

Small World

Chapter 6: When Life Gives You Clones

A few minutes later, a tall, pale skinned human male with short brown hair, wearing a government issue black suit and red tie, stepped out into a three way hallway junction. As the man slowly gazed over the blood stained concrete walls and the motionless bodies of half a dozen black clad troopers strewn across the floor with a look of icy disinterest, two more troopers quickly ran up to him and flanked him on either side. "The test subject is gone, sir. And there's no sign of the hostile intruder, either," one of the troopers reported, voice muffled slightly by his gas mask.

Upon noticing a thin trail of crimson coloured stains leading down one of the corridors away from the scene, the black suit wearing man pointed a finger down towards the trail, and remarked coldly, "I don't suppose that would count as a sign, Corporal."

In response to this, the corporal withdrew a small, black rectangular device from his belt, and spoke into it, "All hands, we need a squadron in E sector, ASAP. We suspect the subjects may be headed for the genetics laboratory. Use caution. They appear to be armed and dangerous. Over." After placing the device back on his belt, the trooper quickly and cautiously crept down the corridor, following the trail of blood left behind.

At that moment, a muffled, agonized groan was heard. Upon looking down, and seeing one of the fallen troopers curled up in a ball on the floor, rocking back and forth slightly as he tightly clutched the area between his legs, the other remaining trooper turned to the black suit wearing man, and mentioned, "Agent Jefferson, this one's still alive. What should we do with him, sir?"

Taking a brief glance at the wounded trooper, Jefferson responded coldly, "What we do with all suffering animals which we have no further use for, Lieutenant."

As the agent casually began walking down the corridor after the corporal with his hands clasped behind his back, the lieutenant pointed the muzzle of his rifle at the downed trooper's head, and pulled the trigger.

Meanwhile, after a few minutes of carefully and quietly limping down the corridor, David and Jack finally came to a thick metal door, with a small key pad mounted to the wall next to it, and the words, '*Sector E Genetics Laboratory*' written in large, bold

lettering just above the frame. As he weakly slumped down to the floor onto his bottom with his back to the wall, grunting in pain, Jack asked flatly, "Okay, Mr. Smart Guy... now what do we do...?"

"Now," David, began, making his way over to the terminal next to the door, "We need to decrypt the security code on this door, so we can get inside. How are you holding up?"

Glancing down briefly at his bullet wound, and seeing crimson fluid gushing even more heavily from it, Jack replied in a deadpan tone, "I'm leaking... A lot..."

"Put pressure on it," David advised as he reached up towards the key pad to begin typing in commands, "Do whatever you can to try and slow down the bleeding."

Pressing both his hands firmly down on the injury, Jack muttered weakly "You're never going to get in there, you know... That's a level five security seal on that door... It would take even my organization's brightest hackers weeks to decode that-" However, upon suddenly hearing a loud click, followed by a metallic squeaking sound as the large door slowly slid open, Agent Spader asked in dumbfound, "How the hell did you do that...?"

"As I told you before, I've been studying the transmissions from your planet all my life," David responded casually, "Most of your world's computer systems run on a basic binary code algorithm. It's really quite simple to crack, if you know what you're doing." At that moment, the Ferren then carefully stepped over towards the now open entrance to the room. However, as soon as he gazed inside, Doctor Gray suddenly gasped in shock at the spectacle before him. "My stars... W-what is this...?!"

Beyond the doorway was a large room with metal walls that were lined along the back with twenty-four transparent, cylindrical tubes, each about two meters in height and one meter in diameter. Inside each tube was what appeared to be the motionless form of a Ferren, all of varying sizes and fur colours, suspended in a clear fluid.

After a long moment of silence, David heard the sound of multiple footsteps rapidly approaching, and exclaimed urgently, "We need to hurry! Can you stand?"

"I can try..." Jack grunted weakly, as he uneasily forced himself back to his feet, and staggered over to the entrance to the room. As soon as the two fugitives were inside, David ran over to the key pad on the inside of the door, and quickly typed in the command to close and re-lock it. After slowly sliding down to the floor with his back against the wall, Jack commented, "Funny... I don't remember seeing this facility in the specs I downloaded from the database... Then again, a lot of the files were encrypted, so..."

"Keep putting pressure on that wound. I'm going to try and change the encryption code on that door, and then I'm going to see if I can find anything in here that we can use to treat you." David said quickly, as he darted over to another computer console at the far end of the room and began typing commands into it.

After a moment, Jack began soberly, "Look, kid... if I don't make it out of here... I'm going to need you to take this to my superiors..." Reaching into his jacket pocket, the wounded agent withdrew a small, black, plastic looking rectangular shaped device. "It's a flash drive containing all the data I stole from this place's mainframe... If we can uncover the secrets I downloaded into this stick... we may be able to... shut this place down once and for all... and save both our species..."

"You're not going to die here, Jack," David assured adamantly, continuing his work on the computer keyboard. "We're going to make it. I promise."

"Don't make promises you can't keep, kid..." Jack chuckled, managing a weak smile.

At that moment, a slightly muffled male voice was heard exclaiming from the other side of the door, "They've changed the encryption code, sir! It could take hours for us to decipher the combination!"

"Use the acetylene torch," a second, icier male voice commanded.

"Yes, sir!" the first voice responded in compliance. A few seconds later, a loud, sparking, sizzling sound reverberated through the thick metal door.

"If you have some sort of plan... you better do it fast, kid..." Jack advised between laboured breaths.

"I'm working on it..." David reassured him, not turning his attention away from the console. "I can't seem to find any medical materials or exits to this room, but from what I have gathered, these... *bodies*, seem to be clones of some sort, with no consciousness of their own... like, blank biogenetic shells or something... I have no idea what these people could be using them for, but..." After a long moment of receiving only silence in response, David slowly turned around to face Jack. Upon seeing the human soldier lying motionless on the floor with his back still to the wall, eyes unblinking and the rising of his chest ceased, a grave expression soon formed on Doctor Gray's face. After slowly turning back to the display monitor, David murmured quietly to himself, "Well, when life gives you clones..."