

From The Eyes of Elliot Klein

Prologue

The escort jerked.

Elliot woke with a start. Yawning languidly, he looked around his cramped quarters and sighed. *It's going to be one of those missions again.* Elliot thought. Thankfully, his bunk was just next to a porthole. Looking out into the deep darkness of space always has a calming effect on Elliot. Seeing the millions of stars outside reminded Elliot how far he was away from home.

Elliot tapped a small button on his watch and a small hologram popped out of his watch, showing the time. *0600 hours, we should be arriving in about two hour's time.* He thought. Quickly and quietly, he made his way to the common bathroom. Using the disposable laser shaver, he made short work of the stubble that managed to sneak up on him last night. Then he stepped into the cold vacuum shower and activated it. The cold water jets, combined with the vacuum outlet, jolted Elliot to full awareness. *The wonders of technology,* he thought as he made his way quietly back to his bunk.

Being the meticulous person that he is, Elliot proceeded to check his medical equipment first. His first love and responsibility has always been his medi-kit. Making sure his medi-kit contains the standard medical and first aid equipment, he then took out half a dozen religious books from his cupboard and pushed them into his medi-kit. Satisfied with the condition of his medi-kit, he then started checking his secondary equipment. He made sure his firearms are in working condition, made sure he has enough ammunition and double checked his armor and helmet for defects. Finally, after being satisfied with everything, he sat on his bunk and waited for disembarkment.

Looking around, he saw most of the other soldiers are up and about. Some scratching their balls as they yawned the sleep away, others, like Elliot, are already finishing packing their equipment. Off to his left, he can see Private Mondo Payne smoking with Private Stig Martar. Every time they exhale the obnoxious smoke, the smoke will be sucked into a small box that was lying between them. Where Stig is a lanky man, Mondo is compact. Where Mondo has dark straight hair, Stig only has short spiky brown hair. Where Stig is roguish, Mondo is simply brutish. Even with all these differences, they smoked and chatted like as if nothing else in the world mattered. Elliot smiled as he wondered how they managed to sneak the cigarettes into the escort in the first place.

Directly opposite Elliot sat Private Charlie. One look at Charlie and many would have thought Charlie should be a model instead of a soldier. With his shoulder length blonde locks, Charlie looked angelic. Though Charlie is fit, he can never look as tough or as strong as Mondo or as fast and dexterious as Stig, yet he looks exceptionally well proportioned and sleek. Elliot often wonders what sort of gadgets Charlie has that kept his hair and uniform so clean and tidy. Then Elliot also wondered if it is worth paying the price to be so good looking, for Charlie can only be labeled the 'Male Blonde', as he had been dubbed by many of us. Sometimes, Charlie can spend up to half an hour searching for something that was right next to him all that while, Elliot laughed inwardly.

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On Elliot's right side, he can hear Lance Corporal Izzy attempting to calibrate his electronic gear. Izzy is the team's main mechanic. The mousy bespectacled man can do amazing things with the various electrical devices. Izzy looked up from his calibration and flashed Elliot a smile, Elliot returned with a wave and Izzy went back to his calibration, oblivious to his surroundings.

"Fall in!" Came the call from the bunk's main entrance as Master Sergeant Marsh Brubanker strode in like he owned the place. Squat, blockish and tyrannical, this man has been their mentor, father and brother for the most part of their training. Instinctively, Elliot and the others rushed towards Brubanker and formed ranks. Once the soldier's were formed up, he glared at them like some starving dog.

Then Lieutenant Conrad walked in. Much younger than MSG Brubanker, he strode in with an easy gait and stood in front of the men and waited. Young, fit and intelligent, Lieutenant Conrad is what you would call a 'scholar officer', though not in his face. His past is filled with scholarships, study sponsorships and numerous academic awards. There is no doubt that Lieutenant is the 'brains' of this mission.

"Good Morning SIR!" The men hollered.

"At ease men. Mission briefing." Lieutenant said softly. The men in the front row sat while the men in the back row stood. He then took out a small remote and darkened the room and a rectangular screen the size of a dining table floated next to him, like a hologram.

