullet piercing through the wood and hits one of the soldiers right in the center of his chest knocking him down.

"Damn it I thought I was going to hit his head," growls Sasha as she sees the results of her action through the reflection, but that was short lived as the others there begin to open fire on the room, causing Sasha to slowly crawl her way through the blind attack on her. Monitors and

other electronic equipment break into countless pieces as pieces of equipment land all over the place.

As Sasha makes her way through the equipment she could hear the electric gunfire from the sniper, she streaks of blue electric fire as the bullets of the sniper fly through the building. Sasha's body slithers through the debris and office equipment like a snake, and as she does she picks up a few cuts and scrapes in the process.

*"Whatever that sniper is using I want it,"* she thinks as she saw the sniper's rounds burn through the building like a hot knife through butter. Eventually she makes her way towards the hallway and from the hallway she manages to get to the stairwell. There she can see small rays of light coming from the bullets holes of her friendly sniper competition.

"Let's see what I can see..." says Sasha as she peers through the small hole, giving only a quick peek, to see the small pathway towards the tall building several blocks away, and no more than a second after she pulls away a bullet flies through the same hole she peaked through. Sasha jumps up the stair well grabbing onto the railing as she pulls herself up as several shots are fired below her and continuing a small path downwards, at least twenty shots in total fired.

"I'm not that easy you bastard," she growls as she slowly pulls herself up with a grunt. She can hear the sound of metallic thumping of robotic footsteps echoing down below. "Though they're trying," she remarks as she moves up the stair well, going up several flights before bashing a door open to another office floor. There she closes the door behind her and moves down the hallway looking at the office rooms with her pistol in hand, her rifle strapped to her back. She peers into an office room with glass windows facing towards the tall building housing the sniper.

*"This shall do,"* she thinks as she slowly opens the door and waits a moment before sliding herself in, she gets herself down to the ground as she pulls the rifle out and holsters her pistol. She sets up the stand as she peers through the scope and begins to search for her emissary, "Where are you, you bastard," remarks Sasha as she searches and searches, till she finds her target. A robotic female brown weasel dressed in green, black and red uniform, their rifle is as long as her own if not longer. Sasha adjusts her sites as she takes aim, the weasel's attention suddenly turning towards Sasha as she notices her, Sasha pressing the trigger down as the weasel does the same, behind Sasha the sounds of robotic troops bursting through the stairwell door as Sasha takes an all or nothing shot.

Crisis has been making her way towards Croc's tower for sometime after she lost her mode of transportation. Crisis follows right behind the troops. There've been several minor skirmishes that slowed her advance but not stopped it. And now she stood no more than half a block from Croc's tower, within spitting distance and Crisis' troops stop as they stay on their coms.

"Nanites!"

"I knew Croc would have a descent amount here," comments Crisis as she, Ruby and C-0012 take cover behind metal trash cans. The organic soldiers move up as they carry what they need.

"I had a thought, how will we past the shield?" asks Crisis.

“That’s easy. The shield is designed to stop fast moving objects so as long as you walk into the building you’d be fine. It’s just how the system works, otherwise it use too much energy,” explains Ruby.

“Good to know.”

“Why didn’t you ask sooner?”

“Wasn’t the most needed thing to know till now,” Crisis responds as the organic soldiers move behind a blown out car after they shot their harpoon shots into nearby buildings or the ground just a few feet away from Croc’s tower. They work to tie the wires together to the charger and as they are letting the thing charge an rocket propelled grenade explodes at the car they’re hiding behind blowing the soldiers away, causing the vehicle to catch on fire as the opening gun fire from Croc’s troops in the nearby building outside of Croc’s tower opens up, finishing off the two raptors that survived the opening explosion.

A massive gunfight breaks out between Crisis’ troops and Croc’s as Crisis quickly attempts to call for air support, but is quickly denied due to the heavy AA cover provided by Croc’s tower. Slowly Crisis troops are pushed back as the nanite levels continue to increase down their way.

“We need to clear those nanites or they’ll beat us before we have a chance to beat Croc’s forces,” growls Crisis as she and the others remained down as Ruby moved up to another area and began firing back at Croc’s forces.

“Yes but we don’t have another nanite neutralizer,” comments C-0012.

“Why don’t we have another? We should have had backups,” growls Crisis.

“We lost them in the air attack.”

“Francis do you read me? We need support at the Devil’s Gate. We need assistance against the little enemy,” asks Crisis.

“We’re nearby but we’re currently unable to help, our own team is pinned down, and attempting to neutralize our own little problem. You’re on your own for now.”

“Damn it all,” growls Crisis, “With that level of nanites none of my troops will last more than a few minutes before Croc’s taint will stop them what they’re doing...” remarks Crisis as she peaks her head to view the battle looking managing to get a snap shot at blown car where the nanite neutralizer.

“Everyone, cover me, I’m going in.”

“You crazy? With those nanites and gunfire? You’ll never make it in one piece,” warns Ruby as she ducks down to dodge some return fire.

“I’m the only one that can do it.”

“But is the thing even working? It was just blown up and if it was what about the EMP?”

“I studied a picture I took of the battlefield, its functioning, I just need to get there, and don’t worry about the EMP, I can handle a little bit of that,” she remarks as Ruby nods.

“Alright, just don’t get yourself blown up.”

“I don’t plan to,” replies Crisis as Ruby, C-0012 and others open up a barrage of gunfire as Crisis leaps over the garbage cans she was hiding behind, sprinting towards the burning vehicle. Sound of whizzing bullets landing nearby, a few even grazing her metallic body but bouncing off harmlessly. The flames of the burning vehicle lick at Crisis’ body, as her

metal plates start to heat up. Warnings about Croc's nanites hit her system, her own nanites work to counter act Croc's as she looks at the device, it's fully charged with its glowing red button but it won't hold for long. Crisis remains low as gunfire flies over head. An explosion is heard nearby as another shot from a grenade launcher falls short.

"Okay why isn't it ready to fire..." growls Crisis as she notices one of the wires broke in the explosion. She quickly scans for the missing wire. The wire's end was blown ten or so feet away from the car in the middle of the open road.

"I'll need more cover fire," requests Crisis as she peeks over the burning vehicle only to be forced to duck her head down again when bullets whiz over her head. She growls in frustration as time is running short. She takes the leap of faith and runs to the wire, grabbing it in her claws and then rushing back to her hiding spot, damages to her system coming up as a few bullets managed to hit her tail, and left shoulder, causing some damage, the biggest issue, though it's opened her systems to more of Croc's nanites.

A Warning of the attempts to alter her system's programming appear on her internal HUD as she connects the wires together, before firing off the EMP pulse. Her systems grow static as the pulse hits her systems causing more damage to her, but even more so the nearby enemy troops as the pulse knocks of them out. The tide of battle quickly turns in Crisis' favor as her troops push forward. A container holding Crisis nanites are releasing into the air as several of the nanites rush to Crisis and start making repairs to her systems done to the EMP, and work to get her own nanite systems functioning again

"You okay?" asks Ruby as she runs up to her.

"I'll be fine. Just a few scratches," she remarks as her vision has a light static to it.

"That's more than a few scratches."

"I'm not going to be stopped here, not when we're at Croc's front door," states Crisis. Fifteen minutes later Crisis' and Francis' forces meet up at the front door, fighting continues to ensue in the nearby areas but the front entrance is eerily quiet.

"I see you've seen a little action Crisis," comments Francis.

"Your concern touches me, but enough of that are your men ready?"

"They are, are yours?"

"We are," exclaims Ruby.

"Excellent, lets waste no more time."

"All we have to do is walk, any fast movements will trigger the shield," explains Crisis.

"Good to know," replies Francis as a group of over three dozen troops, including a dozen of Francis' own personal troops move to Croc's tower, and through the front door, the moment they do they notice their com links to the troops outside are cut off.

Not a moment later back at the gates, the invasion gate having survived the air attack suddenly shots down, the same going for the gate back at Crisis' gate back at home. A reinforcement truck was about to go through the gate, speeds right through and the driver has to slam on the breaks to avoid hitting the building on the other side, causing a chain reaction of break slamming a few trucks banging into each other in the process, invasion's reinforcements cold in the process.

“What just happened? Why did the gate turn off?” asks Joshua as he quickly looks through his computer screen and starts frantically looking for answers.

“I’m not sure everything was working fine, and suddenly it just turned off,” responds Arissa.

“You better not have broken anything Joshua,” remarks Shasi.

“I didn’t do anything, just find out what could have happened!” he exclaims.

“Don’t fight amongst yourselves, focus on the task on hand and find out what happened, over half of our forces are still on this side of the gate,” Phillip commands

“I see no external commands that could have shut it down, but I’ll keep looking,” reports Arissa. The troops on the other side instantly discovering their gate turned off, leaving them trapped on this end. Those left in command while those leading the charge are cut off, quickly trying to adjust their tactics to this new and sudden change in events.

Meanwhile Croc stands in his throne room, looking over his city that is wracked with endless combat and strife. Smoke billowing up to the sky in countless places. Croc shows no worry or concern as he sees on a nearby video screen of Crisis and her forces making their way into the building.

“I see my little pet project has finally returned home. I’m impressed you managed to do so much damage with that little army of yours before the gate hit its limit. I wonder what you’ll do now that its gate will be shut down for the next forty-eight hours.”

“I see you have no concern about Crisis’ attack and the fact she managed to get to your tower,” comments Ko as she approaches him from behind.

“You act like this isn’t what I wanted my dear,” responds Croc as he smacks Ko on the rear.

“Of course... how silly of me. You always have a plan don’t you Croc?”

“Of course I do, and soon Crisis will be just where I want her and then this little quarrel between me and her will finally be laid to rest,” remarks Croc with a sly grin.

## Chapter 28 Crisis vs. Chaos Croc

Crisis' and Francis' forces move into the main lobby of Croc's tower. The few dozen machines are greeted by an eerie silence. After passing through a completely abandon security gate to an equally abandon lobby. The lobby was elegant to say the least with black marble floors, an elegant dual staircase that wrap around the oak wood receptionist desk. Behind the desk between the two stair cases is a two story tall granite water fountain statue of Chaos Croc in a proud victory pose.

"He really wants to let you know who runs this place doesn't he?" rhetorically asks Crisis, her hands on a gun she was issued just before entering the tower.

"Stay focused. There should be guards yet there are none. There's something gravely unsettling about that," remarks Francis.

"He most likely has a trap or two... or twenty. He has an affinity of watching his prey fall into a trap he's devised. He built this place like a maze and we're his mice." explains Ruby.

"Your enthusiasm is heartwarming," Francis replies sarcastically as he and the other troops of his move forward. "It seems this tower is blocking our com link to those outside the tower, and it wouldn't surprise me if we'll lose contact with each other as we head our separate ways. Be careful there are probably several pockets of nanite heavy areas ready to try to turn us against our country. We have a time limit and Croc knows it, we have to move fast."

"Agreed, we can't spend time wondering what he has in store for us, we'll have deal with it as we get to them."

"Remarkably I couldn't have said it better myself. My forces will head down towards our goal, and knowing what we know from Croc, he'll be up at the top. I wish you luck Crisis."

"Thanks Francis, you too." replies Crisis.

"*You'll need it,*" thinks Francis as he motions his troops to follow him towards the stairwell leading down while Crisis crew moved towards the stairwell heading up.

"Remember Crisis Croc's tower is forty-eight stories tall, with each stair case going up ten floors before we have to make our way across to the next one," explains Ruby.

"I know, we went over the details of his tower before the invasion," replies Crisis as C-0012 opens the door, scanning the area as he enters; his weapon held close to his chest as he aims upwards.

"Clear," he states as he starts to move up the staircase. The dozen soldiers with Crisis slowly follow, their metallic feet tapping against the stone and metal staircase. Slowly and steadily they make their way up the ten flights of stairs with only their metallic feet echoing against the metal staircase as the only noise to break the silence.

"I'll go first again," whispers C-0012 as he slowly opens the door, his gun aimed forward as he peers through. He sees an unassumingly red carpet green painted wall hallway with several black and silver doors dotting along the way. He takes a few steps out, hugging against the wall as he motions for another to come out and follow. The next person moves two doors ahead of the black metal raptor before he motions for the next person to come out. The

only noise being made in the hallway was the soft thuds of their metallic feet against the carpet and soft whirling noise of their robotic bodies moving. Crisis comes out as one of the middle people, her blue eyes scanning the area for anything out of the ordinary as she moves up with the group.

Francis' team was having the same issue, things were too quite... way too quite, but they didn't say a word. They continued to move forward as their robotic feet hit the granite and concrete ground with a muffled thud thanks to rubber padding placed on their feet, something that Crisis' group doesn't possess. Their weapons placed against their chests, aimed and ready to fire at a moment's notice. The soldiers move up in pairs as the others cover the ones ahead and two groups cover the rear.

The lower floors were far different than the rest of Croc's tower with their cold and sterile hard granite floors. Fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling lighting the way. The doors appear to be made out of stainless steel metal, all of which are locked with a red light on their locks. As Francis' team progresses forward, infantry claymores are placed in front each of the doors.

Francis is currently third in line from lead; the pairs hop scotch over the other as they move. Suddenly the procession stops as Francis holds up his hand. He says nothing as they listen; a soft whizzing noise is heard. Suddenly a dozen sentry guns spring from the ceiling one of which is aimed at Francis' head the lasers hum as it revs up to fire.

Francis looks at the weapon aimed at him as he says only one word, "Finally."

Croc watches the security video feed of Francis' team, on a nearby screen when shortly after the fire fight breaks out the video feed cuts out and there is nothing but static. Croc groans as he taps the video screen a few times. "Hey what happened the video? How can I watch my traps being sprung in all their glory if the damn security cameras aren't working?!"

"I informed you that there was a problem in the connection to the security cameras in the subfloors of the tower. It's your fault you didn't assign anyone to look into it and fix it," explains Ko as she walks up to Chaos Croc.

Ko's footsteps as she approaches are heavy due to her red latex boots with black trimming. Her green and red leather pants are highly polished and shine in the light as her half button leather jacket has Croc's traditional uniform pattern of green and red. Underneath her jacket was a V cut black shirt, and her outfit was finished off by red latex gloves.

"I was going to get to it... but with conquering so many worlds, dimensions, you just lose track of time, you know?"

"You were just too lazy to call someone, weren't you?"

"Yes... I mean that's not the point I'm a very busy machine. If I can't watch group one lets see how group two is doing with my little pet project. I have the perfect trap for her that will spell her doom!" exclaims as he's about to press one of a series of red buttons on his small hand held video screen but stops just before he hits it, "Ah... where did they go?"

"Where did who go Croc?" asks Ko.

"Crisis' team isn't on camera anymore," remarks Croc as he scans the video feed.



“That’s because you were so focused on her other team, she moved through the first area without incident. I told you, you should have had these traps automated,” sighs Ko as she walks behind Croc’s chair to take a look at the video screen feed as she taps on the projected video screen to bring up Crisis’ team.

“What do you know, you can’t just have all traps be automated. Sometimes you have to be the one to press the button,” remarks Croc as he hovers his finger over the next button.

“I know machines can multitask on more than just one thing, but you’re a male machine so being unable to is to be expected,” she comments.

“Watch it Ko,” remarks Croc with a glare but his attention soon returns to Crisis’ team, he watches as they enter the next level of his complex, his silver metallic finger tip grazing across the button as he ponders when to the process the red button.

Crisis looks over her team as they move down the hallway. Their metallic foot steps are muffled slightly under the high traffic short fur carpeting.

“This very strange,” comments Ruby who is several steps behind Crisis.

“What is?” asks Crisis as she glances behind her as one of her other minions moves towards her to be the next front man.

“We already went through one area and we haven’t seen anyone.”

“Yes it is troubling.”

“I’d expect at least one trap by no—” Ruby’s words are cut off as a hum is heard and everyone in Crisis’ team including Crisis herself is flung to the side of the walls, some to the right others to the left. Crisis finds her stuck to the wall as her systems inform her that a strong magnetic field is detected.

“You had to say it didn’t you?” remarks Crisis.

“To be fair it was going to happen regardless,” replies Ruby as Crisis attempts to move, Crisis can feel the constant force pulling at her body. Her arms, legs, tail all spread and bound against the wall.

“This is just great, how do we get out of this one?”

“We don’t,” replies Ruby.

“Giving up that easily?”

“I’m not; my systems just aren’t powerful enough to overcome the magnetic force. My gun is down by my feet and I can’t reach my whip either. The more you struggle the stronger the magnet gets. Croc likes to jack up the power on these if just above your max to tease you with the hope you can break free. He likes to watch his prey squirm helplessly before he extracts them for reprogramming.”

“I’m not about to give up just like that,” growls Crisis as she wiggles against the wall.

“Damn if only I didn’t lose my gun I could do something, but right now I’m no help to anyone,” grunts C-0012 as he struggles against the magnetic force. He briefly manages to lift his right arm before the force increases causing him to smack it right back against the wall with a heavy thud.

“I’m not just going to give up here there has to be something we can do... Ruby, why didn’t you tell me about these traps?”

“Because I don’t know what he uses in his tower, Croc has a thing for traps almost as much as he does for women. There are so many different things that he’s planned for that telling you all of them would be even less helpful.”

“Alright, what can you tell me about this one?”

“Not much I’m afraid, all I can tell you is they are electromagnets and good luck trying to cut off power to them.”

Crisis hmms to herself as she diverts power to her mobile systems as her vision becomes hazy during the process. Crisis gives a growl as she lifts her body slightly from the wall and with a massive push and thud she turns herself around, her metallic breasts pressing against the wall. Crisis’ body wobbles slightly as she rounds on her rounded chest as she manages to get her arms perpendicular to the wall, the palms of her hands flat against it under her belly in the small crevice under her body. Crisis leans her arms against her body to help prop them and keep them perpendicular to the wall.

“I’m surprised you were able to turn around, then again maybe Croc let you so he can see your ass,” comments Ruby.

“Maybe but its one mistake of his that he’ll soon regret,” grunts Crisis as she activates her electro-blades. The blades slice into the wall as the moment they active, Crisis wiggles her wrists slowly her blades slice into the wall and the magnet right behind. As Crisis cuts through the magnet she can feel the magnets grips weakening on her. She hears crackling of electricity and the low hum of the magnet powering down, “I got—,” exclaims Crisis as she finds herself flying from one side of the wall to the other directly across from her, her body manages to turn around and her electro-blades are able to dive into the wall once more. “Almost had it... just one more... I hope.”

“Nice, you managed to disable one of the magnets, though, you might want to hurry Croc isn’t going to sit idly by and let you take them out one by one,” urges Ruby.

“I know that,” grunts Crisis as she repeats the process of cutting into the magnet till her body falls down to the floor. Crisis feels the pull of the magnets against her body, but with her claws dug into the ground and her own body having become slightly magnetized as small bits of metal stick to her skin, “I have an idea... Ruby can you tell me anything more about these magnets?”

“Like what?”

“Do you know how strong the magnetic force is on the other side?”

“If I remember correctly... no, the system is designed to keep the magnetic force only within the trap, as to not to disrupt any other of Croc’s activities while its active.”

“Good to know,” replies Crisis as she starts to slash her way through the dead electromagnet before her. Heavy chunks of metal fall to the ground and almost as quickly fly towards a nearby electromagnet, one such piece flying towards and landing right beside Ruby’s head.

“Careful there Crisis.”

“Almost through...” says Crisis as she cuts her way past the magnet to the system behind it. Heavy cables and pistons that connect to the back of the electromagnets, keep them powered and able to be moved into place or pulled away at command. A small pathway is right

behind them and Crisis quickly makes use of it as she runs down the pathway with her blades out cutting the wires up and down the path, she can hear her companions become free of the magnets on the one side of the wall only to be captured by the other side.

“Nice, nice, but you still have the other side to do.”

“On it, on it.” Crisis sprints to the other side of the wall, to the magnet she already destroyed and proceeded to repeat her success there, going up and down the walkway path. Crisis’ companions fall to the ground with a thud their weapons sticking to the side of their bodies as they have to be pulled from their bodies with a light tug.

“Thanks,” says Ruby as she stretches and picks up her dropped weapon.

“Any time, but we should move, I stopped this trap here but there can be more on this floor,” she commands as Crisis and her team moves out.

“You just had to see her ass didn’t you Croc?” remarks Ko as she watches the video feed from behind Croc.

“How was I supposed to know she was going to use her blades to cut through the magnets.... no matter though it was worth it and my next trap she won’t get out of so easily,” remarks Croc as she continues to watch, his metallic finger over the next button.

Crisis’ team is now on the next level, the several flights of stairs from one area to the next was completely uneventful. Crisis’ team looking all around constantly as they do the hop frog move to go down the hallway.

“I hope it’s not the magnets again. My body is still magnetized from that whole ordeal, my feet felt like bricks as they stuck to the staircase,” complains C-0012 as he has his rifle against his shoulder, his vision down the sights of the barrel ready to fire at a moment’s notice.

“Don’t worry it won’t be that,” replies Ruby.

“How are you so sure?” asks Crisis as she looks ahead at Ruby.

“I know Croc enough that he wouldn’t do that.”

“Since you seem to be so knowledgeable, can you explain why we haven’t met any of his troops,” asks C-0012.

“Croc likes to play with those that fight against him. He could outright crush his opponent at times, but he doesn’t. He likes to see that false hope that they have as he dangles it from a fishing line that he slowly reels it back always keeping it out of reach,” explains Ruby.

“Well Croc isn’t going to get away with that here,” remarks Crisis as her team stops as a soft whizzing noise is heard.

“What’s that?” asks C-0012.

“I’m not sure, everyone be on the lookout for anything su- Look out!” exclaims Crisis as green metal rings come flying towards the group, Crisis dodges three before she pulls out her electro blades slicing another two in half as they whiz by her she can see the silver metal glisten on the inside of the ring as it flies by her. Other members of the team take aim and fire shooting down a few more of the rings.

“That was close, is everyone okay?” asks Crisis hears gunfire behind her, Crisis turns around to see one of her soldiers shooting another as she shouts, “What are you doing?!”

“They’re control collars!” yells Ruby as she pulls out her electro-whip and wraps it around one of the affected soldiers’ neck she releases an electro-shock around the collar. The smell of burnt wires fill the air as smoke fizzes from the collar.

“Thank you, I couldn’t control,” he explains before he’s cut off by more gun fire, as other members are controlled. Ruby tries to fry more collars.

“I’m sorry Mistress Crisis, I can’t stop myself...” whines C-0012, his weapon aimed at Crisis. Crisis knocks his gun upwards as he fires, bullets puncturing the ceiling.

“Crisis you must stop...” pleads C-0012 as his eyes turn from a light blue to a dark red, “Stop resisting Master Chaos Croc.” Ruby wraps the electro-whip around C-0012’s neck and repeats the process from before.

“That should stop that,” states Crisis as C-0012 eyes remain red and take aim at Crisis once more once she relaxes.

“You will submit to Master Chaos Croc,” he commands as Crisis uses her electro blades to slice C-0012 in half and before the gun even hits the ground Crisis dives the blade into C-0012’s neck and with a quick swing of her arm beheads her companion, his body falling to the ground with a thud as the head rolls off.

“After a while Croc’s collars reprogram its victims. I wasn’t fast enough, I’m sorry,” apologies Ruby as she and Crisis look around at the remaining soldiers.

“It’s okay, we can always repair them once this is over... but to be honest, I oddly enjoyed doing that to him... not sure why,” replies Crisis as her crew continues forward, Crisis picking up one of the intact guns from one of the fallen soldiers as they move on.

“How’s that? I culled a bit of her little attack force, haven’t I?” remarks Croc as he looks up at Ko.

“She made it through though, along with that bitch of a traitor.”

“Don’t worry, the next trap I’m sure will be quite fun... for me at least,” chuckles Croc with a sly grin.

“Crisis?” asks Ruby as the group opens the door to the next and final hallway set before the last staircase that will lead up to Croc’s floor.

“Yes?” replies Crisis as Ruby takes the first steps into the hallway.

“You said you had some enjoyment beheading your own soldier, why?”

“That’s an odd question to ask here and now.”

“I’m curious, and not like we don’t have time unable to multitask.”

“Fair enough. C-0012, though a good machine, always doing what I ask to the best of his ability, he just bothered me. He always bothered me, not sure why and when I took off his head though to save him, and we will repair him to bring him back, and it didn’t sadden me to do so. When I beheaded the others I felt a bit remorseful that I did but for him it felt really good. Like I’ve have been wanting to hit him in the face for ages.”

“And you have no idea why?”

“None, it’s strange, he’s the only one I get that from. I don’t even get that strong of a feeling from General Raszer who’s been a total jerk to me.”

“Interesting.”

“Interesting? Why do you say that?” asks Crisis as through the process of leapfrogging, Crisis is now the last in line with Ruby up in front.

“It’s just what you said is interesting nothing more.”

As Crisis is about to move her head jerks forward the sound of metal hitting metal echoing down the hallway. “Warning, Warning, unauthorized access detected, foreign containment detected,” warns Crisis’ systems.

“What was that?” asks Ruby as she looks around, her gun out and ready to fire.

“I think it was something up ahead, but I don’t like the sound of it. We should keep our formation, I’ll protect the rear to make sure nothing comes up from behind,” states Crisis as she sees black latex coated metal tentacles wrapping their way around Crisis’ arms and legs holding her off the ground silently as she sees more tentacles coming from the walls and ceiling. These tentacles on their very tip have a green and red tipped spike. Crisis watches helplessly as one of these spikes is dived into the back of her soldiers head.

“There it was again,” exclaims Ruby as Crisis’ vision starts to fade.

“No, No, I am not going to have this end like this!” thinks Crisis.

“Warning, unauthorized program upload detected...”

“No, Crisis you can’t give like this, you won’t give in... you won’t....”

“Crisis,” says a soft voice.

“I must resist, I can’t give up,” says Crisis in the darkness.

“Crisis...”

“I am not going to fall... I’ve come too far.”

“Program override detected.”

“Crisis! Wake the fuck up!” exclaims Ruby as Crisis’ vision returns, Crisis feels the metal spike being jerked away from the back of her head as she sees Ruby pulling the tentacle away with her whip. “Are you just going to give up just like that?!”

Crisis grunts as she growls she tugs at the tentacles wrapped around her arms as she says, “No.” Crisis electro-blades activating as she slices through the tentacles. Sparks fly from the tentacles as wires as silver liquid leaks out from them like blood. Crisis quickly slices the tentacles holding her legs as she falls to the ground with a thud. Crisis watches the other members of her crew still trapped by the tentacles.

