

Team H.A.K.

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Submitted: September 2, 2007

Updated: October 12, 2008

All you need to know begins here:

<http://www.fanart-central.net/chapter-70444.html>

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0 - PROLOGUE

The sound of gun shots rang through the air. They were loud enough to be compared to a jet taking off from the runway.

The next loudest noise was the stomping of marching men. The rampaging of angry riots sang along with the soldiers' footsteps.

And to top it off, screams of horror, shrieks of terror, and screeches of pain were the only thing soaring into the skies.

Was it a war?

A battlefield?

An enormous confrontation between international masses?

Maybe.

That's all the information so far.

And guess what?

Man decided to leave all hope in the hands of three kids.

Two teens and a nine-year-old to be exact.

Oh, they're not even human either.

So now the next question is...

Why them?

Why put this task on their shoulders?

Is it a test you ask?

A trial of wit, speed, strength, and stealth?

Yeah, sure, you can call it that.

Now, of course you've heard this story many a time:

The little kiddies team up and save the day.

HIP HIP HOORAY?

Not this time.

Teen number one has more skeletons in his closet than your average celebrity, plus he's a wanted man in a far way country.

Teen two, well she just wants to be famous and prove she has talent somewhere hidden in her split-personalities.

And the little nine-year-old,

The one everyone will surely love...

He's a demon.

At least part demon, but that's nothing a little chocolate bar can't fix.

Are you interested yet?

Do you want more?

Do you enjoy mass amounts of blood shed, violence light-years ahead of any video game, paranoia to the extreme, some dirty comedy, and maybe a little lovesickness?

...Then Welcome...

Team H.A.K. awaits you

1 - Dreams of New Beginnings

The sun was shining through the cab window, brighter than he had ever seen before. In fact, he hardly ever saw the sun; his thick bangs were always in the way of at least one of his eyes. Maybe that's why everyone thought he was 'emo'. It was too bad on his part though; he didn't know what the word meant. It was becoming increasingly agitating to hear the word escape from onlookers' lips every time he passed by however. His troubled sigh was interrupted as the seat he was sitting on suddenly jumped, throwing him to the floor along with his backpack. The car stopped immediately while the driver's voice yelled out, "Oh sorry! You alright?" Just as fast as the vehicle halted, he sat up quickly on the floor. The driver was a woman. He honestly didn't know women drove cabs. "Um..yeah...I'm fine." He replied while getting up to sit back on the seat. [br]

The woman heard a bit of anxiety in his speech. Before pushing the gas pedal again, she adjusted the rear view mirror towards the direction of her passenger. An animal, in short summary, was what she saw. But his species was more common to her, since many of his kind were always running around the place. He was a hedgehog, a very spiky one. His ruddy brown spines spread out against the back of the seat, letting little barbs stick out just about everywhere. Even his tail had spines on the end of it, a new detail for the species. She noted his ears were also larger than regular and the left one was actually chipped. What she was most interested about was his choice of fashion accessory. A steel collar with a couple of metal links hung snugly around the hedgehog's neck. The links clinked lightly as his white gloved hands began to fumble with them. "Someone's a bit edgy..." the driver chuckled as she finally stepped on the pedal.[br]

The cab thrust forward. The hedgehog's hands left his chains, since the woman was no longer looking at him. Being stared at wasn't the most fun of times and was really nerve-racking to him. Letting the thought slide, he noticed his bag was still on the floor and he went to go reach for it. Upon picking it up, a small paper slipped out. He reached for that too, being that he was already close to the ground. Now sitting up again, he placed the backpack next to him and examined the paper. It was a letter, plus the reason why he was in the cab anyway. His fingers flipped the paper over to its front side. It didn't have the usual address, stamp, and other letter-like markings on it, just his name, which was written in its full form. "*Axeleros the Hedgehog...now what the hell were my parents thinking!?*" quickly popped into his mind. "*That's not even English! Yeah, sure, Axel is, but the rest is like some drunken slur!*" He stuffed the letter back into the bag, too disgusted to even read its contents again. With agitation, he turned towards the window for a second time. The view was nice. Clouds as far as the eye could see. Trees just barely visible due to the motion of the car. The grassy fields, rolling on forever until they formed into hills, then into mountains that touched the sky. It was so unreal to the hedgehog. Where he came from, there was no such beauty. He felt as if he were looking at a painting instead of out a car window. Just as he blinked, there seemed to be a blue flash racing across the current meadow. Axel rubbed his eyes and

took another glance. The sudden blur was gone, like nothing happened. “Yippee. I’m seeing things too.” he muttered to himself, but his comment was a little loud. The driver began laughing and her short auburn hair seemed to bob rhythmically along with it. She looked at the rear view mirror again to see Axel’s face. “You’ve never heard of the wind?”[br]
[br]

“Yes, I know what *that* is...” he retorted confusedly. The driver laughed again, this time with a little more cheerfulness. Her hazel eyes met his bang-hidden face through the mirror. “No, I mean a different wind. I can’t really explain, but where you’re headed, you’ll probably meet him soon anyways.”[br]
[br]

“Meet who!?”[br]
[br]

“You’ll see! Just go back to what you were doing. The city skyline will be out your window with in enough time.” The driver smiled sweetly, and then returned her eyes back to the road. Completely dumbfounded, Axel sighed. His chauffer wasn’t making things any easier. So he simply did as she said and glanced out the window again. The previous view was still there, no city, or random colored blurs for that matter. He wasn’t so awestruck by the scenery now and began to shuffle around in his seat. The hedgehog had been sitting down for hours, starting with two plane rides from his home country to the region of this present moment. Never had he sat for so long or even been awake for so long. Both planes were noisy, giving no peace for a quick nap, and the cab ride was filled with potholes, also providing no tranquility for sleep. He sighed again, more loudly and miserably plus slid down in his seat so he was slouching. If slumber didn’t come first, boredom took the opportunity of invading. He leaned to the side and snatched his backpack, preparing to arm himself with the weapon of occupying his wandering mind. The first thing his hand grabbed was the letter from before. Not bothering to think of what was written on the front; he opened the envelope and extracted the sheet of stationery within it. Again, Axel stuffed the envelope back into the bag; he wanted to keep his mind on the paper, not the title he was presented with on his birth date. His paws quickly unfolded the tiny sheet. There wasn’t much to read on it, but it would have to do for now:[br]

[br]
Dear A. T. Hedgehog,[br]
[br]

You, and two others, have been selected to participate in a confidential internship at our administration. This subject matter will remain unspoken of until you arrive in a secure location. You are to tell no one of this, for if you were to do so, the consequences will be grim. Do not worry about reaching this destination; transportation will be provided.[br]
[br]

A.V.W.A.[br]

[br]

To him, the text was very aggressive with its usage of the word 'will'. He wondered how they were so sure he was going to accept the offer also. "*Well, I am here, so they pretty much know what they're doing...*" he reflected. Still, the hedgehog couldn't help but to try to guess what the abbreviations stood for. Every time he thought he found a match, it was rejected, because he forgot to include a word beginning with 'v'. "*These people really know what they're doing. I can't even name at least ten words that start with the letter 'v'!*" Axel opened his bag once again to slip the letter in neatly. He then paused, and flipped the bag to its side. There was pocket with a zipper which he slowly opened. After slipping his hand inside the compartment, the hedgehog pulled out a pack of chewing gum. He yanked the last strip out of the now empty pack and returned it to its proper storage. [br]

[br]

After unwrapping the gum and placing it in his mouth, he found a problem; there was no where to throw the wrapper away. Without much thinking, he turned to the car door and pressed the button for the window to go down. Now a small gap between the glass and door frame, Axel released the button and stood up on the car seat. The opening was far above him, so standing in the automobile was the only way to get to it. He poked his hand out and watched as the wrapper fluttered in the wind. A moment later, he let it go. The vehicle then jumped for a second time. The hedgehog heard the tires screech as he hit his head on the roof of the car. He fell backwards onto the seat, but not before biting his tongue. Everything stopped, including the cab. His eyes slowly opened and locked with the driver's. She had turned around in her seat, and wore a sorry expression on her face. "A-are you okay?" she spoke quietly while covering her mouth with her hand, as if to hide an on coming laugh. Axel carefully sat up turning away from her stare. "Yep. I feel awesome." he answered sharply. His ears flattened against his head as the woman quietly snickered. Noticing his growing irritability, the driver turned back around. The cab started up yet again, causing the hedgehog to ponder whether he was going to get to his destination at all. Another thought came into his head; where did his piece of gum go? Thinking it over, he remembered it disappearing after biting his tongue, which was now throbbing. "Oh god, don't tell me..." He frantically initiated a search of the backseat. The gum was nowhere to be found, not on his backpack, not on the seat or on the floor, not even in his hair. This led him to only one more explanation. Axel rubbed his forehead under his bangs as he mouthed, "...I swallowed it." Feeling a headache approaching, he threw himself backwards, but lying down didn't help his cause. The humming of the car engine steadily comforted him though. In an instant, his heavy eye lids closed ensuring in an undisrupted slumber.[br]

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~[br]

[br]

“Hey, wake up.”[br]

[br]

“...nmmf.....go away...”[br]

[br]

“Don’t give me that! Get Up!”[br]

[br]

“...five minutes.....or die....”[br]

[br]

