



whatever his creator had looked like was foggy and unclear. *That doesn't sound like how my designation is spelled.*"

*"Because it sounds like a right and proper name, doesn't it?"*

That was all he could bring himself to remember. For a moment Mechano tried to recall anything else, but all he could drum up from his memory banks was static and failed file loads. Someone deleted them, he was sure, likely this inventor, but why?

Unfolding the letter once, Mechano found more written on the lightly damp paper. This time the sloppy writing read "Seek The Dojo", a rather cryptic order but unfolding the rest of the paper and turning it around revealed a map of the entire continent. Looking it over, more handwriting was scribbled in one of the corners, having circled a place called Blackwatch.

"I am Meh-ken-o," he reviewed his findings, "and I'm-" looking around, the automaton gave a mechanical sigh, appearing unimpressed, "in the sewers of a place called Blackwatch."

What other scribbles he could find were some warnings, as well as his final destination: The Dojo. It was on a far island, smack dab in the middle of the two landmasses that made up most of Cier. Mechano doubted he wouldn't be hunted down if his memories were mostly deleted and these measly supplies were all he was receiving to get to this island.

*'That means I'm going to have to lie low somehow.'* The mech speculated, gaze raised towards the ceiling of the dripping and slimy sewer. *'Maybe I can find a way to navigate these sewers and just travel here until I find a way out? But I can't remember anything about Blackwatch... unless I never knew anything at all about it.'*

It was completely possible, as Mechano realized he still held a lot of basic information, such as spelling, mathematics, and the fact that if he wanted to get out of the sewers, he had to find a manhole. Unfortunately, none seemed to be nearby, so he assumed whoever took him down under the city, they had walked a great distance to avoid any locations they'd be easily found.

*'If I was taken so far into the sewers as a precaution, I should be just as cautious.'* Mechano speculated, finally standing on his own two feet. The antenna attached to his head swung and dangled like an ornament, glowing a faint red. He noticed the lights on his left arm, green, yellow and red. The green was blinking, so he assumed he only had so much time before it died out and he only had yellow and red. *'Two days of energy left, good. I could get pretty far in only two days.'* He was thankful he could remember his basic functions.

Folding the map so that it fit in the bag, Mechano used the string on the small sack of Rice to tie it around his forearm. He then opened the bag again, counting the grains he had.

"If one grain is three days worth of energy then-" he spoke out loud as he did the math silently, "I have 45 days worth of fuel, plus my current two." Remembering the map, Mechano frowned. "I don't know if that's enough."

Slightly discouraged, the bag was once again sealed and Mechano began his journey down the sewer tunnel, deciding to travel right versus left, thankful for the dull and sometimes flickering lights above, though they were sparse. He wondered why they even put lights in the sewers,

especially if they were going to be on constantly. Maybe this place was more of a thoroughfare than he thought. It didn't matter unless Mechano ran into anybody, which he hoped he wouldn't, since he doubted anyone in the sewers would have good intentions.

Regardless of his worries and anxieties, it was better to leave than stay, if because of anything then because of the smell. Why his creator gave him the ability to smell the area around him, Mechano wasn't quite sure, thinking if there was anything to delete that would have been helpful, it was his sense of smell. His hearing did him no favors either as the solid concrete beneath him sounded more like a wet sponge than solid material, slime and gunk beginning to creep up his legs. The walls too looked more like the gullet of some horrid monster with decaying flesh than concrete. Mechano passed by a short hallway that went to a sealed door, but it looked rusted and abandoned for ages. The deeper he went, the older the halls looked, and even the lights that were once flickering, were going out in this area. It was obviously very rarely used, if at all, and Mechano soon found out why as he reached a dead end, feet covered in stagnant muck.

"I'm starting to think a map of the sewers would have been more helpful than a map of the continent."

Turning around, Mechano stepped to walk back the way he came when a low rumbling caught his attention, and a bright yellow whisked past his peripheral, a brief eye contact being made as a human seemingly appeared from out of the wall. At first glance, she seemed no more than 12, and according to her panicked gaze, she was running from something, said *something* crashing through the wall that this stranger had so easily bypassed. Mechano had to tuck and roll as a humanoid monster stumbled and rolled, its arms like massive scythes and its body a pitch black with glowing blue veins that led to crystalline spikes protruding from its back. It was beginning to regain its senses when the little girl stumbled as well, slipping on the muck of the sewer and falling into the stagnant filth.

*'I don't think that thing is native to Blackwatch-'* Mechano guessed, looking around after removing the muck from his rusting eyes.

Finding a decently long pipe, the mechanoid lunged for the creature before it could attack the still downed girl, effectively knocking it off its path and placing himself in between it and the human. Peeking back at the girl, Mechano summed that she wasn't hurt, though was definitely in need of a bath. Her pink bandana was a strange choice in apparel that clashed with her orange skin.