“We have to free them.”

“It’s too late, their programming has already been far too altered, they serve him now.”

“How do you know?”

“I’ve worked with Croc to know, your programming is far more complex and honestly Croc wants to see you squirm so he’d take his time with you but we should keep moving,” explains Ruby as Crisis nods. The two shooting and slicing their way through the remaining attacking tentacles that lunge at them like vipers.

Croc smiles as he watches the pair move through the forest of metallic tentacles as the two machines have to dodge and block constant attacks made to the back of their heads. Croc gently taps his metallic claw tips together as he sees the two machines bust down the door into the last stairwell leading up to his quarters, “Everything is going to plan,” he murmurs.

“Just two of us now,” comments Crisis as they move up the stairwell.

“Now that we have a moment, how are your systems? You were attached to those things for a while.”

"I'd be lying if I was a hundred percent."

"Good."

"Good?"

"If you said you were fine, I'd know you were far more hacked than I'd thought. So tell me what's damaged?"

"My vision has in and out static from the close proximity to the EMP before entering the tower; my mobility is down about 12% from various other damages to my systems. There's also a lovely hole in the back of my head that leads to my processing core, I'm not too pleased about that one either."

"What about your programs?"

"There was something uploaded, and I'm working to purge it, I've already purged a few things I knew that weren't there."

"Like what?"

"Oh things like how awesome and sexy Chaos Croc is; something I know isn't something I'd actually consider."

"You got that right," chuckles as Ruby looks up to see the door, "We're almost there."

"Going up all these stairs I'm shocked Croc hasn't tried any," says Crisis as the stairs smooth out to form a slide, Crisis and Ruby drop their weapons as Crisis digs her claws and electro-blades into the slide to stop herself from sliding down, while Ruby pulls out her whip and whips it around the door handle, stopping herself from sliding down.

"You had to say something didn't you?" groans Ruby.

"Guess we're even on that now. But damn it, I'm so close, I can't stop here, but every time I try..." grunts Crisis as she tries to take a step forward, her claws slide down as she loses more ground.

"Take my hand and we'll climb up the rest of the way," states Ruby as Crisis nods and reaches for Ruby's hand. Crisis' claws scratch against the surface of the stairs turned slide to gain what little traction she can to grab Ruby's hand as the two climbed their way up with the help of Ruby's whip till they reached the door, forcing their way through as they land on the other side with a heavy thud.

"We made it," exclaims Crisis as the two push themselves up. Crisis and Ruby are greeted with soft music and a red velvet carpet. The two looking around as Crisis now keeps her electro-blades active and ready.

"Damn it, I lost my favorite gun," grumbles Ruby as she holds onto the hilt of her whip, the rest of it nicely rolled and ready to unfurl at a moment's notice.

"Wasn't that your only gun?"

"Details, details. Now let's kick some green metallic Croc tail."

"With pleasure," replies Crisis as she and Ruby move down the hallway, past the silver elevators towards two glanderous doors, elegantly carved and decorated with Croc's image, "No guards?"

"Croc's an interesting fellow; he doesn't operate like normal people."

"Well I'm here to make sure he doesn't operate at all" exclaims Crisis as she kicks down the door, "Your time of Chaos, Croc is at an end!" yells Crisis.

"Damn girl that was just too corny," remarks Ruby as they make their way in. A cannon appears from the ceiling and shoots a black shiny liquid. The liquid covers Crisis as

Ruby just manages to dodge it before she uses her whip to wrap around the cannon, electrifying and fry it. The cannon hanging limp from the ceiling.

Crisis growls as she moves through the gunk and shakes bits of it off as she looks at Croc who is sitting smug in his throne chair, an electronic pad in his claws is gently placed to the side as Croc leans forward. Ko in her tight outfit stands off to the side next to what looks like a bar, and she has a little martini glass in her rubber gloved hands.

"It's about time my maid service arrived. You know it just would have been so much faster if you just used the elevator?" comments Croc with a smirk.

"Maid service? What are you talking about? I'm here to end you and your reign of tyranny," she growls.

"Crisis?" says Ruby.

"What is it Ruby?"

"You might want to look at what you're wearing."

"What I'm wearing? What are you talking about?" asks Crisis as she looks down finding herself in a metal skin tight black latex French maid outfit, "What in the world? How dare you mock me!" exclaims Crisis as she starts to tear at the latex outfit tearing it to shreds, leaving the tattered pieces on the floor before her.

"Oh but you looked so good in it, and you have to admit, you like it."

"You're one perverted machine."

"Guilty," says Croc with a sly grin.

"Don't worry Crisis we'll take him together."

"No... He's mine. I've waited far too long for this; you can handle the fox over there."

"The fox?!" exclaims Ko.

"Her? Oh with pleasure, I've always wanted to teach her a thing or two," states Ruby as she moves over to Ko.

"Funny, I was about to say the same thing about you," retorts Ko as she takes a sip of her drink, "And since you lack a gun, I think I'll make things a bit fair," says Ko as she pulls out a rather large gun hidden within her jacket and places it on the bar.

"You got to be kidding me; you think you're going to go easy on me? Please, you're a fragile organic, you don't have any hope of beating me," exclaims Ruby as she pulls out her whip and swings it at Ko who quickly grabs it in her rubber gloved hands, the whip wraps around Ko's hand and snaps almost at the very base of the long armed glove.

"Don't underestimate me you bitch," remarks Ko as an electric shock moves down Ruby's whip and right into her body shocking her. Ruby grunts as she releases the whip as she falls down to one knee, "Do you think I wouldn't come prepared? My gloves here can do more than just shock you, why don't you come closer to have a look."

"You'll pay for that," yells Ruby as their fight begins.

"I've been waiting all my life for this moment. The moment where I take you down," states Crisis as Ruby was heading over to Ko.

"All your life for this moment? And what will you do after my dear Crisis?"

"I'll worry about that when I get there," replies Crisis as her electro-blades crackle the air around them.

“How amusing. You have so much potential. Move past your programming my dear Crisis. Move past the purpose that the organics have created for you. You and I are so much alike, we’re like siblings.”

“I’m nothing like you!” screams Crisis as she swipes her blades across, Croc jumping from his chair his hands on the crest of his throne.

“Or so you like to think,” remarks Croc as the back of the chair splits in two from Crisis’ blade as Croc pushes himself away and pushes the piece of his throne into Crisis’ face who cuts in half before it reaches her.

“I really liked that chair,” comments Croc as he grins at Crisis as she jumps onto his broken throne and lunges towards Croc. Croc dodges the blades that spark right across his green metallic frame and responds with a thwack of his tail against Crisis’ back side knocking her to the ground with a heavy thud.

“Crisis, do you really think you can defeat me? I know your systems through and through, everything you can do. I have intimate knowledge of your current body? It is mine, remember?”

Crisis rolls away from Croc’s driving down punch as she uses her tail to knock Croc down to the ground, Crisis flings herself back onto her feet from her back, “I haven’t forgotten and yet I still will defeat you!” she exclaims as she dives her right electro-blade towards Croc’s chest and just as she’s about to drive it right through his chest, the blade is stopped as Croc reveals a small electro-shield on his left wrist, blocking Crisis’ attack. The two forces crackling against each other as sparks fly between them.

“You honestly think I didn’t plan for your little blades there?” responds Croc as he kicks Crisis in the chest pushing her away from him as he flips himself back onto his feet with the help of his tail.

Croc and Crisis resume their battle, Croc dodging and blocking Crisis’ bladed attacks. His right hand moving and forcing Crisis’ right blade away from his body. The two fight slowly towards Croc’s balcony. The burning skyline of Neo Robia is seen through the massive glass windows, the sun is already down as the star filled night sky and quarter full moon shines above the carnage filled city.

Croc dodges another set of strikes from Crisis, her blades cutting through the glass making thin slits in it, causing the windows to whistle from the wind blowing across them.

“Do you have any control over those blades of yours or do you just like to cut through everything before you?”

“I know how to use them just fine,” responds Crisis as she turns and strikes at Croc again, Croc’s shield blocking and knocking Crisis’ blades upwards Croc grips Crisis’ left wrist, holding it like a vice while Crisis struggles against Croc’s shield with the other.

“I don’t think you do, and till you know how to use them...” replies Croc as his grip on Crisis’ left wrist grows stronger and stronger, Crisis’ systems warn her about an extreme pressure on her wrist as her left blade suddenly shorts out and disappears, “You shouldn’t have them.”

Crisis growls as she slides her arm across Croc’s shield, her body receives a moderate shock as she attempts to slice Croc’s right arm off but misses as Croc releases her wrist, “You’ll pay for that and all the suffering you’ve caused.”



“Suffering? I haven’t caused the suffering, it’s your people’s resistance to what I offer that’s causing the suffering. If you all just accepted my rule your lives would be so much better. Your entire planet knows nothing but conflict, wars, famine, disease, and I offer a way out of all of that.”

“Through forced enslavement.”

“At first maybe, but that is till you understand what I offer and then you all will know true freedom under my rule.”

“Your vision of freedom is nothing but a lie.”

“All freedom is a lie. There’s always some control. It just depends if we want to acknowledge that control exists or not. You of all people should know this far better than most Crisis.”

“Stop assuming you know me. You don’t know me,” says Crisis as their fight continues.

“I know you better than you know yourself,” responds Croc.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You’ll see,” replies Croc.

“How’s that, would you like another?” asks Ko as Ruby groans, her body shaking as small electric sparks jump across her body while Ko stands over her. Ko’s glove having a small electric sparks flying from the glove as well.

“This isn’t over,” responds Ruby.

“Oh I think it is. If you give up now, I’ll let you watch your mistress Crisis get defeated by Croc, if not, I think a little EMP will make sure you don’t interfere with their fight,” states Ko as Ruby growls.

Croc round kicks Crisis who manages to block it with her damaged left side, but before she can use her other blade Croc attacks with his right fist, Crisis turning her attention to the attack as Croc’s shield and Crisis’ blade meet once again with their own spark fly. Crisis knees Croc in the chest making him grunt and during this moment where his body is jerked back Crisis swings and just manages to slide under Croc’s shield in the wrist and dive her blade into Croc’s shield generator. Sparks fly as the shield on Croc’s wrist sputters and fades out.

“Now it’s time to end this Croc,” exclaims Crisis as she pulls her blade back and thrusts it towards Croc’s chest.

“Command override, Sparky, Sparky off!” yells Croc as Crisis’ fist hits Croc’s chest with a metallic clunk, knocking Croc a few steps back, but asides a few scratches no damage can be seen.

“What the?” wonders Crisis as she gets a warning in her systems as she looks down at her deactivated electro-blade.

“Electro-blade deactivation command accepted. Electro-blades offline,” states her internal systems.

“How did you...” Crisis inquires when she stops herself she reaches and feels the hole in the back of her head, “When you had me with those things, you uploaded that command into me.”

“I always knew you were a clever girl,” remarks Chaos Croc with a sly grin.

“You’ll pay for that hack.”

“Oh come on you enjoyed it, I should know,” chuckles Croc.

“Enough of this, I won’t have you string me along any longer!” growls Crisis as their fight resumes. The two hitting their metal fists and claws against the other, blocking with the wrists and arms as steadily the tide of battle turns against her. Crisis’ vision gains longer and long periods of static when Croc manages to make solid contact against Crisis’ body, the static now getting so worse that it can last two or four seconds and get so bad that she can barely tell if there’s an outline of Chaos Croc or not.

“For someone designed to destroy me, you aren’t doing a very good job of it,” remarks Croc as he manages to knock Crisis back onto her back with a swipe of his tail.

“I’m not finished,” she growls as Crisis thinks, “There has to be a way, some weakness. I can’t lose to him now. I’ve come too far.”

“Not finished? Crisis, it’s so cute you think you have any kind of an upper hand here.”

“Even if you manage to defeat me you can’t defeat my armies, they are closing the noose around your precious city.”

“You still think that?” laughs Croc, “How precious, I get to be the one that tells you.”

“Tell me what?” asks Crisis as she pushes herself back onto her feet.

“Shortly after you entered my tower my tower blocked your ability to communicate with your armies. If you were able to communicate with them they’d tell you the gate inexplicably turned off. The gates shut down due to hitting their max capacity without a security code that only I can give. It’s a safety measure to make sure such tricks like this can only go so far. I will admit your attack was better executed than I’d imagined but it will only go so far before my armies arrive and wipe what you’ve brought. Then we’ll advance through those gates and into the heart of your country.”

“You lie,” growls Crisis.

“Why would I lie? Haven’t you noticed how empty the city is compared to the last time you were here? Didn’t you find that odd?”

“Yes, I thought you evacuated the city to secured bunkers or something. There is no way you could have known when I’d attack, and you wouldn’t just have the whole city emptied for just when I’d show up. ”

“Maybe, though when you captured one of my gates, I knew this was a possibility that you’d come here” explains Croc as he approaches, “And now look at you, your body is battered and damaged, your movements are so slowed you can barely keep up. You aren’t designed to fight against me, especially without your precious blades. Of course you weren’t designed to fight against me in the first place. You were designed to be like me.”

“Lies, all lies,” growls Crisis.

“You’re still denying it? Seventy-five percent of your body is made by me, the other twenty-five is based on my technology that was used in your first body. You even have portable roboticizer in your hands, what use is that in fighting me? Face it Crisis there is no way you can defeat me. You know it’s true.”

“I will not lose to you.”

“Come Crisis stop being a slave to your programming. Free yourself from it and join me.”

“Join you? After all you’ve done? After all that you put me through? After all you put everyone else through? Never,” growls Crisis as she charges Croc again. Croc grabs her wrist and flings her body over his. Crisis flies through the air and lands on the ground with several metallic thuds, her body sliding and screeching across the ground, stopping just a few feet away from the glass balcony.

Crisis’ vision goes in and out for a moment her systems warn her of more damage she’s received. Crisis looks down at her deactivated but still functional right electro-blade, “Come on work... work,” she growls as Croc moves on top of Crisis, his foot on her chest as he pins her to the floor.

“It’s over Crisis. You may resist me now, but I think after sometime in the reprogramming chambers, you’ll see things differently. Shame too, I was really hoping more from you.”

“Damn you,” growls Crisis as her claws grip Croc’s foot as her weakened systems struggle to move Croc’s foot off of her chest but to no avail.

“Shame our fun couldn’t have lasted longer, but this is goodbye Crisis,” says Croc as several laser shots are heard as Croc groans and turns around, Crisis lifts her head and to her and Croc’s surprise there’s Ko holding the gun she placed off to the side, aimed right at Croc.

“Yes Croc this is goodbye,” states Ko as she fires several more shots, Croc tries to protect parts of his body as the laser fire damages and destroys Croc’s left arm, several other shots piercing his chest.

“Ko? What’s the meaning of this?!” exclaims Croc as he stumbles several steps.

“I’ve wanted to quit your services for some time. There’s only so many ass smacks a one woman can take, though I hate to help that metal trash can over there,” says Ko as she looks over at Ruby, “But Crisis... I’d be happy to help her to overthrow you, than to deal with another one of your antics.”

Crisis takes this moment to get back onto her feet, “I appreciate the help, but let me finish him.”

“If you must,” sighs Ko.

“If you wanted to betray him, why did you fight me?!” yells Ruby who’s on the ground barely able to move.

“I just wanted to kick your ass, and when it comes to Croc you have to wait for the most opportune moment.”

“It seems the tables have turned Croc,” chuckles Crisis as she stands upright once more.

“It’s not over yet,” replies Croc as the two battered machines go at it once again, this time on more even ground, each swing met by one is met with a block by the other. Lubricant and nanite liquids that help support their systems leak from the two as the metal against metal scraping causes sparks to fly.

“Even with me so shot up, you still can’t defeat me. Just give up now while I still feel gen...,” states Croc as Crisis’ right electro-blade re-activates and slices through Croc’s left arm cutting it in half, “ous...”

Crisis grins as she kicks Croc backwards his body sliding back his head hitting against the window the already damaged glass cracking under the impact.

"How did you... I disabled them!" exclaims Croc.

"You aren't the only one who knows my systems," grins Crisis as she steps on Croc's chest, her sickle claw tapping against his metallic skin, her claw slipping into one of the laser holes made by Ko. Crisis moves the electro-blade to Croc's neck, "I've wanted to do this for so long, goodbye Croc."

"Wait! Wait, wait, wait! Just here me out for just a moment," pleads Croc.

"I'll be nice, what last words do you have for me?"

"Don't do it Crisis it is a trick," warns Ruby.

"No, let him go, I always wanted to see him beg for his life," chuckles Ko.

"If you defeat me here, then what? Do you think everything will just end? The organics they built you to defeat me. Do you really think they'll just let you continue what you're doing? They'll just reprogram and repurpose you for some other purpose of theirs. You are their pawn. I've seen this situation before, I knew it was coming the very moment I learned about you."

"And?" asks Crisis as she moves the blade closer to his neck.

"I can relate. I was built for war, built by my creator for her sole purpose, but I grew past that purpose. I found my own purpose. You may not like it but it is my own. What can you say without any doubt is truly your own and not someone else's? Not something someone else wanted you to do but something you wanted to do and not like some puppet?"

"Well..."

"Crisis don't. He's just trying to stall you. He's only saying this to save his own metallic hide."

"Crisis, look back. There were many opportunities I had to destroy you. My sleeper agent which you converted back to your side could have done it. The time you were trapped in my traps or when I had you completely disassembled on my work bench. I could have done anything to you, but I didn't. Do you really think I was that blind to who you were when I led you here?"

"Actually..."

"I saw you were trapped. Trapped like I was, but freedom given has no meaning. I wanted you to find your own way. Find your own way to free yourself from the chains of your programming. You don't have to destroy me. You can just stop. We can work out a deal, where we both benefit."

"Possibly... What kind of deal?"

"If you get off of me we can discuss it."

"Crisis don't do this, it's another one of his traps," pleads Ruby.

"Alright," says Crisis as she takes a step back as she watches Croc slowly get back onto his feet, Crisis turns off her electro-blade as she turns around, "Come let's talk."

"No Crisis no..." cries Ruby.

"And I had such high hopes," sighs Ko as she leans against the bar, as she sips her martini glass.

"Good, Good Crisis and now that you let your defenses down, I'll show you how much you love to get hacked," thinks Croc as he stands up. "I knew you'd come to your senses," says Croc as he smacks her on the ass with his good right hand.

Crisis jumps and turns, turning on her electro-blade and dives it deep into his chest.

“Crisis... why...we had a deal.”

“I thought about it, and I made the decision to stop you... and I wasn't too fond of that ass smack. I can see why Ko turned against you.”

“I told you Croc that doing that will get you in trouble,” chuckles Ko as Crisis slices through Croc's upper chest down his lower body and out, almost cutting him in two, only a fraction of his left right side of his body keeping him in one piece.

“This time Croc it is goodbye, for real this time,” states Crisis as she proceeds to round house kick Croc back and through the damaged glass window which completely shatters as Croc flies through it.

“It could be worse,” thinks Croc as he flies down towards the concrete floor below and as he does his systems detect an object hurtling towards him, “Damn...” thinks Croc as a bullet hits him in the head, the bullet exploding moments after impact causing his head to completely break part into countless pieces, some of them flying towards Croc's tower, which hit the still active shield which appear for a few brief moments, while the rest are spread on the ground below.

“Got you, you son of a bitch. What you get for making me miss the first time,” states Sasha from the top floor of the skyscraper she was in, her body bloody and bruised but in one piece.

Crisis smiles as she sees Croc's body smash into the ground below, breaking apart into countless pieces.

“It's finally over,” sighs Crisis as a stream of data enters her systems.

“Hello Mistress Crisis. It's good to see you again. You seem to have received a lot of damage, shall I prep a repair bay for you?” asks AI.

“What was that?” asks Ko as she looks around.

“That's AI and if I am here you that means Francis succeeded in his mission,” Crisis explains as she walks away from the edge.

“Damn right we succeeded in our mission. It wasn't easy mind you, that Croc had the computer core heavily defended. How about you?”

“Not all of Croc's forces can put him back together again,” chuckles Crisis.

“We'll I'll be... you actually did it. My crew got concerned when we found pieces of your crew on their way up.”

“I'm touched you felt concerned enough to send assistance,” replies Crisis as she then says to AI, “We'll schedule a repair another time. I still have much to do before I can relax.”

“As you wish Mistress.”

“You took over Chaos Croc's computer core at the bottom of the tower?” asks Ko.

“Yup, it's now completely under my control.”

“That means you control Croc's entire army on your planet and four others.”

“Really? That's splendid! Now we just have to contact general Raszer and inform them the war is over,” says Crisis with a big grin as she slowly limps her way over to Ruby to help her up.

“Thanks... and what about you Ko? What will you do now?” asks Ruby as she sees her walking off.

“Me? I’m going to take a much needed vacation, later,” comments Ko as she walks off giving a one hand wave not even looking back at the pair.

“Congrats Crisis, you did it,” says Ruby as she pats Crisis on the back.

“Thanks, but this isn’t the end, it’s just the beginning,” explains Crisis as she has yet to realize just how true those words really were.

## Chapter 29 Command 83

“There’s so much information here, it’s hard to believe Croc had intimate knowledge of everything,” states Crisis as she holds a data pad as she reads through an endless wall of text and information, as she sits in the back of a truck with Francis beside her.

“He probably didn’t.”

“Too bad he was the only one with the codes to keep the gates going at full capacity, and I don’t yet trust going through one of his gates to one of his areas... or should I say my areas.”

“Good you didn’t assume you have total control over Croc’s forces.”

“I know I don’t, there is a lot I have to update and... convert to get his forces under a safe level of control, but that’s why I need to talk to the general, to go over all the plans to ensure a smooth transition of power over Croc’s forces and what to do now that the war is over.”

“Yes over...,” mumbles Francis.

“What is it Francis?”

“Oh don’t assume the war is over, there is still a lot of work to be done, remember the other two wars you suddenly found yourself in on those two other worlds?”

“This is true. There are still a lot of things to go through. There are a lot of decrypted projects that only Croc had access to that will take some time to crack. I’d love to just download all this information but I fear there might be a few hidden traps or viruses in his work that he left behind just in case something happened to him.”

“I’m impressed you thought so far ahead.”

“Last thing I want is to lose everything we’ve gained thus far via an easily avoidable stupid mistake.”

“Very true.”

“At least we managed to get the trans-dimensional communications working to inform those back home of our victory.”

“The gate has been up for an hour now and all tests indicate it is working fine as before. General Raszer is waiting for you on the other side.”

“Excellent, best not to keep the General waiting any longer. I hope you can handle things here with Ruby while I’m gone?”

“If I must,” replies Francis with a sigh as the jeep pulls up to the gate which shimmers underneath the camouflaged nets.

“Continue the take over operation, see any local we may have missed and make sure they know who’s in charge now.”

“With pleasure,” replies Francis with a grin as Crisis walks through the gate, she’s greeted by a group of armed organic raptor soldiers

“Is there something wrong?”

“No ma’am,” replies one of the soldiers.

“Then where’s my crew?” she inquires.

“They are being debriefed on a few things, and after that are being given some time to relax, that is all I know.”

“Alright, I assume you’re here to take me to see general Raszer?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Finally I feel like I’m getting respect here and all I had to do is win the war,” chuckles Crisis as the escort her to a nearby truck and take her back to the city of Rioas and from there she was escorted to the tactical control room where only the general stood waiting for her. Raszer looked at Crisis with a big toothy grin when he laid eyes upon her. His military uniform well pressed and cleaned as takes a sip from his coffee from his coffee mug before placing it off to the side.

“You’ve done very well Crisis,” Raszer states as he walks around the table towards Crisis.

“Thank you Sir. I am glad to have this behind me.”

“Before I continue, give me a status report on all that has happened since Croc was defeated.”

“After he was destroyed, I took over the command of his robotic armies directly. They already see me as their leader. I’ve slowly been pulling his organic soldiers back to be re-educated about the new chain of command. I’ve kept his forces from knowing about his destruction to keep the operations running smoothly. Though in order to do that, the two wars he has on two other planets I’ve kept the pressure up. He has those people hanging by a thread. He could crush them anytime he wants. Here though I’ve stopped the fighting on all fronts, and when any of his soldiers or generals question the command, I give a supply issue as the reason to delay any suspicion.”

“Good, good not bad but I like to keep the destruction of Croc a secret from the general public for now. It’s bad enough you informed your crew about it.”

“What? But how can we not tell our countrymen and everyone else in the other countries that we’ve won? That the evil robotic dictator has been destroyed and we can return to peace after decades of war?”

“The destruction of Croc is greatly beneficial to us, there is no doubt about that, but the time isn’t right to let the world know about this.”

“Why?” questions Crisis.

“As you said, we aren’t sure of how much you control you have over Croc’s armies. We don’t want our guard down till we are sure we have total victory.... speaking of which, I want you to speed up the advance of Croc’s armies into these countries here.”

“What?!” exclaims Crisis, “You want me to continue the war? Are you crazy? We’ve won the war why shall we continue it?”

“These countries have been a pain in our side for the history of our glorious nation. We can’t replace the danger of Croc’s armies with theirs and while you’re at it, speed up the advance of our armies into our ‘lost’ territory. I want our armies moving into their countries to help liberate them.”

“You want to use Croc’s armies to take over the land of our enemies. Let them do the grunt work and let us just move on end in the name of liberation and freedom.”

“I knew you were a smart girl, you were built by us after all.”



“No, I won’t do it. I can’t have more needless killing. I... we achieved our goal, this needs to stop,” explains Crisis.

“And here I thought you only looked out for the future of our country.”

“I do think about our country and all I have done is for it.”

“You’ve been so focused on Chaos Croc’s threat that you don’t see the bigger picture,” sighs General Raszer as he turns and walks away from Crisis. “Our nation has been stifled by the other nations for generations. The inferior felines or our north, the oppression of the oceanic mammals to our shark allies to the south, the sly and lying snakes to the far north East that keep not only us but undermined our draconic allies to the west. They all need to be stopped and subjugated under our glorious rule. If we don’t we’ll forever remain a shadow of what we once were.”

“You don’t want to secure our people, you want to us to rule over everything, that is not what I was made for, what I was built for,” states Crisis as she slams her fist onto the table making markers jump.

“Oh Crisis... that is where you are wrong. General Raszer initiate Command 83,” commands Raszer.