“But we’re finally here!” With those words, the hedgehog’s head shot up and turned to the source of the voice. His eyes would barely open, a practically blinding light was shining directly in front of him. What he could make out wasn’t too pleasing either; it seemed to be the driver, and she was tugging on his leg through an open car door. After putting the pieces together, Axel concluded he was asleep for an extensive amount of time, but had at last reached his objective. Before being able to sit up, the woman’s patience got the better of her and she dragged him out of the backseat. This action fully awakened him, forcing his hands to automatically cling to his backpack and begin to yell heatedly: “HEY! I can get out myself!” The driver released him, but a bit too late since he still fell on to the curb. He quickly stood up and brushed himself off then glared at his chauffeur with disapproval. The woman paid no attention to him and simply looked to the sky with a wide smirk on her face. The hedgehog’s own expression faded as he checked his surroundings too. They were standing in a nearly deserted city avenue. He saw now the light that was disabling his vision before was made of many single streetlights. The glow from the lamps made it appear like it was still early in the afternoon, but the sight of the stars and moon peeking out from behind dark clouds confirmed the correct time of day. [br]

[br]

Axel started rubbing his eyes and afterwards yawned. He was still sleepy and was hoping to find some place to settle down for the night. Abruptly, the driver placed her hand behind his left ear and began scratching. Instead of protesting, the hedgehog said nothing; if he were a cat, he surely would’ve been purring. The woman giggled happily and bent down to his eye level. “You do know where you’re supposed to go now, right?” she questioned interestedly. He stared at her, modestly shook his head no, and then quietly spoke: “I don’t even know where I am...” For a fifth time, she started laughing. When she was done, the driver softly poked him on the chest. “You, Mr. Hedgehog, are in Station Square. A lot of things, mostly crazy things, happen here. Always keep a look out, cause you’ll never know when something’s just gonna pop outta nowhere!” Even though her speech sounded quite silly, she was very serious. Axel wasn’t really sure what she was trying to do, scare him or cheer him up, but it didn’t help at all. He shifted his weight to his right leg and held his backpack behind him. This stance showed just how unsure he was and made the woman chuckle again. “Oh don’t worry” she cheerfully spoke while pointing her finger to something in front of the pair. “You’re supposed to go in there. I guess your little letter didn’t tell you that!” The hedgehog looked in the direction of her pointing hand. Ahead of them was a tall white building with dark tinted windows and glass doors. He could see shadows slowly moving around behind the glass as if nothing important were going on inside. The floors of the tower seemed to go on for ever. Few levels had lights off, so something had to be happening. He looked to his side at the woman who was eagerly grinning at him. She placed a hand behind his back and pushed him forward. Shocked at this, he turned towards her. “You’re not even gonna walk me to do the door?!” he said,

rather loudly. If his bangs weren't hiding his face, anyone could've saw anxious written all over it. The driver stood up and shook her head no. "My job was to get you here. You're a big boy, I'm sure you'll be fine!" she stated while walking to the other side of the car. "But...Hey! Wait a second!" he called out again. The woman stopped and stared at him questioningly. "How did you know about my letter, or even that I was supposed to go to this building?"[br]

[br]

"If I told you, it'd ruin your surprise!"[br]

[br]

"...Surprise?"[br]

[br]

"Oh shoot!" she exclaimed as she brought both hands to her mouth. "I've said too much already! Look, just go inside; they won't bite." Before opening the car door, the driver smiled and winked. Then she climbed into the vehicle and turned the ignition. The cab started up for a final time and pulled off into the night, leaving Axel alone on the street. "I've got no choice now. Might as well go in..." he calmly whispered after sighing. His feet slowly walked towards the door. Hopefully this experience would be the highlight of his life, after what had happened to him so far. The hedgehog placed his hand on the door. He hesitated to open it, but eventually did. Stepping inside of the structure brought his hands back to his eyes. The tinted windows hid how bright it was on the inside. Once he was used to the lighting, the room it self seemed to glow. Marble white walls and tiling added to the luminosity. His dark fur coloring was very out of place here. His mind pushed these thoughts to the back of his head as a faint conversation became louder in the room. A few feet in front of him was a small reception desk. A woman with brown hair wearing a pink dress dotted with pale white sunflowers was talking on a phone while scribbling something in a notepad. She repeatedly said 'yes' into the phone's speaker before hanging it up and closing the pad. Next, she stared at the hedgehog standing in the doorway. Feeling a bit awkward, Axel fully moved into the room and smiled sheepishly. The woman giggled and stood up. "You must be Axeleros." She declared while walking around the desk and up to him. Immediately his ears fell back and he leaned his back against the door. The woman cocked an eye brow at him. "Hm? Am I wrong?"[br]

[br]

"No, no, it's just...I prefer Axel over, well, uh, *that*..." The whole time, his eyes never left the white carpeting. The woman saw this making her a little curious of his introverted actions. She bent down to his height and brushed his bangs away, revealing bright spring green irises. His eyes appeared to be shocked at what she was doing. "It's okay." She softly whispered. "My little brother has the same dilemma."[br]

[br]

"Really? What's his name?"[br]

[br]

"Pistachio."[br]

[br]

"...You're kidding...right?!" Axel responded, even more distraught than before. Without warning, she

laughed in his face which further discouraged him. “Yes! I don’t even have a brother. But you know the girl who just brought you here correct?”[br]

[br]

“Yes, all to well in fact...”[br]

[br]

“Well, she’s my older sister!” The hedgehog was just about to repeat ‘you’re kidding’ but the woman interrupted him by putting her hand to his mouth. “Not this time Axel.” She said after winking at him. “*So much for being the highlight of my life...*” he thought as she stood up straight and smiled widely. “My name is Miki Natsuko and my sister is Kita. She’s five years older than me; I’m nineteen, so you can do the math. We both work here at the A.V.W.A., so you’ll be seeing us around a lot. In the meantime, since it’s so late, I can take you to your room, that is, if you want.”[br]

[br]

“Uh, yeah, that’s fine with me...” he said quietly, barely audible enough for Miki to hear. She smiled again and walked over to the desk and sat down on the chair behind it. Axel waited as she went through a couple of drawers. Finally, after searching for a few minutes, the woman found a brown box. She flipped the top open and inside laid a round yellow button. With a soft poke to the small switch, the lights dimmed and the wall behind the desk began to shift backwards and open. The hedgehog was baffled, but realized that was possibly the reason why there were no other doorways in the room. The wall finally lifted up wide enough to allow an average-sized human to walk through and a light brighter than ever shined from it. The young woman stood up behind the desk and walked over to the opening. She stood next to it and held her hand out, as if to coax the hedgehog into following her. Reluctantly, he did and with a quick treading motion while she stepped through. Even before he reached the gap in the wall, it began to close in on itself. Axel broke out into a run; there was no way he was getting left behind. Just as there was only a little open space left, he dropped to the floor and tucked himself into a tight ball, swiftly rolling under the falling wall. The gap finally closed up and he stared at it while trying to catch his breath and train of thought. Now the two seemed to be standing in some sort of elevator shaft on a single platform. Dim lights aligned in arrows pointing up decorated the wall. “*What is going on?*” his confused mind began to question. Suddenly there was light giggling coming from above him. Axel looked up at Miki’s smiling face. “You’re a jumpy little guy aren’t you?” she spoke cheerily while twirling a lock of her hair with thin fingers, “That’ll help you a lot here, since everyone is on the edge too!” Right at the end of her sentence, the floor shifted upward. The rapid motion made the hedgehog lose his footing, and drop his bag. Upon picking it back up, the surrounding area made a drastic change once more.[br]

[br]

They were now inside the opposite of an elevator shaft: a massive open-space filled with noise and people. Many people. All of them human and most were dressed in pale coats like those of a scientist or doctor. The hedgehog looked up and almost came to believe the place had no ceiling. This square plaza towered upwards seemingly forever while numerous gated levels climbed all four-sides of the area. The four columns of levels were color coded: one white, another gray, the next black, and the last appeared to be not a color, but some type of metal. Axel’s best guess was that it was platinum since it shined greatly. The human next to him finally started an introduction on the setting. “This is the center of A.V.W.A. headquarters. Our veteran operatives have dubbed it ‘The Pit’, the case being when you’re on the higher levels and look over the side of the gate, it’s like looking down into skillfully dug out ditch,” The girl quickly flashed a smirk, “but the newer members prefer to use ‘I’m lost, can you tell me which

hall goes to the bathroom?” Miki giggled as her hands automatically lifted up to her face. Her companion wasn't as amused, since he probably would have ended up being one of the few who asked the same question. He decided to walk off of the platform to solid ground and find someone else to guide him to a dark room with a bed. Just before he marched away, a hand firmly grabbed onto his shoulder. Axel looked up to the brown-haired female as she waved a finger at him. “Silly! We're not getting off here!” her voice rang with a light tone. “Then where exactly are we getting off at!?” The hedgehog was getting impatient. He was tolerant of most humans, but this was just ridiculous to him. The girl began to answer him back: “We are going to level 107B.” she stated while pointing to the upper floors of the black column and then towards the others. “Black is for sleeping quarters, grey is for novice/advance weaponry and combat training, white is the medical center, and the metal is classified.”[br]

[br]

“Why?”[br]

[br]

“Don't know. Only our top members are allowed. No use in trying to fake your ranking either, apparently you need a special ID to gain access.” The two shared a glance at the ominous metal wall. The hedgehog now noticed the gating of the floors to this column were mirrors. Miki saw him staring curiously and began talking once more. “They're one-way mirrors; the people on the inside can see us but we can't see them.”[br]

[br]

“Doesn't it bother anyone that unknown things could be happening behind there?”[br]

[br]

“No, probably because no one has ever been that pessimistic before! It can't possibly be anything bad; this place is too good for that.” Her expression afterwards contradicted her words as it seemed that she was contemplating Axel's question. Not enough time past for her to go into deep thought as her frown switched to a wide smile. “And that's pretty much the basic tour for now. You'll get the premium package when the other two arrive.” The young woman then ginned wider and looked down at the hedgehog's wondering face. “Ready to go up?”[br]