His view was abruptly covered by a black appendage, and Mechano was sent crashing into the ground, only barely being able to roll out of the way of the shrieking monster. Its massive, scythe-like arms crushed the concrete beneath it, making chips fly every which way. Mechano adjusted the pipe in his grip as he stood back up, eyeing the creature warily as it too seemed to recalculate for its next move. Despite being feral, there was an amount of intelligence to it as it slowly turned, walking on all fours and examining its new opponent with an eyeless gaze. Mechano stepped to the right and its head followed. He returned to the left and still it followed. He then raised his weapon of choice, noticing the end he had grabbed had a

fitting on it. The creature didn't offer any time to let him think of why this detail seemed important, prompting Mechano to swing back down, hoping to hit his opponent on the head, but instead his swing was mildly dodged and the monster was hit on the shoulder, so the robot had to duck under the rest of its lunge, watching it slide on the grime of the sewer floor as it struggled to gain traction.

*'It's light, it's fast.'* Mechano analyzed. *'I'm neither of those things.'*

With a sharp whine of a roar, the creature slipped and slid as it tried to charge forward, eventually gaining traction and lunging itself back at the mechanoid. Mechano had raised his pipe again, but this time when he swung down, the creature deflected the weapon with its rock hard scythe, sweeping its opponent off his feet with the other and attempting to plunge its hefty claw into Mechano's body, but the robot was quick to drop the first weapon and resort to his own strength. Barely holding the struggling point away from his chest, the slime covered bot found his grip, allowing him to use the creature's own force against it as he re-angled the attack so that he instead slid underneath the beast, grabbing one of its feet along the way and tripping it so that its head came face-first into the sewage.

*'But I'm heavier, so I can find traction easier in this muck.'*

Knowing there was no time to lose, Mechano stood back up. He noticed the little girl was still with them, likely scared stiff from running from this thing, so Mechano understood he would have to kill the creature for them both to be safe from it. While it was still busy screeching and spitting out the vile liquid its head had just been forced under, its opponent kicked up his pipe and swung low to hit the beast in its stomach. This made it roar and spit up a sickening bile that reeked of the sweet smell of rotting flesh and stomach acid, now mixing with the sewage. Mechano was sure he was supposed to be disgusted, but it mattered little to him as he swung again, this time landing a blow on the creature's hip. He would have rather gone for the knee, but the way this thing walked, it wasn't an option. Now with it limping mildly, Mechano tried to sweep around to hit its other side, but he was swiped at by one of the scythes, making him step back before he slipped and was caught by the opposite foot.

Now the two were circling, and for a moment Mechano saw the creature's attention flick to the girl behind him before it tried to lunge past him, apparently deeming this fight too perilous to continue it. Quick to correct the monster's direction, the amnesiac automaton used the curved fitting on his pipe to grab hold of the armpit of his opponent, promptly forcing its momentum in reverse and flipping it to land on its spiked back at the edge of the rubble from the wall. It was a proud moment when the sound of the splash reverberated off the echoing walls, but a moment was all it was as the creature's veins began to pulse their blue glowing color and it roared a deafening roar that caused the girl to cover her ears. Mechano was forced to wait for its next move, watching closely as the creature curled in on itself, exposing its spiked back.

His eyes widened in alarm as the crystalline spikes began to vibrate until they shot out from the creature's back and towards him. A strange instinct took over, and Mechano crouched enough to match the height of his pipe, the hand holding it extending and soon the pipe was spinning rapidly, deflecting the blue colored crystals until the last one made its way toward him.

Being able to calculate its trajectory, Mechano stopped the pipe and instead hit the last projectile back at his opponent, hitting it squarely on its head, causing it to shriek horribly. It growled as thick red blood slid down its eyeless face and into its angry mouth.

*'This thing was human, once?'*

Mechano had no time to ponder as the monster forced itself forward, its long range attack used up, so as a seemingly last ditch effort, it forced all its weight onto the metal pipe Mechano was forced to put up to keep it at bay. Its bulky arms were kept away but now it was snapping at the robots face in a feral panic, trying desperately to get closer. Mechano was about to push it off of him when the monster realized its advantage and forced its heavy and sharp appendages up, knocking the unprepared automaton back and into the sewage. It was smart enough to knock the pipe away from his reach as well, making Mechano begin to panic instead as he realized it was learning.

Kicking himself back up, Mechano wasn't given any time to think of a new strategy, having to lock his arms onto the dangerous and slimy points of this creature's scythes before they came down upon him. The mech was about to push it away again when he noticed movement at the corner of his eye. The girl had picked something up, and to his horror, it was the bag that had been attached to his arm.

