

Industrial Tour

Jamie stood under the glass roof of the facility's porch, watching rain fall over the translucent printed logo on the smooth surface. They made sure to arrive early before the opening hour for the invitation they received, not wanting to miss the rare opportunity to visit the Khajbear inc. facility, especially the labs.

The automatic doors startled them as they squealed open behind their back. Jamie turned around just in time to catch the sight of a tall figure ducking to get through the opening, the large lynxcoon standing back up in front of them, a great big smile on display. The marble fox was naturally short to begin with but standing before Noma was something else, the fox's gaze meeting the hybrid's hips, making Jamie need to look up, then up again past the chest to make eye contact to the smiling figure.

"Glad you made it!" the lynxcoon exclaimed, reaching out their hand down to Jamie, "I've been looking forward to show you around, I'm always happy to have friends over to check out some of my projects..."

Jamie nodded, reaching up to shake hands, the shy blush on their face and wagging tail betraying the excitement being shared despite their best attempt to remain calm.

"Yeah. You told me you had a new breakthrough improving one of your devices?" Jamie asked, watching the lynxcoon's grin growing wider at the question.

Noma clapped hands together, leaning down to respond. "Oh yes! It's gonna be good, even prepared a... Small thing, to demonstrate it, you're gonna love it!"

And before they knew it, Noma grabbed the fox's wrist and pulled them inside the main hall, still empty and only lit by the night lights. Noma rushed to the welcome desk, reaching over to grab a red bracelet with the labs logo, swiftly tightening it around the fox's wrist.

"Here Jamie, don't lose it, that's what gives you permission to be in the private sections without triggering the security."

Noma's face was almost grave, a stark contrast to mere moments ago, and Jamie nodded anxiously, glancing down at the plastic thing before being urged to follow.

Moving left from the desk, the two went to a metal door. Jamie watched Noma merely punch the keypad on the side to make the powered door move back a few inches with a metallic grind before dropping down in the floor, ducking through into the hallway on the other side. Jamie followed, jumping as the door just as quickly closed up, and the metal slab slid forth to seal them from the exit, walking backwards until being called to hurry.

Jamie swiftly trotted back beside Noma, glancing up the side of the tall feline to ask about the plan for the visit.

"So, what can you tell me about this project?"

Noma grinned, letting a chuckle escape them, "Oh it'll be a good one, I managed to get a lot more out of the zapper, it's not stable yet but I planned a demo with some volunteers to safely show it off! Figured that would let us have a nice way to relax later too..."

Jamie held back a sigh of relief knowing they weren't signing up to be the test subject right away this time. Noma's voice following up as they reached the end of the hallway with another metal door.

"But let me show, rather than say... It will be way more telling!" Noma's face was smiling wide, a friendly gesture no doubt, though the large display of sharp teeth was no less impressive.

Another keypad, another punch, another grind of metal before the doors dropped, revealing a dark grey room with one wall entirely made of metal panels. Powerful lights all across the ceiling flashed on to bathe the personal laboratory with a warm glow.

Jamie was pushed in with the lynxcoon following closely before the door sealed up behind them, stuck deep in the facility now. Noma stepped forth towards the central desk, rubbing hands together, approaching the device sitting on it with harnesses of wires plugged into the handle. Jamie's eyes quickly locked onto the bright orange gun, coming closer to check it out.

"Now..." Noma's eagerness turned grave, looking down into Jamie's eyes, "This is still missing final stability adjustments, so you can't just mess around with it, but that will be ironed out soon."

The lynxcoon looked back at the desk, eyes scanning over it before letting out a deep sigh, "Ah, the test subject is missing, let me go get another one. You can look around, though try not to touch things you don't know."

With that, the tall figure hurried back to the door, sealing the fox alone. Silence quickly became heavy, Jamie starting to look at what else was in the room. The desk of course was the first thing to be inspected, beside the zapper, a big power supply and some tools laid around, scattered in a disorganized mess, parts they couldn't identify further amplified the chaos contained on that central workspace.

Turning around, not much else was accessible other than a terminal blinking away a silver cursor waiting for orders. The room felt barren, cold, so large yet so empty making the fox uneasy.