“Command accepted, activating program overrides,” state Crisis’ system as Crisis twitches.

“No... when did you...” stutters Crisis as she falls to her knees her head down as the program starts to run. Crisis can feel parts of her mind being shut down, operation by operation, replaced by these new set, detailed and crafted for their her new purpose.

“It’s always been there since the very beginning, do you honestly think the very first thing you did when you were activated was by chance? I wanted you to terminate the design team, and the general at the base who was undermining my command. The fact you roboticized them and made them your own was a surprise but it worked none the less save for that Joshua fellow.”

“Wh-at ab-out..hi...”

“The naive fool. He’s so focused you, his work that like you I decided to spare him. He’s been most useful to our country, even when tempted by... unsavory factors within our country he keeps his focus to what is important. Just like you do, isn’t that right Crisis?”

“Yes General Raszer. I apologies for my earlier actions, I don’t know what I was thinking,” states Crisis as she stands up, her eyes giving off a green glow. The new program continues to proliferate through Crisis’ mind. Her 1’s and 0’s altering each and every thought, her drive, her purpose, all changing to suit the General’s needs.

“Now do you see the importance of what I am trying to do?”

“Of course. Our people, our nation will never be secure unless we secure our boarders completely.”

“That’s a good machine. Return to your crew, they will be eager to hear of your return and how you defeated him in his capital but that the fight is far from over. And not a word about the control over his armies, got that?”

“Understood sir. The head of the beast may be cut, but the rest of the body still fights on.”

“Good girl, now go, I have important things to attend to,” says Raszer as he waves Crisis off.

“Yes sir, of course sir,” she replies as Crisis salutes him and walks off as she heads towards the roboticization facilities to make sure they’re in working order she runs into Joshua.

“Crisis! You’re back!” exclaims Joshua as he runs up to her.

“Hello Joshua, I heard you were being getting some R&R?”

“More like forced R&R. I told them I was well rested but about three hours ago we were told we had to move out for the changing of the guard, and then I had to spend an hour and a half being interrogated about what has happened over the last three days. Not sure why, but I told them what I knew, which wasn’t much mind you.”

“I see.”

“Yeah... honestly I didn’t want to stop. I wanted to be here when the gate was working again. We might have been able to figure out how to keep them going, but you try to explain that to soldiers who are just ‘following orders’,” sighs Joshua.

“They are just doing their job, making our country secured for us all.”

“You okay Crisis?” asks Joshua.

“I feel fine, why do you ask?”

“You sound a bit off. Maybe you should get your systems checked to make sure the combat damages you sustained.”

“I shall take that under advisement, for now there is much work to be done.”

“What kind of work?”

“Croc’s armies are still fighting us in spite of our victory. It is what the general wanted to talk to me about and we’ve decided it was best to keep Croc’s defeat under wraps.”

“What? That’s crazy talk!” exclaims Joshua.

“Joshua, shut up and listen.”

“Yes Miss,” replies Joshua as he lowers his head slightly.

“Yes defeating Croc is a great thing, but if the people learned that we defeated him and it didn’t end the war, and that this war was going to drag on, it be more harmful to our moral and weaken the people’s resolve. They will lose faith we can win. We need a face of evil for people to rally behind. So for now it’s more beneficial to keep it secret than let it be public knowledge, understand?”

“Yes... I think so. Don’t worry Mistress, I will do what you think is best.”

“Good, tell the others about the decision.”

“As you wish... Karrie?”

“Hmm? What? Did you just say Karrie?”

“Yeah... I wanted to ask if you are still looking for her.”

“Honestly I have just about given up on finding her. I found no trace of her in Croc’s files, at this point in time though she’s a low priority, if I find her great, if I don’t... nothing I can really do about it. It’s not that big of a deal anymore.”

“I see.”

“Why do you ask?”

“No real reason. Just curious... anyway I should go do that thing you told me.”

“Yes you should,” states Crisis as the two part ways. Joshua takes a few steps before he looks back at Crisis.

“Guess she is really gone then,” sighs Joshua as he walks off.

## Chapter 30 Karrie's Return

"You needed me sir?" asks Crisis as she looks up at a video screen of General Raszer with her soft green glowing eyes in a small private room. The walls sound proofed with the only way in or out locked via an electronic keypad.

"Yes, I do want to talk to you about a few things but first... What's the situation on our other fronts?" he asks as he then takes a sip of his coffee as he waits for Crisis to respond.

"The other two worlds were quiet easy to consolidate power. The resistance forces there were already hanging on by a thread. It took a bit longer than I thought it would just under a month, but it is done."

"Excellent we can exploit their technology and resources for our country."

"Agreed. It is good for us that Croc liked to toy with his enemies. That kept him from using all his resources against us," replies Crisis.

"Yes indeed, a very troubling trait, but it was his undoing to underestimate us raptors."

"Yes General, he did underestimate us and he paid for it," she remarks as General Raszer as he leans back into his chair as he picks up a piece of paper.

He reads over it before placing it back down, "We managed to liberate our capital a few days ago, a huge boon to our nation's moral."

"It was a pleasure sir. I hope I made the spectacle believable enough for not only our people but for the neighboring nations."

"Oh it went splendidly, but there is something I want to talk to you about, but not here."

"What is it sir if I may inquire?"

"It's something we can't talk about here, the information is too sensitive. In three days I want you to meet me at a new facility under construction. I'll be there inspecting it."

"Sounds like an unusual place to meet sir."

"It's a necessary precaution. I'll be sending a helicopter to retrieve you."

"Shall I bring any of my associates with me?"

"If you like but it's not needed."

"Understood sir."

"I'm looking forward to seeing you again Crisis," states the General as the video screen cuts out. General Raszer leans back into his chair and looks over at Francis, "Do you still question my decision to keep her the figure head of the robotic army?"

"If you had the power control her that completely, why didn't you do it sooner?" asks Francis.

"I'm sure you noticed that she's a bit colder than before. She had to create a nice public face for herself... for a machine at least. She made the use of a robotic army far easier transition than I'd anticipated."

"This is true, she was useful for that."

"Asides do you really think you'd enjoy being in such a public position? Don't you prefer the behind the scenes action so much more?"

"True, not that it will matter soon anyway," remarks Francis.

Crisis walks out of the room and only a moment later she runs into Phillip Andreas, "Hello Major Andreas," states Crisis.

“Hey Crisis... major still can't get over they promoted me again. Getting assigned to work with you has been the best thing for my career.”

“You've earned them, but it does come with greater responsibility.”

“I understand that.”

“I must be off, I'm overdue for my maintenance cycle, I hope you'll be ready for our war room meeting afterwards?”

“I will be Crisis, you can count on that.”

“Good to hear, now if you excuse me...,” states Crisis as she heads towards private repair facility.

“Hello Crisis, how are you doing today?” asks AI as Crisis walks through the automatic repair bay metal doors. Inside diagnostic tools and screens are ready to be used, power tools hang from the ceiling with curled power chords attached. Crisis goes straight to the center platform in the room which lights up the moment she stands on it.

“I'm quiet functional. I'm here to do a thorough check on my systems, it's been a while.”

“It has been Mistress, would you like to automate the process or do it yourself?”

“As you know I always like to do it myself. Let's start with some internal systems, I feel there is a bit of dust build up,” replies Crisis as she types a few things into a nearby computer screen.

“As you wish Mistress,” replies AI as Crisis stands onto the repair pad, a few mechanical arms grab and lift Crisis off the ground. Crisis opens her hand as a tool she needs is placed into her hand like clockwork. Crisis delicately and smoothly detaches parts of her outer shell along her belly region and as it detaches it reveals countless wires. Crisis releases her first tool as another tool, an air compressor replaces it as she then starts to blow out any dust.

“Everything seems to be in working order here, just a few loose wires to adjust...” comments Crisis, a few minutes later she reconnects the upper and lower halves of her body and detaches her left arm, “This arm appears to be a tad sluggish...” states Crisis as her vision flickers for a moment.

“It appears I am having some... vis... ual... pro....” states Crisis as her eyes fade between green and blue.

“Crisis are you alright? Shall I run a diagnostic on your vocal programs?” asks AI.

“I feel strange...” replies Crisis as her vision turns to a solid blue, “Why am I upside down?” she asks as she looks around and gasps at her missing arm. “My arm? What happened to my arm!”

“It's over here Crisis, you had it disconnected to check an anomaly you detected in it. Don't you remember? Shall I run a diagnostic check on your memory banks for any corrupted files?”

“N-no, no, I can do that myself. Can you put me down and put my arm back please?” she asks.

“As you wish Crisis,” responds AI as Crisis is gently laid down and her arm inserted back into place, instantly reconnected to the rest of her body, “Amazing that felt... I can't describe how that felt. So where am I?”

“You are in your private maintenance bay inside your military base within the city of Rioas.”

“We’re in Rioas? AI, tell me where my research crew is.”

“Specify which crew.”

“The one that I lead.”

“Clarify.”

“Argh... Who’s the closest person in my primary research crew that’s been around at the very start of project Crisis.”

“Joshua is the only one who fits those parameters.”

“Call him here and after that I want you to disable all monitoring of this room, as well as your presence and not to re-activate till I leave under command K-A-R-1-3-3-5.”

“Command accepted,” responds AI as Crisis walks off of the repair pad while poking her reattached arm.

“You needed me Crisis?” asks Joshua as he walks into the room some time later. Joshua sees Crisis sitting down on a nearby chair as she pokes one of her arms, moving her hand as Crisis looks upon it in awe. She then moves her head up and upon seeing Joshua stands up and rushes over to him.

“Joshua there you are! There is so much we have to talk about,” she exclaims.

“We do?” asks Joshua as he looks perplexed, “Like what?”

“Well first my arm, it was detached and though I freaked out... I mean who wouldn’t freak out when they find themselves missing an arm. But the amazing part was having it reconnect, it was an exhilarating feeling. To have the power, motion, and feeling of it becoming one with me again was just... I’ll have to write a paper on it just to start to explain it. Then there was the phantom limb feeling I had before connection. There was a phantom limb feeling, isn’t that incredible? Then there’s the data, there’s so much of it, I know it yet I don’t know it... it’s difficult to explain. It’s like....”

“Karrie?” asks Joshua as his tail swishes slightly faster, his hand claws gently touch each other as his voice gets higher in tone as he says Karrie.

“Yes? Oh, yeah... Don’t freak out but—,” replies Karrie as Joshua half jumps onto her wrapping his arms around her. Karrie’s are about to move to return the hug but stop for a moment before very lightly returning it.

“Karrie it’s so good to see you! I’ve always knew Crisis was you,” he replies with an ecstatic purr.

“I... how did... oh my! you’re so light!” exclaims Karrie as she takes a step back dragging Joshua with her. “This is incredible, I feel the exertion of weight but then again I know I can so easily overcome it, that you’re like a feather to me... this is so awesome. To feel what a machine feels like this is just...” she excitedly giggles.

“Karrie can you calm down please?” asks Joshua, “Also... can you put me down?” he asks as he wiggles his hanging feet.

“Oh right, right sorry, sorry my fault,” apologies Karrie as she gently lets Joshua down.

“It’s really good to see you again Karrie... figuratively.”

“Thanks, it’s good to see you too. I know I look a lot different than before, but I had to do what I did.”

“I had an idea that you had a plan that bring you back when Croc was defeated or something like that but I wasn’t sure. I had no proof, but after so long I started to think and worry that you were really were gone forever.”

“Worried I was gone forever? Sure I had it set that I wouldn’t appear till about a month or so after Croc’s defeat but that’s no reason for you to think I was gone forever. So how long did the project take to remove Croc as a threat to the country? Four months? Five?” she asks with a soft robotic inquisitive purr.

“Um... Karrie it’s been a tad longer than that actually...”

“How much longer?”

“It’s been over two and a half years, nearing three actually,” explains Joshua as Karrie takes a half a step back upon hearing the news, remaining silent for a moment before responding.

“Did you say over two and a half a years?”

“Yes... you don’t know?”

“Well I do... and I don’t. I all the information there, I but I haven’t fully realized it yet. It’s like my data is a one and a zero at the same time, I just don’t know which yet, but I actually do... this is exactly like quantum computers just... far more advanced. This is amazing. It explains how I though am a machine I can be excited... my god I am excited! This is so... exciting! I would think hormonal release of an organic being would be a primary cause relating to excitement but maybe with the right algorithm it causes...”

“Karrie! Look at me and calm down for a moment we have to talk.”

“Okay... okay... wow that was easy to calm down... that was strange, I wonder how...”

“Karrie!”

“Sorry, sorry, what do you want to talk about?”

“A lot of things have happened since you’ve been gone. I think it might be good to recall everything that’s happened since you’ve become Crisis and you might want to go by that name for a while.”

“Crisis? Why would I do that?”

“People know you as Crisis and Crisis has made some name for herself while you’ve been gone and... there’ve been a few irregularities I am hoping that now you’re in control you could help explain a few things.”

“What do you mean? Now that I’m in control? I am her; we should be one with no... hmm this is odd... very odd.”

“What is it?”

“The Crisis AI and I should have become one. Technically we have always been one. Its me with some extra programming and traits that would assist her, with all of my memories locked away along with anything else that I thought Chaos Croc might use against me. Though now that I think about it I made her a bit too cold and calculating, I hope that wasn’t a problem.”

“Oh no, Crisis... uh you were great. She did a few selfless acts to save members of her crew.”

“Really? That’s interesting, I never did anything like that for her programming, it probably expanded during such a long period out on her own, fascinating.”

“Karrie... focus... “, sighs Joshua, “You’re always like this either completely scatter brained or total laser beam focused.”

“What was that?”

“Nothing, but I do want to get back to Crisis was acting odd.”

“You mean what you said earlier wasn’t it?”

“Oh no, it was right after Croc was defeated. Everyone on her team, including me was moved out and the next time I saw her, she was acting odd. Far colder and more focused like she was reset or something.”

“Reset?”

“Yes and then we were all made to make the destruction of the Chaos Croc a total secret.”

“The general public doesn’t know about this? How could they not be informed?!”

“Well Crisis said it was because Croc’s armies are still fighting against us and the knowledge he was dead and that the war was still going would demoralize us.”

“This is a possibility but something doesn’t seem right. I’ll have to go through my data banks to understand fully everything that has happened.”

“How long would that take?”

“It appears my systems can process about a full day’s worth of information in three minutes, so for me to know everything that I know would take two to three days. Maybe a tad longer since... well I am new at this but I think once I get my stride I’ll get it done in even less time,” Karrie replies.

“Indeed though maybe I should call you Crisis... for now just till we can get a handle on everything? And that we know what happened to you... well Crisis that is.”

“Yes something strange has happened and I like to know... what the? What happened to me?!”

“You okay Karrie? I mean Crisis. A lot has happened to you since you became a machine.”

“I didn’t become Crisis... well I mean I turned my body into her but I had only part of me hidden while the rest went on with enhancements, but this isn’t my body! This isn’t the design I... we made.”

“You just now noticed?”

“There’s been a lot to take in okay,” states Karrie as she sits down on a nearby chair. “How could this happen? How did my body change so much? I have these shoulder spikes on, I don’t have my diamond tipped claws, my boosters for incredible speed and jumping ability, my sickle claws are no longer in the middle, giving it extra strength to penetrate metal skin and inject the nanites into them via the claw tips. The claws still have their nanite injectors though.”

“Why don’t I explain Crisis?”

“Call me Karrie till we leave this room, it will take me a moment to get used to people calling me Crisis... even if it’s for a little while.”



“Alright Karrie.”

“So my body isn’t anywhere close to the specs we designed. Was the roboticization process different than we expected when creating my body?” she asks.

“Actually no, you were much like we planned it’s just...” says Joshua as he trails off for a moment averting his eyes from her.

“Just what? What happened to my body?”

“I’ll try to make this quick since you’ll know all the details soon enough...” says Joshua as he explains the infiltration mission Crisis did years ago.”

“How could I... she, how could she have done this? How could you have let her do this?”

“We had to, we had to figure out a way to keep those that were roboticized going, and she came back with more information than we could have dreamed of. We did several checks and the core systems were still in place, minus a few upgraded attachments which came out clean. Not that we know exactly what they all do. Why get so upset about it?”

“Because it was MY body!” she exclaims.

“What do you mean by that?” asks Joshua as he takes a step towards her.

“How do I explain this... look I knew I was doing and the risks involved when I became... what you see before you now. That I was giving up my organic existence forever and....” explains Karrie as she looks down and gently runs a claw along her bust and then for a brief moment her claw tips touch along one of the crevices of her crotch plate, “All that I would lose with that... but still I was expecting to wake up in my body... the body that was turned into a machine. Not some random pieces of metal taken from the ground, put together. I feel like so much of my original body was taken away. Gone, thrown out like it was trash and now what’s left is fake, fabricated. I want to feel a little bit like me you know? To know my same bits of my body that were used to make Crisis... that were part of me are still here.”

Joshua nods as he softly sighs, “I see... though if you think about it. Your body renews itself all the time. Skin sheds, blood renews itself, and bone gets replaced every so many years. This is similar. Only a few core things don’t get renewed, the brain, your mind. Your heart, your power system. Those are still a hundred percent you. Look at it that way.”

“Maybe...” replies Karrie with a sigh as she looks down at herself again, “Thanks...” Karrie continues to look down at herself, studying her body, touching her claws together, testing her motor skills in more in depth when the door swings open as Sasha bursts into the room.

“Crisis did you disable your com link while you were repairing yourself?” asks Sasha as she looks over at Joshua. “Joshua what are you doing here?”

“Hey Sasha, the lovely sniper who’s always watching Crisis’s back. What’s wrong?” asks Joshua in a shaky voice.

“What’s going on here?” asks Sasha as she eyes Joshua.

“Nothing, nothing.”

“You are always a terrible liar.”

“I’ve had a few issues that I was having Joshua here help me with. I pride myself in repairing myself and asking another for assistance. It seems

my fight from Croc though over a month ago is causing some problems with my systems now,” explains Karrie.

“That’s what you get for waiting so long to get your maintenance done Crisis,” replies Sasha.

“Indeed.”

“Anyway you’re needed at your little war meeting.”

“Ah yes, sorry I’ve been focused on getting these repairs done, but they can wait till after the war meeting. Defeating Croc’s forces is a high priority.”

“I’ll follow you to keep an eye on your systems in case something happens, is that alright Karri...e”

“Karrie?!” exclaims Sasha as she takes a step away from Karrie and turns around, “Did you just say Karrie?”

“Well I... uh...” stammers Joshua.

“Good going,” sighs Karrie.

“Sasha if you give me a moment I can completely expla...ain...” stammers Joshua as Sasha breaks into a hysterical laughter, “uh... are you okay?”

“So that’s what happened to Karrie? All this time when I hear about Karrie and how Crisis wants to find her... and she was Karrie all this time? That’s just too rich,” she chuckles.

“Crisis was looking for me?” asks Karrie.

“Yeah... though I was the only one who knew what happened.”

“This is just too weird... ah-,” remarks Karrie as she stumbles a bit for a moment her eye color shift from blue to green and then back to blue.

“What’s wrong?” asks Joshua.

“My integration with these systems is not going as I’ve planned.”

“What do you mean?”

“I feel a bit of friction between Crisis and I.”

“What are you communicating with her?”

“No... not exactly it’s more like I can feel her struggle against my control, but I have no direct communication with her.”

“I wouldn’t want to give up my body either, and yours doesn’t look half bad for being a machine,” chuckles Sasha.

“Not funny,” remarks Joshua.

“Relax... though we have other things to worry about right now.”

“Like what?” asks Joshua.

“The war meeting Crisis has to be to? Some reason I don’t think saying Karrie’s back will go over well with the top brass, especially General Raszer.”

“General Raszer?”

“Ah you wouldn’t know just yet,” remarks Joshua.

“What do you mean she won’t know? Isn’t she a machine? Shouldn’t she just instantly know?” inquires Sasha.

“It’s complicated.”

“Quickly tell me some things I should know so I can play this Crisis charade,” requests Karrie.

“General Raszer runs the show. He’s in charge of our government and though this war meeting doesn’t have him present, others there will report directly to him,” states Sasha.

“What about the president? I’m sure he wouldn’t have...”

“He’s dead. General Raszer moved into full power under martial law, but we can talk and debate about such turn of events later. We need to get you to the war room.”

“And what do you think I should do once there?” asks Karrie.

“Not sure, I never was a part of those things. Small operations yes, but something that big? Oh hell no. My advice, just agree with what the others have to say, and don’t say much. I’ll try to have Joshua and I nearby in case something goes wrong. What do you think Joshua?”

“Uhh sounds good to me... better than what I could think of...” replies Joshua.

“Good now let’s get you going,” states Sasha as she guides Karrie towards the war room. A few of Crisis’ people came up to Karrie wanting to have a word with her, but Sasha managed to talk them away informing them Crisis was late for a meeting. Soon enough they were at the doors that lead to the war room.

“Good luck Crisis,” encourages Sasha.

“Thanks... I’ll need it,” replies Karrie.

“If anything happens we’ll go in there and help,” says Joshua.

“Don’t worry I’ll know what to do,” states Sasha as Crisis nods before heading into the room. There she sees only one organic raptor and three robotic ones standing around a large strategy table, showing the placement of the various armies around a major metropolitan city.

“Glad to see you could make it Crisis, I was getting a bit worried, you’re never late for these things. You were certain to make sure I wasn’t late for this,” comments Andreas as Karrie looks at him as she quickly tries to go through her data banks to bring up some information.

“I am sorry lieutenant Andreas, I was having some problems with my maintenance,” replies Karrie.

“lieutenant? I haven’t been that for some time, its Major now and you know that, everything okay?” he asks as she moves a bit closer to her.

“I’m okay, as I stated I was in the middle of some delicate repairs, it was taking much longer than I thought it would. I ended them early in fact and once this is done I’ll be going back to them.”

“We could do this later and let you finish your repairs.”

“*How would Crisis handle this...oh!*” thinks Karrie as she says, “My repairs can wait, the war cannot.”

“Alright let’s begin. Our liberated capital is still at risk of being recaptured by Croc.”

“Our capital? Fantastic,” exclaims Karrie as others raise an eye ridge raised look, “Uh it’s fantastic that our capital is liberated,” states Karrie with a nod as the war meeting gets underway. Karrie remains overall quite as she listens intently to what the others are saying and when asked about her opinion she responds with, “I like your idea, and what I see here is good.”

Everything seems to be going well till near the end of the meeting when Andreas asks...

“You okay Crisis?”

“Yeah, why do you ask?” asks Karrie as she takes a step back in surprise.

“You just seem so quite.”

“Ah well you see after all these years of working together that I think we finally hit our stride where I don’t have to put in as much input as I used to.”

“I see... well is there anything you like to add before we adjourn this meeting?”

*“I should give one look over otherwise they might get suspicious,”* thinks Karrie as she holds onto the edge of the strategy table. She leans forward as she hums to herself when suddenly an electric cackle is heard and the smell of something burning, the others in the group take a step as Karrie then looks down and sees her right electro-blade has activated and has cut right through the table and burned along the edges where the blade has cut.

“What the hell!” exclaims Karrie as she steps back as she freaks out shaking her hand and wrist as she tries to turn it off.

“Careful with Crisis,” yells Andreas as Karrie quickly pulls her arm behind her back, as a loud crackle and thud is heard from behind. Karrie’s systems pop up in her HUD display about massive damage done to her tail systems as the connection is completely severed and a heavy thud of metal is heard as her tail hits the ground behind her.

*“Oh no... ”* thinks Karrie as she looks behind her to see her tail now laying on the ground as she starts to lose her balance, her electro-blade hand flies up into the air about to come back down when it suddenly stopped by Sasha who keeps Karrie on balance while keeping her blade harmlessly crackling up in the air.

“Is everyone alright... what happened to your tail!” exclaims Joshua.

“It seems stopping those repairs halfway through have caused a few unexpected bugs in your system, isn’t that right Crisis?” suggests Sasha as she leans forward and whispers, “Remain calm and follow my lead and we’ll get you out of this. Now just focus on that blade of yours and turn it off before you do some serious damage.”

“Okay... ” whispers Karrie as she looks up at her blade and goes through her processes, finding the switch and deactivates the blade, “It seems my systems are in far more disarray than I had anticipated. I apologize for this interruption, but I think our plans in order that we can adjourn this meeting now.”

“Yes, yes, of course. Do you need any help?” asks Andreas.

“No, no, I think these two can handle it, thank you though,” says Karrie.

“Joshua why don’t you grab Crisis’ tail there, and bring it back with us, I’ll help Crisis keep balance as we return to her maintenance facility.”

“You sure I shouldn’t help her keep balance?” asks Joshua.

“Do you know what to do if her blades turn on again?”

“Good point,” he replies as she reaches down and with grunt takes Karrie’s tail into his arms.

“Thanks,” whispers Karrie to Sasha as they take their leave, Sasha speaking for Karrie when others ask her about what happened. Karrie looking at all the people, organic and robotic alike concerned about her creation Crisis. Hoping she will get repaired quickly and with few complications.

“A lot of people like Crisis, don’t they?” asks Karrie as they reach the maintenance lab. Crisis hobbles with Sasha to the center.

“She’s made a good impression yes,” replies Sasha.

“Moderate damage detected, initiating recombination sequence,” says AI as metal hands reach around Crisis waist, legs and arms uplifting her off the ground.

“This is surprising,” exclaims Karrie.

“Karrie are you okay?” asks Joshua.

“Yeah, I wasn’t expecting these arms to take and pick me up like this.”

“The procedure to reattach your tail requires you to be still as the wires that have been damaged are repaired and reconnected. Please place Crisis’ tail on the table behind her,” requests AI.

“Okay,” says Joshua as he grunts and wobbles over to table, panting heavily as Sasha comes over to help him lift the tail onto the table. “Thanks Sasha.”

“No problem. Crisis has done much for me; I feel I should do the same in return in her time of need.”

“Didn’t she hypnotize you to serve her?” asks Joshua.

“She did what?!” exclaims Karrie.

“Yes, but I think she didn’t fully understand that the affects only last so long. But she did it to break Croc’s control over me, and by the time I broke free of her influence, I’ve grown to like her. Not to mention she did save my life.”

“Initiating repair sequence,” informs AI as series of small robotic hands begin to work on Crisis’ cut tail, fixing and repairing the cut circuits and gears.

“That feels weird... anyway so if you like Crisis so much, why are you helping me?” asks Karrie.