'It must have been cut by this thing's arm-' Mechano speculated, his joints beginning to groan from the strain he was putting on them.

The girl wasn't paying them any mind anymore though, instead opening the small bag. With wide eyes, the girl looked up at the robot that was saving her, who had also turned his head enough to see her. She began to back away from him and the creature, the bag tucked close to her body. Her expression was still scared, but something about it showed a hint of hope, though not that she might live and thank her savior as she got up and began running away from the two.

"No- hey, *wait*, that's-"

It was just enough to give the creature an opening.

Before Mechano could retaliate, he was tossed to the side, rolling in an attempt to get back up but this only saved him from being impaled, instead being tossed harshly into a wall, leaving cracks and making the mechanoid dizzy. His blurry vision could just barely see the creature stepping back to gain more distance between them, but this wasn't to run away. It took one last step back before charging at Mechano, who, for a moment, thought that was it, until his right arm seemed to lift itself on its own, and he pushed himself forward just enough to be narrowly missed by the pointed arms of the monster as he grabbed hold of its head, crushing it with a grip that made its skull splinter, its teeth shatter and its brain squeeze out from between his fingers. The body twitched and writhed, thinking it was still alive and that it needed to get away, the blue veins rapidly pulsing as if it had anymore spikes to release. Its arms were buried deep in the concrete, so they were of no threat to Mechano, who was stuck between them.

Still with his arm held out, Mechano stared at the spatter on his arm. Gone was the copper color of his metallic arm, and even the brown and green sewage was hidden beneath the sticky and slippery cells that made blood its sickeningly red color. What organic matter he still had in his hand was let go, and his arm fell to the ground, as weighty as the body that now rested on his legs, but Mechano didn't have the strength to push it off himself. He looked to his left arm, seeing that it had gone from a solid yellow light, to a blinking red.

*'Five minutes of power left.'* He understood. *'I shouldn't use that too often then-'* He peeked above the body with tired eyes, but the girl had left completely. *'I don't think I'll be able to use it at all, actually.'*

Mechano tried to move his legs out from under the beast, but even without its head and the crystalline growths, it seemed to weigh a ton when he was on low output energy. Even his movements were slow as he tried to push it off. It took more time than he wanted, but eventually he was able to push the corpse over enough to allow him to stumble out of his cornered state, only to fall back down and lean against the wall next to his deceased opponent. Even the light on his arm began to blink slower and dimmer from the extra exertion at such low power.

"Sorry, creator." Mechano thought it silly, apologizing to no one, but somehow his coding felt prompted to do so. "I don't think I'll be making it to The Dojo."

Slowly his vision clouded and darkened. He knew this was what it felt like to shut down. Somehow it didn't feel unfamiliar, so he wasn't scared of it, like a human may be scared of death. Either he would wake up again, or he would not. He doubted he ever would, being in such a secluded spot that monsters freely roamed. It made him wonder, however, what such a little girl was doing so far in the sewers, anyway?

She seemed so scared and alone. How long had she been under Blackwatch?

Thinking about her made Mechano begin to hallucinate as he saw the orange and pink of the girl's palette peek out from a wall. He didn't remember being able to hallucinate, but maybe something found its way to his motherboard and soiled it.

His vision had gone completely black, but unexpectedly it had started to return. Mechano half expected to have forgotten all his memories again, but the fact he was worried about such a thing proved it was not an issue. In fact there seemed to be no issue as he observed the same girl from before poking at a small trash fire. The smell must have been unbearable for her, as even Mechano thought it unpleasant. Then again, she herself didn't exactly smell like roses, either.

His pupils moving to examine his surroundings, the bag of rice sat next to the girl, closed and looking unharmed, if a little dirty from landing in the sewer sludge.

"You said you were heading to The Dojo." The girl spoke, itching at her face. "Why?"

Looking at his energy gauge, Mechano saw that it had replenished, meaning this girl had figured out how to refuel him. This also meant Mechano was already behind in his plans to travel to this mysterious Dojo.

Finally moving to sit up properly, Mechano felt no fatigue from his fight, as most humans would. His movement made the girl nervous as she shuffled away from him a bit, apparently having expected him to at least be tired or some such human thing. He made his movements slow to avoid spooking her, trying to reach for his small bag of personal belongings, but the girl was quick to grab first and held it close to herself. Mechano gauged that she was not going to give it back unless he gave her good reason to.

"I don't know." Mechano admitted. "I think my creator is there."

The girl looked the automaton up and down, suspicious.

"Do you know what this is?" She held up the bag.

"I know that it is my fuel." Mechano told her, stoking the small fire with a piece of plastic, trying to look as non-threatening as possible.