Turning back to the much more familiar ray, Jamie thought to themselves that it couldn't be so bad to check it out closer, after all it wasn't the first time they'd seen it or could try it out and they had their own ray so it wasn't like they lacked experience. Sure enough, it felt safe enough once in hand, the prototyping cable harness made it awkward to hold but the buttons were still the same with a selection cross, a set of big "confirm" and "cancel" button, with the more minor "menu" and undefined button.

That last one caught Jamie's curiosity, its label had been recently peeled off, probably being remapped to new commands, the fox couldn't resist to hear the vocalized name and display the details it should bring up if their memory of the functioning was right.

The clawed thumb inched over to press it while holding the barrel with their other hand to keep the thing stable in their grip, the low-quality digitized voice glitched to life, barely making sense, "vious mo aut sho" resonating in the fox's head as the last thing they heard when a bright flash blinded them.

Nausea ramped up, losing balance, feeling as if in freefall despite the cold ground still rubbing against their speckled sole... Rubbing like two treadmills going in opposite directions pulling the fox's legs apart.

Unable to see for a few more seconds, they blinked repeatedly to slowly regain a sense of sight, the blurred monolith of a wall standing before them, stretching for miles left and right, then looking up towards the ceiling, to finally spot the edge of the dark grey desk, out of reach.

Quickly plans to climb back up and revert the changed rushed into Jamie's mind, though with each aborted thought the tasked seemed increasingly impossible. Then a last hope, the bracelet, perhaps, had some sort of emergency alarm to call for help. Then despair, feeling over their wrist only to realize how bare it was, while clothes shrunk, the Khajbear device might have been immune, and as no wall of red was seen around them, the fox could only guess that it was also up, lost in the piles of junk.

Now Jamie's only hope would rely on Noma to notice their disappearance and spot their form, the fox now trying to gauge their scale looking back to the floor. Feeling all the more hopeless when the black strip as wide as they're tall downed on them how small they got, the lynxcoon's improvements were impressively fatal for sure, much to the marble fox's dismay.

Their thoughts were interrupted moments later, the door's metallic clanging so loud and deep it almost pierced Jamie's eardrums. Looking to their left towards the opening, they could see the distant, looming shape of the hybrid walking in, a box in hand. Each thunderous step taking the dark figure closer and closer, Jamie tried to dash off, climbing over the light grey tile, running across the cold surface going up and down the imperfections up until the quakes grew too powerful and each of the lynxcoon's steps shook the fox off their feet.

Scrambling, they turned back to watch, a charcoal mass coming down at incredible speed, slamming down right where the marbled speck stood seconds prior. A mix of dread and relief pounding as hard as their heart beats. Looking up at the dark wall that now stood before them, they could make out the enormous treads forming tunnels over the ground, the shape of the steel toed leather covering the toes stretching into a comfortable looking padded fabric around the ankles, then up the leg, the dark fluff barely hiding the muscle underneath, up and up the dark pants, finally locking gaze to the box being put down.

Noma sighed, looking around with frustration as they put down the box onto the workbench, not seeing the fox around though they were sure the doors were locked for guests. Tapping a claw on the container, the lynxcoon looked at the test subject standing in the glass cube, their ear twitching as they spotted something off. The sharp eyes of the hybrid leaving the wolf to scan over the mess of parts before noticing it, the bracelet sitting right over the handle of the zapper.

A deep growl escaped the feline realizing what must have happened. They shook their head and stepped back to head to the terminal standing against the wall behind them. Right down on the floor, the sight was breathtaking, the boot lifted with a powerful suction of air that pulled the fox forward a few speck-sized steps despite their best effort to remain still and stable, watching in awe the dark rubber sole raising overhead, moving over and away before landing a few relative miles off, the quake still strong enough to keep Jamie stuck crawling on the floor.

Noma swiftly made his way to the blinking terminal, leaning down to reach the keyboard and typing away commands, staring at the monochrome text interface to look up the security logs with a quick sweep of the room to check for entities. A snort escaped them as the result of two micro test subjects popped onto the screen, with the approximate position set on a rough vectorized map of the room.

While the lynxcoon was busy trying to narrow down Jamie's position, the test subject took his chances, seeing the distracted state as his one chance to escape. The wolf hurried to the small door on the side, that he'd spent all his time in captivity tampering with, managing to get it to unlock was not so hard. As soon as he got out, the black wolf rushed to the edge of the workbench, parkouring through the mess, grabbing onto a bit of tape from a dispenser and pulling it with them before jumping off the table, the tape acting as a rope to scale down to the floor.