[br]

“Wouldn't we need an elevator for that?”[br]

[br]

“You're already on it.” Before being able to bring up more inquiry, the room surrounding area blurred as the floor under them thrust upwards. Everything flew by with unimaginable speed, sending the young male into a state of panic. His heartbeat raced as he latched onto Miki's arm. Without thinking he looked up to see if she was distraught as well. Her reaction was contrary to his, in fact she didn't seem mind at all; the same charming smile was still plastered on her face. The hedgehog couldn't help but think she was mocking him. Suddenly, a large blur zoomed past them arguably at the same speed they were moving. Axel concentrated on it enough to find that it was another platform with a few people riding on it. As the seconds went on, more platforms came whizzing through the air. Up, down, left, right, and all around they went, just enough to make one curious about what powered them. “What the hell happened to taking the stairs?!” the hedgehog thought out loud while shutting his eyes fearfully. This experience was a bit too much to take in and their platform had many stories to go. However, that did not take long as his ears perked up to the voice of Miki shouting, “And...we're here!”[br]

[br]

“No, she's lying...,” was his first thought, but upon opening his eyes, she was indeed telling the truth. In front of them was a gate, and behind that was hall with few people walking through. Still in a state of shock, the hedgehog did not move. His human counterpart had to struggle in order to get him to release

her arm. When he did release his grasp, she began rubbing her arm on impulse. "You have a tight grip." She said with an annoyed expression looking down on him. "S-sorry..." replied the hedgehog as he visibly shook with tension. Without the human's arm to cling to, he hugged his backpack like it was filled with gold and someone was threatening to take it. The young woman began to show some sympathy; after all, it was her fault for not giving a warning. Slowly, she walked towards the gate and gently pushed it open. She stepped into the hall, hoping the hedgehog would follow. She turned around and saw that was not the case. His trembling figure was still glued to the platform. Miki then decided to take a try at 'Plan B'. "You know," she started. "If you stay there, it'll take off again with you still on it." No other words were needed; the hedgehog darted off the floating object and into the new area. Just as she said, it took off immediately once he left. The female began laughing despite the hedgehog's nervousness. She finally stopped and winked at him. "Was that fun or what?"[br]

[br]

"Please, can we just go?" begged a tired Axel. He wanted nothing more to do with this strange girl and hoped he wouldn't have to deal with her sister later on. "Oh fine, come on, just a couple doors down the hall." The female responded as she turned on a heel and began a casual stroll with the hedgehog close behind. If weren't for the crazy elevator ride, the young male would have believed he was in a normal building. The corridor could be described with the word 'bland' and possibly nothing else. Just wooden doors and white walls. Black carpeting for flooring was a reminder on which column they were in. Soon, the girl stopped in front of a door. The hedgehog almost walked into her from not paying attention. He too halted in front of the door and looked up at her. "Is that it?" He quietly remarked. "Yeah, pretty much. The rooms on this level have been refurbished, so it might smell like paint too." She placed her hand on the knob and twisted it, then pushed the door open. The room was just as plain as the hall. The walls and black carpeting supposedly decorated it along with a bed and dresser that followed the same color scheme. A small lamp sat on the dresser, but it gave off enough luminosity to light the whole place up. "All the rooms look like this to keep people from randomly trading with someone else," Miki's voice echoed in the space. "And the door locks from the inside, so individuals like me can't get in." The female smiled sweetly then proceeded to walk out the doorway. Axel hesitated as he watched her leave. "You're leaving?" he finally spoke up with the same anxiety from the beginning of the day. The young woman turned towards him and showed a puzzled look. "What, you want me to tuck you in?"[br]

[br]

"Wha--No!" He unknowingly shouted. A guilty look filled his eyes as he noticed the volume of his voice. "Then yes," she grinned. "I'm leaving." This time, she continued out the room without interruption. The hedgehog's mind was blank. The first thing he did was lock the door; no one was going to wake him up tonight. Next he emptied his belongings from his backpack to the bed. There wasn't much that was in his possession: his empty pack of gum, a pair of dark grey, cotton pants that were usually worn to bed, and the letter. He kicked his shoes off and slipped the article of clothing on. Sometimes he felt cold at night, so the pants were helpful. After picking up the gum-pack and placing it on the dresser, he glanced at the white letter contrasting with the black sheets of the bed. His hands gradually lifted it without command. This one little package of paper started this whole encounter. Since receiving it, he met new faces and traveled more than ever. Hopefully it would mean not going back to the life he had before this. That life was a time of blood, cruelty, murder, and a number of other depressing events. It happened so long ago, but it still felt like yesterday. "It's probably why I'm so screwed up now..." whispered through his lips as he opened the dresser and placed the letter along with his backpack inside. "Maybe I should have given in..." he went on while turning off the light and throwing himself onto the bed. "Maybe I should've let him...let him...kill me..." The white-walled room was fairly dark, the same as his memories. Seconds flew by as his eyelids grew heavier. In an attempt to let his thoughts go, Axel rolled over onto his side, letting three last words out before dreaming of better days...[br]

[br]

[br]

"I'm sorry, mother." [br]

[br]

[br]

[br]

2 - What a B#tch!

"Like this mother?"

"No, you're doing it wrong. Steadier motions."

"Um...like this?"

"Steadier!"

"How about--ACK! IT SPILLED ON ME!!"

"Alright, alright, it hasn't come to a boil yet. You're okay."

"Making soup is hard..."

"You'll get it right one day. I'll make sure of that."

"Promise?"

"Yes, a promise it is, Axeleros."

~ ~ ~ ~

The sound of loud thumping caused the sleeping hedgehog to fall out of his dream, and onto the floor. *"Dammit. They never go away, do they!"* he thought with eyes glaring towards the door. Getting up was not an easy task; His entire body was wrapped in the sheets of the bed. Whoever was at the door kept on knocking, louder and more vigorously, further agitating the half-asleep male. "HOLD ON. DON'T YOU GUYS HAVE SOMETHING BETTER TO DO THAN BOTHER ME?!" Axel shouted irately, still trying to untangle himself. More than a minute later, he was finally able to make his way to the door. A quick twist of the knob undid the lock, and the hedgehog flung the wooden slab open, almost hitting the person who awakened him. The young male looked up and his eyes locked with those of the auburn-haired woman dressed in silver tank top and black pants. "Do you know how long I've been knocking?" She inquired with a cocked eyebrow. "Do you know how long I've been sleeping!?" he countered her question with malice. "Fifteen hours straight. It's one o'clock, time to make the doughnuts!" The woman smiled enthusiastically, while the hedgehog stared at her in mixture of confusion and curiosity. "...Doughnuts?"

"Um, it's just a proverb. You've never heard it before?"

"No...." the hedgehog hesitated. "What's a 'proverb'?"

"Riiiiigght...no time to explain. Look, just, uh, get *undressed*, and meet me by the elevator..." the female

replied while she inquisitively glanced at the hedgehog's pants. She left the entrance of his sleeping quarters and the young male did as she said. He threw his sleepwear onto the unmade bed and buckled his shoes on. The door shut soundly when closed behind him and he proceeded to follow after the human. She continued walking at a fairly quick pace, a speed the hedgehog had to accustom to just to keep up with her. Apparently, the woman acknowledged he was walking beside her as she began scratching him on the head. Unlike last night, Axel moved away and shot an irritated look at her. "What, no freebies today?" she asked nonchalantly. "You woke me up..." he gruffly answered her with his eyes looking down at the floor. "So you have grudge against me for that?" Kita grinned while placing her hands behind her back. "Get used to it. Wake up calls around here are a whole lot earlier than what you'd expect. These next few days, you'll be getting that extra five minutes, but once your little team is set, you will be expected to follow the rules."

"What happens if we don't?" The hedgehog raised his head and looked the woman in the eyes. He couldn't help wanting to ask; he felt avoiding consequences would be easier if he knew what they were. Though he almost thought the woman wasn't going to answer his question. Time seemed to stop and she glared down at him with a grave face. The moment was tense, and after a few seconds, made Axel lower his eyes to the floor. The female shook her head and continued her stroll, giving him the answer of "You don't want to know". After that, they said nothing else to each other until they reached the gated area of the hall.

A floating platform was clearly visible behind the glass fencing. It silently taunted the male as it bobbed up and down slowly. Kita didn't hesitate to open the gate door and step onto the gravity-defying elevator, but paused once she became aware that Axel wasn't with her. She turned towards the open hall and starred at his trembling figure. "Can't we take the stairs?" his voice uttered in a tone that was as shaky as he was. "No, we can not take the stairs!" the female said matter-of-factly and crossed her arms against her chest. "Get over here NOW!" Her sternness nearly made the hedgehog jump. He obeyed her command, albeit at an unwilling rate. Now that both of them were standing on the platform, the young male began to dread just how fast it would move this time. He waited. And waited. And waited some more. Nothing happened, though he couldn't tell with his eyes tightly shut. Gradually his eyelids lifted and green irises peered out from behind his bangs. The platform was moving yet the scenery of the building was not distorted from high speeds. In fact, they were going at a reasonable pace that allowed Axel to settle back into his comfort zone. He looked around and admired the craftsmanship put into the walls of the building. Intricate designs were carved through out the walls; he had never seen something so impressive. His admiration ended as his eyes met with Kita's. She stared him down with a disturbed glare. "Why the hell are you holding my hand?" spat out of her mouth and the hedgehog soared out of his comfort zone once more. "I'm sorry!" he quickly said and his hand shot down to his side. "Wait let me guess..." the human started up again. "Miki sent you on a wild ride last night?"

