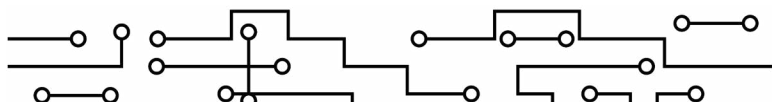
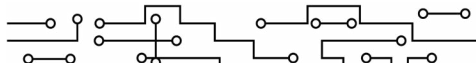


MAY THE BEST BIONIC WIN



A Record from Isle I: Biomechatronics Testing
(as told by the Secretary
and Mr. Cameron Allaway)

Sara Francis

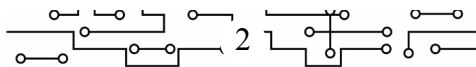


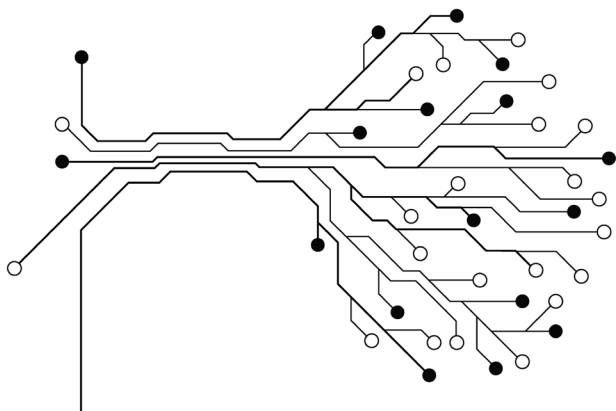
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Cover Design by Sara Francis

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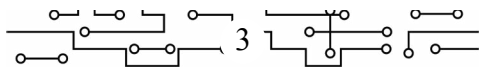
RECORD LOG OF ISLE I ENTRY 2935

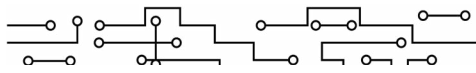
“Ready?” Axel asked.

“Ready,” Alison stated, dropping into her stance. She raised her guard, putting her metal right arm in front of her face. Inside, she wasn’t ready. Mr. Allaway instructed the two Bionics to perform a sparring match until one of them could hardly stand. She still thought this fight was unfair. While she and Axel both had 2 enhanced prosthetic limbs, she thought her one-arm one-leg combo was no match for Axel’s two metal legs.

Once the bell went off, she was proved wrong.

Before she had time to think, Axel thrust and threw a front kick, almost driving Alison back. She kept her feet firmly planted and blocked his powerful leg with her metal arm. Immediately, he threw another. Axel knew that it would be tough blocking her attacks with his organic arms. They would surely break against Alison’s metal.





As much as he didn't want to hurt Alison (or himself), Axel knew she would show no mercy. He's known Alison for as long as he could remember. Her perseverance and determination was one of the many qualities he liked about her. He also knew she would scold him if he held back. So, he played offensive and kept kicking.

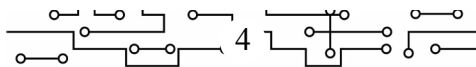
Axel's metal legs flashed in the sunlight as they flew at Alison. With each attack, he shouted like a warrior in the heat of battle. They were hard and strong, but Alison was just as quick. She kept deflecting and wasn't hit enough to be knocked down.

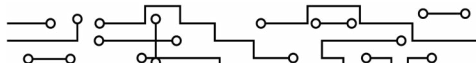
Growing tired of the repetition, Alison wound up her metal arm and plunged it into her friend's organic stomach. Axel exhaled sharply, his eyes widened as he watched stars dance. He clutched his torso and staggered backward, struggling to catch his breath. Not sorry, Alison was ready to come in with another blow. Her gray eyes locked on her target; she clenched her fist and pulled it behind her.

Luckily, Axel collected his bearings. As her fist swung towards his face, he jumped back and blocked the attack with a crescent kick. Alison's arm was thrown away from her and her body followed; just enough time for Axel to recoup and plan his next move.

Growling, Alison whipped back around to find Axel in the air about to dive on top of her. Quickly, she dove and rolled out of the way. He crashed hard into the concrete ground, dust and debris flying upward.

Alison looked up and saw her friend standing in the





dust. She could tell he meant business. His stormy gray eyes were serious as they slowly looked up at her. His brow was furrowed and sweat dripped beneath his white curly hair.