Alas freedom being closer, they take a moment to breath and check the lynxcoon was still busy. The wolf sighed and looked around, taking a few steps before hearing a deaf voice and sharp squeak grab their attention. Looking down, he was quite perplexed to find a being even smaller than him, crouching down to watch the micro to a micro closer, and apologize for nearly stepping on them.

"So are you another subject that signed up for this without reading the fine prints?" the wolf asked, crouching down, looming over the microbe at his feet.

Jamie had to crane their neck uncomfortably to match the eye contact, scratching the back of their head, they took a few seconds to process the booming voice, before hesitating a response, "No, I'm... a friend of Noma, I was going to see a thing he was working on and... There was an accident?"

The wolf raised an eyebrow, scritching his chin.

"Well, then perhaps you can help me get away if you know the way, and I can try and help you too, what do you... Think..."

His voice trailed off noticing the light quakes, looking up to see Noma coming closer, eyes locked on him, having attracted the attention of his captor with his squeaking voice.

The wolf swiftly ditched Jamie, making a dash for the exit, but to little effect, just a few steps was all Noma needed before the heavy-duty boot landed right on the escaping subject, the treads mercilessly crunching the poor thing's body in a split second with an annoyed growl coming out of the lynxcoon, despite the pleased huff following after one final, satisfying pop.

Jamie stared at the wall of rubber, shocked, speechless at how the colossus heartlessly obliterated that larger micro, shaking realizing how close they were to live through the same fate, the steel toed boots standing mere relative feet away from the minuscule fox.

Before they could properly take in the sight though, that foot lifted up in the air, Noma leaning against the workbench to keep balance, pulling off the boot, and watching that the wolf all stuck to the treads with nothing left on the ground, before letting their foot drop back down, scraping off the failed subject with annoyance, unaware that down below, the poor fox nearly had a heart attack when the now bare footpaw slammed down, toes like mountains landing on either side of the speck, in another near miss.

Jamie took a moment, brain lagging behind events, but now that the towering tour guide was still and busy, they hurried up to their feet and rushed to the side of one of the white furred toes, though the fox could only reach the dark toepad. They hesitated, once they stood almost right against the wall of radiating warmth, unsure it was a good idea to bring attention to themselves after the heartless extermination of that other micro.

But rationalizing the lack of other option, Jamie took a deep breath, only to cough from the thick dampness filling the air, before shaking their head and start pounding on the side of the thick toepad, feeling the heat and moistness penetrating through the fur of their hand.

Much to the fox's surprise, this did get Noma's attention, the lynxcoon stopping dead in their cleaning and putting the boot down on the workbench, leaning back to look down, eyes darting all over trying to find the source of the itch.

Though they didn't spot much of anything at first, the insistence of Jamie pushed the lynxcoon to carefully crouch down, making sure not to let their toes shift too much in the process.

Their face got rather close to the ground before they adjusted their glasses, squinting for a few seconds. What should have been a relief quickly turned to a wave of worry for the fox though, as the expression when those distant eyes locked on their pathetic body was not of surprise, or gladness, but of annoyance, a deep frown forming in the fox's sky.

For a moment, Jamie thought they were done for, seeing the titan stand back up, so far up and away into a blurred silhouette, the feeling only reinforced when the walls of toes that stretched for miles on either side of the little fox suddenly shifted in a ground rumbling slide, pinching around their body, surrounding them in the hot softness, padding squishing to conform around the fox.

Suddenly gravity felt stronger, a great vertigo made Jamie sick as they were lifted up in this grip before an immense jerking motion almost knocked them out.

Noma settled up on the workbench, pushing items aside as they sat back on the desk space, bringing their foot up on their other leg, sole facing as far up as their great flexibility allowed.

They carefully pushed a finger between their toes, the little fox getting caught like lint and dragged over and onto the sole, under the careful gaze of a celestial looking being.

Jamie got back up on their feet, looking around the desolate landscape of the padded soles with various hills and mountains far off in the distance, taking in the odd feel of the squishy, slightly damp ground and the thickness of the air all around them.