"...S-she told you?" his tense voice was low but audible. He was upset with the other female, though he didn't want her to get in trouble. "Nah, she didn't say anything. It's just an easy guess", Kita stated as she brought her hands to her hips. "You see, my sister is an idiot. Along with being an idiot, she is also a daredevil. She'll do anything for a quick thrill." Her eyes quickly rolled with aggravation. "The bad part is she doesn't know when to stop. You tell her she can't do something, and she will prove you wrong. Like this one time, some dumbass here told her she couldn't kill a guy without touching him or using some sort of weapon."

"What happened?"

“Well she challenged him to a duel, a pistol duel to be exact. A fair amount of people got together to watch them duke it out the next morning. Both were expected to stand back-to-back, walk ten paces, and shoot away at each other, but that was not the case. Before taking his fifth step, the man dropped dead. It was pretty surprising; he looked fine until that moment. Some days later, and autopsy revealed he was poisoned, from bleach. Then right there, Miki let the cat out of the bag. Apparently, she injected a couple of bagels in the conference room with said cleaning product. The man she challenged just so happened to pick one of those bagels that morning, and the chemicals finally finished him off by the time of the duel.”

“That’s terrible...”

“Yeah, I guess. She did get suspended for a while too, since there were others who ate those tainted bagels and felt that she deserved to be punished for bringing them such pain and suffering. But some close friends decided to throw her a party anyway.” The human began to check out her fingernails, but didn’t show much interest. “Anyway, back to the elevator thing, they only go up at high speeds.” She then made a few solid stamps on the platform with her boots. “They’re also programmed to go down at low speeds. I mean, if you went down at a fast velocity, you’d fly clean off the thing!” With those words, the hedgehog began to imagine such an event. He quickly stopped as horrible images filled his head. This conversation brought out a lot of mixed thoughts, and he felt the subject must be changed before more tales of random deaths came up. “So where are you taking me?” he quietly inquired while scratching his wrist under his glove. “Uh, Base Level. You should become familiar with it A.S.A.P.” The hedgehog looked up to her with a questioning glance. Her eyes met his, and she sighed exhaustedly. “It means ‘as soon as possible’.”

“Oh...then why should I--” Axel almost asked, but Kita interrupted him; she was not fond of answering obvious questions. “Well, for starters, it houses the cafeteria, that is if you want to eat the crap they dare to serve in there. Then there’s the library; a lot of good things in there if you need to research. Then you got the recreation center...” The woman paused and smiled. “That’s where the hot tubs are.” For awhile there was silence as she seemed to go off in a dreamy daze. The hedgehog grew restless and spoke up. “Is there anything else?”

“What?--oh, no, nothing else. This place is boring. You’ll have more fun running amok in the city.” She let a long, somewhat depressed sigh. “I wish I could be you; I’m stuck here doing errands and such for the higher ranked operatives.”

“Don’t you get a break?”

“Nope. That’s what happens when you get demoted.” Another moment of speechlessness came upon them. The word ‘demoted’ was unfamiliar to the young male. He would have asked what it meant, but he kept quiet; Kita looked rather upset now, with her arms crossed against her chest and that indifferent look returning to her eyes. He concluded that being ‘demoted’ was bad and their conversation ended there. It was the perfect timing though. The platform came to shaky halt on the building’s bottom floor. The plaza was particularly empty, a few people stood nearby and a janitor was mopping down a corner of the area. Axel waited until his counterpart noticed the ride was over. It didn’t take her long, a quick shake of her head and she started talking to him again. “That was faster than usual,” she commented while stepping off the elevator. “Maybe it’s because I had someone to talk to.” The woman watched the

hedgehog step off after her. She could tell there was something on his mind as he looked up to her with an apologetic expression. "Did I upset you?" he said solemnly, yet with a concerned tone. Kita's eyebrows quickly rose with shock. "Wha-No! What makes you think that?"

"Well, it just seems you're upset about something. I'm sorry if I--"

"Axel, you didn't do anything! Quit saying 'sorry' already!" Her voice was loud and made the hedgehog's ears perk up in a surprised manner. She didn't mean to shout even if she wanted to get her point across. She did think of his caring attitude to be sweet though. A smile steadily crawled across her face and she let out a happy chuckle. The woman gazed at the hedgehog that was now carrying a baffled expression. "Look, you're not what my problem is. Really, I should be apologizing to you," she said with the smile still on her face. He continued to stare at her in bewilderment. The human began to explain, "Okay how 'bout this: you know when something happens that you don't want to happen, but it still happens and you have no control over it?" The male carefully thought over her sentence. It was worded awkwardly, but he understood what she was trying to get at. "Yeah..." he answered her. "Well, that's how I'm feeling today. It'll pass, so let's not worry too much over it, alright?"

"Alright.." For some reason, Axel felt a burst of reassurance. He didn't know why, but it felt good. It also seemed that Kita felt that same burst too. There was a wide smile on her face plus she sighed a content sigh. She glanced at the young male and winked. "Now let's get you where you need to be. I have other things to do today and I'll never get to them if I'm wasting time with you!" She turned on a heel and he followed suit.

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The library was a fairly impressive room. Maybe it was because it had a high ceiling and windows that scaled the walls from top to bottom. Or perhaps it was the many bookshelves that almost touched the ceiling. Whatever it was, it was enough to make Axel fear getting lost in the large area. He was fine for now being that he had Kita by his side. It seemed to be especially busy this afternoon with numerous people running about, their tired arms filled with stacks of books. The pair was careful not to walk into anyone and slowly made their way to the back of the library. Now the back of the library fit the definition of the word much better. It would have been completely silent if it weren't for the few individuals reading to themselves in a whisper and the sound of paper pages steadily being turned. The hedgehog felt he could easily take a nap here. His human companion ushered him further on until they came across a room that wasn't entirely a room. Its walls were really bookshelves huddled together to form a small secluded space. In the center of the space was a wooden table, and sitting at the table was a girl.

The young male's curiosity flew out the window. She wasn't human; he could only guess she was part of some species of rodent. Her ears were large and oval shaped and her short snout ended at a pink button nose. Her hair took on a shade of creamy cinnamon plus was long and flowing. Her bangs were styled in an odd fashion; to the right were twin curls and on the left was a long, glossy lock. They didn't hide her face like the hedgehog's, but actually brought more attention to her features. However, her attention wasn't set on the two people in front of her, but rather in an open book cradled in her arms. Still, if one was to really go deep into it, the girl wasn't reading the book at all. Thin white wires trailed from her ears and down under the table. Axel noted that there some sort of sound hovering in the air, but he couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from. It seemed loudest by the girl though, since her head bobbed along with the noise. Unexpectedly, Kita began to knock loudly on the table. The girl jumped in

her seat and dropped the book. Her chocolate eyes were large and alert as they fixated on the human. She made a wide smile and laughed. "I thought I was still alone. When'd you come back?" she asked and cocked her head to the side while doing so. "Well, we've been here for a quick minute. I do know though that *those* are not allowed in any library," the women answered her and pointed to her own ears in an annoyed fashion. The younger female quickly pulled the wire from her right ear out. At the end of the wire was a small circular shell. It was also white and immediately caught Axel's interest. The sound was definitely coming from it. It amazed him how something so little could make such a loud noise.

"Oh poo..." the girl spoke again, this time with a hint of disappointment. "That was my fave song too." She then pulled the second cord from her other ear and brought out a box from under the table. Only a small amount of time had passed and the hedgehog's inquisitiveness was about to kill him from everything he had seen so far. The box was connected to the two cords. It was covered in several buttons and a small black screen. The girl gently pressed a button with a quick flex of her index finger. The screen flashed white, then back to black, and she wrapped the wire around the box. She closed her book then stood up and stretched her arms out. Suddenly, another sound echoed through the air. This time the sound came from the human. Kita pulled a sleek device out of her pants pocket and held it up to her ear. "Whaddaya want?" she quickly asked the device. The rest of the conversation riled her up even more: "No, I told you I'm busy today....I don't care, get some one else to do it! Miki's not doing anything useful ask--Don't you fracking use that tone with me asshole!" The silence that came afterwards was awkward. The human waved her hand at her confused audience and whispered, "Hold on guys I have to take care of something, I'll be right back." She then walked out of the area still yelling into the device.

While the older female left, the younger walked around the table with the book in her hands. The young male's attention focused on her again, this time his eyes traveling towards her attire. The young female wore an azure sleeveless shirt with a thick collar. The shirt ended at a bare midriff which soon started into brown skirt. The skirt had pockets and a white ribbon belt that tied into a bow on the side of her hip. Under the skirt was bit of bare legs and knee-high socks that hung loosely from their starting point to her ankles. Her shoes were an item worth talking about. They were navy blue and striped with white, but the toe, heel, and sole were incased in metal. The footwear remarkably made no sound against hardwood floor. The hedgehog continued staring in a fearful awe. He could barely remember a time where he was with a creature of his kind or his own age. It was one of those uncomfortable situations where he didn't know how to react. The female in front of him certainly knew how to respond though. Her calmed expression turned into frenzy of feelings as she dropped the book in her arms and her brown eyes darted to Axel's direction. "My skirt's on backwards, isn't it?"