"As you may or may not know, our escort picked up a distress call from this space station." He said, as the screen showed an image of a space station that looked like an inverted cone. "Our mission is simple. We are to enter the station from here," His remote emitted a laser to point at the tip of the upside-down cone, "travel all the way up," He then brought his pointed right to the flat of the cone, "here and rescue whoever is still alive in there." He paused to let some of the slower men absorbed the information. "This station was a scientific research center, mainly used for experiments. The higher ups have no idea what went wrong. The distress call was only picked up two weeks ago, yet, when our ship scanned the station for life not thirty minutes ago, there were no sign of life. We maybe too late...or not. In the event that the scientists have put themselves into stasis to avoid whatever danger were present, we must rescue them too." He added, scanning the room and faces for any reaction. "Take note that whatever danger they faced two weeks ago might still be present, so we take no chances."

"Docking sequence in ten minutes, please strap yourselves in." A mechanical female voice announced over the P.A. system.

Lieutenant Conrad looked around once more. "Any questions?" When no questions were forthcoming, he continued, "Good, then prepare to leave in five minutes! This pilot's a devil..."

With that, he dismissed his men and he and MSG Brubanker left. Then while Elliot was strapping his seatbelt, he heard someone ask, "One last stick?"

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Act 1 – When Leaders Go Out

Beep. The light turned green.

The hatch to the loading bay opened and a stench like that of an old library reached Elliot's nose. Up ahead, it was darkness as far as the eyes could see. While standing near the hatch, Stig whipped out his motion sensor and scanned the immediate area. Stig looked at his scanner and signaled the negative to MSG Brubanker. Then Brubanker motioned for torches to be turned on.

Bright beams of light pieced the darkness. The loading bay was the smallest room in the entire station, locating right at the bottom tip of the 'upside-down cone'. The room was barely sixty feet square, with three other hatches leading to airlocks along the other three walls. This place was definitely not made for comfort, passengers were quickly and efficiently ushered to or from their ships to their destinations. Right in the middle was a platform about 30 feet square with four pedestals at each corner. The entire place was covered with dust.

"Nothing here, Sir." Stig reported to Lieutenant Conrad softly. MSG Brubanker then signaled everyone to hop on to the platform. Once everyone was on the platform, Izzy walked over to one of the pedestals and keyed something in, and four metal walls appeared, boxing everyone on the platform. Then the platform started humming. "Good work Izzy," Lieutenant Conrad said, "I know that we are supposed to go level by level, but there are staff databases in the Control Room Level. They will make our head count and search for survivors easier. Make for the Control Room Level." Lieutenant Conrad instructed Izzy. Izzy punched in something and the platform started moving up.

Almost instantly, the platform stopped.

"Security Code please." A mechanical female voice asked in the platform. Lieutenant Conrad walked over to another pedestal and started keying the code. "Security Code not recognized." The voice whizzed overhead. "Damn! Why don't I ever get the memo?" He asked looking upwards, as if the ceiling might provide an answer. "Izzy, what level are we at?"

"Sir, we are at level five, the servicing bay. Maybe we can find the proper code in here, Sir." Izzy replied. Lieutenant Conrad seemed to consider it for a moment, then said 'Open the doors, we are going to find us a code.'

Izzy pushed a button on the pedestal and the metal walls vanished. Just as the wall closest to Lieutenant Conrad disappeared, a great roar like that of a hundred lions thundered nearby.

"Defensive position!" MSG Brubanker said. Then everyone assumed a defensive position and scanned for the source of the roar. Then out of the quiet darkness, the steady *thump thump* noise can be heard. "What's that?" Stig asked to no one. Then he quickly raised a stick to his mouth and lighted it, taking a long drag. The thumping noise was louder and more closely spaced as moments went by. "It's running towards us!" Someone shouted. Then it appeared.

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Standing close to ten feet high, the thing looked roughly humanoid. But being humanoid barely does it justice, Elliot thought. The thing has greenish skin and has hands the size of a man's chest. On its shoulders is a smallish head with what looked like a million sharp teeth. "What kind of experiments were they doing here?" Elliot thought to himself.

With amazing dexterity, the thing swiped its large hand across Lieutenant Conrad and sent him flying straight to the pedestal. The officer then slumped motionless on the ground. "Fire damn it!" MSG Brubanker hollered as shots were fired at the creature.