Noma frowned, breaking the silence after a few seconds, "Well get to work, might as well make yourself as useful as you can be to earn your pardon, if you want to grow back... I was clear you shouldn't touch anything, wasn't I?"

Jamie shivered, trying to respond, however after a few babbles that led nowhere considering the lack of reaction, they quickly figured they were far too small to be heard. Seeing the patience visibly dwindle on Noma's face, the fox whined, giving in, resolving to getting down on all fours, giving a shy kiss to the dark, warm surface.

They continued with a lick, dragging their tongue across as much of the padding as they could, barely felt, besides a tickle causing a few tremors. The quakes sent Jamie tumbling left and right, scrambling back to try and lick again, fearing the quakes indicated a lack of satisfaction.

Noma relaxed back, a hand resting on the workbench, tapping their fingers humming along, focusing to try and feel the little speck. Sadly, for Jamie mostly, this wasn't too effective, the lynxcoon sighing as they grew bored of the lack of proper sensation rather fast, considering other subjects that could do more.

Pondering, the scientist thought up a little experiment, bringing a smirk up on their face. Jamie paused in their efforts, unsure whether this was a good sign for them, or something to worry about. The fox didn't have to think for too long, however, when fingers came back around them to swiftly pluck them up.

Brought up to face level or thereabout, the fox could see the shine in the hybrid's eye, and the teeth of that great big smile. From the corner of their eye, Jamie could see the other hand go back behind the torso filling their horizon, bringing back the immense boot that was discarded moments ago.

Noma grinned even wider somehow, a smile worthy of a Cheshire cat being soon met by the low rumble of a choked chuckle. Jamie tried to squirm out from the tight grip of digits far more powerful than them, with as much success as one would expect and their breath forced out. In contrast, with next to no effort, the hybrid brought the fox over to the wide-open boot, pushing their fingers down to let the speck drop down onto the cushioned insole.

Jamie gasped for breath as they got their bearings, looking around the dark cavern ahead of them, dimly lit by the artificial lamps from the grey sky above. Standing up, the fox swallowed nervously, taking a few steps around to inspect their surroundings, shivering at just how massive it all felt.

And massive a quake soon followed, shaking Jamie so hard they nearly fell right back, trying to look out the opening above, only able to make out a blur of grey, unsure if it was Noma's fur, the ceiling or perhaps something else. Before they could figure out what they were looking at though, things suddenly crashed harder, the fox was slammed to the spongy ground, right onto their back.

As their nauseous sight recovered, Jamie started to make out shapes blocking out the little light that managed to get in, shapes the fox was well familiar with, their heart sinking as they quickly got back up to their feet with a rush of adrenaline, starting to sprint away towards the toe end of the boot. They struggled to keep their footing with the squishy floor, feeling the dampness of absorbed sweat, and the rumble of the toes coming down to chase after them.

Much to the fox's dismay however, Noma was much quicker than their sprint speed. No matter how desperate Jamie was, they couldn't outpace the casual slide of the enormous footpaw. Getting plunged in darkness as the fur of the foot and ankle started to seal the one entrance of the fox's new environment, they ended up tripping, tumbling deeper on the arch path of the insole.

Unable to get back up in time, toes brushed onto the fabric, the fox seeing monolithic digits fly by at a breathtaking speed before being pounded by the ball of the foot, being rolled as the padded surface dragged over the insole, pushing the fox ever deeper down the cavern. Heat quickly started to build up, from the body pressing down and the high friction, not that Jamie could properly register it, entirely disoriented until, at last, the sole settled down over them.

Much to their surprise, Jamie wasn't popped like the larger micro, whether it be their size being small enough to compensate, or the sole and insole being soft enough to squish around rather than crush down their form. This was but a silver lining though, struggling to breathe in the hot, humid atmosphere, in the little pockets of air that they could get access to as the fox's world shook, time growing abstract, each pounding crash making them skip over moments, maybe hours at a time.

Outside, Noma just went on, not sure if the visitor would make it out whole, to get grown back at the end of the day, thinking of what they could try to bring the speck back if there was nothing but a stain left, with a subject to experiment still stuck to the treads of their boot. At least that would be the plan, if they didn't forget about it by the time work was over and they were headed home to kick back and relax.