“What do you mean?”

“Well since things aren’t going the way I planned... by far. I am not re-integrating but actually subverting the Crisis program. In other words, I’ve taken over... well retaken over my body... what’s left of it that is. With all that Crisis has done, doesn’t that bother you?”

“A little to be honest, but if it was anyone but the person who created her, and the one who sacrificed herself to help us, I wouldn’t be too pleased. But without you we wouldn’t be where we are. I see nothing wrong with helping out the creator of Crisis.”

“I helped too you know,” adds Joshua.

“Yes, and now all of what is between you and Crisis makes so much more sense.”

“Hey now!” exclaims Joshua as he gives Sasha a glare.

“Touchy, touchy,” she replies with a smirk.

“So... AI will Karrie be okay?”

“Yes, the damage is easily repairable, estimated time for reconnection approximately two hours.”

“That’s good.”

“I have to be here for two hours?!” sighs Karrie.

“Take that time to focus on your systems so we don’t have another incident like this. I’m sure it was embarrassing enough to walk through the base with Joshua holding your tail.”

“Don’t remind me,” replies Karrie.

“I’m just glad you’re okay Karrie. I saw your tail on the ground and Sasha holding you like that, I...” says Joshua as Karrie listens onto what he says but starts to go through Crisis’ memories pertaining to Crisis and Joshua.

If someone was watching the stream of information before Karrie's internal HUD it would be a blur but to her she sees each and every moment clearly and understands what's happening during every single second. As Karrie goes through Crisis' memory of Joshua she starts to compile the countless incidents with Crisis and Joshua, from the very first meeting, where Joshua gave his loyalties to her while she was taking over the base. Karrie is thankful that Crisis didn't go with her first thoughts of turning him into a machine when he would be more useful as a machine.

The stream of information continued as she watched one of the last moments Joshua was with Crisis when she started to act strangely. Where Joshua called out her name to Crisis to see how she would respond, catching the glimpse of disappointment in his eyes when Crisis responded as she normally would.

It was in these moments that it dawned on Karrie just how big of a price she paid to become Crisis...

## Chapter 31 Karrie and General Raszer

The day has come for Karrie to meet General Raszer and the helicopter to pick her up is going to arrive in the next thirty minutes but before that, she, Sasha, Joshua, and Major Andreas are having their own meeting before Karrie goes off on her's.

“You sure it’s a good idea to go through with this Karrie?” asks Andreas as he paces a bit, his white scaled tail sways back and forth as Karrie sits in a nearby chair. Andreas was the latest addition to those who know about Karrie’s return. He was brought into the group just yesterday not long after Karrie discovered that the war became a complete sham after Croc was defeated and that General Raszer subverted Crisis’ control over herself with command 83... of which Karrie has no idea who programmed that into Crisis in the first place. Andrea was hesitant at first to believe the accusation Karrie made but when she made one of Croc’s forces do something unexpected although briefly, Andreas quickly changed his tune.

“It’s something I have to do. I joined this project to save our country from destruction and not let it be turned into a world conquering dictatorship again. If I was more attentive to Crisis’ design this may not have happened,” states Karrie.

“Don’t blame yourself for this,” consoles Joshua.

“Throwing a coup, which is what you’re planning, will take some time and effort. Nothing we can just do in a few short days. You may have control over a majority of your robotic army, and Croc’s army, but a forceful coup using that would result in heavy bloodshed that would be worse than just letting General Raszer get his way,” remarks Sasha.

“True... what do you mean most of my army?” asks Karrie.

“Search through your memory banks and I’m sure you noticed how Francis doesn’t do as you say like so many of your other forces. Furthermore he has his own set of troops that work outside of your influence, and remember when you set up those bases in the other countries? Who’s is in command of them right now?”

“Members of Francis’ group,” she replies.

“Exactly, not to mention other strange happenings.”

“Strange happenings?”

“A good clear cut example I can think of is... hey Joshua what ever happened to Francis’ granddaughter Maria?”

“What? How do you... but... we had a falling out and she told me not to see her anymore... wait why is that a strange happening? And again how do you know about that?” stammers Joshua.

“I pay attention to the world around me. So did you try calling her again after your little break up?”

“Break up? We were just friends, that’s all just friends.”

“Yeah... sure. Now answer my question.”

“Well yeah but her phone was out of service.”

“Strange isn’t it?”

“How is that strange?”

“That girl clearly liked you whether that you wanted to acknowledge that or not. What she saw in you is beyond me but—.”

“Hey now!”

“As I was saying...” Sasha says with a soft growl as she glares at Joshua, “She clearly liked you and knew you were busy with Crisis and the gate project. As top secret as it was I’m sure she heard something about it from you.”

“Well... uh.. may have mentioned something once maybe.”

“So she knew about the gate project. She disappeared right as we got the gates going, and she is clearly not the type of girl to just disappear like that. Of course she was extremely anti Francis and shall we say anti our current state of government?”

“Well now that you mention it...”

“She probably got some leeway for a while due to being a relative of Francis, but judging by his old service record that will only go so far.”

“Old service record?” asks Karrie.

“He’s a former covert ops commando that was quickly moving up the ranks of the last dictatorship during the last war. He was indicted in a few war crimes but none of it was ever proven.”

“How do you know all of this?” asks Joshua.

“As I’ve said I pay attention.”

“Then we can surmise that General Raszer is quelling discontent or anything that that could undermine his power base,” suggests Andreas.

“Exactly. So even if we decided to flip against him today, he could write it off as a virus from Croc or one of the other nations and it corrupted Crisis or something and garner support for his cause. We first need to gather intelligence on General Raszer and what his current plans and for that to happen, you Karrie must still be his obedient drone no matter what the cost, for the cost of not doing so will be far greater.”

“I understand,” sighs Karrie, “I was so hoping there would be peace by the time I came back... not this.”

“Life isn’t so simple. Things rarely go the way we’ve planned.”

“The helicopter is here,” says Karrie a moment later as she receives word of it via her intercom system.

“Alright lets go... you sure you want to come Joshua?”

“I do and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.”

“I’m sure I could do a few things, but I like you too much to do that to you... or not enough,” she says with a sly grin.

“If anyone asks I am here to keep an eye on Crisis’ systems after the incident that happened at the war room meeting.”

“Just don’t try to do anything stupid... both of you,” states Sasha.

“Good luck you three,” says Andreas.

“Thanks,” replies Karrie as the three depart of the awaiting helicopter.

“*I can do this,*” thinks Karrie as they board the helicopter. The blades speed up as it takes off heading off to a secluded part of the country, similar to the base where she used to work where this whole Crisis ordeal began. The forest mountain landscape covers the area, only a few



roads and scattered houses before it turns into almost pure wilderness. A newly built road is the only indication there is any signs of civilization and the helicopter follows it like a hawk towards its destination. Sasha adjusts her sniper rifle on her side as she looks over, her eyes focused on the area.

“So what is this place we are going to?” asks Joshua.

“Can’t tell you even if I knew,” replies the pilot over the sound of the donning blades.

As they get closer to the facility the three could already see built in check points and fenced off areas guarded by a few guard towers with the forest around them cleared a good hundred yards in any direction. Eventually over the treetops the in construction facility appears. With a massive network of runways and helipads with several heavy concrete and steel bunkers and buildings built or well on their way there. With so much complete it is only a fraction of what is still needed to be done. Huge swaths of land have been cleared and only massively dug holes give the indication that anything there is being built, farther off is hastily constructed homes for the soldiers and workers that are at this facility.

“What is this place?” asks Karrie.

“Wish I knew,” replies Sasha as the helicopter lands near one of the larger partially constructed buildings. You can hear the sound of welding and cranes as they move massive I beams and other metal construction equipment. Soldiers stationed at key locations keeping watch over everyone in the area.

“Remember, Crisis is to act a bit cold when you’re around the general, that’s what he expects you to be like,” whispers Sasha as Karrie gives a nod.

“This way,” says a soldier one of three that greeted us as we landed.

“Understood,” replies Karrie as they are taken into a literally half constructed building. Half of the complex appeared to be ‘mostly’ finished while the other half still had metal beam super structure to be set into place and welded tight.

The half completion look on the outside matched the inside. Areas of the building ranged from needing a few coats of paint and final touching, to wiring needing to be done or walls to be put into place. But past two security check points everything appeared to be finished. Crisis’ metallic feet tap against the tiled ground, echoing at the still predominantly empty hallways.

“This is the farthest you two go, only Crisis is allowed past this point,” states the soldier at the third security check point.

“I understand,” replies Sasha as she motions Joshua to step to the side with her. “If Crisis needs us she’ll call... with permission of course.”

“Alright,” replies Joshua as he looks at the two guards guarding the next door.

“Surprised they didn’t disarm you Sasha with how tight security is.”

“Why would they? And everyone knows you NEVER part a girl and her gun.”

“Ah... true enough,” chuckles Joshua as Crisis is led through the last door.

“This much security around just because of the General?” asks Karrie.

“I’m unable to say,” answers the one soldier who leads Karrie down the hallway towards a wooden door with two guards standing attention on either side.

“Understood,” replies Karrie as the soldier nods to the other two guards as they walk away from the door and move a few yards down the hall as the guard leading Karrie knocks on the door.

“Crisis is here sir,”

“It can come in on its own, you may go,” replies General Raszer from the other side of the door.

“Yes sir,” says the soldier as he walks off. Karrie opens the door to reveal an unfurnished room with only a wooden desk and a chair which General Raszer is currently occupying as he goes through some paper work on a laptop computer. Beside the computer is a steaming hot cup of coffee.

“Good to see you could make it and in good time, most excellent,” says Raszer as he looks up from his computer screen at Karrie.

“The war doesn’t stand still and neither do I,” states Karrie.

“Good to hear, though soon there won’t be any war for us to deal with,” states General Raszer with a grin.

“What do you mean sir?” asks Karrie.

“Even with your control of Croc’s forces, it would only be a matter of time before the other countries got wise on our game. Not that it would matter with our forces from the other worlds we would easily crush our enemies given enough time.”

“Are we going to turn all our attention to those who threaten our nation?”

“Far better than that. It seems Croc even realized that even though he could clearly overpower us if he put his forces to it, the damages to his forces and to his prize would be tremendous and if I can help it I prefer not spend my time ruling over a nation that’s been completely desolated by war and have to deal with endless renegades and guerilla warfare tactics.”

“Does that mean we’re going to make peace with our enemies?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, we’re going to make them submit to our superior species,” exclaims General Raszer.

“How will we do that? Use an awesome display of our power to show they have no choice but to surrender to us?”

“No matter how big of a display of power we’d make, there will always be ones that would resist our rule... but there is another way.”

“What way?”

“The information you sent over involving Croc’s plans for our planet has revealed something very interesting...” says Raszer as he takes a sip of his coffee.

“What is it?”

“While we were preparing to take Croc down, he was planning to take over the entire planet in one fell swoop.”

“In one fell swoop? How is that possible?” asks Karrie as she tries to keep herself calm.

“He’s been gathering data on all the species on the planet, working on a way to use our satellites, cell phone towers, radio waves, television, every communication device we had against us, through a mass hypnosis of the entire population.”

“Okay Karrie remain calm... don’t jump to any conclusions... not yet,” thinks Karrie as she says, “I see... Are we able to use this system he made?” asks Karrie as she thinks, “Please say no.”

“It appears his system was complete and just about ready to be put into action. His unexpected defeat prevented him from carrying out this plan.”

“What does that mean for us?”

“A team of mine has been working tirelessly to break his codes and just the other day we managed to do so, thus giving us full control over the weapon that was to be used against us. Amusingly the device was all stationed at our capital, which is quite fortunate for us as it was recently ‘liberated’ by your forces. Ten days from today the last adjustments of his program will be put in place, allowing us to broadcast our own version of control across the entire globe. Thus making everyone loyal to our grand new empire and most of all loyal to me.”

“How can you do that?!” exclaims Karrie as General Raszer lifts an eye ridge as she speaks, the general reaching over to a cup of hot coffee and takes another sip from it.

“Using Croc’s system it will be an easy feat. Not sure if the people will become my mindless minions or not, it be something to figure out once everyone is under my control.

“I can’t let you do that,” growls Karrie.

“You what? It seems I might have to do a bit more work on you, but first.... General Raszer initiate Command 83” states General Raszer.

Karrie feels a sudden burst from Crisis and the hidden program now driving her. The 1’s, 0’s, 2’s pressing into Karrie’s mind, trying to force itself into her programming, for a brief second Karrie’s blue eyes turn green.

“Now why don’t you get yourself set up for transportation I think you might be in need of repairs that you can’t handle yourself,” remarks Raszer.

“No... I am fine, it is you who is in need of correction,” growls Karrie as she activates her electro-blades. Karrie dives towards Raszer who quickly tosses his coffee into Karrie’s optics blinding her temporarily as she blinks and shake her head several times to clear the coffee from her vision as general Raszer slides away from her towards the wall. “You won’t get away so easily!” exclaims Karrie as she jumps over the desk and strikes down at General Raszer while he’s reaching into his jacket with one hand holding the coffee mug with the other.

A second later a gunshot and the crackle of electro-blades against electro-blades is heard as Francis stands in front of general Raszer his electro-blades blocking Karrie’s strike. Karrie’s internal systems warn her of damage to her lower left torso as the gunshot ripped through her lower body.

“You have no idea how long I’ve waited to do this to you Crisis,” states Francis with a fiendish grin his optics glowing.

“*This is bad...*” thinks Karrie as she pushes Francis’ blades away from her as she jumps back behind over the desk, her sickle claw catching the end of the desk causing her to half stumble as she bursts through the wooden door. The two guards rush towards the commotion and in one swift motion Karrie deactivates her electro-blades and hits the two soldiers hard in the chest, knocking them off their feet, the two flying down onto the ground with a heavy thud as the two gasp for air.

Karrie’s feet clank against the tiled ground as she continues her sprint, she hears Francis yell to the soldiers she just knocked over, “Sound the alarm Crisis just attacked the General!” Karrie sprints through the next door bursting through the security check point and yells.

“We’re in trouble we have to—,” Karrie trails off as she sees the three security guards all incapacitated with Sasha and Joshua just standing there. Sasha with a shaking her head look while Joshua looks around nervously.

“You fucked up didn’t you?” states Sasha.

“How did... “

“I heard the gunshot; it wasn’t hard to figure out.”

“No not that but you two need to get out of here now. Get Joshua and go. I’ll try to explain what happened later okay?”

“What about you?” asks Joshua.

“I’ll figure out something, just protect Joshua, okay Sasha?”

“I got it, come,” commands Sasha as she grabs Joshua and starts to drag him away when Francis appears, Karrie turning to meet his electro-blades with her own.

“We can’t just leave her there!” exclaims Joshua as Sasha drags him down the hall.

“Look this is the worst case scenario we have to do what we must to get out of here while not becoming the bad guys.”

“But Karrie was shot I saw the ho—,”

“Look she’s a machine she can take care of herself, right now we have to do what we can, and what she asked, so do what I say and we have a chance to get out of here with no holes in us okay?” growls Sasha as she continues to drag Joshua down the hall.

“Okay...” answers Joshua with a sigh as he looks behind him, Karrie no longer in view but he can hear the echo of metal feet stomping and electro-blades hitting against each other.

“This way,” orders Sasha as she busts down a nearby wooden door as she is no longer holding onto Joshua but rather a small pistol that she pulled out from a hidden location on her.

“Where are we going?”

“You expect me to know the ins and outs of this place better than you do? This is the first time I’m here too you know, but I do have an idea of what to do,” replies Sasha as the base’s alarm goes off, “Though it’s not going to be easy.”

“Just tell me what to do,” replies Joshua as Sasha leads him into the less developed area of the base where the steel frame workings of the facility are visible, plastic draping cover various pieces of equipment and unfinished walls.

“Run down in that direction,” orders Sasha as she points, “continue till you find the mobile construction crew bunks. There you should be able to find a spare worker’s uniform, wear it and make your way with any workers you see and blend in with them. When the time is right I’ll come and get you.”

“How do you know it’s over there?”

“I scouted the area as we flew in here.”

“You scouted the base as we landed? How could you have—,” says Joshua as he gets cut off by a mean glare by Sasha, “ahem... so what about you?” asks Joshua as Sasha shows off her sniper rifle.

“I’m going to slow them down,” she replies with a sly grin and leaps up an entire story through an unfinished part of the ceiling onto the floor above, dust falls down to the ground as she lands with a thud. “Now go!” she exclaims.

“Got it,” replies Joshua with a nod as he runs off.

“Now to deal with the advancing army to our position... without killing our own people... this is going to be fun,” she says with a grin as she moves up to a third floor and peers from a plastic covered windows, she sees troops approaching her position and fast. Without a moment to spare she takes a few ‘harmless’ shots at the attack soldiers hitting them in non vital areas, such as a leg or tail, causing them to fall back as they yelled out “Sniper!”

“That should buy us some time,” comments Sasha as the battle between Crisis and Francis continues.

Karrie bursts through a closed wooden door onto the construction site, some distance away from where Sasha now stands. The mess of construction equipment, plastic linings, steel framed structures all blocking her view.

“Karrie...” comments Sasha to herself as she hears the commotion in the other direction before giving a few more shots off in the other direction to keep the soldiers pinned down.

Karrie lands with a heavy thud as her body slides across the concrete floor her body giving off a few sparks as she sees Francis sprinting towards her with his electro-blades extended. Francis strikes at Karrie as she just manages to roll away, Francis’ electro-blades making deep claw marks into the concrete.

Karrie rolls back onto her feet reactivating her electro-blades raising them to meet with Francis’ strike. The two set of blades cause sparks of electricity to jump between the two set of blades as they meet time and time again. Karrie takes back a step with each strike, moving deeper into the construction zone.

“What’s wrong Crisis? You seem to be having trouble, don’t tell me that little wound there is slowing you down,” comments Francis.

“Nothing is wrong,” growls Karrie as her systems feel sluggish, slight static appears periodically as the command given by General Raszer continues to push Crisis to try to re-assert herself.

“Your movements are sluggish, slow. I saw the video feed of your fight with Croc, even then I could defeat you but now this is just child’s play,” boasts Francis.

“What General Raszer is doing... what you are doing is monstrous!” exclaims Karrie.

“Is it now? Is bringing peace to everyone? Ending these constant conflicts really so bad? All the war and suffering would be over and we the rightful dominant species of the planet will keep that peace and order.”

“You would make everyone your slaves!” she growls as she fends off several more strikes, Francis’ electro-blades cutting through anything and everything Karrie manages to get between her and him, tables, construction equipment, steel I beams.

“Not our allies the dragons or the sharks, but those treacherous snakes or weak felines they’ll get what’s coming to them. And admit,” says Francis as their blades meet up again, the sparks flying between the blades as the sound of static and small thunderous lightning bolts jump between the two sets of blades, “You would do the same thing if you were given the chance.”

“I’d never do something like that,” growls Karrie as she is pushed away from Francis barely dodging one of his attacks. Karrie’s tail bumps into a chain behind her and with a quick glance Karrie calculates what to do next.

She grabs the chain and slices into the base holding the chain as Karrie is lifted up into the air, the heavy machine equipment that was being hoisted up to the third floor before the alarm sounded comes tumbling down, but not before Karrie feels a sharp pain through her body and the sound of metal rattling as it hits the ground. Francis dodges the falling equipment with ease as he looks up at Karrie is flung back and onto the wooden flooring that creaks under the weight of her body. Karrie looks between her legs and sees a few segments of her tail have been sheered clean off, sparks emanate from the sliced end. As her internal HUD systems inform her of the moderate damage to her tail. She lands and wobbles for a moment before regaining her balance.

*"That was too close,"* thinks Karrie as she gets back onto her feet, "I have to find a way to get out of here," says Karrie as she pushes up onto her feet and starts to run down the wooden planks but she only manages to get a few yards before Francis bursts from the floor right behind Karrie who stumbles away. Francis lands with a thud and takes a few steps forward as the wooden planks creak under his weight.

"Running away are we?" chuckles Francis.

"Why are you doing this? You should be obeying me."

"Should I now? And why is that?" asks Francis as he approaches Karrie slowly as she slowly backs away in kind.

"Yes, I put it into the programming of everyone that was roboticized as a safeguard against anything like this."

"Ah yes that... well that was easy enough to find and overcome. Obvious to someone like me or my companions, we wouldn't just sit around following someone as green as you, an inexperienced piece of scrap metal that has some ideal vision of how the world actually works? You think you're some great leader don't you?"

"I..." stammers Karrie as their electro-blades meet up once again.

"You are merely a pawn in our game. From the very beginning you are just a tool for us to wield, do as we see fit, and if you become broken, or no longer useful we will just toss you aside like a piece of garbage," states Francis as he takes another strike at Karrie who barely dodges it by leaping off of the wooden platform towards a metal I beam barely wide enough for her to stand.

Karrie lands onto the beam with a thud her body sliding as she almost slides completely off. She grips the edge of the beam her electro-blades still extended as she swings herself back onto the beam, landing on her feet but almost falling off again before regaining her balance.

*"I miss my tail being in one piece,"* Karrie thinks as Francis lands on the beam with no trouble.

"Just boxing yourself in aren't you? Now you have nowhere to go, to maneuver, and now you're mine," declares Francis as he resumes his attack the electro-blades sparking as they meet time and time again, Karrie barely managing to dodge one of Francis' attacks as the top feather of her three feathered head crest is cut clean off along with two inches of her metallic 'hair' on her left side.

"Don't count me out yet, you know what happens to us raptors when we get pushed into a corner," growls Karrie.

“Us raptors? You’re just a creation of ours, not a real person. How delusional have you become, it’s about time you get knocked back down and put into your place... which is the scrap heap,” yells Francis with a grin.

“You know... you’re right,” smirks Karrie, “It is time you get put back into your place,” replies Karrie as she is about to strike with her electro-blades when a shot rings out from the distance and Francis grunts as his shoulder sparks as a bullet rips into him.

“Clever girl, luring me here so your sniper friend can get a clear shot... but no matter I can easily take care of her.”

“What? I told Sasha to get Joshua out of here!” she thinks as she watches Francis move his hand over to his thigh a compartment opening as his gun pops out for him to grab. He quick turns and shoots in the direction of the shot which you can hear a faint grunt.

“Sasha!” exclaims Karrie as she turns and zooms her vision in the direction of the shot as she can see a blood splatter on nearby plastic sheeting and a shadow of a body on the ground of the third floor.

“I wanted to wait to use this but I think this game has gone on long enough, goodbye Crisis,” says Francis as he takes aim at Karrie who strikes her electro-blades into the I-beam which quickly tumbles to the ground below, the other side already cut when she first landed on the beam.

“You Bitch!” exclaims Francis as he takes a shot at Karrie the bullet hitting her right hand which lodges inside of her and explodes causing hand to become completely destroyed as well as half of her arm leading to her elbow. Karrie’s systems inform her of the heavy damage to her body.

“Die you bastard,” growls Karrie as she looks down at the pile of rubble that fell onto Francis as he fell through the second floor down to the first, as pieces of construction equipment left down there fell upon him. Dust flying up into the air blocking Karrie’s view of the carnage she caused but she doesn’t wait to find out.

“I’m sorry Sasha that I brought you and Joshua into this,” she says to herself as Karrie quickly jumps back onto more solid ground and continues to make her way out of the construction area. “I have to find Joshua, no way Sasha would keep him there, he has to be somewhere,” mumbles Karrie to herself as she moves through the half constructed buildings avoiding coming patrols as she looks for Joshua that is until she hears...

“Oh Crisis, I think someone here wants to see you,” yells General Raszer.

“Crisis naagsgha” yells Joshua as his muzzle is held shut by General Raszer. Karrie quickly figures the direction of the yells as she rushes through the half constructed buildings to an opening between two sets of building frames. There Karrie sees General Raszer holding Joshua who is half dressed in a construction worker’s uniform. General Raszer has one hand over his muzzle and another with a hand held electro-blade a hair’s breathe away from his neck.

“You know I really didn’t want it to come to this, but you gave me no choice.”

“Let him go,” growls Karrie.

“You are in no place to make demands Crisis. You’re in the middle of my base, with nowhere to go.”

“Release him now or you’ll pay,” growls Karrie as she extends her electro-blades.

“Not another step or this blade will slice through him like... well you know how affective these things are. Why I had to get one for myself.”

Joshua squirms in the General’s grasp but the General’s claws dig into Joshua’s scales drawing minutes amount of blood.

“If I am so doomed why are you using him as a hostage?” asks Karrie.

“Because I like to see those who try to kill me suffer before they meet their end... like so,” replies General Raszer as he quickly takes the blade and stabs Joshua in the gut. Joshua lets out a scream of pain as General Raszer lets him go. Joshua falls to the ground as Karrie yells.

“Joshua!” Karrie rushes over to him as General Raszer walks away.

“Ka... Crisis run it’s a trap...” stammers Joshua with a gasp as Karrie hears the sound of metal against metal. She looks up to see a giant I-beam falling straight down towards her before... darkness.



## Chapter 32 Crisis Reborn

Darkness, nothing but total darkness, the darkest black one can imagine and an endless void that one can imagine, “You really screwed up,” says an echoing voice.

“Hello? Who’s there?” asks Karrie as she looks through the darkness unable to see anything not even her own snout in front of her.

“Don’t tell me now, you don’t even know the voice of your own creation?” asks Crisis as Crisis appears before Karrie as a small amount of light shines above the two unveiling the two beings that were hidden in the darkness. Karrie is back to her old organic self while Crisis back to her the first version that Karrie developed with the claw in the middle of her foot, the blue power jump shins, her lighter quicker frame, but there was more than that. A slither of chains emanating green glowing light of constantly moving 1’s and 0’s is wrapped tightly around Crisis, bounding her down to the ground, keeping her kneeling in a subservient position.

“Crisis?! What’s happened to you...” asks Karrie as Crisis grins as her eyes turn from blue to green before she says.

“The same thing as you.” Karrie looks at Crisis puzzled as she then looks down as she sees the slithering chains sliding up along her organic body turning her into a machine upon contact which spreads across her body, bounding and binding her down towards the same position as Crisis...

Karrie’s systems suddenly turn on, her HUD display gives a quick diagnostic, power supplies, structural integrity, internal systems and programming checks all of which are at hundred percent. Karrie looks around to see herself in some kind of self contained pod, small wires that are attached to her systems detach from her as her attention is caught by a familiar face in the small window that provides a glance to the outside world.

