

*Slumped against the wall and watching the sky turn dark, Lisa paid little attention to Blondie as she now looked at her computer and oddly enough, spoke to it. The day had been long, though it came with its own advantages. She'd found out that there were other people within the maze-like city, and if there were people, there had to be a way they got there. Her instincts urged her to the idea that there was a way out...maybe a way home.*

### **Monsters**

Sitting beneath the window, I glanced out to see the sky dark, but no sign of monsters yet, or the other two that went off to investigate. The dark woman-Porter and James were still gone, but the woman they called Blondie seemed ambivalent towards it. I sincerely hoped her jaw still hurt but couldn't deny that her resetting James was a quick solution to ending his suffering. On the watch for the return of the monsters, I felt concern more for James than the woman with him. Blondie shoved the dissection tools she used into her bag, closed her computer and slid over next to me. Watching her pull out a gun and inspect it, I anticipated an attempted retaliation but after loading it, she put it away and rubbed the new bruise on her face.

“Ow. You know, you broke some seriously expensive equipment when you punched me.” She griped, sitting her computer on her lap and opening it again.

“Equipment? What do you mean?” I'd never heard anyone refer to their jaw as equipment, maybe she was referring to some sort of surgical procedure, though there was no sign I'd disfigured her permanently.

“My neural tech. It's going to take hours to repair.” She answered, the annoyance clear as she pulled a large square bandage from her bag and set it over the bruise.

I was curious what she meant by neural tech, but didn't have to wait long to find out. Within a few seconds of her putting on the bandage, an image of circuits appeared on it. Mumbling, Blondie then gave a verbal order to her computer and after the screen went black, she began typing in line after line of information. The computer responded with a screen change and displayed the same design of circuits as the bandage, and she closed it again, this time sighing relief.

“What were you doing?” I asked, now confused by what she'd been doing. “I can't connect normally to my computer right now...thanks to a certain someone, so I had to type it in and program instructions for my repair patch.” Blondie answered, the annoyance hadn't disappeared.

“So what's that thing over there?” I asked, changing the subject and figuring Blondie discovered something after hours of dissection.

“Not sure.”

I’m not one to question the abilities of others so long as they remain useful but, I’d think that she’d have something go on by now. Even if it was an unusual creature, something had to lend a clue.

“What do you mean, *not sure*?”

“I have no idea what that thing’s made of, I’ve never dissected an alien or monster or whatever the hell it is, before. It’s dense but not hard, wasn’t difficult to cut into at all, but the disappointment was that there were no organs, that I could see anyway. The blue webbing was there but, that’s it. The only thing I do know is that the three of you have some biological similarities to it. Although, I don’t think the reset quality comes from them. That’s still a mystery to me.”

“How is that freak similar in biology to- wait you only said the three of us. Why did you exclude yourself?” I demanded.

Blondie pushed her now limp hair over her shoulder and answered without pause.

“I’m technologically spliced, so human with some upgrades.”

I couldn’t help but raise an eyebrow at what she’d just told me. Looking this short blonde over from every angle, I can’t see her subjecting herself to experimentation, though I don’t know her or the others so I can’t be sure unless I ask. It’s not like we can really go anywhere right now with the toy-box nightmares on the prowl right now.

### ***Mystery***

It was then that I noticed we hadn’t heard or seen any of the monstrosities yet, and it was well into the dark phase of the day. Strange...usually the area was swarming with them by now. I looked at Blondie, she was still fixing her equipment, so I doubt she noticed anything, or if she did...she wasn’t saying anything.

“I’m going to go and check something out.”

“Where?” Blondie asked, her attention now on me when I stood and started to the door of the room.

“I’ll let you know when I get back.” Walking out of the room, I looked around cautiously, making my steps as quiet as possible. My military extracurricular training paid off in terms of stealth and

searching. Walking down the hall and down the stairs to the exit James came out of earlier, I propped open the door with the nearest object I could find.

This is going to sound suicidal but, I actually went investigating to search out those monsters...and walking down that dark alley, I found out.

There were dozens of them, the monsters lying motionless on the street. Arming myself, I approached one of them with caution, ready for it to attack at a moment's notice.

Nudging the monster, I watched it roll slightly. At the sound of a moan, I aimed for a shot and stepped back from the monster as it turned over. All I do was stare at what was revealed when the monster was on its back and motionless.

It was split open and inside was more of what Blondie found in Porter, James, and myself, but that was as surprising as what it was attached to.

A young man lay inside the monster, hundreds of glowing blue tendrils attached to him. Kneeling, I listened for signs of breath and found him to still be breathing.

The situation was getting stranger by the second, I kicked over motionless monster after motionless monster, and it was the same each time. A creeping feeling settled in when I realized that I recognized them all. They were all Porter, James, and myself. Strange as it sounds, it was even more unsettling to see. All connected to the strange blue network by tendrils, breathing, alive.

I hated to admit it but, this was something that Blondie needed to see but, just one of them wasn't going to cut it. She needed to see them all, and see where they came from. Dozens of people, trapped inside the monsters.

### ***Spliced***

Looking around and making sure there was nothing around that might make my discovery disappear, I grabbed one for insurance I could show Blondie, hauling the thing up the stairs, I found Blondie right where I left her.

“So, where'd you go? What'd you find?”

She asked, setting something else on her computer and looking frustrated.

“Exploring. I wanted to know where our violent friends were, since we haven't seen them this evening.

I don't know if what I found is a good or bad thing, but I doubt you're going to like it.” I answered, taking in a deep breath before I tossed the monster to the floor in front of her.

The quickest I'd ever seen someone draw a weapon and aim it didn't even compare to Blondie when she was faced with the monster and practically teleported her gun into her hands.

“Relax, it's dead...I think. How it died I don't know though.”

“You sure it's dead? Where did you find it?” Blondie asked, keeping her gun trained on the monster and waiting for something to happen.

“Out just past the alley. There's dozens of them just laying there. This is what I wanted to show you though.” Kicking the monster over to expose its stomach, I revealed something that must have upset Blondie, because she ran to the window and heaved.

“There's more of them downstairs. Every last one I checked was either Porter, James, or myself. I just happened to get one with James inside it, I guess, I brought it in case the others disappeared like evidence seems to do around here. He's alive I think...but I'm not so certain this is actually James.”

Watching Blondie wipe her mouth and take deep breaths to calm herself she snapped, “So what do you want me to do about it?”

“Aren't you the resident Dr. Frankenstein here? I want you to see what this thing is and why it looks like James.” I answered, putting my gun away. She was irritating enough to shoot right now so I was doing us both a favor.

“How do you expect me to do that?” She answered, with vitriol in her voice.

“You had no problems with the tools to dissect that thing, rotting in the corner...use those.” My patience was wearing thin with her, she shifted between staring at the thing that looked like James, and glaring at me. Sighing, at her hesitance, I grabbed the body, monster and all and slid it on the same dissection table she used earlier.

“Get to it...or would you prefer I go back and look for one that resembles me or Porter?”

Blondie glared as like she wanted to start something, I was all for it. She wasn't the only one in the room that was tampered with...not that I'd give her the advantage of knowing of my own genetic alterations.