"It's on what?" The male questioned her back; from what he could tell, the skirt was on *her*, not anyone named 'backwards'. "Then it's the shirt! I knew I shouldn't have worn this!" Her hands flew up to her head and tugged at her hair in distress. "I totally should have bought that white one! But no, they don't have a goddamn medium! And the pink was sold out and the green--Christ, who even wears green anymore!?! And then there was that yellow one, I tried to buy it, but it wasn't on sale--Canyoubelievethat!?! So I thought 'Hey, why not steal it? No one could miss a shirt that much!'. So then I stole it, well I tried, cause then alarms went off and stupid security went and chased me through the mall like it was their sworn duty or something, and then they caught me, but I fought back, punch that asshole right in the nose I did, but then they handcuffed me, so I started kicking em', but then they went and handcuffed my legs too! And that's like 'Ohmyfriggingod, are they even allowed to do that!?'...So I started biting people...But it was totally out of self defense, cause they were trying to tase me with a friggin taser, and dammit, that stupid little piece of crap really hurts! So the bums arrested

me, at least that's what I think happened, that dumb cell in the back of the security office can't possible be real a threat to anyone. They kept me there for like an hour, then my mom came and she like verbally abused them and stuff and started yelling about lawsuits until they let me go. But ya know what, they let me keep the yellow one and gave me the blue as a bonus, so that says something right?"

Unlike the girl in front of him, Axel was speechless. He did not understand a word she had said and felt rather lost after her speech. The girl however stared at him looking for his opinion, unaware of the budding confusion between. Her eyes began to show worry as she wrung the edges of her skirt, making the opposite feel just as bad. He didn't want to hurt her feelings by not answering. It would be unfair being that he hardly knew her, and she surely didn't know him. The male decided to blindly respond, despite what the outcome would be. "I-I think it looks nice..." his nervous stutter instantly sparked the girl's enthusiasm once again. She rewarded him with a playful, yet rough punch to the arm. "That's what I was totally thinking! But now that I think about," she wondered while scratching her chin. "If my mom had gone through with the suit, I coulda gotten a lot more shirts..."

"How would she do that?"

"Well duh! If you sue a friggin mall you're bound to get some kind bling! That's like common sense, man!" Her vigorous grin wasn't enough to help him understand what she was saying. "... 'Bling'?" was what he questioned, and it utterly disgusted her. How could he not know what one of the greatest joys of living was? "Wha--IT'S MONEY DAMMIT!! WHAT, YA LIVE UNDER FRIGGIN ROCK OR SOMETHING!?" The hedgehog took a small step back at her outburst. After trying to be nice to her, she immediately turned the tables on him. He was at fault in his eyes though; asking too many questions usually led to trouble. The girl on the other hand would have blamed herself. They were in a library for heaven's sake, what gave her the right to yell at anyone? She could hear the scolding voice of her mother in her ears as if the maternal figure was in the secluded space with them. The voice annoyed her enough to force her into making amends. "Aah, I don't think I told you my name yet." The girl quickly raised her hand out to the hedgehog. "Name's Hana. What's yours?" The male reluctantly accepted her friendly gesture by putting his hand in hers. "Um, it's Ax--"

"Why good afternoon Axeleros!" pierced the calm setting. The hedgehog shivered with embarrassment while the girl looked in the direction of the new voice. In the opening of the area stood Kita, and standing by her side was a brown-haired female. She was clad in yellow tennis outfit and smiled down at Hana. "Oh, you must be the new girl! I see you've met Axeleros..." then she bent down to Hana's eyelevel and smiled. "He's a bit on the shy side though." The human pointed towards Axel, who now looked sick to his stomach. It was an interesting observation to the girl in the blue shirt; he showed no sign of visible sickness just a moment ago. "Okay you guys," Kita began as the other human stood back up. "Hana, this is my sister Miki." The second woman quickly flashed a wide grin. "And the kid over there I left you with is Axel. Miki is going to show the both of you around for a bit, since my employer has something stuck up his arse. If you need me, don't bother looking for me, because I will not come to your aid." With that, Kita left grumbling something under breath. Without hesitation, Miki broke the silence with a question: "So, like, are you a squirrel or something?" Her inquiry was obviously directed to Hana. However she did not seem too happy to answer. She mumbled in a grave tone while glaring at the floor. "Sorry, I didn't quite catch--"

"I'M A CHINCHILLA." The girl loudly exclaimed. Both the human and hedgehog stared at her with wide eyes. The brown-haired woman twisted a lock of her hair, and then proceeded to speak again. "Oh...I

thought chinchillas were used to make coats and stuff..."

"...They are..." Hana bitterly retorted. The topic was becoming somewhat uncomfortable, but the human kept on talking. "Ha, I guess you were one of the lucky ones, huh?" Miki began to laugh while Axel continued to stare at the other female. Her cinnamon fur hid the fuming red of her anger. It was one thing to insult a stranger, but to insult their ancestors' troubles was completely unacceptable to her. "Are we gonna stand here all goddamn day or what?!" the chinchilla quickly inquired. It hadn't even been five minutes yet, and she already had a strong dislike for the human. She bent down once more and picked up the book Hana had dropped before then placed it on the table. She answered the chinchilla with: "Nah, I hate libraries; their all stuffy and filled with nerds. We can go to the café to get food that is, if you want."

"Café?" the hedgehog looked to the woman with curiosity. She gave him a shrug, "Cafeteria, mess hall, lunch room. Look, it's got food, doesn't matter what the hell you want to call it. So are we going?"

"Whatever, I don't care..." Hana answered and walked out before the other two. Before she was out of their sight, she came running back, for she had left her white-wired box on the table. "Almost forgot my music!" She exclaimed while nearly pushing Axel and Miki out of her path. The chinchilla commenced with cuddling the box as the three continued their way out the library.

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"Oh my God, you're friggin kidding me, right?!"

"No, I'm not..."

"But that menu over there said 'Hamburgers'! THESE ARE NOT HAMBURGERS."

"You're point?"

"MY POINT!?! THIS LOOKS MORE LIKE...I don't know, DEATH-ON-BUN!"

Even after the short walk to the cafeteria, Hana had still not come to a calm state of mind. In other words, she would not stop talking. This was mostly due to what was being served. From far away, the entrees looked edible, but up-close it was different story. The blob of meat sitting between oddly shaped and unusually colored bread was not appetizing to the female. In fact, she found the blobs immoral for not looking like the usual food found in fast food chains. "Is there anything else besides this, because I seriously think this crap is moving...", the chinchilla tapped the glass that separated her from the food. She was thankful for this window, just in case the blobs did move and decided to attack her. "Er, I think they have crackers by the utensils and stuff." Miki answered, while watching the younger girl continue with tapping the glass. "I swear, this must be the remains of some murder victim..." Hana mumbled to herself, carefully examining the food items before turning to the human. "Well I guess I'll be eating crackers then. I'll meet you back at a table." The girl walked away, leaving Miki alone with a quiet hedgehog. She had forgotten he was at her side; he hadn't said a word since they left the library. "Axeleros, would you like something to eat?"

"Um, s-sure..." he quietly answered, though Miki felt he wasn't all that sure. She took him by the hand,

being that he was already holding hers, and led him to the lunch line. It wasn't too long that they'd be standing there forever, but they were on the line for some amount of time. The entire time, the hedgehog eyed his surroundings with caution. The cafeteria was equally as large as the library; however it was a great deal louder than the previous space. There were no windows in this dank area and a strange odor floated around his head, though he couldn't tell if the smell was coming from the sweaty man behind him and his companion. The lighting didn't do much here; a good number of lamps were broken, and few were literally dangling on their last threads, threatening to squash anyone who dared to walk underneath. The people serving the food also looked rather frightening, as if they have never smiled once in their entire lives. Axel wished to leave, and find where ever Hana had traveled to, but it was too late, he and the brown-haired woman had reached the front of the line. In front of them was a grimy counter covered in numerous spots of unknown substances. A large metal machine sat on top of the counter, and was just as dirty. Despite this, the young male's eyes were glued to the mass behind the counter. Standing before the two was a man of gargantuan proportions. He was as tall as he was wide, his clothes blotched with many unsightly stains, and his oily, stringy hair hid his grungy face. Axel's fear of this man was akin to Hana's fear of the food being served. Meanwhile, Miki's upbeat smile shined through like usual, and began to strike up a conversation with the hulking individual. "Good afternoon Frank!" her voice rang with warmth. The hedgehog's eyes immediately darted up to the woman's face. How could she speak to this man with no hint of terror? He didn't know whether to admire her bravery or shun it. For now, he watched the humans interact and made mental notes of their behavior.

Miki talked to Frank for quite the while, though he said nothing to her, except for the occasional, annoyed grunt. In fact, he seemed to ignore her the whole time as he grabbed a paper plate and splattered food on it with his plastic-gloved hands. He was about to hand her the flimsy dish when the female quickly interrupted him. "Oh wait; I need a second one Frank. It's for my friend." She then patted Axel on the head. "His name's Axeleros. He's part of the new squad the heads are assembling. But I guess that doesn't matter to you, just means more mouths to feed, huh?" She finished speaking and punctuated her statement with a smile. With this new information, Frank looked down and glared at the horrified creature clinging to the woman's arm. He was nearly sweating, and tried to hide himself from the intimidating stare by taking a few more steps behind Miki. The man behind the counter made a displeased grumble and grabbed another plate plus a tray. He slammed the tray on the counter yet lightly placed both dishes of food on it. The plastic tray sat lopsidedly on the counter's surface; it seemed to be melted on one side. The hedgehog brought it upon himself to play with the tray, tapping it on the side and watching it bob up and down, while the human female reached in her pocket and pulled out multi-colored paper. Axel stopped his activities and watched once more. Frank took the paper from her, and then slammed a fist on the metal machine. Another box, hollowed out and filled with more slips of paper and coins, burst from side facing Frank. The large hand dropped the paper into the box and grabbed a handful of coins which were presented back to Miki. She happily accepted the coins and tossed them on the tray with the food. She picked up the tray with her free hand and began to depart with Axel, but not before glancing back at Frank. "Thank you Frank! See you later!" With that, the two finally left the lunch line and began to search for Hana and a table.