Elliot looked around and noticed almost half the team was shaking in their pants, including himself and Mondo. "Must fight the fear." Elliot kept saying to himself. Mondo started firing madly but many of his shots went wide. Stig kept firing with one hand while the other hand was holding on to his cigarette and taking quick puffs at the same time. The creature advanced towards MSG Brubanker and Elliot took his chance. He ran forward to drag Lieutenant Conrad's unconscious form away from that monstrosity. A quick glance showed the officer suffered only bruises and cuts, nothing fatal. Glancing back, Elliot can see the creature bleeding from several wounds. Then amazingly, Charlie walked up to the creature and attempted to talk with it. Whatever Charlie was attempting to do, it did not work, because with an angry roar, it grabbed MSG Brubanker and tried to squeeze him to death. "If it can bleed, maybe it can be poisoned." Elliot thought as he took a morphine syringe and rushed forward and jabbed the needle into its arm, injecting all the morphine into it. The distraction caused it to drop MSG Brubanker but made Elliot its prime target. Looking unaffected by the drug, it proceeded to slam Elliot towards the back of the platform.

Finally, Lance Corporal Montgomery fired his anti-tank baby and with an equally loud boom, took out the creature's right arm and right upper torso. Then, with a sickening crunch, the creature fell forward, slamming its attached arm over Montgomery. Finally, the creature's chest grew still.

"What the fuck was that?" Mondo said while the rest retrieved Montgomery from under the green arm. "Izzy! Shut the doors!" Someone shouted and the metal doors materialized, hopefully keeping them safe for a while.

Elliot dragged Lieutenant Conrad and MSG Brubanker together and attempted to wake them, but to no avail. "They are out cold, alive but unconscious. I need more medical supplies to wake them." Elliot said. Then Elliot proceeded to Montgomery. Stunned and bruised, but at least he was still awake. Elliot took the opportunity to take some of the blood and skin sample of the creature off Montgomery for further study.

"Stig! Use your motion detector to see if there are more of them around." Another soldier cried. Stig made a quick scan and replied no more movement. Yet, no one was sure the danger has passed. "Can anyone tell me what that thing is?" Stig asked.

Charlie stood up and said "Calm down everyone." Then everyone quieted, like magic. Turning to Elliot, "Elliot, can you determine what

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that thing was?" Elliot nodded slowly, "But I will need DNA analysis kits, and the medical bays are on the upper floors." Charlie absorbed this and then said to Izzy, "What are the levels below us?" Izzy pressed a few buttons on the pedestal and replied, "Directly below us is the cafeteria, then the storage level, then technicians quarters and the loading bay, where we came from." Charlie nodded thanks.

"This is what we should do." Charlie then paused as he looked at the faces of his friends. Elliot could swear he saw Charlie swished his blonde hair just now. "We remain calm and finish our job. We need to find the security code. I believe this level is too dangerous so we go down systematically." Looking around, Elliot can see some soldiers nodding in agreement.

Turning to Izzy, Charlie asked, "Izzy, can you bring us down to the cafeteria please?"

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Act 2 – Soup's Up!

The platform moved downwards.

Elliot waited next to the officers. He took their pulse once more to make sure they are still alive. Looking around, he noticed that the depressing silence was broken only by the puffing noises of Stig.

The platform jerked to a stop and everyone, except Izzy, scrambled to a defensive position. Elliot quickly dragged both officers and dumped them in the middle of the group. When Charlie gave the nod, Izzy punched the 'Open' button on the pedestal and the metal doors vanished.

The cafeteria was lighted dimly. Somewhere to Elliot's left are rows and rows of tables and chairs for dining. On his right, he can make out the café lady's food dispensing counter. That, however, was immediately pushed to the back ground of his brain as a strong coppery smell assaulted him. *Blood, and lots of it.* Elliot thought to himself, and then he saw it. Lots of it. There was blood all over the place, on the counter, on the floor, on the tables and chairs and even the ceiling. All splattered like as if some giant shredder had come through here and shredded everyone instantly.

Stig whistled a low whistle of wonder, then started lighting another cigarette. Elliot threw him a black look. "What happened here?" someone whispered to Elliot. Having no idea, Elliot just shook his head. Then Montgomery stood up, pointed somewhere ahead of them and shouted.

Everyone tensed up. Then Elliot saw what Montgomery saw, at least he think he saw. The blood drops and splatters were all moving. Crawling, like some unholy red swarm, the blood moved steadily towards a point just outside the platform. Where the blood merged, there was a giant blob of blood. Like some strange giant bubble, the thing kept growing until it has drawn all the blood into it. Elliot watched it silently, filled with fascination. The others also stood very still, but out of fear of the unknown.