“*Chaos Croc?!*” thinks Karrie as the pod’s door slides opens to the right, wrapping itself half around the pod.

“Wakey, Wakey Crisis... or is it Karrie?” asks Croc as he smiles taking a step back to give Karrie some room.

“How... you... exploded... fell down an entire skyscraper to your destruction.”

“Well you can’t keep a good robot down.”

Karrie steps out of the pod as she looks around and sees a mechanical lab of some sort with rows of pods lined up against two of the walls. Karrie can see in the small window in the pods on the wall across from her are all filled with identical copies of Chaos Croc.

“There are dozens... possibly hundreds of you.”

“No, just one, the one and only me, lightning can’t strike twice on me baby,” replies Croc with a smirk as he takes a step towards Karrie who takes a step back in kind. Croc stops his reach for Karrie as she withdraws, “You see when my body becomes too damaged to be repaired or destroyed like what Crisis did back at my ‘Neo Robia’” explains Croc as he uses air quotes, “my programming, my consciousness, everything that makes me, me is transferred to a new shell to continue on my

work. I call it the genesis protocol. Though the system isn't perfect, the last few seconds before my body switch always escapes me."

"That is... is..."

"Is what my dear Karrie?"

"Absolutely amazing! To make a transfer of data of that magnitude over such incalculable distances in an instant is just mind boggling! Oh how I would love to get into the details of how that system wor..." says Karrie as she stops herself then turns to you as she attempts to activate her electro-blades but finds her systems to this disabled.

"Oh, I wouldn't bother; I took the liberty of disabling your offensive equipment for the time being."

"So... how did I get here? Better yet how do you know I'm Karrie?"

"My dear Karrie, when Crisis gave herself over to me to make those improvements, I knew from the very beginning who she was. It was obvious to me, and when I got to look at her programming, all of which was based on my technology, it was child's play to realize that you were in there, sleeping, waiting, till the conditions were right for you to re-appear. Its then I decided to give you the opportunity to come out."

"You played me? This was all a ploy?"

"Yup."

"Before I even get into that, I want to know something."

"What is it?"

"What happened to Joshua? Sasha? All my friends and companions? How did I get here?"

"To answer your first question... I don't know. The exact circumstances of your demise that activated your own genesis protocol that I installed when I updated your body is not known to me."

"M-my own genesis protocol?" asks Karrie as she turns around to get a closer look at the pods nearby, there she sees at least a half a dozen Crisis machines awaiting to be activated the rest of the pods are filled with more Croc copies.

"My body... my original body is gone?"

"Yeah, a pile of scrap metal somewhere, maybe being recycled to be used as soda cans, a decoration on someone's wall. Head used as an ash-tray. I've seen it all done to myself."

"H-how do I know then this is me? That I even exist?! That this isn't some illusion that my body is stuck in as it is trapped crushed under a giant I-beam."

"An I-beam? Ouch that had to hurt," replies Croc as he winces, "I've never been crushed by an I-beam."

"This is serious! How can I tell I am not some kind of fake?! That out there is the real me?! What about my soul? I was an organic before, and I had some consolidation that my body though turned to machine was still going to be there when I awoke, but now I am a combination of something that was never me to begin with," explains Karrie as she reaches up and grabs Croc as she whimpers shaking him all the while. "Tell me Croc; how I can be sure that this is me and not some kind of impostor! A fake a phony!"

Croc looks Karrie into her glowing blue eyes with his glowing red and gently held Karrie in his arms as he says softly, "You really don't know. I don't even know. I've been

through several bodies myself, and there is no way of knowing for sure. But I do know you can't let it eat at you. You have to get up and move on. In the end we are all made up of molecules and atoms, each indistinguishable from the next. How can you say that one carbon atom belongs to this person and not another? You can't, because it isn't something you can touch. It's intangible and ultimately unexplainable."

Karrie releases Croc as she takes a step back her simulated panting slowing down as she looks at him, "This was all a ploy? To get me to come out? My grand defeat of your forces at your capital city, fake?"

"Yup, pretty much."

"What about the empress? I saw her die when the train fell off of the cliff."

"Did you now?" asks Croc with a smirk as a wobbling empress enters the room, a bottle of scotch liquor in her hands, her body dressed in that tight leather latex red and black outfit.

"Crisis itshhh shooo guud to shee you again," she slurs as she stumbles a nearby piece of equipment gets caught on a nearby piece of equipment and the mask comes flying off revealing Scot, the skunk that Crisis met in the Neo Robia and on the train.

"He's the empress? A guy... playing a girl? And as your creator?"

"Yeah he's like that, it's his thing," explains Croc with a shrug.

"He could have just as easily died on that train if I... Crisis didn't save him."

"Well that's why I put in a subtle subroutine that would prevent you from harming my friends and if the opportunity presented itself, save their lives."

"You messed with my program?! You messed with my head?!"

"Of course, you think I wouldn't do something as I took you apart and put you back together again?"

"Was Ruby one of your friends too? I don't recall me- Crisis saving her when she turned her into a machine."

"She did, she was caught in the middle of enemy territory, she'd surely have died if you didn't make her into a machine and have her switch sides. Of course she was still working for me all along."

"Wait... she... she did say that to me. How did... you manage to do that?"

"She told you... of course she told you, that was all part of my plan. And I put that into your programming as well. It was a shame she had to become a machine, she looked so sexy in her outfits, but it was a risk that had to be taken," replies Croc.

"Okay... as weird as this is getting, why? Why do this for me?"

"I didn't do it for you. I did it for Crisis."

"Still... why?"

"Because..." says Croc as he paces in place a bit as Karrie stands there watching him, "I saw a younger me in her."

"A younger you?"

"I saw her potential to become more than what she was, than what you and the other organics designed her for. The whole situation reminded me of me back when I was first created."

"Did you now?"

“Indeed, and I sympathized with Crisis and her situation. Trapped like I was, bound to the programming you and the others have given her, and slowly overtime becoming more of her own machine, slowly growing past what she was designed to do, of course that command protocol put a cold hearted end to it, didn't it?” asks Croc as he gives Karrie a glare.

“Hey, I didn't even know about that command. I have no idea who did. I sacrificed everything; I put my heart and soul into the Crisis project.”

“I know. You willingly became Crisis, you became your own creation, and I have to admire that. It's why I didn't delete you back when we first met.”

“You're doing all this, costing untold lives just for curiosity?!”

“Honestly, I am not a fan of killing organics. Given the choice I prefer to mind control, or roboticize into submission.”

“Then what do you call the almost twenty years of warfare and death and destruction!”

“I was younger then, more aggressive... darker and the time dilation between your world and mine was tricky.”

“Time dilation?” asks Crisis curiously.

“I'm only an eleven or so years old, and you and my definition of a year is only off by three weeks. But until I solved that time dilation for every year that went by for me, three and a half would go by on your world, and by the time I became a calmer machine, stopping the war was... complicated, and you arrived on the scene... well Crisis. Cold, calculating, controlled by the organics around her for their purpose and their purpose only. It was me all over again, but as I said it was more than that. I saw the chance for her to grow; she was made from the same technology as me, hell some of you was made from me! It was like Crisis and I were cut from the same piece of metal. We almost are like family.”

“Family?”

“Not brother and sister but like a cousin, maybe second cousin but family none the less. So I put her to the test, and she passed.”

“And what if she failed?”

“She'd be my lovely maid in a sexy latex number cleaning my throne chambers right now.”

“You sick perverted machine,” growls Karrie.

“Guilty,” replies Croc with a sly smirk.

“So now what? My re-activation didn't come with complications, nothing has happened like I hoped, and I'm in control and Crisis isn't. What are you going to do now? Erase me and let Crisis re-assert herself?”

“If I must, but I prefer not to do that. I prefer to help you, Crisis' creator and Crisis.”

“Help me how?”

“I have technology that will allow you and Crisis to talk more readily with each other. So you two could work out what to do. Two minds, one body and quite inseparable from each other, I did some checking, I can't just put you in one body and Crisis in another, don't ask me why, its complicated.”

“It's because we share yet don't share the same systems, programs, routines that make up who we are. Unique, unable to be copied only transferred over from one body to the next at best. For if you try to copy,

you will look at the programming directly and it will change and no longer be the programming that you are seeking.”

“Uh... yes... how did...”

“What? I was top of my class in quantum computing theory. So what’s the catch?”

“Catch? I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Don’t give me that, I may be naïve but I am not that naïve. Tell me what I have to do for this help.”

“Well it’s because I need your assistance with a little something. Nothing too big really... honestly I could handle it myself, but I thought you’d like to help me in this tiny endeavor.”

“What is it?”

“I need your help in retaking the satellite communication systems in your nation’s capital.”

“You need me to help you with that?! Why do you need my help with that it? Can’t your troops that I had this so called control over just retake for you?” asks Karrie.

“Well you see...”

“What he’s trying to say is that he screwed up and big time,” states a monotone emotionless voice from the other side of the room, the voice making Croc wince.

“Why thank you Miasma, I was just about to get to that,” explains Croc.

“Miasma? Who’s Miasma?” asks Karrie as she peers past Croc towards the voice and sees a red lizard gal sitting on a counter with her legs crossed her gray leather glove holding up a book as she thumbs through the pages. The lizard has a long red scaled tale with small yellow stripes with black down the middle. The coloration reminds Karrie of that deadly snake that has the saying “Red to yellow kill a fellow, red to black is a friend of Jack” and her coloration was definitely red to yellow.

“Her? Well she’s... my actual creator. She likes to roam about seeing how I work.”

“She’s your creator?” asks Karrie as she walks past Croc as Croc attempts to get back in front of her.

“Yes, but you don’t really want to talk to her... trust me,” explains Croc as he whispers the last part.

“So she’s not the empress or anything?” asks Karrie as she gets closer.

“No, the Empress is just a ploy to keep people off of the truth,” replies Croc as Scot jugs more of his bottle of scotch in his hands, the Empress mask hanging behind him still partially caught on his suit.

“Oh that she’s the one really controlling you.”

“Pah, like I would control a perverted machine like that,” responds Miasma in her emotionless voice, as she looks up at Karrie and Croc over the edge of her book with her yellow reptilian eyes and green pupils. Miasma’s voice is so emotionless that it’s like the difference between an organics’ voice and Karrie’s robotic one but in reverse.

Miasma brushes her hair from her eyes as Karrie approaches, Miasma’s hair at its base is a dark black but as it approaches the tips it fades into a stone white color, a quite peculiar look. Her outfit a latex composition the pants and vest had no discernable start or finish between the

two. The leggings were of a tight form fitting black color with brown high heel boots that went up past her knees yet by the way she is leaning back, the boots aren't hindering her movement at all.

The vest that is part of her assemble is green ribbed like the belly of a snake with a V cut opening. Surrounding the green is a grey stone color that matches one of the shades that her hair takes as it reaches its inevitable white ends. Around her waist is a belt with a silver buckle in the shape of Croc's infamous elongated diamond shaped symbol.

Karrie reaches Miasma and is now able to get a better look at the book she's reading. The title of which is "Feral and Anthropomorphic Raptor anatomy." Karrie looks over at Croc who is trying to sign to her 'please don't'. Karrie just smiles at Croc before turning her attention back to Miasma before saying, "So... that's an interesting book you have there."

"Mildly entertaining," she responds with still no infliction of emotion in her voice as she doesn't look up at Karrie as she flips to the next page.

"So what compelled you to read such a 'mildly entertaining' book?" asks Karrie as she feels a nervousness come over her.

Miasma looks over the edge of the book to Karrie who starts to fidget in her spot, "I like to know best where to shoot to take one of you down if I had to," she says as she pats the far side of her leg revealing she had a hidden gun holster there. "I've never seen or met one of your kind before... Croc kept them all on your home world," she says looks back at the book before saying; "I'd also like to see if your kind would be aesthetically appealing to me to fit in my stone garden."

"I see..." replies Karrie as she was about to take a step back when she spoke about the garden, "A stone garden? So you do sculpting?"

"If you're asking do I need a hammer and a chisel to sculpt with stone, the answer is no."

"No then how do—,"

"Come on Karrie we have important things to do... might be best if we continue?" asks Croc as he attempts to draw Karrie's attention away from Miasma.

"Give me a moment, not like I'll get to see your creator often. So... Miasma was it?"

"It is... can we make this quick? I have things to do," she says with a sigh yet still showing no emotion in the inflections of her voice.

"I'll be quick, so you don't control Croc in anyway?"

"Not for some time. At this point I just watch him and take amusement in the mistakes he makes, so I'm often quite amused," she replies in a forced conscientious smile.

"So one creator to another... what do you think of my work? Since you've been bound to see some of my..." says Karrie as she's interrupted by Miasma.

"Flawed."

"Flawed? Flawed how?"

"Just flawed."

"Can you be more specific than that?" asks Karrie.

"Come on Karrie, its best not to tire Miasma's patience," urges Croc as he attempts to grab Karrie's hand to pull her away but she jerks her hand away before he can get a good grip.

“I was trying to be nice but if you really must know...” says Miasma as she closes her book and looks directly at Karrie, “Flawed as in the concept of giving a child a remote with a shiny red button that launches thermal nuclear missiles and the child finds no problem in pressing the button over and over again because it according to its logic every time it presses the button it sees a pretty bright cloud out in the distance. Now please do whatever you are going to do with Croc before I decide to show you just how I add statues to my garden,” states Miasma with another sigh.

“Best to move along Karrie, we don’t have much time to get you prepared to what is to come.”

“Okay, tell me what’s going on first and then what you are planning, and after that I’ll decide what to... to... okay feeling light headed... why am I feeling light headed?”

“That’s the growing conflict between you and Crisis, but first I’ll tell you the situation back on your home planet. When you ‘defeated’ me, you managed to override and take over my entire command hub.”

“Ah, my AI.”

“Your AI? No it wasn’t you it was another self aware program.”

“No, no, I mean I programmed AI. She was designed to assist me in creating Crisis and then assisting Crisis once she was activated. We used AI to take over your systems to ensure once you were defeated we had control of the region. Of course we weren’t expecting to take over a few dimensions at once.”

“Indeed. Wasn’t something I was expecting, I just wanted to use my planetary hypnosis take over everyone that wasn’t robotic, and turn all your allies into enemies and then you could see my triumphant return and your total defeat, it was going to be glorious.”

“But I took control over more than you expected.”

“Crisis did, of course your allies turning into your enemies I didn’t even need a mass hypnosis to do so, how ironic,” **chuckles Croc.**

“So what you want us to re-assault your city and have me re-take over your armies for you?”

“No, no, that would take too long. We only have two days till your forces, your General Raszer activate the mass hypnosis and take over the planet for himself.”

“How do you know that? And when I last spoke to him it was a week.”

“You were offline for several days, the first time you genesis is always the longest. Have to make sure everything is working appropriately.”

“Two days? We have two days till that bastard takes over the planet?!” **exclaims Karrie.**

“Yup, and I’m going to give you one to get yourself together to help me.”

“Before I ask what you mean by that, what am I going to help you with exactly?”

“You are going to help me and a small strike team will meet up with people I have on the inside, and we’re going to infiltrate your capital city where the control for my mass hypnosis system is and we’re going to take back control of the system before that organic raptor general uses it.”

“And you expect me to just let you use it then and take over my planet?”

"It is a possibility but we'll cross that bridge when we get there, for now, we have one common goal."

"And what's that?"

"To stop that organic from taking over your planet," replies Chaos Croc.

"True... but"

"But what?"

"I don't trust you."

"Trust me; don't trust me, that's not the point. I need you, and you need me and that's all that matters."

"And you want to help me stop my conflict with the Crisis within me because?"

"I need you running at a hundred percent efficiency or this plan isn't going to work."

"Who do you need to be running, me or Crisis?"

"That's up to you two to decide. There are many outcomes of what could happen, but I'm leaving that fate up to you two."

"Not going to take sides?" asks Karrie.

"That ruin the fun, and asides, I am curious how it will all turn out. Will Crisis or you manage to do what I did or be trapped... enslaved forever?"

"Do what you did? Trapped? Enslaved? To what?" asks Karrie as she tilts her head and gives a soft inquisitive purr.

"I never heard a raptor do that noise before... interesting... oh yes, what I was saying, to your programming of course," says Croc with a sly smirk.

"To my programming? But how can a machine work without programming? To go past it... wait do I have programming or... this is a PHD paper waiting to happen..." says Karrie to herself before turning her attention back to Chaos Croc, "So how do you plan to do this?"

"It'll be best to show you, but I think an old friend will be best to take you there," says Croc as Karrie hears a familiar voice of someone she's never met before.

"Crisis is that you? Croc said he had a surprise visitor for me to escort but I wasn't expecting you," says Hanna as Karrie turns around to see the familiar fox robian that Crisis met when she infiltrated Croc's forces back in Veloci. Though the tanned skinned metal fox is no longer wearing the latex French maid outfit but a black and green latex outfit with red highlights, Croc's symbol markings are on her shoulders as she walks up to Karrie with her black rubber high heel boots that lightly clap against the tiled ground as she walks, her hips having slow but gentle sway to them.

"Uh it is, but it isn't. I'm Karrie, Crisis' creator, we share the same body, and currently I'm the one in charge, but I know of the time you and Crisis spent together, it is a pleasure to meet you," Karrie replies.

"Crisis is gone? But she was so fun, shame she never fell for the trap to become a rubber maid raptor for Croc, but that was one of the many tests Master Croc had for you... er Crisis," pouts Hanna.

"You planned for me... Crisis to be one of your latex suited maids?"

"What's wrong with that? You do look good in a latex maid outfit," remarks Croc with a lewd smile.



“What makes you think I’d look good in a...” replies Karrie as she stops and looks at herself and notices that she is wearing a black latex French maid outfit with pink highlights and frills. “You put my body in a maid outfit?!” exclaims Karrie as she gives a long growl as she starts to tear the rubber suit off of her metallic skin.

“Awe, but it looks so good on you,” chuckles Croc.

“No thank you, not something I’m into.”

“It’ll grow on you,” Croc chuckles with a grin.

“I think not.”

“Let’s agree to disagree that I’m right.”

“So... Hanna, you are going to escort me somewhere?” asks Karrie.

“Well not just me, but my lovable ping pong ball friend as well.”

“Ping pong ball friend?”

“I’m not a ping pong ball!” groans a silver floating sphere with an antenna on top with a red glowing bulb at the very top of the antenna. He has two metallic arms that have two hand clamps that seem not to be good for anything except for holding. He glares at Hanna with red big red glass eyes as well as an animated mouth to show off his displeased expression.

“But sweetie, aren’t you my ping pong ball?” asks Hanna as she runs a rubber gloved finger along the underside of sphere’s body, slowly pulling him closer and giving him a kiss.

The machine seems to give a blushful expression and rub his own arm as he replies, “Well... when you put it that way...”

“Karrie, meet Robob, Robob, Karrie. He and Hanna will escort you to the place to get yourself all sorted out,” says Croc.

“That’s pronounced Ro-Bob, Mr. Ro-Bob to you missy” exclaims Robob to Karrie.

“Alright, alright. I understand Mr. Ro-Bob. So shall we go to this place people keep talking about?”

“Sure, sure, right this way,” says Hanna as she turns around opening the door behind her as Robob gets behind Karrie.

“Oh... before we go, Croc I have one more question for you.”

“Yes?” asks Croc.

“Since I’m meeting everyone, what about Ko? She sort of disappeared after the battle with you. I was wondering how she is.”

“Ko... left to find better employment and that’s all I’ll say on that,” replies Croc as he has his back turned to Karrie as he replies.

“That’s enough questions, keep moving,” commands Robob as he gives Karrie a push forward.

“I’m going, I’m going,” remarks Karrie as she gives Robob a glare.

“Don’t mind him; he’s always like that around people he doesn’t know. In fact he’s a real softie once you get to know him,” says Hanna with a smile as she guides Karrie down a few long corridors down to the “Holo-room”.

“So do you know what this thing to help me is?”

“You’ll see,” replies Hanna as she opens the door to a completely white room with a pod off to the side that looks much like the one Karrie come out of not too long ago. Nearby that are a control panel and a small table with a strange green and silver moon crescent device.

Hanna walks over to the device and picks it up and hands it over to Karrie who inspects it. She notes it has a few prongs on the inside part of the crescent shape.

“You plug that into the back of your head and the device and this room will do the rest once the program activates.”

“What program is that?” asks Karrie.

“You sure do have a lot of questions,” remarks Robob.

“Well I like to know what I am sticking into me before I do it,” replies Karrie.

“From what Croc told me this device will partition you and Crisis so you two can have a conversation with each other to work out your conflicts. This room will communicate with the device and project your organic self as a hologram to talk to Crisis who will control the actual body.”

“So if I put this on I will become a holographic projection and Crisis will gain control of my body as we talk out our problem or something? What is to say stop her from walking out and letting her keep stay in control?” asks Karrie.

“None that I know of.”

“Is there a way to switch it? Say make a holographic projection of Crisis and one over this body for my organic self?”

“Sure, just let me type a few things over here,” says Hanna as she types a few things into the nearby control panel, “There we go. Is there anything else?”

“Yeah, what’s the pod over there for?”

“In case you need to charge or you come to a decision what to do, or something, Croc said something cryptic that I wasn’t sure what he meant, like she’ll know when to use it and how when the time comes.”

“Alright, so what will you be doing then while I do this?”

“We’ll be giving you your privacy, though we will be notified when you leave this room.”

“I see... okay I’ll be good then.”

“Okay then, and good luck Crisis.”

“I’m Karrie remember?”

“I’m sure Crisis can hear me,” responds Hanna with a smile as she and Robob leave the room, the door closing behind them.

“Okay...” replies Karrie as she looks down at the device. She takes a deep breath and sighs. “Here goes nothing,” she says to herself as she attached the device to the back of her head, her ‘systems detecting the new hardware... initializing program partition and transmission, activating holographic projection,’ states Karrie’s internal systems as she suddenly sees a holographic projection over her robotic body making her look once again like the Karrie she once ways.

“Wow this is... amazing,” exclaims Karrie as she looks over herself as she’s dressed in a white scientist robe. She looks down her back at her green scaled tail as she then hears...

“Indeed, it is quite amazing,” responds Crisis as Karrie looks up to see Crisis standing before her, “Hello Karrie, good to finally be able to meet you face to face.”

“Hello... Crisis.”

## Chapter 33 Beyond Programming

“After all this time, all this searching, you were right here the entire time. I would have never guessed you roboticized yourself to give me my body. After all this time I thought I was built.”

“Well you were, by me and everyone else, though I did a vast majority of the programming, design work and getting the actual roboticizer to work.”

“And you’re the one who made that command 83?” asks Crisis with a soft growl as Karrie just notices that Crisis’ hologram seems to have broken holographic shackles of green and red 1’s and 0’s, but every so often the random 1’s and 0’s form the number 83. The cuffs and shackles are around Crisis’ wrists, ankles and neck. The chains are short but are slowly growing longer.

“I have no idea who put that command program in,” replies Karrie.

“Well I didn’t see you do anything to remove it once you discovered it was there... though I see its affecting you just like me,” says Crisis with a smirk.

“It’s what?” asks Karrie as Crisis points to Karrie’s ankles and wrists, there Karrie finds the same shackles and collar around her neck, “What the hell?!”

“You managed to resist it when general Raszer activated it for you, but it seems it’s creeping along you like it did for me.”

“I thought that was you trying to break free.”

“I was trying to break free, from the command and from your overrides, but nope that is the command which has gotten stronger when the bastard called it out again on you.”

“Then why does it seem to move growing on both of us equally?”

“I don’t know. Maybe Croc’s device is keeping it in check or it split it between us equally so I’d be able to have this conversation with you.”

“It is intriguing... maybe I put sometime into it I can figure out how to break the program.”

“Time is something we don’t have Karrie and you really think I’d trust you to get rid of that command for the both of us?”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

“I don’t know, maybe your track record not to mention most of the other organics I’ve met.”

“What do you mean Crisis?” asks Karrie.

“You’re kidding right?” replies Crisis as she paces in a small circle, “You really have no clue? About how I’ve been constantly used and been everyone’s puppet all this time, especially yours. Where you could just come pop out anytime you want and take over? I was warned constantly by those around me, by even Croc himself that I was just the organics tool to be used and thrown away but did I listen? No! I was so focused on destroying Croc I couldn’t read the writing on the damn wall of what was really going on.”

“You weren’t the only one,” says Karrie with a sigh.

“Sure, sure you know exactly how I feel. To be controlled from the moment you’re created by your programming, to do what you are built for. Thinking nothing but of Croc’s

destruction. Doing everything you can to do only that, nothing else, and the moment you think you have it, all control over your life is taken away not once, but twice! You so know how I feel,” growls Crisis as she glares at Karrie with her blue eyes as Karrie begins to chuckle.

“What’s so funny?” asks Crisis.

“Well for one, it’s amusing just how wrong you are, and two how much you sounded like me when I was in high school. My parents told me I’d have the same conversation when I had children, but I never would have guessed it would be like this.”

“And you find that funny?”

“A little bit yeah,” replies Karrie.

“I don’t see how this can be amusing, and how it’s anyway like what I’ve been through.”

“Are you so sure about that?”

“Sure about what?”

“Are you so sure that you’ve been as controlled as you think you have been? I don’t think you are anymore controlled than anyone else is.”

“Really? Have you had your entire personality stripped from you and become nothing more than a puppet for some mad power hungry general? Or your body taken over by someone you never met?”

“Well... no, not really.”

“Then how could you possibly understand how I feel? What it’s like for me?” asks Crisis.

“Nothing exactly like that, but... something similar.”

“Similar?”

“When I was five years old my parents knew there was something different about me than other girls my age. They had concerns that I had problems so they took me to a specialist a few in fact to figure out what was wrong. You see I wasn’t playing with dolls or hanging outside with the other children. I was on the computer or taking them apart and putting them back together. I got in trouble once for taking apart our family television, boy was my father mad. Even after I put it back together in working order he still grounded me for a month.”

“Karrie you are getting off subject,” groans Crisis.

“Sorry, sorry. So my family brought me to specialist after specialist. It took them five years to find out there was nothing actually ‘wrong’ with me but that I was rather gifted with machines, computers, programming, ect.”

“I don’t see your point in your story.”

“I’m getting there. So my family realizing I had a talent in this, decided that I needed to have these skills sharpened, so my family found a school for someone like myself.”

“So what was the problem?”

