

*Clunk. Clunk. Clunk.* Heavy boots on a metal walkway suspended on the outside of a building that seemed to extend down into endless nothingness, the groan of the bolts affixing it to the wall not bothering the lonesome worker: they had held for years, surely they would hold for years more to come.

The door to the workshop opened with a squeak; one would have expected a mechanic to fix that with a couple of drops of oil, but the hyena found the sound friendly, welcoming, and like a free alarm system. With the flick of a switch just inside the door the single bulb dangling from the ceiling sputtered into life, casting its increasingly feeble light over the workbenches littered with oily rags, wrenches, hammers, and various spare parts. To her mind, however, this wasn't a workshop and she wasn't a mechanic: she was a doctor returning to her surgery to tend to her patients.

Preferring to spend some of the company's budget on electricity rather than be mildly encumbered by extra layers, she shrugged off the jacket that had shielded her against the cold outside and gave her radiator a kick to encourage it to start belching forth hot air. Beneath the jacket she wore an ill-fitting singlet with a liberal covering of grease stains beneath which protruded several inches of tan belly fat; from the armholes jutted two thick, meaty arms which managed to jiggle even while rippling and bulging with muscle. Dark green cargo pants covered her lower half, these too littered with work-associated smears of black and brown; they would have been loose on most pairs of legs, but the powerlifter's thighs they were tasked with encasing had the fabric stretched unusually taut.

After stopping by one of the workbenches to retrieve her headtorch, she approached the first of the patients that had been delivered to her while she was breaking for lunch, her spare tyre jostling hither and thither as it was bumped by her thunderous thighs.

"Hey, buddy," she said aloud to the inert wreck of wiring and charred white plastic, "Let's see what we've got here." She twisted the torch strapped to her forehead to compensate for the pitiful glow provided by the ceiling light, then cast the brighter illumination over her patient. "Test subjects been giving you a hard time again, huh?" She patted the turret's casing lightly, then heaved it into her arms to transfer it to one of the less messy workbenches: no mean feat considering it had taken two delivery guys to bring it to her workshop in the first place.

The first step on any the road to recovery for any of the robots brought to the hyena was to check their 'medical records' for any parts that had been noted for replacement the last time they came through, which meant finding their serial number; since turrets in particular were regularly half-destroyed, their numbers were marked all over their interiors. There was a second, more personal reason she had for knowing which turret this was: the more she knew about it, the more personality it had, and so the more she enjoyed her work.

"TW-9196..." she muttered to herself, flicking through the large tome that was her list of the service histories of every single robot in the facility. Finding the page in question, she scanned the list and found a note for a replacement voice synthesiser. "No need for that now, I guess," she observed, poking what she knew to be the shattered remains of what she liked to call 'robo-cords'.

With a little sigh, it was on to stage two: cataloguing damage and replacing parts.

"They sure do love lasering you guys," she told TW-9196, able to tell that was the fate that had befallen it quite easily thanks to its severe and widespread burns, not to mention how it was in multiple pieces.

Servos, wires, PCBs, and numerous other components presented themselves along with the voice synthesiser as being either missing or destroyed, the list nearly as long as one of the hyena's burly

arms. Each was replaced in its respective system – or ‘organ’ as called them – with the utmost care; her fingers, while mighty and thick in their own right, were as steady as a surgeon’s and fitted even the smallest of components back in place with practised ease.

After the simple matter of fitting everything back together into one cohesive whole, it was time to see if actually functioned.

“Heeeeeeeeeeeeeello-o! I see you!”

The hyena beamed as the turret’s red light blared and its sing-song voice rang out. “I see you too!”

The turret’s sides flared. “Dispensing product.”

“Not just yet, honey,” she chuckled, patting the top of it: she wasn’t fool enough to replenish a turret’s ammunition when she still had work to do; anyway, that wasn’t in her job description.

Speaking of which, officially she needed only to get robots back in working order before sending them back to either the armoury or the testing centres, but she liked to go the extra mile and actually have them looking their best. Though she had replaced the TW-9196’s casing it was covered in almost as many smudges and smears as she was, and that simply wasn’t good enough in her opinion.

“Are you still there?” the turret asked as she moved around behind it to start cleaning it up as best she could.

“Sure am, sweetie,” she assured it, wiping an oily hand on the circular logo emblazoned on the large swell of her chest. With a clean rag and a special spray of her own devising, she wiped and scrubbed every last speck off the turret’s gleaming shell, leaving it looking – in her opinion – as good as if it had just come off the assembly line.

After one last visual once-over, the hyena was satisfied. “There! Now we can get you back to work.” She hefted it off the workbench, finding it a much easier task now that it didn’t have loose components dangling all over the place, and carried it to a conveyor which would take it to the armoury.

“Goodbye,” it trilled as it disappeared through the flap that separated the workshop from the network of transfer tubes beyond.

“See ya, Tee-Dub.”

She heaved a breath, stretched, tried in vain to pull her singlet over her belly, then made for the second silent pile of incongruous parts. “Next patient...”