Finally, when all the blood was gone, the blood blob urged forward and rolled over a soldier, his screams turning to gurgling noises almost immediately. "Fire! Shoot that damn thing!" Charlie pointed. The men started firing with wild abandon, but Elliot noticed many shots simply went through the blob like firing through gelatin. Elliot could almost make out the drowning soldier inside the blob. Then someone got a good idea, at least to Elliot. Someone fired at the sprinkler system and activated it, sending sheets of water cascading down on everyone. Elliot noticed that the water caused the blood blob to shrink, as some of its mass is being washed away by the falling water. "It's working!" Charlie said, and raised the hopes of everyone. The blob moved forward and tried to consume another soldier, but it is now two thirds its original size. Yet it managed to roll over another soldier, but instead of drowning him, the blob just left a red mess behind.

Then the sprinkler system stopped pumping out water. "Close the doors!" Charlie shouted at Izzy. Elliot quickly pulled the bloody

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soldier into the platform while Mondo rushed next to the blob and reached inside. In a second, Mondo pulled out the first soldier out of the blob, and flung into the platform.

Then the doors materialized and the deadly hush fell over the men again. Elliot went over to the soldier Mondo pulled. Hoping he was not too late, Elliot put both of his hands on the still man's chest and pumped. Blood flowed out of the soldier's mouth and nose like a leaky faucet. After fifteen minutes of C.P.R. the man finally coughed and sputtered, vomiting blood all over. "Oh man! I am never drinking soup from any cafeteria again." He said, while spitting more blood. At least he is alive to fight another day. The other man just suffered minor bruises. Thank the Great Divine his medi-kit was well equipped. Elliot quickly took a sample on the weird blood and bagged it in his medi-kit.

Izzy walked over to Charlie and asked "What do we do now? Where do we go?" the questions were mirrored on many men's faces. Some also wore faces streaked with fear. Soldiers are trained to fight an enemy of flesh and blood, not weird monsters of the science lab. Montgomery, Mondo and Stig and many others all look to Charlie now, seeking some answer that could quell the horror in their hearts and minds.

Charlie only smiled and said, "Have no fear my friends. I think it is time we abort the mission, or at least try to get help." Turning to Izzy, he continued, "Get us back to the loading bay, we are leaving." Izzy nodded gratefully and the platform moved downwards.

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Interlude – No Way Home

The platform door disappeared.

Everyone is on high alert now. Montgomery and Rico quickly and quietly moved across the loading bay, looking for signs of hostile life. Once the area was cleared, Charlie and Izzy walked to the airlock that leads to the ship. Izzy frowned deeply.

"What's wrong?" Charlie asked his voice barely above a whisper.

"Airlock's busted." Izzy pressed a button furiously, mentalling willing the hatch to open. "Let me check it out." With that, Izzy squatted down and opened the control panel to the airlock security pad. Taking out a strange device with a long flexible cable attached to it, Izzy inserted the cable inside the lock and turned on the handheld device. Elliot was delighted to find out that the cable transmitted images scanned from inside the lock back to the handheld and displayed them on the tiny screen. Izzy kept looking at the screen and twisting the cable this way and that.

"Hey look!" Stig said, drawing the attention of everyone except Izzy to the porthole he was standing next to. Everyone padded over to catch a glimpse of what he saw. Outside, in the darkness of space, is their ship. "The boarding ramp is still attached to the ship, but why won't the damn gate open?" Stig asked aloud as he paced the area, smoking and cursing softly.

Charlie and Mondo squinted at the ship. Then Charlie's face lit up light a thousand nicronian lamps. He tapped his helmet and spoke "Pilot! You there? Open the damn hatch! Lieutenant Conrad and MSG Brubanker are down." Charlie repeated over and over again. After four or five tries, Charlie stopped. "Stig! Use your motion sensor to scan for movement in the ship." Stig stopped pacing and immediately scanned the ship. "No movement Charlie. Could the pilot be sleeping?" Charlie honestly did not know.

Just then something tapped on the porthole next to Rico, sending him also jumping to the roof. Some just chuckled at the idea of a huge man jumping at a noise. Looking closely at the object, Rico laughed out loud. "It's only a damn toothbrush... Wait a sec... it's my toothbrush! How the fuck did it get OUTSIDE?" the last word was barely shouted across the loading bay.

Just then, Izzy came back and reported, "There is nothing wrong with the lock or the hatch. The gate won't open because there is something wrong with the ship." Everyone gasped at that. Elliot wondered if the pilot was alright. "I believe something struck and penetrated the ship's hull and created a vacuum in the ship. The gate hatch then detects that there is no air on the other side, so it won't open for people on this side." Izzy finished. Then as an after thought, he added softly, "I think it is supposed to be a safety feature."