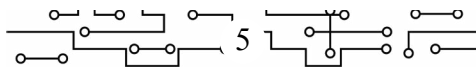
Standing upright, Axel shook his robotic legs and began to walk towards Alison, leaving behind a crater and cracks in the concrete. As he walked, his pace got faster and faster until he was charging right where she was standing.

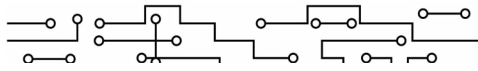
Determined not to lose this fight, Alison dropped into a stance once again with her right prosthetic foot in front. She tilted her left shoulder back and pressed her organic left-hand on her hip. With her right shoulder forward, she crossed her Bionic arm over her chest, waiting for Axel before striking.

When he was ten feet away, Axel cross stepped and threw a leaping side kick, his right leg extended. As he flew toward her, Alison let out a yell and, with all her force, took her hand and whipped it threw the air. As planned, her Bionic fist smashed Axel's ankle before it got to her. Sparks flew as metal hit metal. The blue lights that connected their limbs flickered upon impact.

When Alison's hinge punch swept across, Axel was turned sideways and his upper body crashed right into her. The two of them tumbled across the cold concrete. Their organic limbs receiving several cuts and contusions, the metal became scraped and scuffed. After they finished rolling, the two lay on the ground, gasping for air.

The fight had ended.



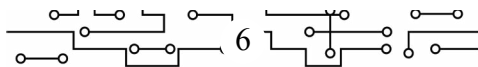


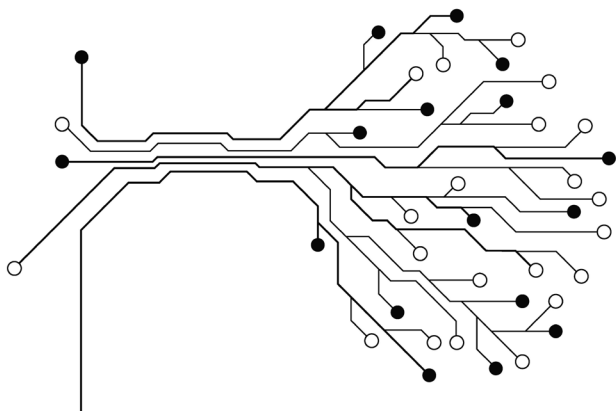
Their Keeper, Mr. Allaway, crossed from his observation chair to the Bionics. Leaning over the two, he scratched his crooked nose. “I figured it would end in a tie,” he told them casually. Picking up his electronic clipboard, he entered the results.

“Then...why’d...we...fight?” Axel panted, still lying on the floor face up. His prosthetic leg sparked where the metal had been smashed inward. It would need some work. Alison’s hand didn’t receive as much damage; a few dents in the side of her fist but nothing irreparable.

“Because it’s fun,” the Scottish Keeper replied, smiling. “Also, it lets me know not to get on either of your bad sides.” Axel tried to say a witty remark but no more words would come out. Alison was silent, watching the Keeper carefully. Kindly, Mr. Allaway offered both of them a hand and helped them up. “Now, you two better go rest. You train again tomorrow!”

Emotionless and exhausted, the two forced a word of thanks to their Keeper and went back to their cell-like bedrooms.



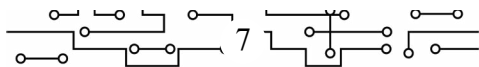


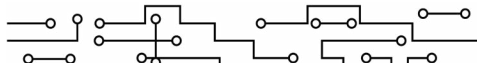
RECORD LOG OF MR. CAMERON ALLAWAY - KEEPER OF ISLE I ENTRY 2935

I watched as the waves crawled up the shore and back down again. Their pearl white foam sloshed against the sand. I counted the time between each wave. 1...2...3... The next came and disappeared in a moment.

Out there, time was meaningless. Where the sun was in the sky meant nothing. I took a deep breath, letting my lungs fill with the salt air. When they were full, I exhaled with a sigh and relaxed. I closed my eyes as the wind brushed through my red hair and kissed my face. Despite the golden rays beating upon my forehead, the heat was no match for the cool breeze. I shoved my hands into my pockets and dug my toes into the sand.

This was my favorite part of the job; being able to have a retreat from the responsibilities and stresses of being a Keeper. The Isles were beautiful places to live. They may





not be Scotland, but they do just fine. I am usually very grateful that the Headmaster invited me to be a part of it all.