Since they had gotten on line, the cafeteria had become awfully crowded. It didn't take long to find the chinchilla though, for she was sitting at metal table talking loudly, even though no one was at the table with her. The pair walked up to the lonesome table and found Hana was not talking to herself, but to a little device similar to the one Kita possessed earlier. Compared to Kita's device, the younger female's was smaller and a shade of blue that shimmer with gaudy rocks. Accompanying her were several empty packets of crackers and the crumbs of their no longer existent contents. Miki and Axel sat down at the

table with her, but she paid no attention to their arrival and continued talking. "God Lynnsie, I miss you guys so much! Since I left it just feels like I'm missing something, which is like really weird, 'cause I know I brought everything: My cell phone, my MP3 layer, all of my best clothes, all my necessary hair care products, some couple of hundred dollars. I mean I just don't know what it is, ya know? ...Really? No I think I have that--WHA?! YOU dog!!", the girl screamed, causing many heads to turn to the direction of the table. Still, she went on. "HOW THE HELL COULD YOU LET ME LEAVE RIVERTON WITHOUT GIVING BACK MY frackING LAPTOP!? NO, I DON'T WANNA HEAR THAT shoot LYNSIE! YOU ARE SOOO NOT MY B.F.F. ANYMORE!!!" The device was slammed down onto the table's surface, along with Hana's head. The audience she had garnered promptly returned to whatever they were previously doing since her episode was now over. "...Is everything alright?" the hedgehog sitting across from her asked. He hesitated though; he wasn't entirely confident if it was the right thing to do. "YES." Her head sprang up from the table. "Everything is just frackng great! I'm stuck here with no laptop, so of course I feel fine!"

"Well, there are computers in the library Hana." Miki tried to console her. The girl rolled her eyes. "Yeah, but I can't check my private emails in a public area! That's soooo taboo!"

"Is it now? I do it all the time."

"Dammit, I don't care what you do; I care what I do, and right now I am not checking my emails, so I am NOT happy!" The girl angrily folded her arms across her chest. Then she eyed Axel. He was eating the food that she had rejected not too long ago. This, once again, disgusted her. "You are seriously not eating that, are you?" She inquired with deadly gaze. The male avoided her face and stared at his meal. "It tastes fine to me..."

"But it looks horrible! Like someone decided to scoop up some road kill and serve it to unsuspecting people!"

"..I-I'm just glad to have any food at all." The hedgehog was surprised by himself with what he said. The chinchilla seemed to be a tad surprised too, but the emotion faded. She mumbled a quick "whatever" and brushed her bangs out of her eyes. Hana then glanced at Miki, who was more or less playing with her food than eating it. "Why is this cafeteria is so crappy, but everything else is here is so glamorous?" she questioned, but didn't drop her attitude.

"Oh, well, the building was just recently renovated. Actually, it still is being cleaned up and such. This place is pretty big, it'll be awhile before everything's done."

"Okay, another question: What exactly will we be doing here?"

"Sorry, that's classified until further notice." The statement caused an awkward silence among the three. It seemed Miki's words were somewhat rehearsed; she spoke the phrase monotonously, like a computer with no purpose but to repeat simple instructions. Of course this did not show on her face. The same bright smile made its home under her nose. Hana blinked a few times, and restarted her questionnaire. ".....Ooookay, are we getting paid for whatever we're doing here?"

"That too is classified!"

“Alright, whatever, do you at least know who the next member of this group is?!”

“C-L-A-S-S-I-F-I-E-D spells classified! I am sorry Hana but I really can’t tell you anything. You’ll find out later.”

“But I can’t wait that long!”

“Too bad! If everyone else has to follow these rules, than you do too.”

“FINE! What do you have to say about this Axel!?” Upon hearing his name, the hedgehog jumped and nearly choked on his food. The chinchilla was once again asking his opinion on a matter that he vaguely knew. Though this time around, he had support. “Unlike you Hana,” the human sitting next to him began. “Axeleros is tolerant, perceptive, and courteous. He respects the rules, and abides them like he knew them all his life. I recommend you regard him as the perfect example of an established member of this organization.” Another silence fell upon the table. This time it was more cold and unnerving, the essence of intimidation. Axel’s fur stood on end all over his body. He could feel the rage radiating from the girl sitting across from him. Amazingly, there was no outburst. She simply stood up and grabbed all of her cracker packets. Before leaving, she glared bitterly at Miki. “If you’re gonna sit here and lecture me like some freakin’ little kid, then I am out of here!” The chinchilla left their presence, threw her trash away in huff, and stomped off into the distance. Peace reigned over the table as the human placed her hand on Axel’s head. “I think she likes you!” she exclaimed cheerily. The hedgehog was not as happy though; he knew, for fact, that he’d never want to be with Hana in dark alley way.

3 - Escape...~PART ONE~

The evening arrived without much warning. The sun was up for one minute, and came crashing down on the horizon the next. The moon was just barely visible in the farthest corner of the sky. Though the hedgehog couldn't tell from what his own eyes saw; the view from the library window only provided a subpar view of the sky. There were just too many buildings in the way for a good look of the heavens. This feeling of disappointment was not new to Axel. If every disappointment in his life so far took the form of a sandwich, there'd be enough food to end world hunger. The male lowered his eyes away from the window. His hands trembled as they lied upon the glass. Finally he walked away from the window, before anymore emotion could erupt from the crevices of his soul. His silent foot steps treaded down isles of book shelves and he soon came to a long table with a row of machines sitting atop it. Earlier, Miki had told him the machines were computers, which were named for 'their useful habit of computing things'. She told him that this form of technology was one of the best things humans could create, but that most people abused computers for personal gain or entertainment. Axel saw an example of this as he passed a balding man who was fixated on the screen of the computer he was sitting at. Out of the corner of his eye, the hedgehog could see odd images and naked forms of numerous beings on the screen. He turned away in horror and began to walk faster. At the end of the long table sat the hedgehog's human companion. She stared at her computer's screen with annoyance and was frantically hitting the buttons of the rectangular board in front of her. She mumbled something about it being 'frozen', but the hedgehog didn't feel cold at all. Sensing that she didn't know about the man sitting not too far way, he began to speak in a whisper. "Um, Miki..."[br]

[br]

"Hmm?"[br]

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"T-There's someone over there..." Axel lifted his arm and pointed toward the individual over yonder. Miki looked down the row of machines and spotted the young male's source of tension. She quickly stood up and commenced with shouting across the room. "HEY! THESE COMPUTERS ARE TO BE USED FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES ONLY!!!" She obviously caught the man's attention, for he fell out of his chair and fearfully scrambled into an isle of bookcases. The female sat down quietly and claimed, "That is the third time this week!" Her counterpart of course didn't fully understand what had taken place. He didn't get the chance to ask questions as Miki began to rant. "I just can't stand the things some people do! It is rude and inappropriate, and shows complete disdain for others! Axeleros, if you ever hope to become anything, be sure that it is not a pervert, because once you fall down that road,

your life is over!" She waved a finger in his face as she stated her last sentence. She then went back to her previous activities while the hedgehog watched from behind. The display of the machine was filled with many boxes, filled with words and pictures. As they sat there, the human began to explain the mechanics of computers; what are CPU's, how do modems work, why you should never stick magnets on the computer. It all didn't make much sense to Axel, but his will to learn kept him listening.[br]
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Eventually, the woman was able to fix the machine's problem, which led her to introduce Axel to the Internet. Apparently the Internet was invented to communicate with individuals across the globe, but once again, people still used it for misdeeds. Miki soon listed many of these wrong-doings to her companion, despite him not knowing what most of them were. 'Identity theft' sounded familiar, but 'pornography' was entirely foreign to him. For some reason, Miki was not all too happy about that subject either. She started another rant on how the government was not putting enough effort into their searches for 'those scum bags'. The young male said nothing as she continued on, but soon wondered what happened when she abruptly stopped. He looked up and saw a new face standing next to her. It was a tall, slim man, dressed in black casual clothing. A pale green dress shirt peered out from the collar and sleeves of his darker jacket and his leather shoes shined with an elegant flair. He unexpectedly shoved a pile of papers into the hands of Miki. "Give these to your sister. I can't find her anywhere in the building..." He commanded gruffly. His dirty blond hair covered his right eye, while the other stared at the hedgehog with a cold, gray iris. Axel avoided the eye contact with this new human. "Hm, that's funny," Miki replied while fingering through the papers. "She told me she was going to pick up some dry-cleaning and she would be back soon. I don't know if she went out of town to do so, but I haven't seen her all day." The man pondered over what she said. He stared into her eyes trying to see if there was any hint of deceit, but there was nothing but a blank expression. His visible eye rolled in obvious displeasure. "Well, thank you anyway. At least you're more helpful than her," he stated as he walked away from the pair. When the man was finally gone, Axel took his chances and started asking questions. "Who was that?"[br]

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"Him? Oh that was Lars. Or Mr. Ivanski; he doesn't like being called by his first name."[br]

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"What does he do here?"[br]

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"That is classified, Axeleros. Sorry..." There was no more talking after that. Miki continued her activities on the computer, while Axel sat down under the table. He began to wonder when everything would stop being 'classified'. It was beginning to get annoying.[br]

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...Outside the library, the blond-haired man strolled into the crowded lobby. Immediately, the occupants of the lobby stopped what they were doing, and began to greet him. Multiple "Good evening sir"s and