"This is *Rice*!" The girl held it higher, having a strange anger in her words. "You can't get this stuff except from big governments or being a Duelist, how do *you* have a whole bag of it?"

Mechano shrugged.

"My creator left it for me, I assume. I woke up here with most of my memory wiped clean." He figured being completely honest would be the best route when speaking with a child.

"Your creator?" The girl looked doubtful. "Hold still."

Mechano was startled as the girl seemingly lost all fear of him, and she examined his limbs, his head and knocked on his chest. She stared him down in his screw-shaped eyes, her own, human eyes squinting.

"How are you a Blackwatch invention running on Rice?" She questioned. "Other than the smoke from being coal powered you have all the signs of being a Blackwatch invention but no inventor in this stupid city would even *think* about making something like *you*. That's just asking to be arrested."

"Arrested?" Mechano frowned, a sudden pang of anxiety he couldn't explain shooting through his frame. "Is Rice that bad of a thing to be powered by?"

The girl frowned at his question in return, looking unsure of how to answer that.

"Well, not really." The girl decided to sit back down by the fire. "It's just- Blackwatch has this thing about industry that makes them hate anything that doesn't cause smoke and make trees die."

"Oh- I see." Mechano nodded, assuming his creator must be on the run the same as him then, or perhaps arrested like the girl insinuated. But then, why would his creator have told him to go to The Dojo if there was such a high chance that he would never make it? "Well," he decided it was time to ask her a question, "then why are you here? You don't look like an inventor to me."

"Pfft- no. I wouldn't want to invent for Blackwatch anyway." She huffed in a sassy manner. "I want to be a makeup star like I see on TV!"

"That didn't answer my question." Mechano noted, earning a glare from his new conversationalist, but she quickly looked back to the fire with a saddened frown.

"My parents got sick from the smoke." She admitted, hugging her knees to her chest. "We tried to leave so they could get better. We even said we'd come back but they were arrested anyway. I got away because I can walk through walls."

So Mechano *wasn't* hallucinating when he saw her peek through the wall before he shut down. That would explain why she was able to just step through the dead end while the monster broke through it. It was certainly a helpful skill for her, but a girl as young as she was shouldn't be living in a sewer, let alone on the run from an entire government.

"So you're alone here?" Mechano asked her to clarify, the girl nodding as she hugged her legs closer. "Do you want to go to The Dojo with me, then?"

At this she perked up, hopeful eyes glinting in the low fire light.

"You mean it? Even after I tried stealing your Rice?"

Mechano nodded.

"You came back and after I saved you, you saved me by giving one back." The girl frowned, realizing she should probably give the rest back as well, so she held out the bag, and Mechano took it gently. "We'll call it even, yes?" He offered. "This way, you're protected from monsters, and I have a guide."

"Out of the sewer?" She questioned open-endedly.

"And to The Dojo." The automaton nodded. "A robot like me roaming around might get a lot of attention, but a robot with a young charge I think would be explainable."

"What's a young charge? Is that like a battery?"

Mechano chuckled, shaking his head as he counted the Rice. Indeed, only one was used.

"How about we start off by finding where that monster came in from? If it got in here, then there's a way out that's close by, right?"

"Oh! Yeah, I saw it come in even, but I think it could hear me so it started chasing me. This way!"



The two set off, carefully avoiding the monster's corpse and climbing over the rubble after Mechano found his pipe, deciding it was wise to keep with him. The girl ran off ahead of Mechano, making him lose her, but only because she forgot most people, and robots, couldn't walk through walls at will. So, using her ability, the two were able to find their way around the maze that was the Blackwatch sewer, coming to a massive hole in what used to be a welded grate that led to a cesspit. Like the rest of the sewer, it reeked, but a breeze made the smell a little more bearable for the girl.

"That's the wall to the outside." She pointed up, Mechano spying the massive barrier with wide eyes. "That monster probably climbed up it and fell in here. Weird, since usually the watchmen aren't so lazy."

"Maybe because this is to the sewers they don't consider it a priority." Mechano speculated. "Maybe we can climb them too."

The girl shook her head.

"Keeping monsters out is one thing. Most of Blackwatch is armed in *some* way, like super powers or a weapon like your pipe. I think that wall is there mostly to keep people in. I haven't heard of anyone escaping Blackwatch if they were being hunted." She continued to stare at the wall before somehow startling herself and offering a hand to Mechano abruptly. "I'm Ann, by the way. Short for Annalise."

Mechano stared at her hand a moment before gently taking it in his, careful not to crush the smaller appendage.

"I'm Mehkeno."

"Meh-ken-o?" Ann frowned in confusion. "But your name looks like Meh-can-o."

"I think I'm going to get that a lot."

## Demo Complete