Sadly, my time of relaxation was up. I received a message on the electronic clipboard that went with me everywhere like a faithful companion. Mr. Cameron Allaway, the text read, it is time for you to supervise the Bionics' weekly combat training. Today I instructed them to fight with full strength as you ordered. I also forewarned them that it would be a tournament style fight.

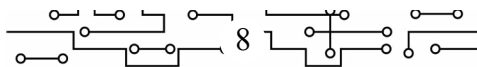
After reading the message, I tucked the black tablet under my arm and looked out at the waves one last time. Sighing, I bent over, grabbed my sandy dress shoes, and headed back to the facility. Time for another day to begin.

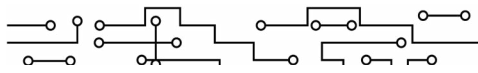
Reaching the training area, I stepped onto the cold concrete where the Bionics were waiting. They stood uniformly in their armor waiting for my instructions. Before speaking, I looked in awe at all the children. They would never know how proud I was of them. These young adults who have become part machine for, not just their own survival, but to save others. They have sacrificed so much; they will never know.

A quick moment passed, and I quickly shook away the thought. Smiling, I greeted them and said, "Good morning, everyone. Are you ready for today's tournament training?"

"Yes, sir," was their unison response... like machines.

I nodded, looked down at my clipboard, and called up the first pair. "Robert and Axel." Despite the fact that Robert was barely a teenager while Axel was 18, the two



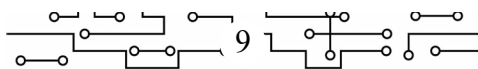


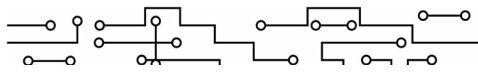
Bionics were scheduled to fight. I backed off the paved concrete of the courtyard and went to a comfortable folding chair on the sidelines. After I was settled, I gave the order and the two fought. The tension was high among the bystanding Bionics, but I already anticipated the outcome of the entire tournament. I had it all figured out, but I knew they needed to learn for themselves.

After a brutal match, Robert collapsed to the ground, making Axel the victor. Without looking up, I marked it down on my clipboard and waved on the next pair. That one finished and I called the next...and the next... and so on. Some dragging out more than others. It's not like I didn't take pleasure in watching them fight, I was just used to it. Imagine watching a beloved movie you have seen over and over again until you were sick of it. Unfortunately, most of the Bionics' moves were repetitive, predictable, and stale. They were getting used to each other and fought almost robotically.

Thankfully, the final match arrived with my two Veteran Bionics, as I predicted. They were the fighters I could count on for a show. Axel and Alison. The very first two I rescued from the Accident. I was thrilled to watch them fight. After asking each other if they were ready, Axel thrust and threw his powerful front kick. From there, the battle began. Friend against friend but that meant nothing. Winning was all that mattered.

I was on the edge of my seat throughout it all. My eyes jumped back and forth between the fighters and sometimes





couldn't keep up with their swiftness. Finally, I saw the end of the fight approaching. Alison held her stance as Axel flew in with a leaping side kick. I held my breath as the two collided; sparks flying from the impact. When Alison swept his leg out of the way, Axel crashed right into her and the two went tumbling; the fight ended in a tie.

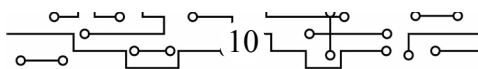
Honestly, I was not surprised. Like I said before, I predicted the entire tournament. Whenever they fought each other, a victor was never determined. Standing up from my chair, I went over to them. I leaned over and stared at their faces. Their prosthetics were damaged and needed repair... again. Like I said, predictable.

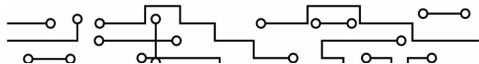
Scratching my crooked nose, I said, "I figured it would end in a tie."

As I entered the results into my clipboard, Axel asked out of breath, "Then...why'd...we...fight?"

Normally, I would give them a scientific explanation about the reasons for repeatedly practicing techniques, developing strategy, and efficiency. But today I wanted to be honest with them. I smiled and told them the truth. "Because it's fun!" Helping them both stand up, I told them, "Now, you two better go rest. You train again tomorrow!"

Drained, the two nodded and wobbled off the fighting grounds, leaving me alone. Chuckling, I looked around at the cracked pavement that needed to be fixed... again. That never bothered me. It was all worth it. Every last bit.





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