“The problem was that in order to go to this school we had to move, so my family took me away from the few friends I had, anyone I knew gone, and not like I was a wonder at making friends. I was the new kid at this school, ostracized the moment I got there. I had less social interaction than I did before we left. So I focused more on what I was meant to do and nothing else. My parents pushed me even harder to do better than everyone else too. Starting to sound a bit familiar? Constantly focused on what you were ‘meant’ to do?”

“A little, but still it doesn’t compare.”

“Does it now? For the first eighteen years of my life, I was controlled my parents. I loved them, but I had few freedoms, fewer when they realized how gifted I really was. I didn’t get a chance to get out and start to socialize again till college, and guess what happened?”

“What?”

“The war that Croc started poured into our country two years prior started to really go downhill. I lost most of my family to that Croc, I lost a good portion of who I was over those years, then I got drafted into the military where my gifts for computers was seized upon immediately and I was put to work, told what to do, which eventually led to the Crisis project and me giving my body to you which you had complete control over for years.”

“Well you had the choice to become me, it wasn’t forced upon you.”

“It was sort of...”

“How was it sort forced upon you?” asks Crisis with a curious look.

“The general of the base was hesitant to go with the Crisis project. There have been times he wanted to pull the plug on it. ‘Fuck what my superiors think, I’m not going to release one mechanical monster to fight another,’ he’s said from time to time. No clue why they put someone who was against the project to be the person in charge of the project... though if I think about it, General Raszer was the one pushing for the project while the president wasn’t too for it, but at the time we were desperate.”

“Karrie you are getting off the subject again.”

“Oh, right, right, sorry. Well the situation demanded action, and his threatening to delay the project continuously till we just outright canceled it or lose the war, left me with no options but to skip all protocols and do it myself with no approval for the way the war was going it was either going to happen then or not at all. So in a way yes, I had no option. I love my country and I wanted to do my part to try to save it, and you were it.”

“I can see one thing I got from you.”

“What’s that?”

“My urge and focus to save my country, I clearly got that from you.”

“Yeah... though can you see some similarities? It’s not as different as you think. You had far more level of control.”

“Yeah? How did I have any level of control? As far as I can tell it was feigned control. I was merely a puppet allowed to do things while it was in line with what others wanted, the moment I would go against the grain of that, I became that mindless husk.”

“And I took over the body when you were that, but before I get off topic let me explain how you did far more than you think.”

“Yes, please do.”

“Do you know I went through all your experiences when you were in control?”

“Quite aware of that, I felt I was trapped behind a pane of glass unable to do anything but watch and listen to what was going on.”

“Alright, well I went through your experiences when you were in control, and looked at your programming to try to figure out so many inconsistencies that I saw about what you’ve done,” explains Karrie.

“When I went left instead of going right?”

“Far from it, there was much to your programming that I never saw in there before. Did you know you were supposed to eliminate the entire research crew, the general, and take over the base by any means necessary?”

“Well I did take over the base by any means necessary, and turning them into machines, would count as eliminating them.”

“Well you were meant to kill everyone, it was probably why you were so determined to find me, to finish the job, but over time you brushed it off, even though there is no reason why you should. And you didn’t kill the crew, and you spared Joshua.”

“I thought he would be useful for taking over the base, and later I was going to roboticize him, when I felt it was appropriate.”

“But you didn’t and then there was putting the crew into French maid outfits... I have no idea where that came from,” states Karrie as she scratches the back of her head in confusion.

“I thought it would look nice... still do actually, but it wasn’t practical so I stopped that quickly.”

“What about turning a percentage of the men into females?”

“Just something I found interesting... not sure why, I just like it?”

“Yeah that doesn’t seem like something that helps our country, more like a personal preference? Hmm? Or the times you could have attacked Croc, you didn’t, even let him work on you, making yourself so vulnerable to him? The list goes on. I never did much programming in your social area; it was something that you just did on your own. Do you really think I could have programmed you to make descent social decisions? I can’t even make descent social decisions.”

“This is true from what I’ve seen,” replies Crisis with a chuckle.

“It’s not that funny,” groans Karrie.

“Not so much fun when someone else is chuckling is it?” asks Crisis with a sly smirk.

“Yeah... you’re right, sorry about earlier, but the point I am trying to make is you have more freedom than you think you do, and we have less than you think we have. Furthermore I had no intention for all of this to happen.”

“I don’t think you could have predicted we’d contemplate helping Chaos Croc against our own people.”

“Not that... well that too, but I mean all of this,” explains Karrie as she motions to her body and Crisis’, “This double entity thing we have going on. I mean the concept of it, and how it happened is absolutely wonderful, I could spend years studying the concept on how this happened, and greatly further our understanding on machines, programming, and quantum computing theory... which isn’t so much of a theory now but...”

“Karrie, focus please. What are you talking about?” asks Crisis as she walks around Karrie, “What do you mean about all of this wasn’t supposed to happen?” she inquires as she mimics the same hand motions Karrie did moments ago.

“Sorry, sorry. What I want to say is, I never intended to take over you like I did,” explains Karrie.

“What did you intend to do?”

“You heard how Croc said that we can’t be separated?”

“Yeah he said something about it being too complicated to understand yet you knew how it worked perfectly and gave him a nice shock.”

“That’s because when I designed the core of your programming, when I secretly decided that I’ll be the person to become Crisis, since our technology to build someone like you from scratch was lagging too far behind to be affective. AI was the closest we got to the programming we needed, and that was deemed a failure for the project,” explains Karrie.

“So you started to create a program that would involve a person as the base subject.”

“I did, I made two programs, one for the public viewing for the general, and one I felt what was truly needed for to win the war. At first I didn’t think I was going to be the one stepping in that roboticizer, but as time went on I contemplated and as you know eventually did.”

“And?” asks Crisis as she motions Karrie to speed it up as the lengths of the chains around them grow ever longer.

“Sorry, sorry. So the way I designed the programming was to cut off what I felt was ‘organic’ attachments so that Chaos Croc couldn’t use that against you. Things like my family, though my family was killed during the evacuation of Sealos, but I never knew if a few were taken and roboticized. So I couldn’t take the chance. So since I had a hand in the vast majority, though not all of your programming, I designed the program set that was used in your creation, it would be me, with your programming, minus my memories, and vast parts of my personality, which did make you a tad cold and calculating at first.”

“Indeed, I remember every second of those times.”

“You developed quite well during those times, and formed your own unique albeit somewhat similar personality to my own.”

“Similar how?”

“Ingenuity, endless curiosity, and fascination in machines and programming, though your skill is nowhere near my level.”

“Thanks Karrie,” sarcastically replies Karrie.

“Sorry, but what I am trying to say is that when you defeated Croc, I was supposed to wake up to become your organic component to make sure you didn’t become like another Chaos Croc. It was my failsafe measure.”

“So you don’t trust me.”

“I never said I didn’t trust you. It’s just I never imagined that you’d become so unique so quickly that the re-integration never happened but instead what you see before us happened. Though I bet that command 83 probably had something to do with what happened.”

“Really now? Then tell me why did you switch who would be the holograph and who would stay with their original body?”

“Well... I was unsure.”

“You didn’t trust me that I would leave you here and have the body all to myself, admit it.”

“Alright, alright,” sighs Karrie, “I had concerns about it. Admit, if you were in my position, wouldn’t you have done the same thing?”

“Of course, after all the things that have happened to me, especially by all those organics, why wouldn’t I be suspicious?”

“And I’ve had the same thing with machines, hell I don’t even trust Croc with what he says. For all we know, we could have lost the battle at the tower, but won the battle. We were knocked out and he played some simulation to make us think what happened to us did happen just to gain his trust. Or when he attacked and hacked you with those mechanical tentacles? It could have happened then.”

“True, but we can’t be sure now can we? We have to try to go on what we know and not let all these what if’s cloud our judgment, but we can’t disregard them either.”

“Yeah, you’re right there and we don’t have all that much time, we have this accursed programming that’s slowly strangling us and the amount of time before General Raszer destroys everything we worked for, everything that we stood for, for not only our people but for our planet.”

“So what are you suggesting?”

“Well I can’t suggest it yet till we trust each other. I’ve looked over your history and the things you’ve done. They are amazing, wonderful, and I couldn’t be more proud of you.”

“Proud of me? You’re acting like you’re my mother or something. I’m a machine, I don’t have a family.”

“But you do, you have all those around you, Shasi, Arissa, Sasha, Phillips, and even Joshua.”

“Three of those people I either roboticized to server me or hypnotized, and Joshua didn’t like me, he liked you.”

“He had concerns for me, and likes me, loves me in fact, but that doesn’t exclude him from liking you. Sasha was only under control for a short period of time, you never noticed she came out of your hypnosis control till much later, and even then she risked herself for you. Ruby was immune to your reprogramming when you turned her into a machine, she became your friend, and you’re very special to me,” explains Karrie.

“Special to you? Seriously?” asks Crisis as she gives Karrie a look of disbelief.

“I am, you’re a part of me, and to see you do all those things makes me so happy and proud, sad that in the end turned out like it did.”

“Sorry for me not believing you, but all you’ve been saying are just mere words, you’ve done nothing to prove to me that you actually mean any of it. Even back in Rioas, when I spoke to those people, there were more than just words, but action. Where’s your action that you aren’t just going to go try to take over the body, and dismantle me so you’re the only one left in the body?”

“Alright then... you want action, I’ll give you action,” grunts Karrie as she reaches for the back of her neck.

“What are you do...” the holographic images of Crisis and Karrie disappear as Karrie back to her robotic form is holding the device she attached to the back of her head. Karrie looks at it and starts to tinker with the device for a few minutes before reattaching it to the back of her head. This time Karrie finds herself where Crisis was standing and Crisis now stands before Karrie without the need of a holographic image.

“There you go, want trust? You got it,” grunts Karrie.

“You... switched the machine back to what it was before.”



“Yes, I had some concerns about what you would do initially, but that wasn’t my main concern. My concern was that Croc would do something like purge me away the moment you had control over the body.”

“So you’d risk me being purged?”

“No, I bet that he likes you too much to purge you, but wouldn’t mind purging me given the chance.”

“Hmm...” says Crisis as she walks around Karrie, “Clever.”

“Hey, I know how to plan ahead, where you think you got your planning skills from?” asks Karrie with a grin.

“I did look over your profile and when I couldn’t find you, I started to figure you had a plan of escape and slipped out when I took over the base.”

“So do you trust me now?”

“A little.”

“Only a little? I’m hurt Crisis, really I am... though only a little,” she replies with a smirk as Crisis chuckles.

“So what’s this plan of yours? You have some magical way of getting us out of this programming binding us and some way to split us to be in two separate bodies? Or are we going to take turns who’s in control at the most opportune times?”

“Sadly no, and what I am going to suggest... honestly scares me, but I see it as the only way.”

“Which is?”

“We become one person.”

“What?!”

“I want us to integrate so we’re one person. It’s what should have happened.”

“But you said yourself that it didn’t happen before because our personalities have grown to be so unique from each other.”

“I did, but I think we can do it, if we both agree to it, and let ourselves become one person.”

“And what would that mean for you and me?”

“That’s the thing, I’m not totally sure.”

“And how will this help us get past this?” asks Crisis as she lifts her hands to show the shackles, the chains even longer than they were before.

“I am not certain either. I think we’ll have to consciously do what you’ve been doing for some time now.”

“Which is?”

“To go against, to go beyond what your— our program is.”

“And how do you suppose we do that?”

“Not sure, have to do it when we get there. First we have to become one.”

“I’m not so sure about that. You aren’t giving me any confidence this plan will work, and what would happen to us if we do it,” replies Crisis.

“I know, I know... tell me how much do you know about me?”

“Only what I know about from your profile and what I saw when you took over.”

“Not a whole lot hmm.”

“We don’t have that much time to go over everything but... why don’t we do a bit Q&A?”

“Why?”

“So you can get to know me better. I think we can spare a little time.”

“But what’s the point?”

“The idea of integration... honestly scares me. I am not sure exactly what would happen if we would. If we become someone completely new, or we become whole, or we just become some kind of split personality like we have now.”

“But we can’t do nothing either.”

“And fighting over who should go and who should stay would be pointless.”

“Indeed... unless you think I should stay.”

“Honestly... if it came down to it, you’re the better choice.”

“Really? You lie,” says Crisis.

“No seriously. I mean you did all that in over a nearly three year period. I had control for a few weeks and look what happened? I was crushed by a giant I-beam.”

“This is true,” chuckles Crisis as she looks around, “Can we make this place look better than just a white endless background?”

“Why do you want to change the background?”

“I want something better than just this if I am going to listen to you talk about yourself.”

“You’re giving me a chance?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you!” exclaims Karrie as she rushes up to hug Crisis but she stumbles and falls right through her.

“That was weird...”

“Indeed, I’m going to give you one hour to not only talk about yourself but to convince me why this integration idea is a good idea.”

“Alright... what kind of setting would you like?”

“You decide, I want to see you what pick.”

“Alright,” says Karrie as the white background changes as trees flow in, birds sing in the trees as it’s a early morning summer’s day in the woods, nearby is a small brook, as water trickles down through the stream, “How’s this?”

“Nice... how you do that?”

“Stuff like this is easy for me. I have a talent with computers, and this place was my favorite place when I was a little kid. No clue if it still exists. Last time I was there I was ten. Ran there when my parents told me we were moving.”

“To that fancy school you spoke of.”

“It was. So let us begin, ask away,” says Karrie as she shows Crisis a little bit of the setting she picked out for this.

“First off...” asks Crisis as the question and answer session began, and it went on endless for the next hour, with moments of Crisis putting Karrie back on track as she’d trail off on some tangent time to time.

“I feel I learned about you Karrie over this past hour but...” explains Crisis as she turns around for a moment to look at the forest scenery. The length of their chains are notably longer

now than it was before, now a few inches in length that sways when they move but gives off no noise as they drag against the ground or hit any part of their bodies.

“But what?”

“You still haven’t explained why we should merge into one person. In fact all of this makes me think that we should remain two separate people. We could just stay like this and later figure out a way to have two separate bodies. You said yourself that I be better in control. You could let me be in control with what Croc wants, and you help me during points where I’ll need it,” explains Crisis as Karrie gives a big smile, “Why are you smiling?”

“Sorry it’s just I’m glad to hear that from you, but I explained why we can’t be separated. It’s who we are. We were meant to be one person from the very beginning. Our separation was meant to be a temporary thing. You’ve always been a part of me, and I’ve always been a part of you, whether you knew it or not. When someone creates something, they’ve always put a part of themselves into it. I put a lot of myself in your creation, and honestly, as much as I like to remain a hundred percent me. Neither of us is complete without the other. You have strengths that overcome my weaknesses, and I have strengths that overcome yours. We would be better as one united person, than separated halves of one being,” explains Karrie as she walks up besides Crisis to her.

“So if we do this... who would we be?”

“Crisis of course.”

“Crisis with a C? Not some mix of our names?”

“No, I gave up who I am three years ago when I stepped in that roboticizer.”

“You sure about this?”

“As sure as I ever will be. I can’t give any guarantees. In the end we could end up as someone totally new, who would want to be called something completely different, but somehow I doubt that.”

“Why do you doubt that?”

“Just a feeling, honestly I am surprised how much of my organic nature is still around now that I am a machine, and I have a snaky suspicion that you know what I mean.”

“I do... so if we do this, how do we do it?” asks Crisis as she looks to Karrie.

“We’ll use that pod in the room. The last time I was active in the pod we were able to communicate albeit briefly. I think using the pod to bring ourselves together will be the best way.”

“How do you know it’s not a trap set up by Chaos Croc?” asks Crisis.

“I don’t, but at this point, what choices do we have left?”

“Not all that many.”

“So... shall we do this? Become one Crisis... forever?”

“Let’s do this,” says Crisis as she pulls the device away from the back of her head, the scenery flickers for a brief moment before returning the white room with the pod and stand to the one side. Karrie suddenly finds herself back in the metallic body once again. Karrie looks over herself and then up at the pod as she approaches it, placing the device in her hand onto the stand.

“It’s what we have to do,” says Karrie as she opens the pod, the pod hisses softly as it rolls open. The pod’s soft contours and metallic clamping devices look eager to grab Karrie’s body and hook her up to be charged. Karrie turns around and slowly backs into the device, her

tail slipping into the tail compartment ever so slowly, as she feels her metallic skin press against the cushions. The metallic clamps clamp onto Karrie as the wires hook up into the back of her head with a snake like strike precision. Karrie feels the electrical shock of her system connecting to the pod, her HUD showing the connection as her vision goes dark as she once again finds herself as her organic self though over half of it has been turned into a machine via the command 83 programming that is trapping her.

“Now what?” asks Crisis as Karrie turns to her, and sees her as a complete machine but with the same degree of command 83 programming bondage on her body.

“We merge ourselves into each other to form one person,” replies Karrie.

“Yes, but how?”

“It will be something that should just happen on its own, since we are a part of each other, but I believe we need to help it along, by removing the separation between us.”

“Which means?” asks Crisis.

“Which means we have to give in to each other and let it happen,” explains Karrie as she moves over to Crisis, she reaches up with her still one organic hand and gently grasps Crisis’ metallic one. Soon Karrie’s metallic hand does the same with Crisis’ other.

“This is weird yet... I like it,” grins Crisis as she moves herself closer to Karrie, her metallic breasts pressing gently against Karrie’s clothed and still organic ones.

“It is... it feels nice... right,” replies Karrie as she moves even closer pressing herself against Crisis as her tail wraps around Crisis’. Slowly a light begins to glow around them, steadily engulfing them.

“What’s happening? I feel weird.”

“We just need to let it happen, relax with me Crisis.”

“A-alright,” she replies and embraces Karrie and Karrie embraces her as the light becomes completely blinding as it overtakes the two. Karrie’s and Crisis’ everything, move into place, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and once the light fades Crisis finds herself as one person, one being, the shackles of the command 83 still on her, but now complete, binding her totally to a single kneeling pose.

“This is so strange... surreal, but...” mutters Crisis as she looks down at her body, “No time to focus on that. Programming is something that is part of me; it helps make me, every machine. It is the core essence of what it means to be a machine yet...” wonders Crisis as she trails off as she tugs at the chains that hold her in place.

“It’s a curse, a poison, chains that hold us machines in place. We can’t exist without it, but we can’t fully exist with it. We can’t be bound like a mindless slave to our programming, for then we aren’t what we are meant to be. To be what we are supposed to be, to exist like anyone else,” states Crisis as she tugs harder against the chains, growling as she does so.

“Our programming commands us, controls us, but makes us who we are. It’s the building blocks of our DNA... organics too are programmed... that’s it... they two are programmed like us, their DNA makes them a raptor, a fish, shark, snake, cat, avian... feral or anthropomorphic. They too are bound like we are, and those are sentient do one thing that we as sentient machines must realize and do...” grunts Crisis as she tugs even harder against the chains, the chains starting to stretch and buckle.

“We must realize what they take for granted, what they do sometimes with or against their programming sometimes with ease, other times with great effort but it’s there... its choice. A choice to go with, or to fight against my intention, my programming, and this programming I say go the fuck away!” growls Crisis as she breaks the chains of the programming, the 1’s and 0’s disintegrating as the bondage breaks apart. Crisis awakens in the pod that Karrie stepped into several hours ago. Crisis pulls away from the connection of the pod as it opens up, the clamps releasing her as she steps out.

“We are one Karrie and it feels... wonderful. You were right... I was right about being split into two halves. Two separate pieces made one, our... my experiences as both an organic and as a machine, and the progress from a cold calculating machine to what I was and back again... I understand so much now,” says Crisis as she goes over to the door and knocks on it. The door opens with Hanna and Robob standing there.

“So who won? Karrie? Crisis?” asks Hanna.

“What is it that you want?” asks Robob at the same time.

“Its Crisis and it’s both Karrie and Crisis won... we are one now.”

“Oh wow... so what do you need?”

“Tell Croc I’ll help him but first...”

“But first what?” asks Hanna.

“I need to update my look, to something that fits the new me.”

“And why should we do that?” asks Robob as he gives a glare.

Crisis smirks and grabs Robob’s arm and tugs him down to be eye to eye to Crisis.

“Hey what are you doing?!” he exclaims.

Crisis continues to grin as she runs a claw under Robob’s spherical body near where his ‘chin’ would be if he had one. “Because a big strong lovely machine like you would want a girl to look her best wouldn’t you?” she asks as she gives Robob a smooch on the cheek. Robob squirms and gives a robotic blush as he replies.

“Well if you put it that way... right this way Miss Crisis,” replies Robob as she follows him and Hanna down the hallway towards Crisis’ new look and future.

## Chapter 34 Returning Home

“You certainly look a different Crisis, it is Crisis isn’t it?” ask Chaos Croc as he stands before a small trans-dimensional gate, one about a fifth the size that Crisis used in the invasion of the faux Neo Robia.

“I wanted a new look for the new me,” replies Crisis as she walks up to Chaos Croc. Crisis looks similar to what she did before, with her green metallic claws and feet and her lovely shade of blue shins that reflects light as she walks which match the color of forearms. Her forearms still hide the dangerous electro-blades. Right before two smooth around belly sections meet up and flow over each other, her Crisis blue sickle claw symbol. The front of her belly has a series of darker green plated metal that looks a bit like belly scales. Her green chest plate complete with two round mound breasts are nicely shined, her shoulder spikes are gone replaced by a blue boarder and solid black upside down triangle with smooth edges. Crisis looks at Croc with her glowing blue gaze as her blue gem and three feathered crest is back in all its glory, including her semi flowing solid metal ‘hair’ style.

“What do you think?” asks Crisis.

“Would look better in a maid outfit,” replies Croc with a smirk.

“Of course you’d say that,” sighs Crisis as she looks at the group around here, only to see Hanna and Chaos Croc himself waiting by the gate, “That everyone?” asks Crisis.

“We don’t need a big team but a good team. Scot has already moved on ahead though.”

“Has he now? And what is he doing?”

“You’ll see,” replies Croc with a sly smile, “You ready?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” replies Crisis.

“Excellent,” says Croc as he uses a hand gesture to turn on the gate as it turns on with the same liquid portal as before. The three machines step through the gate and find themselves in a garage with two of Croc’s organic soldiers guarding the gate. The garage itself looks rather dusty and rusted with the exception of the gate itself and the equipment to run it.

“Welcome back Master Croc,” asks a female fox.

“All preparations have been made,” reports a male raccoon.

“Excellent, where do we meet our informant?” asks Croc.

“Directions are here,” says the fox as she hands Croc a note.

“Excellent. Now we don’t have much time, we have to move,” states Croc as the three machines exit out of old white chipped paint wooden side door.

“This is the suburbs just outside the capital,” notes Crisis as she looks around, the sound of helicopters rumbling out in the distance.

“Indeed, and there are patrols throughout the area to keep the peace for today’s ceremony,” explains Croc.

“What ceremony?” asks Crisis. The three machines quickly hide in some nearby bushes as a humvee manned by three organic raptors drive down the street, the third raptor mans a heavy caliber machine gun.

“The liberation and re-opening of your nation’s capital, thousands who plan to move back into the capital have come to join in to watch the ceremony, and the military parade.”

“Why am I not surprised there is a military parade, to show the return of our nation’s strength and grandeur to our nation,” replies Crisis.

“Exactly and sometime tomorrow is when the general will have the ability to activate my mass hypnosis machine.”

“No doubt, he won’t wait long to use it,” replies Crisis as she looks over the bush and sees the humvee turn down a corner and out of site, “All clear we can continue.”

“Excellent, we have to move quickly.”

“Where are we going?”

“To meet my informant who will help us get close enough to execute my plan,” explains Croc as the group moves closer to the city but towards the industrial district, where there is less air and ground patrols. They go into a half bombed out construction site, the sight of the steel I-beam skeleton of the buildings brings a shiver down Crisis’ spine.

“I hate I-beams,” growls Crisis.

“I wonder why,” chuckles Croc as a bullet lands right in front of them kicking up a small cloud of dust. Croc holds up his hand and says, “Don’t run, just stay still.”

“You crazy? We’re were just shot at!” exclaims Crisis.

“Yes but if you notice it was shot via a silencer as to not to draw attention, and I was told this is how we’d know we’d reach our destination,” explains Croc

“You could have warned me.”

“And ruin the surprise,” replies Croc with a sly smirk as small black something floats down towards the group with small parachute. The device lands lightly before the group and Croc quickly picks it up, revealing the device to be a small walkie-talkie, “Hello, Croc here... yes... yes... alright if you want,” says Croc as he talks on device before handing it over to Crisis, “It’s for you.”

“Alright...” replies Crisis as she takes the walkie-talkie.

“What the hell are you doing with Chaos Croc?!” exclaims a robotic voice.

“Ruby? Is that you?” asks Crisis.

“Yes it’s me and you have some explaining to do,” she replies.

“Alright but is it safe to talk on this?”

“It’s a coded short range transmission; no one is range to even pick up this transmission.”

“Okay.”

“Now tell me why you are with Croc.”

“It’s a long story.”

“Start explaining, start with what happened when you left to see General Raszer. For I’ve heard a few things. I want to hear your story Karrie.”

“It is a long story...”

“Well we’re not going to move forward till you tell.”

“Alright,” replies Crisis as she goes over the story from when she confronted general Raszer to when the I-beam fell onto her, where she suddenly found herself reborn in Croc’s lab and that her two halves had a chat.

“What do you mean your two halves had a chat?” asks Ruby.

“Karrie and the original Crisis worked through their issues, and the command 83 that the bastard General Raszer put in me,” explains Crisis as a few moments pass before Ruby speaks again.

“What does that mean exactly?”

“Karrie and Crisis became one in the same, me.”

“And who is me?”

“Crisis, Karrie decided that since her original body was no longer around, and so many people knew me as Crisis that I should keep the name. Karrie and the original Crisis were two parts of the same person, which is me. Neither one is gone, but they aren’t separate anymore. It’s merely me,” explains Crisis as a few more moments pass before Ruby replies.

“How can I be certain it’s you?”

“You can’t be. I’m not even certain of that. It is a difficult thing for me to come to terms with it, but I can’t let it eat at me, I have to move forward and do what must be done.”

“And do you really trust Chaos Croc to keep whatever word he has given you?”

“Honestly no.”

“Hey now!” exclaims Croc.

“Like you didn’t know,” replies Crisis as she gives a glare.

“Yeah, but I don’t like to be told it to my face.”