“Hello Mr. Ivanski!”s chimed simultaneously. Like a church choir, the voices synchronized into one sound and bellowed into the air. They didn’t address him because they wanted, but because they had to. Severe consequences would ensue if this rule was not followed. They’re salutes to the man meant nothing to him though. They were beneath him, insignificant flies compared to his status. He walked through the crowd with ease; anyone in his way would quickly remove themselves from his chosen path. At last, Ivanski made his way through the mass and reached the metal plated walls. Embedded in the wall were a small unlit light plus a thin slot under it. The man pulled a blank, plastic card from out of his pocket and slid it into the slot. After a short humming sound, the wall spat the card out back into his hand. The light blinked yellow as the metal walls separated, creating a doorway. Mr. Ivanski stepped inside while his onlookers cheered him on and the walls began to close back...[br]

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“Energy confirmation?” asked a redheaded man with glasses. He stood in the middle of a room filled with the building’s most advanced computers and technology. A team of two people accompanied him. Finally, after years of trial and error, his dreams were about to come true. “Energy is one hundred percent, McFallen.” answered a freckled faced woman sitting at one of the computers. “How is the dimensional portal?” the bespectacled man questioned. A hint of excitement could be heard in his voice. After all, he was finally about to do something never done before: send a fellow human to another time and dimension. “The portal is stable and ready to go!” replied a younger male in a baseball cap who was trying to balance a pencil on its sharpened point. The redhead smiled and adjusted his glasses. He, James McFallen, would go down in history. “Perfect. Begin the process...” he confidently spoke. Instead of his crew following his command, there was an unsteady pause. “I’m afraid we can’t do that McFallen.” The freckled face woman meekly said. “What, Why!?”[br]

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“Our guinea pig is not here, love” an elegant voice echoed into the room. James turned on a heel and faced a raven-haired, bronzed skinned woman entering the room. The woman seemingly floated to him in her black floor-length dress. She held an insulated cup and sipped it delicately while James vented his anger. “Then where the hell is he?!”[br]

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“Relax, he’s down the hall suiting up. You’re acting like it’s the end of the world.”[br]

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“It might as well be! I’ve been working on this for ages, and he has the nerve to be late!”[br]

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“Oh boohoo, shut up and act like a man, McFallen.” A voiced called out from the entrance of the room. It was Ivanski, newly clothed in a white, baggy suit. He carried a large helmet in his arms. The outfit closely resembled an astronaut’s spacesuit. “Why Elena, you look lovely today.” the blond man addressed the woman in the black dress. She chuckled delightedly and sipped from her cup once more. James immediately frowned. “Stop flirting with my fiancée.” He commanded heatedly as he walked up to him. “You oughtta be glad I’m not reporting you for your lateness!”[br]

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“Like that’ll do anything. You may be an elite like me, but my ranking is still higher than yours; therefore no one would take you seriously even if you went through with such a ludicrous idea.” Ivanski replied with zero emotion. The bespectacled man had been put in his place. It didn’t stop him from being even angrier though. The man’s face turned as red as his shaggy hair. “Now why don’t you do your job like a good little boy, hm?” Lars patronized him while pushing James out of his way. Trying his hardest not to retaliate, James started over his check list. “Energy confirmation?” he asked exasperatedly. “Energy is one hundred percent...”replied the freckled faced woman. The second time around, the redhead wasn’t as enthusiastic. “Dimensional portal okay?” he inquired, barely with any feeling. “Um yeah, portal’s ready” answered the man in a baseball cap, who also seemed equally sluggish. “Alright, begin the process Elena.”[br]

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“Will do love.” His fiancée replied, though with more zest than him. She sat down at large monitor surrounded by blinking lights and switches. Elena began to flip switches, triggering the lights to flash madly. Soon enough they began to blink in rhythm. A low humming sound erupted from deep in the machine. “I guess that’s it...” She turned to Lars in her chair. “The coordinates you gave us for your destination are set pretty close in time. It seems to only be about 10 years from now, except it’s in an altered timeline. D.F.C. is also detecting no oxygen, so keep your helmet on at all costs. And now, James will show you to the portal.”[br]

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“Do I have to?!” replied the redhead. “Oh Jimmy please? I wanna finish my hot coco...” Elena pleaded. She pouted like a child and stared at her man with pitiful eyes. “Fine, whatever...” he instantly responded. “Follow me, dammit.....” James left the room before Lars, being that the blond was distracted. “Bye Lars!” the raven-haired woman shouted after him. The declaration of his given name was like a bullet to the brain. He quickly glared at her and grumbled, “Its Ivanski...”[br]

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“Yeah, like I really give a damn” Elena retorted. She smirked at him as she innocently sipped from her cup. Ivanski clenched his teeth in annoyance and said no more as he left the room. He entered the hall to find James standing two doors down. “Come on loser, it’s in here.”[br]

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“Calling people names? You’ve fallen to an all-time low.”[br]

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“Oh, frack you man! If it weren’t for you funding all this I’d--“[br]

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“You’d be sobbing like a dog because you didn’t fulfill your dead father’s goal?” Ivanski questioned

with an unimaginable amount of spite. James fell silent. The man had hit his weakness with full-force. Of course it hurt, but wouldn't dare show it. If word got out that James McFallen cried like a newborn infant over an insult, his name would be tarnished forever. "Well, are you going to show me to the portal or what?" Lars was slowly losing his patience. No one knew how much he hated working with people who had less importance than him. No one knew how much he hated people in general. Though, it wouldn't be long before he could fix this problem of his. He had everything flawlessly planned out; he just needed time. Still in silence, James escorted Ivanski into the room. What lied ahead seemed to have been ripped out of a science-fiction movie. The men stood on a glass platform that hovered above a dark liquid. It bubbled and boiled underneath them. "What the hell is that?" the blond asked as he stared in disgust. "That is classified." James announced. Ivanski stared at him in disbelief. As far as he knew, nothing was 'classified' for his eyes and ears. "Seriously, I'm not allowed to tell you. Ask Elena if you really want to know" he reassured. "Just be careful not to slip in. We still don't know what happens when living beings come in contact with this stuff." The redhead strolled forward on to a short staircase. The three small steps led to a thinner stage that traveled towards the end of the room, where the main attraction laid dormant. Two large metal pillars set apart from each other stood in the liquid at the end of the second platform. They glowed in an array of colors, sparking small bolts of electricity every now and then. The low humming was loudest near the pillars. "This is the Dimensional Flux Capacitor 5000." James began seemingly out of nowhere. "This machine requires nearly all forms of energy to work: thermal, nuclear, chemical, electric. You name it, it uses it. So far it can send an individual at least two hundred years into the future or past, and to several dimensions that are similar to ours, yet unique in it's own way. It may even be able to break into a parallel universe."[br]

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"Is that why it takes up a whole damn floor of the building?"[br]

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"This is complex technology Lars. It's still in the beginning phases, so it's gonna need room to grow!"[br]

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".....It's Ivanski..."[br]

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"And my mother's the fracking queen of England!" James sarcastically claimed. Suddenly, the pillars flashed white. The low humming transformed into loud booming bang. Sparks flew wildly as a strong blast of air bombarded the men. James shielded his eyes while Lars began to fix his helmet to his suit. The booming sounds from the pillars escalated to a near-deafening noise. It roared triumphantly as a miraculous event took place. Slowly and steadily a hole of light expanded in between the pillars. Its size grew rapidly while the volume of the roar became louder and the wind blew stronger. Whilst being careful not to fall into the liquid below the platforms, Ivanski made his way towards the gaping portal. He stood next to James, who was flabbergasted by his own creation. Lars patted him on the shoulder to help him regain consciousness. The redhead finally sighed and whispered: "I...I can't believe it..."[br]

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"Well I guess it is impressive."[br]

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“Hell, it’s more than that!” James quickly spat. He then went silent for a second time, after noticing how much Ivanski really did resemble an astronaut. “So what are you hoping to get out of this excursion?” he finally spoke. “Well, with world being depleted of energy sources so rapidly, I felt it was my duty to find a private source for A.V.W.A.”[br]

[br]

“.....Right.”[br]

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“Look, somewhere out in this altered timeline is an infinite source. I would know, because Elena helped me isolate it out.”[br]

[br]

“.....What the frack were you doing with my fiancé alone?!”[br]

[br]

“That’s classified McFallen” Lars stated as he gazed into the glowing portal. “So do I just jump in or something?” He began to ask. “No, you don’t ‘just jump in!’”[br]

[br]

“Then how do I--AAUGH!!” the blond screamed as he was kicked into the portal. James lowered his leg and adjusted his glasses. He began to make his way out the room, but not before shouting to the portal, “Good luck, asshole!”[br]

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His eyes were open, but there was nothing to see. Pitch darkness invaded his eyesight. The only thing he was sure about was that he lying on a hard, rough surface. Slowly, just in case he might his head, Ivanski sat up. He stayed still until he was sure nothing bad was about to happen. Now at ease, he got to his feet and tried to make out his surroundings. With no warning, there was a voice: “Ivanski, you alright?” It was a calm voice, and certainly female. The blond recognized it as the raven-haired

woman's. "Yeah, I'm fine Elena. I'm guessing this suit has built-in intercom."[br]

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"Well aren't you a smart boy?" She chuckled lightly. "Yeah, sorry I didn't tell you, I was relying on James to do that."[br]

[br]

"Ah, well he certainly took the time to kick me into the portal."[br]

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"Hm, I'll get him back for ya. But right now I'll explain the basics to you. Your oxygen supply will last you for up to four hours. Take this into consideration, since you have only three and half hours until departure. In order to get back to us, another portal will be ready in the exact spot you're standing. It will only stay open for fifteen minutes"[br]