Elliot looked around, saw and read many expressions. *Were they ever going to get home? What were those creatures who hunted the halls in the upper levels?* Many thoughts swarm in Elliot's mind as he pondered these very problems. "Charlie," Elliot called out. "If we

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cannot leave, I guess we should make the best of our situation." Charlie looked hard at Elliot and nodded for him to continue. "Our best bet is to wait for Lieutenant Conrad and MSG Brubanker to wake up. They will know what to do. However, I do not have the necessary equipment to administer to them." Elliot paused to take a deep breath. "Izzy said there is a storage level here. I think I can find some medical equipment there to restore the officers to wakefulness."

Charlie considered this and smiled. "Good idea. We spent a lot of ammunition killing those buggers. We should seek out supplies." Charlie looked around and saw people nodding their agreement. "Then it is settled. Izzy, bring us to the storage level." Izzy flashed a smile to everyone and punched a few buttons on the pedestal and the platform started to move.

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Act 3 – Monster Trucks Anyone?

"Storage level." The disembodied female voice announced over the enclosed platform.

Charlie turned to Stig and made a quick scanning gesture. Stig whipped out his scanner and took a quick scan of the area outside the platform. "No signs of movement Charlie." He whispered to Charlie. Charlie told everyone to stand down but remained alert, as no motion, does not indicate no life.

The doors dematerialized as Izzy opened the doors. Like before, the storage area was dimly lighted. *Wonder what happened to all the lights?* Elliot thought silently and grimly. Yet, even the dim illumination showed the storage level to be relatively big, like nothing more than a giant warehouse. The shelves are so high that their tops are constantly shrouded in darkness. Just a few feet ahead, a small computer terminal stood silently, as if awaiting someone to use it.

Izzy strode over to it and turned it on. The screen flickered a while and finally showed the storage catalogue and search functions. "Medical supplies please." Izzy's voice rang hollow through out the storage level. "Mechanical, yet polite, very rare these days." Stig chuckled aloud to Mondo, resulting in Izzy blushing away. After a few moments, the screen displayed where to find medical supplies and how to get there.

"Montgomery, Izzy, Rico, Stig, Mondo, Elliot and I will go and find the supplies." Charlie said. "The rest of you, stay here and guard the officers. We should be back soon." With that, we followed Izzy as he led the way to the medical supplies. After countless turns and such, Elliot started wondering if they had gotten lost.

"We're here." Izzy pointed. Elliot knelt down to examine the boxes on ground level. "These supplies are too old. Maybe the newer ones are up there." Elliot pointed to the darkness high up on the shelf. "Anyway to get up there?", Elliot mused, as everyone started spreading out to find a ladder or something. Then Izzy and Montgomery gave an excited shout. There were three power loaders all parked nicely and ready to go. Izzy exclaimed excitedly, "These babies are fully functional and all ready to go." With that, he scampered up one of them and started it up, grinning all the way like a kid with a new toy.

Montgomery and Mondo took one each and started them up. All three power loaders were driven near the medical supplies shelf. Elliot then climbed up their loading platforms and was hoisted up to the top. "Anything up there?", Charlie shouted from the ground. Crinkling his nose, Elliot brushed the thick dust away and read the date. "This stuff's good. You guys should stock up too!" Elliot responded.

Elliot opened the crate before him and took out some items he felt he needed for this mission. He took two packets of liquid splint, four bottles of adrenaline, more morphine, some sedatives and some smelling salts. *These should wake them up.* Elliot thought. He also dug around and found a portable D.N.A. analysis kit. Elliot's face fell as

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he saw the date. Damn kit is all molded over and stuff. At least the medical supplies are well sealed.

Within minutes, Charlie and Stig also joined Elliot on the top shelf. They too, were adding some medical equipment into their packs. "Guys, what did you find up there?" Montgomery shouted from below, as he turned his headlight beams up at us. Elliot turned his face down and answered "Some medical supplies, and some stuff I think we can use." Just then Stig's voice also came from the darkness "I think I found the ammo section, load up on ammunition boys!" Stig and Charlie opened the crate and found storage of ammunition. Looking around, it seems like this is the only ammo crate left. Taking as much as they can, both joined Elliot and signaled to Montgomery to bring them down.