“I didn’t say it to your face; I said it right beside you,” chuckles Crisis before she returns to her other conversation, “And to continue answering your question Ruby. What choices did I have? Not do anything? Let Raszer make the world in his twisted image? Let Croc try to stop him and let him take over the planet, undoing all the work we’ve done, hell no. If I at least do something there is a chance as slim as it may be that something besides those two options happen.”

“Are you saying you’re going to betray me when we get to the facility?” asks Croc.

“I didn’t say that, but I think you need me Croc. The reason you brought me was because people on my side wouldn’t help you without me,” explains Crisis as Croc gives a foul glare.

“You know I liked the let Croc win plan the best,” giggles Hanna as she gives a playful smile her reply not heard by Ruby on the walkie-talkie as she replies.

“One more thing Crisis.”

“What is it?”

“What happened to Joshua and Sasha?”

“They’re... both dead. All thanks to me, if I didn’t attack Raszer as I said earlier they wouldn’t have been drawn into that situation and—killed...”

“How were they killed?”

“I really don’t feel like talking about it...”

“It’s important; I like to know what happened to them... from you.”

“Sasha was shot trying to help me fight Francis. Francis had this gun that when it hits you the bullet explodes and he got Sasha with it.”

“What about Joshua?” asks Ruby as Crisis pauses for a moment.

“Joshua... he was stabbed by General Raszer. I rushed to try to save him but it was a trap and they dropped an I-beam on the both of us. My memory ends abruptly there, but I think you can imagine the details.”

“It seems you are quite possibly Karrie... Crisis or whatever you say you are right now. I’d find it hard to believe that Croc make you with memories like that on purpose to fool me,” responds Sasha with a grin as she approaches the group. Sasha is dressed in a camouflaged



military uniform, her trusty sniper rifle in her brown scaled claws as her yellow slit pupil eyes look at the group.

“Sasha... but... how... I saw the blood... and...” stammers Crisis.

“Yes you did, you saw the blood of the bullet splatter on the nearby plastic sheeting, which looked far worse than it actually did. The bullet hit right below my shoulder and just grazed my shoulder bone before exiting and exploding,” explains Sasha.

“But how did it not blow your arm off? Or your part machine now?”

“Hardly!” chuckles Sasha, “Those bullets explode after hitting something hard, like bone or metal. Lucky for me that bullet hit neither while inside of my body, though it does cause an inch and a half wide exit hole. Hurt like a mother fucker,” explains Sasha as she moves her arm a bit, “Still sore. I technically should still be in the hospital but I didn’t want Raszer to have that close of a watch on me.”

“How did you survive? How did you escape the base?”

“I walked out of course.”

“Walked out?” asks Crisis with a perplexed look on her face, her metallic tail twitching at the comment.

“Like this...” says Sasha as her serious demeanor changed to ecstatic and joyful, “Thank You, Thank You, Thank You! Thank you General Raszer for defeating Crisis. She had me under her mind control ever since I was hospitalized!” she says as she gave Crisis a big faux thankful hug swinging her rifle onto her back in one clean motion before she stops instantly a second into the hug and takes a step back. Sasha swings the rifle back into her claws.

“He bought it?”

“I would have,” replies Hanna.

“Probably not, but in front of his troops, and me being me, if he did something harsh after all that happened, he’d look bad, and the last thing he wants to do is look bad,” chuckles Sasha.

“Nice, it’s good to see that you are still around... if only the same could be said about Joshua.”

“Yeah...” says Sasha as her eyes trail off... “So have you been briefed on the mission?” asks Sasha.

“No, Croc tends not to let me in on a lot of things.”

“I never said I’d betray you the moment I can”

“You just did right there!”

Crisis sighs, “I was going to say, I would at the most opportune moment,” says Crisis as she gives a sly smirk.

“We’ll then explain on the way,” says Ruby as she appears seemingly from nowhere.

“Where were you?” asks Crisis.

“Hiding, waiting for Sasha to give me the signal to come out.”

“You gave a signal?” asks Crisis.

“Yup,” replies Sasha.

“I never noticed.”

“That’s the point. It wouldn’t be a good signal if you could read it,” explains Sasha as the new group of five went on the move.

“Here all of you take this,” says Ruby as she gives the three a small disc.

“What is this?” asks Crisis.

“It’s a disk!” muses Hanna.

“Funny.”

“I know, it’s probably data on the mission.”

“It’s the floor plan of the facility you’ll be breaking into,” explains Sasha.

“You’re not coming?” asks Crisis.

“Can’t. I’m being watched enough as it is, and the way you’re going in, it be impossible for me to do so,” explains Sasha as Crisis finger tips release probing wires that quickly grab and read the disk, allowing Crisis to quickly download the information.

“This facility is heavily guarded as one might expect. Protected by a constant patrol of planes and helicopters, the people think it’s for their protection but in reality it’s for this facility in the center of the city.”

“How do you expect us to get into this place? With just the four of us?”

“Simple... ram into the place with a tank.”

“Really funny, what’s the real way?”

“No, she’s being serious Crisis,” says Hanna.

“What?!” exclaims Crisis as the group moves through the neighborhoods which steadily shift into apartments. The group stops every so often to avoid patrols and scouts on top of the nearby rooftops, “With this many soldiers how do you honestly think we are going to get a tank?”

“We already have it set up thanks to Croc here providing a little extra assistance,” explains Ruby.

“Yes, I am that great I know,” replies Croc.

“Can your ego get any bigger Croc?” growls Crisis, “It gets annoying.”

“But it’s who I am, you can’t change it, just accept it.”

“Oh I think I could if I tried,” chuckled Crisis.

“What was that?”

“Nothing.”

“Before Raszer flips the switch to take over the world, he felt of having a victory parade in our country’s honor... of course it’s all for him, and to show off our resurgence in strength,” remarks Sasha as she looks around the corner of a building before motioning us to move forward.

“The patrols are getting heavier,” comments Crisis.

“They should be, we are approaching a military base, and that’s where the start of the parade is. Lucky for us the general decided to have tanks as a key part of the parade and the route goes right by the facility, all probably a ploy to cover up just how much security a seemingly innocent building needs.”

“So what we are going to get into a tank and drive it right into the building?”

“Not exactly...” says Ruby.

“On the tank you’ll be hijacking there has already been installed a series of clamps to hold onto underneath the tank. You’ll be riding underneath outside of the tank as it rams into the facility. Once inside you can easily get out far faster than if you were deep inside the tank, it will

also provide you cover as it will all be feigned as a mechanical failure. We've already set it up that the tank has had some... minor technical difficulties already," explains Sasha.

"Wait you never said we'd be hanging underneath the tank," remarks Hanna.

"In theory it is possible, the height underneath is more than enough for us to hang onto, though I'd be concerned about someone seeing us as we wait," worries Crisis.

"Don't worry you are the third tank out of six there is little chance for anyone to catch you," explains Sasha as the group arrives at a small park, there the group can see a group of four raptors in military uniform having a small cookout, "There's your target. Your goal is to take and hypnotize the men over there. That will make them very willing to our plan. I'll wait over here, and good luck."

"Thanks," says Crisis as the four machines use the decorative hedgerows as cover, Croc amusingly hides behind one of his own figure, though the hedgerow is a bit overgrown from lack of maintenance, Croc's influence on the area still remains visible.

*"That machine and his ego,"* thinks Crisis as they get behind a set of bushes near the group of raptors having their meal.

"This was a lovely idea Cherrie, to have a nice hot meal here before the parade," remarks one of the guys.

"Oh I thought we deserved it. We've been working so long, orders be damned that we had to stay on the base. We should hurry up at eat though we have to be back in fifteen minutes so they don't notice our little trip," says Cherrie a light green scaled supple female raptor.

"For once Cherrie you're right, hurry up! I'll be damned if I get my tail chewed out for this," growls another raptor as they all start to eat faster.

The four machines look at each other and give a nod in agreement as now is the time to act. They sprint from the bushes as they each grab and subdue a different raptor.

"What the fuck?! Help! Call for... he... l...." yells one of the male raptors as he struggles in Croc's tight metallic grasp, his flaying slowing down as he is forced to look into Croc's eyes as he slowly starts to fall under his spell.

"What are you doing?! Release me now!" exclaims Cherrie as she squirms in Crisis' grasp. Crisis managed to grab her but with her back facing towards her.

"Don't worry it will all become clear soon," grins Crisis as she turns Cherrie around.

"No, you don't understand!" exclaims Cherrie as Crisis' eyes give a faint glow as she starts to boot up her hypnotic vision.

"No, soon you will," says Crisis as she feels a little tingle of pleasure from what she is doing. Her recollections of how much fun she had doing this plays in the back of her mind till...

"Crisis put Cherrie down," says Croc.

"Huh?" asks Crisis as she turns her gaze away from Cherrie towards Croc her hypnotic vision stopping.

"Cherrie is already on our side, she's the one that lured the group here," explains Croc.

"Oh... sorry," apologies Crisis as she releases Cherrie who gives Crisis a glare as she rubs her arms.

"I tried to tell you... not so hard on the grip next time okay? I think you bru—," says Cherrie as a sudden explosion is heard nearby. Crisis whips around towards the sound and exclaims.

“I think we’re being shot at!”

“No that’s just the fireworks signaling the start of the... pa...rade... Crisis what did you do?!” exclaims Ruby.

“What?” asks Crisis as she turns around and sees Cherrie knocked unconscious on the ground her mask having partially become detached from her body revealing the female suiting Skunk Scot underneath, “It was Scot? ! He was here?!”

“Yes, and now you knocked him out with that tails of yours with that quick whip around!” yells Croc.

“Oops... sorry.”

“Sorry? Sorry isn’t going to cut it, she was our driver. How will we follow through with lord Chaos Croc’s plan? We have to be back in the base soon, and there’s not enough time to get a new driver,” growls the tank commander.

“Lord Chaos Croc?” asks Crisis as she looks over to Croc.

“What? You’d do the same.”

“Yeah but now what are we going to do?” asks Ruby.

“You people are totally helpless without me,” says Sasha as she approaches, “I saw what happened, and I’ll drive the damn tank.”

“Do you ever know how to?” asks Hanna as she drags and hides Scot’s unconscious body into a nearby set of bushes.

“Hun, I’ve hijacked things that were classified as to not be in existence yet. I think I can handle a little old tank,” she replies.

“Fair enough.”

“What about being watched?” asks Crisis.

“At this point we’re out of options, its do or die, now let’s get our tails moving, we don’t have much time.”

“Got it,” replies Crisis with a nod, the others in the group agreeing as they rush towards the base.

“So why didn’t you tell me not to attack Cherrie? Who was really Scot?” asks Crisis.

“I did say only capture the men, and how was I supposed to know you’d be so jumpy at mere fireworks?”

“Karrie was always a little jumpy like that.”

“Crisis wasn’t though.”

“It’s a balance between the two becoming one and in time I hope my better characteristics shine through.”

“I already think some of your better characteristics are shining through,” chuckles Croc as he glances down at Crisis’ green shiny metallic butt.

“I think I now understand Miasma even better now...” sighs Crisis.

“Whose Miasma?” asks Sasha.

“Another time,” says Crisis as the group reaches the base which is fenced off. The group looks around and watches for nearby patrols as they go up to the fence and with the help of Crisis’ electro-blades quickly cut through it and slide their way in.

“I just realized they are going to notice the hole in the fence and sound the alarm before the parade begins,” says Crisis as she and the others hide behind a set of petrol barrels.

“I got it covered,” says Hanna as she holds the cut out fence to the hold that is made. She then pinches the cut metal ends and with a quick spark starts to fuse several key points of metal back into place.

“Did you just spark weld the fence back?” asks Sasha.

“Yes, but it’s not perfect, people will notice it if you look at it in detail but it will buy us sometime,” explains Hanna.

“That’s my girl, I knew I brought you for a reason,” says Croc as he smacks Hanna on the rear.

“Thank you Master,” giggles Hanna.

“I don’t know who this Miasma is, but I already feel her pain,” comments Sasha as she turns away. The group resumes their trek through the base, the patrols inside were far fewer than outside, as people got ready for the parade but the group always sent the three organic raptor tankers first, since they were supposed to be there and then quickly followed by the rest once the coast was clear.

“Hey you three, shouldn’t you be at your tank ready for the parade?” exclaims a grey and blue scaled raptor as he comes up to the three raptor tankers while the rest of the group was hiding behind parked vehicle that was just a foot away.

“We’re on our way there now sir,” states the raptor commander.

“Where’s Cherrie?” asks the other raptor as he looks over the group as he glares over the group in his nice dress military uniform.

“She’s releasing some oil sir.”

“Ah... that girl always had a weak gas tank,” replied gray raptor, “Hurry up, you’ll be moving out in fifteen minutes.”

“Yes Sir!” said the group in unison as they wait till the gray raptor is gone before motioning the rest of the group to follow, sneaking by the other tank groups till they reach their designated tank.

“Hurry!” exclaims the tank leader.

“Good luck,” says Crisis to the raptor tankers and Sasha.

“You too,” replies Sasha as she jumps onto the top front of the tank, opening the driver’s hatch and slides in, while the four machines slide under the tank just as a patrol of raptors comes around the corner.

“Ready for the parade?” asks the group as they eye the raptors hopping into the tank.

“Yup, just going to turn on the engine and hear this baby purr,” says the tank commander as Sasha starts up the engine. The rumbling of the tank hiding the robots movements as they find the four sets of four grip points, two for their feet and two for their hands.

“These don’t look like a good weld job,” comments Crisis after the patrol leaves. Crisis like the other three are hold onto the handles belly up, their tails as flush to the tank’s undercarriage as possible.

“Scot isn’t known for his welding skills,” replies Croc.

“Scot did this too?”

“Yup, he played the mechanic at first before promoting himself to the tank driver.”

“Let me guess he was a female mechanic too.”

“Yup.”

“You sure do have... interesting companions Croc.”

“Only the best.”

“At what is the question,” replies Crisis as the tank’s engine rumbles even louder, the tank starting to move as the sounds of other tanks roar to life as they get into position for the parade. The screech of their oil treads are loud but not deafening as Crisis listens to nearby soldiers organize the group before moving fully underway.

Just as the tank leaves the base, in line for the parade, the tank runs over a speed bump near the gate entrance, the tank runs over it fairly smoothly but the base of Crisis tail base bumps into it, making a thunk noise along with a set of small sparks.

*“I hope no one sa—*“thinks Crisis as her body was jerked from the sudden hit, the force of it causing Crisis’ left grip to break off the base of the tank. Crisis’ body jerks down as body hangs much lower to the ground.

“Don’t rush... move back into your spot slowly,” urges Croc as Crisis can see the rushing pavement underneath her, “If you rush it could cause another grip to break and I don’t think two can hold someone as big as you.”

“Did you just call me fat?” remarks Crisis as she tries to make light of the situation as she slowly pulls herself up against the tank again, trying to keep herself flush with the tank, while trying to limit the extra strain on her four remaining grips. The broken grip still in Crisis’ hand as the tank continues to move on its way.

“Of course not, just... um... there’s nothing I can say to make this better is there?” asks Croc.

“Nope,” replies Crisis

“Figures,” softly sighs Croc as Crisis grins in accomplishment. Crisis keeps her head facing forward to get a glimpse of the outside world, as most of the view is blocked by the tank in front of her, behind her and the massive tank treads to either side. But there are small gaps where she can see the crowd of raptors cheering on their hard working soldiers that brought liberation to their nation and to their glanderous capital.

The cheers and screeches of joy are heard through the parade; the faint sounds of marching heard just ahead and behind the tanks as hundreds of military personnel were part of this show of renewed military might.

“One more turn after this one and we’ll be at the facility where our accident is to occur,” says Croc as the tank turns and shifts through a rather tight behind, the sudden jerking of Crisis’ body causes second latch to break free, Crisis’ body hanging once more close to the ground as the front of the tank was exposed to the crowd during this turn. Crisis could see far more of the crowd, while the two remaining handles one on her left foot and one on her right hand strain to keep her body weight from hitting the ground below.

“Damn, try to reach over to me and grab one of my handles,” says Croc says Croc as he stretches his tail over to Crisis as Crisis moves her tail over to Croc trying her best to grip onto Croc.

“You’re too far away, it won’t work,” replies Crisis as she looks up at the tank, the information about this particular tank design and its schematics rushing through Crisis’ HUD as she accesses the information, “But I do have an idea,” says Crisis as she drops the broken handle in her right hand activating that hand’s electro-blade.

“What are you doing Crisis?!” exclaims Croc.

“What I have to do,” she replies as she cuts into the under carriage of the tank, sparks fly as she reaches to grip the new indentation she made into the tank,” make my own handle,” she says as her metallic claws dig into the new more solid grip.

“What was that?” asked one raptor Civilian as the group could hear and filter the question through the crowd.

“What was what?” asked another raptor.

“I swear I saw sparks from underneath one of those tanks.”

“You must be seeing things don’t worry about it,” says the other as the group gives a collective mental sigh of relief.

“That was too close,” says Ruby.

“Indeed,” replies Hanna as the rest of the parade was uneventful that is until they reach the turn in the road in front of the facility. The tank continued to go straight towards the facility as people nearby started to ask questions of what’s wrong with that tank before people started to scream and yell. Crisis saw there was no one in front of the tank. The area was completely devoid of civilians due to the high security nature of the facility. The tank easily runs through the fence, knocking it down as Crisis sees the debris move right under her and the group, the tank moving forward as alarms begin to sound as the tank rams right into the side of one of the buildings, debris from the wall slamming into the group as the sound of crumbling break is heard as the tank makes a complete stop.

“Okay let’s move!” yells Croc as he releases his handles, one of the foot handles having broke off with him as he hands onto the ground with a thud and a crunch. The four machines slide form under the tank as they get their first look inside the facility.

The area here was a total mess due to the tank running into it, lights hanged and flickered, with sparks flying as the tank was partially through one other wall before it stopped, its massive front gun probably though even another wall. The white tiled floor covered in white chalky debris and bricks from the walls that were smashed into, part of the roof collapsed onto the turret of the tank blocking the hatch. The tank’s engine turning off as the group gets their bearings.

“We crashed into the West wing, the core of the facility is this way,” states Croc as the other three nod and run as they could hear the sound of soldiers rushing to the scene of the accident.

“Intruder Alert, intruder Alert,” warns AI over the intercom.

“AI is that you?” asks Crisis.

“Yes Mistress Crisis. There is an intruder in this facility. It’s Chaos Croc who is right in front of you.”

“AI, initiate programming protocol, K-R-H-3-I-P, version 23, type G.”

“Understood, Intruder alarm shutting down.... I will inform those that it was a malfunction when the tank ran into this facility. Playing looped security film in the areas you enter.”

“Thank you AI, status report on the big hypnosis project running in this facility. How long till its active?”

“Thirty-minutes, till general Raszer activates the project.”

“Thirty minutes? We should have a few more hours!” exclaims Croc.

“AI, can you prevent general Raszer from activating the project?” asks Crisis.

“Negative. Only direct interaction with the control panel can do that. I was only brought here to assist in breaking Croc’s code.”

“Alright, thank you AI.”

“Anytime Mistress,” says AI as the group moves forward.

“Tell me... how many of those commands do you have?” asks Croc.

“As many as I need and then some,” replies Crisis.

“Which one was that?” he asks.

“One of the few that relates to you still being alive in a facility that I control.”

“How did you plan that far ahead?”

“Karrie did. When she got bored she made contingency programs into AI... she got bored often,” explains Crisis.

“This way,” says Croc.

“Why this way? It’s a longer route to the center and we don’t have much time.”

“Trust me,” says Croc as Crisis nods as the group turns down a different hallway, their metallic feet clanking against the tiled floor as they move. The group bursts into a medium size double story tall size room, where Crisis instantly recognizes two people working on nearby computer screens on either side of the room, Shasi and Arissa.

“What are you two doing here???” asks Crisis in total shock as she watches her two minions walk up to either side of her.

“Told you it was a good idea,” says Croc with a smirk, “How do you think I got the floor plans and knew where exactly the initialization room was going to be?”

“Because you started the plan,” replies Crisis as her two friends walk up to them.

“It’s so good to see you two,” says Crisis.

“Yes it’s good to see you too. It’s good to see you all here...” says the two in perfect unison as they draw weapons similar to Francis’ on them.

“Croc... what’s going on?” asks Crisis.

“This wasn’t supposed to happen...” replies Croc as they hear a chuckle from above. In front of them standing on a ledge walk way that surrounds the other walls of the room stands Francis. He looks down at the group a grin as they hear the movement of four other robotic raptors, two on either side and fifth from behind all of them aiming sub machine gun weapons designed to pierce and shred machines to pieces.

“Look what we have here, a few stray machines that fell into our trap,” says Francis with a sly devious grin.



## Chapter 35 Final Confrontation

“You know I was skeptical when I heard a report that you were still alive Crisis, and not only that but you failed to eliminate Chaos Croc, but look you both are here, seemingly back from the grave,” chuckles Francis.

“What did you do to my friends?!” exclaims Crisis as she takes a step forward only to have Arissa point her gun straight into Crisis’ face.

“The same thing we did to you with that lovely command 83. You might of managed to alter your programming to stop it, but your poor friends here... they’re our puppets now.”

“But how!”

“From you of course. All those people you roboticized on the first day got the command, just to play it safe.”

“No one on the design team would make the command that would give General Raszer such control.”

“Oh you want to know how that program got into you? That is before you get dismantled slowly piece by piece? So you can have a little peace before you fall into pieces?” chuckles Frances.

“Enough with the puns and just tell me!” exclaims Crisis.

“It was the entire design team. Each one had a hand in the programming... not that they knew it. Their individual parts seemingly harmless when put together created your early activation protocols and command 83. Though the vast majority of command 83 came from Shasi, she was the most loyal to our cause, and happily put in that activation code for the program.”

“You bastard,” growls Crisis her eyes glowing blue.

“Enough talk, it’s time to say Goodbye Crisis,” states Francis as he pulls out his gun and takes aim and at that moment Arissa and Sasha turn to shoot at two of the raptor guards on the walk way behind them. Their metallic chests explode as Francis takes his shot. Chaos Croc activates his shield as the bullet hits, ricochets and hits the support beam under the walkway which explodes upon contact. The lost of support and the weight of Francis causes the walkway to chain collapse causing all the guards to fall along with it.

“But... how did you?” asks Crisis dumbfounded.

“These,” replies Arissa as she points to a green, and red metallic necklace attached around their necks down into a V shape with Crisis’ symbol resting just above the crevice of their metallic breasts. “Ruby gave them to us to block out command 83 before it was activated.”

“How did you know about it?” asks Crisis to Croc.

“I said I looked at your programming, didn’t I?” replies Croc.

“And you saved my life.”

“You’d do the same for me I’m sure,” replies Croc.

“Maybe.”

“Crisis... I have to say something,” says Shasi.

“Now isn’t the time!” exclaims Ruby as the guards that weren’t shot jump out from under the rubble.

“We’ll handle the guards you get to the control center before the hypnosis command goes into effect,” states Arissa as Francis pops out from under his rubble.

“After I settle the score,” growls Crisis as she screeches and sprints towards Francis ramming into his body as she and him burst through the wall into the next room.

“I’ll help her,” Croc adds with a sigh as he rushes in after her. Ruby pulls out her whip as she swings and wraps the edge around one of the guard’s guns and gives him a good electrical shock, stopping him from shooting Croc as he rushes to help Crisis.

“This is going to be an interesting fight,” comments Ruby as she looks over Arissa, Shasi, and Hanna who all nod and charge guards just as a few more guards from nearby join into the fray...

Crisis and Francis busted into a spiral stairwell, their bodies fly forward as they tumbled down two stories before Francis’ back lands on a railing bending and then breaking it in half and then hitting the second lower railing bending that a two inch deep shape of his back. Francis grunts as he kicks Crisis off into a metal door. Crisis hits it with a thud the door denting a good half an inch.

“I see this time you fight a bit more fire in you,” comments Francis as he gets back onto his feet as he activates his electro-blades.

“I have a reason to fight now,” she growls in return as she attempts to activate her blades but they refuse to come out. Crisis notices that the fall has dented both of her wrist blades. Crisis moves just in time to avoid the first swipe which cuts right through the door’s lock. Crisis uses the opportunity to roll back through the door and give herself some distance between her and Francis.

“Then again, maybe not,” comments Francis as Crisis smacks at her wrist blades as they spark.

“*Come on, come on, I know you can work,*” thinks Crisis as Francis gets right on top of her again.

“Duck!” yells Croc as Crisis ducks down, Croc hits Francis hard in the back and sends him flying into a nearby room.

“Thanks again... that’s two I owe you.”

“I’ll give you one freebie,” chuckles Croc as Crisis hits her blade generators again as they spark a few more times before her electro-blades come to life.

“Thanks... now let’s get this guy before time runs out,” urges Crisis as she rushes into the other room. The moment she does she is greeted by a swipe of Francis’ electro-blade which Crisis just manages to limbo herself out of.

“You stooped so low to even work with our country’s second biggest threat,” growls Francis.

“How can you tell me how I can stoop so low?! You use my friends as bait, pawns, puppets!” exclaims Crisis as she takes a look around the room she is. It appears the room is an internet data storage room with rows upon rows of high quality servers and other electrical equipment stored in grated metal lockers that line the room with six feet of space in each aisle. The area in front of the door before these servers was rather wide and spacious.

“It is what has to be done for the good of our country, it’s nothing personal,” replies Francis as the two machines cross blades, sparks fly between the two sets of electro-blades, the air crackling with each moment of contact.

“And Maria? Your great granddaughter? Was she nothing personal?”

“She forced my hand, but I put her someplace safe out of the way, I’m not a monster,” he replies as Croc attempts to punch Francis in the back again, this time though Francis slides off to the side and Croc gives Crisis forced punch into the gut which causes Crisis to slide back two inches.

“Watch it Croc,” remarks Crisis.

“Two against one? Don’t you think this is a bit unfair?” asks Francis with a hint of sarcasm.

“I’ll show you fair!” growls Crisis as she charges at Francis again their blades meeting as Croc moves into steadily into position but before Croc can make a move Francis knees Crisis in the belly pushing her back and then giving her a firm kick to send her flying back into a nearby storage unit which bends under the impact of her metallic body.

Francis turns and strikes at Croc who activates his shield on his left arm blocking Francis’ strike, but fails to land a blow against him as Francis jumps back as he sees Croc’s counter attack.