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"So you're saying, if I miss my departing portal--"[br]

[br]

"You'll live for another fifteen minutes in a strange world. Sounds fun if you ask me."[br]

[br]

"Thank god I wasn't asking..."[br]

[br]

"Oh, and strenuous activity will also use up your air faster. So act like your carrying scissors. You know, 'walk, don't run'."[br]

[br]

"Anything else Elena, cause I think I'm losing oxygen talking to you."[br]

[br]

"No, nothing else. I'll be waiting for you with baited breath" her transmission ended with that. Lars was now on his own in the darkness. Instead of standing around like an idiot though, he commenced with feeling around with his hands. After a couple of minutes, he reached a solid surface. He knocked his knuckles against. The resulting sound was solid thunk; the surface was wooden, possibly a wooden door. He felt around for a door knob, but there was none, so he tried the next best thing: ramming into the surface. After three tries, the obstacle gave threw, sending the man tumbling into a pool of light. He was on his back once again and groaning in pain. He was right about the wood, but wrong about the door. Ivanski had just crashed threw a boarded up window and was now lying in a pile of broken glass and rotten wood. He stood back on his feet for a second time and checked his surroundings. Now he wished he didn't. What was once a city was now a burned-down wasteland. The building the blond had crashed out of appeared to have been a small shop. Its brick walls were burned to a crisp and the sign that advertised it had fallen. The signs new job was blocking the front door to the shop plus the entrance to the building beside it. He stood on a sidewalk that was decorated with bullet holes along with old stains of blood. The skyscrapers standing in the distance were in ruins; they would probably collapse any at any sudden moment. *"This is pleasant..."* he thought while staring up to the sky. The small bit of light that had showered on him before was trying it's hardest to bleed through thick, ugly clouds. Sadly,

the light was fighting a losing battle. *"Well I guess I'll be walking for three hours."* The man was about to start a long journey, but caught himself. He had no weapon. This was a first since he always carried a pistol somewhere on his person. Ivanski sighed and picked up a large piece of glass. It was better than nothing, and would probably be a wonderful asset against whatever could be stalking these desolate streets. [br]

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Finally, he trudged along the gloomy sidewalk. The area wasn't much to look at, but he didn't have to worry about that for long. Almost two blocks away from his starting point, he found himself in a sudden predicament. With no warning, the cement of the sidewalk engulfed his right foot. Never in his life had he seen hardened cement do this. He grunted loudly as he tried to free his limb, although after a while, he started hearing something else besides himself. It sounded like foot steps. He looked around and saw nothing, but the sound was coming closer. Suddenly there was shrieking along with the footsteps. Lars was now panicking; his grunts became shouting obscenities as he desperately tried to pull his foot free. There was no use and whatever was screaming was just seconds away from attacking. The blond quickly swung himself around as far as he could and slugged his stalker in the face. He opened his eyes and saw a feeble old man fall to the ground. The old man regained himself as if had never been hit. He stood up with his bad back and stared Lars down with his one good eye. He then had a change of heart. "Why...why yer just nuthin' but a spaceman!" the frail senior exclaimed. "You aren't much of anything either" Lars quietly remarked. He looked over the short elder and acknowledged that something terrible must have happened in this time. The old man was covered in rags that hung loosely from his skinny, bruised frame. His white untrimmed beard was the only body hair on him. Tightly attached to his face looked to be a clear gas mask, and he nervously licked his lips under it. The old man was obviously looking for food, and Ivanski had disappointed him for not being his next meal. "Oh Mr. Spaceman," the delirious man started. "Y-ya'll.....ya'll shun't be here Mr. Spaceman, ya'll shun't. G-g-go back to da moon wher' ya belong!"[br]

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"Look, I'm not a 'spaceman'. I'm just here on a mission."[br]

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"Oh, yer lookin' fer food too?"[br]

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"N-no, I'm looking for--"[br]

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"Cause I cud help ya! Oh yes sir Mr. Spaceman, I cud help ya find food! We....we cud do it together!" the old man grasped Lars hands tightly. His one good eye stared at him pleadingly. It was a pitiful sight, even for the cold-hearted blond. He began to reason with the poor old man. "....Are there any other people here?"[br]

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"J-just da gov'ment, at least whas leff of it. Dey dun help us lil' people none, dough. But I cud help ya Mr. Spaceman! All ya gotta do is ask!"[br]

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"You could help me release my foot--"[br]

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"Oh sure Mr. Spaceman! I'll....I'll help ya do dat!" After gaining his trust, the little old man helped Lars pull his foot out. The senior made it surprisingly easier; with two tugs he was free. Ivanski began to check his foot out as the little man began to talk to him some more. "Ya know Mr. Spaceman, I dun think yer from 'round here."[br]

[br]

“Do ya now?”[br]

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“Yup. And dat means I gotta school ya. I gotta school ya on whas right and wrong ‘round here!”[br]

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“Alright, I’m listening...”[br]

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“Well Mr. Spaceman, da furst thing ya’ll shud do is find a house! It’ll come in handy when nighttime rolls ‘round. Ya’ll dun wanna be in da dark ‘round here....”[br]

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“And why wouldn’t I want that?” Lars curiously questioned. He was shrouded in darkness not to long ago and there wasn’t anything strange about it. However, the old man begged to differ. Panic flooded into his eyes at the sound Ivanski’s inquiry. He trembled, which was exaggerated to a wild shaking due to how scrawny he was. “....D-dey feed in da dark Mr. Spaceman,” the old man whispered. “And dey dun stop till ther’s nuthin’ leff of ya! Das why ther’s no one here. Dey ate all the people! But, d-dey.....dey still want more.....” he made an ominous pause and frantically looked around. There was nothing to stop him from revealing the last bit of his warning. He grabbed Ivanski a second time and whispered so quietly, the blond almost couldn’t hear him. “Dun go to da old warehouse down by da shore. Dun go ther’! Ya’ll can go wher’ever ya please, but just dun go ther’!”[br]

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“Why!? What’s at the warehouse?!” Ivanski was becoming impatient, but it was too late. Apparently the old man scared himself with his own warning. He screamed in terror and ran off in a blink of an eye. Lars stood still, going over the information the poor senior gave him in his head. Something big must be at the warehouse if just mentioning it was enough to make the senior crazy. It could possibly be the infinite energy source. He made his decision; he was going to the warehouse. There’s was no telling how long it would take, but he had no other plans. The blond looked up at the sky again. It was considerably darker and the few strands of light that ripped through the clouds were disappearing. Nightfall was approaching. “Oh frack me....” he grumbled. He began walking again and soon broke into a steady jog. If ‘they’ were as ruthless as the old man said, he had to get moving, before ‘they’ could find him.[br]

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Lars jogged down several blocks and avenues, only to find that many of the street names were akin to those in the present. With this knowledge, he could reach the shore in a reasonable amount of time. This was good; the clouds had started separating, revealing a setting sun in the distance. The sun wasn’t allowing him to get to his target in time though. It was falling to the horizon at a rather fast pace, forcing Ivanski to run. Too bad he wasn’t aware of the impending doom; a flight of deteriorating stairs. The blond tripped, and fell a long, excruciating way. Chunks of rock and metal whizzed by his head as he continuously rolled into a living hell. His vision was nothing but a plummeting and spiraling world. Finally, the spinning scenery came to a stand still. For a third time today, the man found himself on his back, and this time, feeling very nauseous He slowly opened his eyes and stared at the blotched sky. Stars were

staring to appear overhead. His ears noticed the sound of crashing waves. Lars rolled over and saw the coastline. However, there was something extremely wrong. A large submarine had run aground in the sand and corpses were scattered just about everywhere. He made his best effort to stand and gave the place his full attention. He stood on a boardwalk, the point where the hideous city ended and the even more dreadful beach began. Like he had foreseen, a few buildings managed to have fallen onto the shores along with the stranded sub. The sand was dyed blood red where the piles of rotting citizens lay. Yet the waves of the ocean continued their soothing sounds as if there was nothing amiss. [br]

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He was utterly disgusted, that was for sure, but his concentration found a new target. A pile of corpses was moving. Lars froze as a body rose from the heap and limped across the sand in his direction. "This is why I don't do missions anymore!" he growled and prepared himself for a fight with the seemingly undead. Lucky for him, something else took care of the job. Specifically, a swarm of small creatures emerging from all corners of the wreckage attacked the body. They literally flew to scene with flapping bat wings and high-pitched screeches and hisses. The corpse was hurtled to the ground while their little hands clawed and jerked at its flesh. They picked at it until only a skeleton was left. They then started to dine on the other corpses lying around. These monsters must have been what the old man had spoken of. Ivanski tried to make an escape, but to no avail. He stepped on a piece of rusted metal. To him, it made the loudest cracking sound known to man. The creatures stopped and eyed him with gleaming ice blue eyes. Angry hisses and vicious snarls broke the silence. The blond made a mad dash down the boardwalk as the monsters took to the air and followed suit. The path was mangled and distorted making his get away all the more difficult. The creatures, at the speeds they were flying, quickly surrounded him. They dragged him to the floor and slashed at his suit. Fanged teeth sunk into his limbs multiple times while their screeching covered up his own cries. In the end, the ultimate damage was done: the monsters bashed Lars' helmet in. Glass shattered onto his face as he breathed his last breaths. His sight was diminishing, but not before a voice shouted "STOP!!" Lars wished he could have seen who brought this wild assault to an end. He wished he could make out the shape that was standing above him. There wasn't enough oxygen in his body to grant these wishes. A burning blue hand reached into the shattered hole of the man's helmet. It was the last thing Ivanski witnessed before blacking out...[br]

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~ *To Be Continued* ~

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