Once safely down, Charlie mused, "Won't the rest be surprised to find our power loaders." Izzy chuckled as he drove the vehicle back. Montgomery and Stig followed suit and soon everyone is back at the platform.

Elliot was glad to see everyone at the platform was fine. He quickly dismounted and walked over to the officers. Taking out the smelling salts, he held them under Lieutenant Conrad's nose, hoping to wake him, but to no avail. MSG Brubanker also could not be awakened. Checking their vital signs, Elliot breathed a sigh of relief, as he found no trace of poison or disease in their system. *Maybe they just need to sleep it off.* Elliot thought to himself.

Charlie distributed the ammunition to the rest with haste. Then he said to everyone, "Get ready. We should head out to the technician's quarters. I think there is a high chance we can find the security code there." Everyone nodded grimly as they mentally prepared themselves to face whatever horrors this research center throws at them.

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Act 4 – I, Robot, I, Lost

Thump

"Charlie!" Elliot said softly as he knelt next to his friend. Charlie has knocked his head when he fell from the power loader, sending the blonde soldier into sweet deep darkness. Elliot checked for lasting injuries. Satisfied that Charlie is going to wake up with nothing more than a huge headache, he settled down to wait.

The platform halted and the door vanished into nothing. Izzy quickly scrambled to the center and everyone assumed a defensive formation, expecting no less than a dozen monstrosities to appear out of thin air.

After almost a minute of silence, the deep groan sounded. Stig jumped, as the sound came from behind him. His smoke almost fell to the ground but with his deft touch, he swiped it before it even reached his knees. Turning around, he saw Lieutenant Conrad and MSG Brubanker stirring.

Elliot slung his weapon around his shoulder and rushed to the awoken officers. Elliot handed them their respective water canteens and they drank deeply. As they got their bearings, Elliot filled them in on what had happened the past eighteen hours or so. Shaking his head a few more times, Lieutenant Conrad stood up on wobbly feet looked around.

The immediate area outside the platform was quiet and dimly lighted. Roughly fifteen feet away, Elliot can see four walls surrounding the platform. There is a double door, like those in the emergency rooms, in the middle of each wall.

Thump thump. Everyone started. The noise seems to be coming from the south. Elliot remembered hearing that thumping sound right before the green brute charged at them. He noticed Stig fumbling with his motion sensor, trying to gauge the size of the moving thing. "Sir, it's almost twice the size of a human!" Elliot heard Stig whispered to Lieutenant Conrad. Lieutenant Conrad nodded and waved Stig off. The noise seems to be constant. MSG Brubanker signaled to the rest to prepare to engage.

Standing next to the double door, MSG Brubanker kicked the doors open the screamed "Die you spawn of evil!" and started firing into the darkness. The rest also fired in the dark ally. Elliot can hear some shorts '*pinging*' away, indicating the shots hit some sort of metal, robotic creature. That thought was reinforced when he heard no screams from the creature.

The creature then rolled out. Fully twenty feet tall, it was a robot. Moving on tracks, the thing wheeled quickly towards the men, many of their shots flying wide or just simply ricocheting off its metal armor. With two metallic appendages that shaped like arms, the robot used one arm to slam Mondo against the wall, stunning him for a split second. The other arm then issued forth a hail of ballistics, sending many men diving for cover.

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Elliot wondered how they can defeat that thing when Izzy shouted, "It's a PB-2500! Shoot at where the head and the torso attaches!" He then proceeded to fire at the metal robot but his aim went wide. Elliot can hear the sound of blood spurting as Mondo and Stig started taking wounds from that thing. Montgomery was also wounded when the thing used its unarmed arm and broke Montgomery's left leg.

Elliot rushed to Montgomery to prevent him from bleeding to death, as a piece of his thigh bone pierced through his flesh. The exposed bone was grisly to behold. A lesser man would have barfed but Elliot, being a doctor before joining the army, kept a level head. Looking around to make sure they are safe, he noticed the robot thing lost his firing arm and was now attempting to slam everyone with its remaining unarmed arm. Elliot then quickly took the jagged protruding bone and quickly jammed it into the wound. Montgomery immediately turned ten shades whiter and issued a scream that would send many men cowering in fear. Then almost a split second later, the scream ended as Montgomery fainted in Elliot's lap. Then quickly, from his medi-kit, Elliot fished out a small bottle of cream colored liquid. Unscrewing the bottle, he quickly poured the liquid on to the wound, watching the liquid changing color to match the skin color of Montgomery. In the span of seconds, his fracture and wounds are gone, leaving only an unconscious soldier on the ground.