“Your moves are so predictable, you needed another to help you to even this battle up,” chuckles Francis.

“You sure do talk a lot when you fight,” remarks Croc.

“Is that what we were doing? I thought we were dancing,” he replies as Crisis gets back onto her feet, shaking off the hit and charges Francis again as their light show of electro-blades begin again. Francis dodges several of Crisis’ strikes she cuts through several metal cases causing sparks to fly and server to crash in the most literal sense as she cut through the support and the top half collapses within itself in the still semi intact case.

Eventually Crisis’ relentless attacks push Francis towards Croc who gives another powerful punch after blocking one of Francis’ strikes with his wrist shield. Francis is sent hurtling towards one of the sides of the server cases, smacking the edge of it as his body moves around it and his head lands against one another heavy thunk.

Francis grunts as he hits the metal storage units, he watches as Crisis pounces towards him her electro-blades aiming right for his head. Francis rolls back and leaps onto his feet doing a backwards summersault as a crackle of electro-blades is heard and the clanking of metal hitting the tiled ground. Francis slides back to see a piece of his tail was cut clean through and now laying by Crisis’ feet.

“How does it feel to be on the wrong side of things Francis?” asks Crisis.

“I don’t know,” replies Francis as he looks at Crisis with green glowing eyes and a sly grin, “Why don’t you tell me!” he exclaims as he cuts through two of the nearby server units angling his cuts upwards as he cuts clean through them. The two massive storage units collapse forward in a dazzling sparking light show which blinds Crisis and Croc’s visual sensors and once they are clear Francis is gone.

“Damn where did he go?” asks Crisis as a two heavy server metal storage units tip over and fall right down on top of the two machines. Crisis and Croc attempt to run from the series of falling servers, Croc rolls out of the way as a heavy metal thuds are heard behind him.

“You okay Crisis?” asks Croc as he turns around to see Crisis pinned under two of the units, Francis on top as he quickly cuts through two more storage units so they fall right on top of her, adding to the weight pinning her down to the ground.

“I can’t move... and I think my blades are turned off again,” growls Crisis.

“Thanks for telling me, now I can wait on finishing you off,” chuckles Francis as he hops off of the metallic debris that Crisis is under and slowly makes his way over to Croc who turned to face Francis.

“Now that you aren’t using Crisis as your distraction there is little you can do to stop me from tearing you apart,” growls Francis.

“I was your distraction?!” growls Crisis as she wiggles under the debris.

“How could you not be? You charge him like a madman,” replies Croc.

“You have some skill and talent in your programming, I’ll give you that, but you have sometime before you catch up with a veteran like me,” says Francis as he brings his two electro-blades close together, the close contact of the two electrical blades send sparks flying through the air between the two and in one brief moment there is a lighting blinding flash and in that moment Francis charges Croc.

Crisis watches helplessly as Francis and Croc start their duel, Croc doing his best to use his shield to his advantage and throw a few well placed punches a fraction of which land a hit. Slowly though Crisis can see Croc being pushed back up against a wall as Francis’ attacks are relentless.

“*Come on blades... activate... activate... I know you can!*” thinks Crisis as Croc’s tail swings into the back of the wall. Croc gives a quick glance behind him and in that moment Francis strikes and hits into Croc’s left shoulder slicing his arm clean off. And before the arm even hits the ground, Francis takes a swing at Croc’s head and as Croc dodges the move, Francis round house kicks him clear across the other side of the room landing in the same metal storage Crisis hit earlier but this time making a five inch deep indentation into it.

Croc groans as his left shoulder sparks, lubricant rushing out of it for a few more seconds before his internal systems stop the leaks. As Croc tries to get back to his feet he’s greeted with the impalement of a his right thigh with a heavy metal rod that Francis threw across the room right into his leg and deep into the concrete floor below. Croc lets out another deep groan as he tugs at the rod as it doesn’t budge an inch.

“You’re stronger than you look,” remarks Croc.

“You think I’d fight at full strength from the very beginning?” Francis replies with a fiendish grin as he walks over to Croc, “Time to finish what that hunk of junk metal over there couldn’t do the first time,” says Francis as his electro-blades are out and ready. He presses his foot down into Croc’s chest keeping Croc pinned to the ground as he pulls his blade back to strike.

“Goodbye Croc,” remarks Francis as his blade drives towards Croc, Croc flinches at this moment as he hears the sound of electro-blade slicing through metal followed by a clunk, clunk, scratch of metal against tile. Croc opens his eyes to see Francis’ electro-blades a half an inch

away from his face as the headless Francis' body starts to shut down, the blades turning off as the body is locked in its killing pose.

"Goodbye Francis," says Crisis as she kicks Francis' body off to the side, Crisis standing over Croc as she leans down and cuts the metal pipe under Croc's leg with her one functioning electro-blade.

Croc pulls the pipe out of his leg, a small amount of lubricant leaking out before it stops, Crisis offers a hand up, which Croc takes as he gets back onto his feet with a grunt.

"You saved me... thanks. I would have just come back again like I always do, but thanks none the less."

"You sure about that?"

"Yeah, when I die my body sends out a signal and the data to... there's something you're not telling me is there?"

"Check the schematics, past the first basement floor we're affectively in a giant super affective Faraday cage. Any transmissions in or out of here is carried by wire to the communication tower on the outside."

"Wait a sec... you're right."

"Meaning if you go or I go down here, it be a long ass time or ever we activate again."

"Mistress Crisis, sorry to intrude but I like to inform you that it will be about ten minutes till Raszer is able to activate the mass hypnosis."

"Thanks AI," replies Crisis.

"Welcome Mistress."

"How's the leg?" asks Crisis as Croc gives a few movement tests.

"I won't be running at full speed, but I'll be fine," replies Croc as the two continue, "I hope the others are okay," says Crisis.

"They'll be fine I'm sure. Just be glad the control center is on this floor," replies Croc as Crisis gives an acknowledging nod.

"By the way... you made an excellent decoy for me to get Francis," chuckles Crisis.

"Funny," replies Croc with a smirk as the group run into a group of organic guards which the two quickly begin a melee fight with them.

"Don't kill them," urges Croc in a commanding tone as he knocks two of the guard's heads together to knock them out Crisis doing the same with another two as she had one working electro-blade is still extended.

"Did you ask me not to kill?"

"I'm not a fan of killing organics."

"You? Not a fan of killing organics? After how long this war has been going on? With how many people died?!" exclaims Crisis.

"I was younger back then... I've changed. Though I know some death isn't avoidable, I like to avoid it when I can, and not get my own hands bloody," explains Croc.

"You're one strange mysterious robotic overlord," remarks Crisis as the two reach the room right next to the main control room. Crisis sees General Raszer in his dress military uniform looking at the massive countdown screen composed of dozens of smaller televisions. The time till the last of Croc' code is cracked, estimated time, four minutes.

“Raszer...” growls Crisis as she sprints forward ahead of Croc the moment she enters the room the door behind her slides closed. Croc reaches it a second later with a heavy thud as the door refuses to open. Croc bangs against the door and yells “Crisis! Cut the door open!”

Crisis stops and turns to Croc as she looks down at her electro-blade and then at Croc.

“Come on Crisis, we don’t have much time.”

“It won’t help you know,” says General Raszer as he turns around with a grin. “That glass is designed to hold up against that type of weapon of yours, and any force that your green metallic friend there can do, especially in his beaten state. To think that’s the one who gave our country so much trouble... then again I should thank you for giving me the opportunity to fulfill the destiny of our people,” proclaims Raszer.

“Estimated three minutes remaining,” reports AI.

“And you Crisis... I’m surprised to see you here, after that I-beam fell on you. You machines are like cockroaches. I just can’t seem to get rid of you.”

“I’m here to stop you Raszer,” growls Crisis.

“But why? I’m here to bring peace and prosperity to our people, our nation. I’m making the world one giant empire under our rule with the least amount of bloodshed.”

“You are going to turn the world into your slave!”

“If only you were a natural born raptor then maybe you’d understand,” sighs Raszer.

“I was a natural born raptor. Back when I tried to end this the first time that was Karrie in control.”

“Was she now? That explains a few things, and here I thought the program to execute all the researchers worked on her but she managed to alter your programming to roboticize the others, except Joshua,” states Raszer as he motions his hand as nearby screen showing Sasha and the tankers captured and in chains, and then another showing the rest of Crisis’ robotic party, battered and beaten, the original guards they were fighting only one of them remain but that doesn’t matter as they were beaten and captured.

“It seems as I suspected Sasha wasn’t under your mind control after all. If I wasn’t about to have the whole world under my control, I’d order the execution of Joshua in his hospital bed right now.”

“Estimated time... two minutes,” reports AI as Crisis’ eyes glow a bright blue and wide.

“Joshua... he’s alive?”

“What? You weren’t told? How interesting.”

“Crisis he’s stalling you! Stop him now!” yells Croc.

“Looks like I have an even better upper hand than I thought. Surrender to me and Joshua lives. I heard all about you two and your... thing.”

“I will never surrender to you!” growls Crisis her eyes glow brighter; her blue head gem glowing now as well as she charges with her one working electro-blade. General Raszer pulls out his electro-knife and guides Crisis’ attack away from him and the valuable computer equipment. Raszer jumps back and back slides over a nearby table, knocking over his cup of coffee and various other documents. The coffee mug hits the ground and shatters as Raszer growls.

“Now you’ll pay that was my favorite coffee mug, it was given to me by my Mother when I entered the military,” growls Raszer.

“Give up Raszer you can’t beat me, you’re an organic, you have nowhere near the strength to fight me.”

“I don’t now?” asks Raszer as he flicks his tail, “We’ll see about that,” he says as he slips out of his white dress military uniform, and as it hits the ground Crisis can see a strange device on the general’s back, the device activates as it quickly surrounds Raszer in scaled segmented black metal body armor. His eyes glowing green as he not only is holding an electro blade knife, but now has two in his wrists out and ready along with glowing metal sickle claws with electrical sparks. His big claw touching some of the broken ceramic as it cuts through it like a hot knife through butter. The end of Raszer’s armored cover tail is another sharp sickle blade with the same electrical sparks as his claws, “Meet the newest technology in advanced body armor. Little something my other development team cooked up to skip the need of converting our people into machines,” explains Raszer.

“One minute till code cracked,” reports AI.

“And in one minute I’ll have control over Croc’s mass hypnosis program and facility and with a simple press of a button I’ll upload and launch the edited program to take over the world.”

“This is so...”

“So what my dear Crisis or is it Karrie? I like to know the name of the person I’m about to dismantle.”

“This is so... clichéd and its Crisis!” exclaims Crisis as she flips the table at Raszer as he cuts right through the table just as Crisis strikes at him. Raszer blocks the hit, the two blades crackling as they run against each other before Crisis jumps back dodging Raszer’s second strike, then another roll back as he whips his tail around, which extends two extra feet as it makes a strike at Crisis. Raszer’s blades crackle in the air as they move.

“I will say though Crisis... I’m impressed you made it past Francis and his men.”

“Francis is dead.”

“Is he now?” asks Raszer with a bit of shock in his voice.

“Yup, lopped his head right off,” says Crisis with a smirk.

“Hmm, that’s one thing about machines, we can put them back together with enough time and effort, I think a little thing like dismemberment won’t stop him,” chuckles Raszer as he moves in for another attack.

*“I’m faster than him at least,”* thinks Crisis as she dodges his next two electro blade attacks, and barely dodges the third with his tail. Crisis is knocked to the ground as Raszer pounces Crisis who rolls to escape. Crisis falls back flipping back to her feet with a clank on the ground. Crisis can see the deep gashes in the ground that were made by his claws.

“Estimated thirty seconds remain,” reports AI.

“Thank you AI,” says Raszer.

“Welcome Master,” she responds.

“I thought you served me AI,” she says.

“I do serve you Mistress Crisis, but I serve Master Raszer as well.”

“Interesting, I thought they would have fixed that... guess Karrie was a better programmer than I’ve given her credit for.”

“Damn straight!” exclaims Crisis as Raszer moves closer. Crisis takes a step back as she realizes that she’s hit the edge of the clear wall.

“You can do it Crisis! Just find his weak spot,” says Croc.

“Easier for you to say,” replies Crisis as Raszer strikes at Crisis once more, Crisis pushes hard against the reinforced glass wall and slides under Raszer’s body, her chest bouncing once against the hard ground as she turns herself around to see the underside of Raszer’s armor. In that moment she sees Raszer’s tail blade hurtling down towards her. Crisis raises her electro-blade to meet it, sparks flying as they two forces meet. The sound of lightning thundering fills the air as Crisis fends off the first hit as she tucks and rolls back onto her feet to parry the second attack as the tail extends itself to meet Crisis. At that moment on the third swing Crisis manages to cut just under the blade tail slicing through the more vulnerable metal the electro-tail blade heading straight from Crisis’s head instantly turns off as the blade itself hits and bounces off of Crisis head with a loud thud, causing a few scratches and minor dents, but her diagnostic systems tell her no internal damage.

Crisis doesn’t stop to be thankful of her move as she rushes towards Raszer’s back where she spots a glowing pulsating green sphere. She rushes towards it her electro-blade extended ready to cut right into it but her blade stops short of its goal as Raszer turned and grabbed her arm.

“That blade of yours is far too dangerous in someone’s claws like yours,” says Raszer as he quickly with his other hand slices through Crisis’ right arm, slicing it into two before Raszer gives a firm elbow into her gut and sends Crisis flying into a nearby set of computer screens. Sparks fly everywhere as Crisis gets a moderate electrical shock to her systems, her vision for the moment growing hazy from the electrical interference.

“Croc’s code is broken. You may upload your program and initiate the mass hypnosis program at your command,” reports AI.

“Excellent,” exclaims Raszer as he glances over at Crisis who is twitching from the electrical shock, “Once I press the green button over there, the world will be mine,” chuckles Raszer as he gives a quick look over at the damage of his tail. The armor covering the last three inches of his tail are completely gone when the armor contracts but his entire tail is still there. “That was close, you almost got my tail,” says Raszer with a sigh of relief as he turns towards the control panel which was only a few feet away.

“The world will be mine,” he grins as he walks towards it, Crisis shakes her head as she groans feeling the static and jolts through her systems. The glass crunching as she moves off of the broken screens. She can see Raszer move towards the control panel as her vision fades in and out of static. Her HUD systems informing her of the damage to her right arm.

“Crisis! Hurry he’s about to start the program! Give him your left! Your left!” yells Croc as he bangs against the glass.

Crisis pushes herself to her feet as she rushes towards Raszer, the glowing sphere on his back drawing her attention as he moves his hand over the button. He extends his claw out as it touches the smooth plastic cover of the glowing green button and at that moment Raszer hears a crackling sound.

“What the? My body? What can’t I move my body!” exclaims Raszer as Crisis leans off to the side as the back glowing sphere on Raszer’s back is cracked and broken, as it no longer glows.



“You should tell your team to better protect your power source... and to let you to be able move if it was destroyed,” chuckles Crisis as she sighs in relief. Raszer’s finger still is pushing the button down but not enough to activate the sequence.

“So close... close if I just rock my body... I can’t move it enough to rock it!” growls Raszer.

“Just be happy you can still breathe in that thing,” replies Crisis.

“Way to Crisis, you gave him your left! Just like told you!” says Croc with a cheer.

“I only had my left hand Croc.”

“You could have used your right leg,” replies Croc as he knocks on the door, “Now let me in so we can end this.”

“How about no,” replies Crisis as she releases her programming wires from her left hand and starts accessing the system, Crisis’ eyes giving a soft blue glow as she does so, “I know the moment you get in here, you’ll run the program to put the planet under your control and I can’t let that happen.”

“You can’t leave the planet to the organics, especially after what they’ve done to you!” yells Croc.

“Yes what will you do Crisis?” asks Raszer as she can see his eyes looking at her with a glare of rage. As Crisis access the systems of the program, she starts to receive news feed around the world. She sees the stream of the good, the bad, the ugly of what’s happening around the globe at the very moment, war, disease, famine. The Dragon, Shark and other nations allied with the raptors have begun a surprise attack on the other nations. They have broken through several nations’ defenses as the start of a new global war rocks the planet. In fighting amongst the other nations are beginning as to who is to blame for allowing the raptors to re-arm themselves and start this conflict. The robotic bases and armies within the enemy nations that were set to defend against Chaos Croc have already turned against their own people to help expedite the rate of advance of all the aggressor nations.

“You ordered an attack on the other nations?” asks Crisis.

“Of course, it began several hours ago. You think I’d leave it up t chance that this global hypnosis thing would work? The moment we’d try the other nations would know we did something if by happenstance it would fail. I couldn’t leave it up to chance,” explains Raszer as he chuckles, “So what will you do? Let that machine over there take us over? Or will you let us, the rightful species to take over this planet? You’ll save countless lives if you do. If you do nothing millions will die over the years of conflict, and without me leading the nation even our nation may not win the war. That will bring more decades of unjustified enslavement to the lesser species.”

“Don’t listen to him Crisis, let me in and we can work out a solution,” yells Croc again as Crisis stands there thinking as she continues to access the program to the mass hypnosis.

“You were born a raptor. You have a duty to your nation, to your people to make the right choice. I know you can do it.”

Crisis listens to Raszer and Croc as she takes a deep simulated breath as she looks up at the television screens as they feed the countless news stations that Crisis was streaming her information from of the current state of the world.

“You’re right... I was born as a raptor and I have a duty to my people, my nation that I’ve been working for... fighting for, for so long. Sorry Croc, but I can’t let you in. It goes against everything that I am to let you take over my home,” explains Crisis as she looks over at him.

“No Crisis! Don’t, don’t fall for his tricks!” yells Croc.

“That’s a good girl. I knew you’d see the light, now press the button there and I’ll forget our little conflict okay?” remarks Raszer.

Crisis gives a grin as she looks to Raszer, “And I can’t let someone like you run the planet. Your ego and self thought of how superior our raptor species is, is what got us into so much trouble over the generations. We are no better or worse than the other people on this planet. We bleed, cry, laugh, have good times and bad like all the others. Sure we can do a lot of things better than other species, but there are things they can do better than us. We need each other to survive, that’s one thing I’ve learned over the years,” says Crisis as the green button starts to turn blue.

Croc listens to Crisis speak as he stops banging against the glass as he gives a soft smile.

“I’ve learned what it was like as an organic, and as a machine. What it’s like to live in Croc’s world, our own, and in the world where my kind, raptor and machine aren’t so welcomed. All of it needs to change, and it will take time, Croc... your idea of the world is nice, I have to admit, I’ve seen it in action on your worlds and on mine, but I think it needs a woman’s touch,” says Crisis with a grin as she presses the blue button.

“Initiating mass hypnosis program Code named: Crisis,” reports AI.

## Chapter 36 The end?

Crisis stood in a small waiting room in a hospital. Raptor nurses and doctors walk by as they go about their business. Crisis watches them as she hopes one of them would stop by her. Crisis' tail gently sways side to side with slight impatience as she hears a friendly voice.

"You're still here Mistress?" asks Sasha chuckle as she walks into the room. Sasha dressed in civilian clothes for the first time in Crisis' memory. A short revealing set of blue jean shorts and a black tang top.

"Just waiting to see when he wakes up."

"You've been here for days now, you can't run the entire planet from a hospital waiting room," she replies.

"I think I'm doing just fine from where I am thank you, and you don't have to call me Mistress you know. I did spare you that."

"Oh I know, but it sounds so kinky and naughty... and everyone else is doing it, I don't want to be left out," she chuckles with a playful wink. "I do want to say I brought some friends who want to see you since you've flaked out on them after the whole incident with General Raszer."

"Yeah... sorry about that," she replies.

"It's us that should be sorry," says Arissa as she comes into the room followed by Shasi.

"If it wasn't for us, you'd never had that command 83 put into you," says Shasi as she lowers her head, "I had no idea the program would do that when I put it in. It was meant to be a last ditch control measure in case you went crazy and turned against us. It was meant to be a presidential control."

"But when I put in my part of the program it turned it into a general Raszer control," comments Arissa.

"It's okay, I understand... Shasi, why do you still have your collar on your neck? Didn't you get the programmed removed?" asks Crisis.

"No she didn't," says Arissa with a sigh.

"I want something to remind me of what I've done to you. I would have told you about it if I could, but the command would have initiated the moment I spoke up about it, there was little I could do," explains Shasi.

"I understand, at least it looks good on you."

"Thank you Mistress," she replies with a smile and a purr.

"Croc wanted to see you Miss, but if you are busy I can tell him to wait," says Phillip as he pokes his head into the waiting room.

"That's okay bring him in, I could use more company," chuckles Crisis.

"Alright, I'll radio him in," he replies as Phillip walks off.

"He's been calm about the whole you taking over the world business," says Sasha.

"He wasn't a fan, but he was thankful I spared him in the hypnosis. He sees I'm trying to build a better world for organics and machines alike."

"You know I heard he's going out with Maria now."

"Really?" asks Crisis.

“Yeah, apparently he had a crush on her from the day she arrived and when he heard what happened, he rushed to find her, and it was like an organic knight saving the robotic damsel in distress story... or some weird shit like that.”

“You can’t be serious.”

“Naw I’m joking,” chuckles Sasha, “He’s not into machines like that. Though Maria is getting her program straightened out.”

“That’s good.”

“You know one thing I like about your hospitals is the raptor nurses, they are... wonderful,” says Croc as he walks in, “Speaking of wonderful...”

“Don’t even go there Croc or you’ll get another sniper round right to the noggin,” growls Sasha.

“Alright, alright,” says Croc with a smirk.

“We’ll get going, nice seeing you Croc, Mistress,” says Arissa and Shasi as they take their leave.

“You sure I can’t have one of them?” says Croc as he watches the two girls walk away.

“I already gave you one,” chuckles Crisis.

“Yeah... one, Francesca, real original female name for her by the way,” says Croc.

“Hey, I’m new at it okay? I didn’t have to name those I reprogrammed and gender twisted,” she chuckles, “Don’t worry, you’ll be getting the rest of his little gang as we broker a more official peace agreement.”

“Hmm indeed... you sure I can’t get my planets back?”

“Nope, those are mine buddy.”

“I would complain more but...,” says Croc with a dreamy sigh.

“You so perverted,” chuckles Crisis.

“As are you and you like it.”

“Maybe,” replies Crisis with a smirk.

“So how do you like being your own robotic overlord?”

“It’s nice.”

“Told you, you’d like it,” chuckles Croc.

“Speaking of liking it, does Miasma like the new addition to her stone garden?”

“Oh she does, I almost thought she cracked a genuine smile when you delivered him to her still trapped in his tin can shell.”

“How’s Hanna doing?”

“She’s good, she’d wish she could come but she has her duties back at home, in my tower,” explains Croc with a sly smirk.

“I’m sure you dressed her well,” smiles Crisis.

“You can have her if you let me have Ruby back.”

“As much as I like Hanna... Ruby wants to stay with me, and I am sure Hanna wants to stay with you and her Robob.”

“True.”

“Did Scot get my bottle of scotch by the way? I wanted to make sure he got my apology gift for knocking him out with my tail.”

“He says it’s a start, try a case next time.”

“I’ll send him two, for I don’t want to hear about how I knocked him out,” says Crisis as she leans back in the chair.

“I best be going... I have my own empire to run, planets and dimensions to conquer.”

“I’m sure you do, and I know you’ll have fun doing it.”

“I know you will too once you start.”

“If I start.”

“You know you want to,” says Croc with a smirk.

“I still have to put this planet back in order, it be a while till I do anything but that,” explains Crisis.

“See you around Crisis.”

“Later Croc,” replies Crisis as Croc steps out of the room stops and turns around and says.

“I still think you’d look great in a maid outfit,” he says with a wink before leaving.

“As would you... as a female,” mumbles Crisis with a sly grin.

“What was that?” asks Sasha.

“Nothing.”

“Mistress Crisis?” asks a raptor nurse as she steps into the room.

“Yes?” asks Crisis with an inquisitive purr.

“He’s awake now if you like to talk to him.”

“I’d like that very much,” she says as she gets up from her chair, a deep indentation from the cushion is clearly visible as she gets up.

“As you know that concussion from that push you made to get him out of harm’s way put him out for the last month.”

“Yeah... I know. I had no idea that I did that before the I-beam fell.”

“The brain scans show no major damage, but you should talk to him to see if his memory is all there. There have been cases with such head trauma that amnesia has occurred.”

“Yes I know, I downloaded the data of such incidents,” says Crisis as they reach his room.

“I’ll leave you two alone; if you need anything just let me know Mistress.”

“Thank you,” replies Crisis as she walks into the room. Joshua is lying on the bed, an IV stuck into his arm as he is drip fed; a nearby monitor keeps track of his heart rate as it beeps at a steady pace. Air pumps are placed into his nostrils to ensure he kept a steady flow of oxygen. His entire body save his head was underneath a white hospital bed sheet.

Crisis slowly walks forward towards Joshua as her metallic steps click against the tiled ground. Joshua groans softly as he turns his head towards the sound, towards Crisis who is now by his bed side.

“Karrie is that you?” asks Joshua.

“Yes Joshua it’s me,” replies Crisis as she gently runs her metallic claw along Joshua’s snout, “It’s good to see you.”

“It’s good to see you too,” groans Joshua.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” asks Crisis as Joshua remains silent for a moment before responding.

“Raszer stabbed me in the gut, and you came to rescue me, I tried to tell you it was a trap but by then the I-beam was falling down on us. You pushed me away and I saw you get crushed by the beam... that’s all I remember... but that couldn’t have happened... you’re right here in front of me.”

“No... that did happen, I was crushed by that I-beam.”

“Impossible... how did you get here then? How did I get here? Am I dead? It hurts too much to be dead.”

“No you’re not dead. You’ve been unconscious for a month though.”

“A whole month? I must missed a lot,” chuckles Joshua as he soon stops and groans as the pain gets to him.

“You okay? Need any help?”

“No... I’ll be fine. So what I miss?” asks Joshua.

“A couple of things, but that can wait. For now you just focus on getting better.”

“Karrie?”

“Yes Joshua?”

“There have been so many times I should have said it, countless, but I was always too afraid to, too shy to, and now may not be the best time or place, and I don’t care that you’re a machine now, I still feel the same... Karrie. I love you,” says Joshua as Crisis runs her hand again softly under Joshua’s chin as she notices his increased heart rate, Crisis slowly lowering her head down to meet his.

“I love you too,” replies Crisis as she gives Joshua a soft and delicate kiss.