Boom! Elliot looked up and saw the robot had finally succumbed. Now it is nothing more than a heap of scrap metal and cables. Lieutenant Conrad took four of the most woundless men to secure the immediate area while Elliot attended to the wounded.

When Elliot was tending Izzy's dislocated shoulder, Elliot noticed that Izzy's skin had a total lack of scars. Either he had a really good doctor or he was new to this fighting business. Despite the pain, Izzy flashed a childish smile at Elliot. "Will it hurt when you set it?" Elliot smiled and said, "It hurts less when you don't think about it." Izzy looked curiously and gasped as Elliot popped his shoulder back. "See, I told you so." Izzy wriggled his shoulder. "Thanks doc. I better go salvage. I think I can use some items from that robot to arm our power loaders." Elliot waved him off and attended to the next wounded.

Soon, Elliot heard Lieutenant Conrad's voice. Apparently, the south wing is empty now. No security code, no more robots and stuff. After everyone has been tended to, he ordered everyone to split and search the other wings. Izzy and Montgomery were ordered to stay behind with the power loaders and look after Charlie.

Elliot, Stig and Mondo were to search the west wing. Elliot noticed Stig and Mondo looked so tired now. Maybe it is the constant fighting and stuff. Elliot hoped they find the code too. This constantly dim lightning is giving him the creeps.

Stig waved his motion sensor ahead. "Two, small, moving creatures ahead, on our left. Mondo moved slowly, and carefully opened the double doors. Once determined its safe, the three of them went in. In front of them is a long dark hallway, ending in pair of doors marked 'Gents' and 'Ladies'. On each side of the hallway are six doors. Elliot hushed them as they approached the first door on their left.

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"Do you here something?" Elliot whispered. Indeed they could. There were soft barking noises from behind the door. "Could be dogs or cats or some alien pets." Mondo suggested. Arming themselves, Stig and Mondo kicked open the door and charged in. Indeed, there were two robotic dogs barking and scratching on the door.

Elliot delighted in seeing these robots. Built to resemble men's best friend, they were nevertheless built to provide the same companionship and comfort as real dogs. Why, you do not even have to clean up after these robotic dogs.

They jumped up and down around the three soldiers happily, wagging their metallic tails constantly. Then for no apparent reason, they started growling. Elliot wondered if it could be a problem with their programming, maybe even a virus.

Then the dogs attacked. One attempted to leap on to Mondo's chest to bite his chest but fell on the floor with a metallic clang. The other dog bit down hard on Stig's ankle and with a kick, Stig sent it crashing onto the far wall. Mondo then fired one shot at the mad robotic dog and then both dogs just deactivated. "Stupid techies and their mad creations." Elliot heard Stig mumble as they walked out of the room.

Going from room to room, Elliot found out these were the living quarters of the technicians. Beds, tables, lockers, they all contained nothing of much import. Once the rooms on the left side are checked out, they proceeded to check the rooms on the right. The first four bunks yielded no security codes. Then they reached one door labeled 'Gym'. Stig took a scan and indicated no motion inside.

Mondo kicked open the door and everyone entered. Inside is a fairly large room with gym equipment. Most of them are dusty or not usable anymore. The only strange thing is that most of the room is covered in what seems like giant spider webs. Then Elliot saw a humanoid shape stuck between the webby strands. Without any hesitation, Elliot rushed towards the trapped person.

"Look out!" Stig said as he spotted a huge hairy creature drop down from the ceiling. The creature is a spider, yet a thousand times its normal size. The head itself is of the same size as a human head, with mandibles the size of steak knives.

Elliot reacted by stumbling into another mess of webbing, getting himself stuck fast. Stig and Mondo fired at the giant spider but the spider dodged and scuttled up the wall. Then it fired a strand of webbing at them, trapping the slower Mondo. Stig then decided he had enough. He knelt down, took his time, while the spider descended over Mondo, and aimed. "What the hell! Fire at it! Kill it!" Mondo screamed loudly. As the mandibles clicked dangerously close to Mondo's neck, the spider suddenly exploded, sending goop and ichors all over Mondo. Elliot was amazed. Maybe Stig hit a weak spot or something.

Stig quickly got Mondo and Elliot out of the webbing. Then Elliot ran towards the unmoving person. Lying halfway in the webbing is a

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balding man of middle age. *What horror he must have endured.* Elliot thought as he noticed his deathly pale skin.

"Please help me! Are you here to kill me?" The man asked quickly. Elliot could see some hit of madness in his eyes. Sometimes, the body maybe whole, but the mind is not. "Relax, we are here to help you." Elliot quickly cut the man out. Elliot was surprised when he touched the man's arm as it was really cold, like touching dead flesh.

"Please don not leave me here." The pale man pleaded Elliot. Elliot opened his medi-kit and proceeded to take his pulse, trying to ascertain if this man has been infected with some strange disease or not. Strangely, there was no pulse. Elliot took again, making certain not to have missed his reading. When he was sure, Elliot stepped back in horror. The bald man looked at the three of them, "Why are you not helping me up? Please help me."

Stig and Mondo looked uncertain as to what to do. "Is he sick or something?" Stig asked. Elliot shook his head, not knowing how to answer. Elliot took a deep breath and said simply, "He is supposed to be dead. We better kill it."

"What the fuck! You kidding me right? He is there talking and stuff." Stig questioned. "I don't know what's going on but he is not alive." Elliot replied, his last four words dragging like the sound of a beculian space whale. Mondo stepped up and simply shot that thing in the chest. The gym was very quiet now as everyone wondered what just happened. "We should go" Elliot said softly.

Just as they turned, a light skittering sound can be heard. All three turned to see where that noise came from. To their horror, eight spindly metallic legs pierced the neck and lifted the head away from the body. Then the head turned around and smiled at Elliot! "Why won't you help me? Please help me..." Mondo and Stig no longer doubted Elliot. They promptly destroyed the head. They blasted it until the head no longer talked. Elliot then dispassionately picked up the disfigured head and stuffed it into a bag for further analysis.

After the gym there is one room left. Opening the door, Elliot could see a bunk with a puddle of water on the floor. In the middle of the puddle is a card totally submerged under the water "I think we got it!" Stig moved deftly into the room and reached out to pick up the card. As he touched the water, he cried "Fuck!" then he quickly brought his fingertips to his uniform and rubbing them vigorously. "That's not water! It stings like hell!" Stig said. Mondo used his helmet's built in radio to report to Lieutenant Conrad about their find. "They will be here soon." Mondo said as the three of them moved out of the room.

Soon, Lieutenant Conrad and the rest arrived. Mondo and Stig pointed the card to Lieutenant Conrad and reported the strange acidic properties of the liquid. Then the officer stood into the room. Immediately, the liquid erupted in motion. Taking on a shape similar to the one the soldiers encountered in the cafeteria, except this one is transparent and smaller. Everyone stepped back and starting firing at it. Drops of the acidic liquid splashed on everyone, making tiny holes in everyone's uniforms and burning small holes on skin.

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The blob then sent a pseudopod of clear gelatin wrapped around the ankle of a soldier. The creature pulled hard and the soldier fell. Elliot can see through the pod how the liquid is eating through the soldier's boots. With surprising strength, the creature solely dragged the soldier towards itself.

The soldiers closest to the fallen soldier stopped their firing and attempted to pull him to safety. But the blob proved to be stronger. As if flicking a piece of paper, it sent the soldiers flying across the hallway while still dragging the soldier. Now, the soldier's lower legs are inside the blob, screaming in pain and frustration.

Elliot can see through the blob to see the clean skeletons of the soldier's feet as it entered the blob. Apparently, it dissolves flesh instantly. All that firing had done squat to it as many rounds just get absorbed into it. Finally, with a great sucking sound, Elliot saw the soldier as he entered the blob. His screams turned muffled as his mouth entered the blob, and then went silent as his neck turned to bones only. When the blob finally digested its victim, it just collapsed like a burst water balloon, leaving the skeleton of the soldier lying on the floor like some ornament.

Everybody stared mutely as they realized they had lost one of their own. That skeleton on the floor could have been anyone of them. Izzy started to sniff softly next to Elliot. Elliot then realized he did not even know the dead soldier's name.

Lieutenant Conrad walked over to the card, now lying completely dry. Picking it up, he stared at it long and hard, as if thinking is his what he had come to do? Elliot sometimes wondered about it too. MSG Brubanker then broke the silence by ordering two men to carry the skeleton for a proper farewell in space. Soon everyone proceeded to the platform, awaiting new instructions.