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3. Script

In Matthew's childhood

The story begins in darkness.

A phone rings.

Matthew: Hello?

Father: Ah, you're there. Good

Matthew: Huh? Dad? Is that you?

Father: I can't talk long, Son. Can you come outside? Right now?

Matthew: Huh? Yeah, OK!

He hangs up the phone.

There are some footsteps.

Matthew: DAD!!

There are more footsteps.

Matthew: What's wrong, Dad? Why aren't you at work?

Father: It's your birthday, isn't it? I brought you a present. Here, hold out your hand.

He does so.

Matthew: Wow! It's the watch you promised me! But don't you need that for work?

Father: It's a very special watch, Son. There's nothing else like it in the world. And I want you to have it.

Matthew: You're serious? You're really giving it to me?! Thanks, Dad!! This is so cool!

Father: Like I said, it's very special and I need you to take care of it.

Matthew: No problem, Dad! I'll take good care of it!!

Father: Good. Now promise me one more thing. Keep it on you always. Don't ever take it off.

Matthew: Uh-huh! You got it, Dad! I'm never, ever gonna take it off!

Father: Think of me when you wear this watch. Take good care of it. Even when you're all grown up, I want you to keep it safe, OK?

Matthew: Uh-huh!

His alarm goes off meaning he has to go to work.

Father: Look at the time. Dad's got to go. You be a good boy now.

There are footsteps.

Matthew: Huh? You're leaving? But you just got here.

Father: I'm sorry, Son, but I have to. There's some work only your old man can do. I have to go.

A door opens.

Father: Good-bye, Son. And remember, think of me when you wear this watch. Take care of it. Don't forget, all right?

Matthew: I won't! But Dad, where are you going?

Father: Far away. I have to go to a place that is very far away.

He gets in his car and leaves.

Matthew: Dad?

Present

Lucy: (quietly) Wake up.

Lucy: What, you got wax in yer ears? I said wake up and get outta bed!

The setting is now brighter as normal.

Matthew wakes up

Lucy: Honestly!! Just because you don't work doesn't mean you can sleep your day away! Do you even know what time it is? It's past noon!!! Don't you have a job interview? What was that place again? Stale Horse? You need that job if you're gonna pay your rent! Now, get up and get that job! You heard me! Get out of bed and drag your lazy behind to that Stale Horse interview!

Matthew: Jeez. Good morning to you, too. And it's not Stale Horse. It's Steel Hearts.

Lucy: Hmph! Whatever! Just get up and get out of bed! You need that job! Oh, and good luck.

Lucy leaves and Matthew gets dressed and out of bed. Matthew then leaves too.

Lucy: Well, look at you! All gussied up and ready to go. Now, don't come back here without a job! I've been worried about you and not just because of the rent, you know!

Matthew: You were worried about me?

Lucy: Well, we've all been worried. Not a single word from your father for

years, and then that letter comes? It must have been a terrible shock to find out about his death like that. Just a letter and a will

Matthew: telling me to become a robo commander. I know, it's weird. But I hadn't seen him for so long. In fact the only thing I really remember about my dad is the watch he gave me. I don't remember anything else. But that's beside the point. I need to worry about the future, now.

Lucy: That's certainly true. You've been living off your family savings for years. It's about time you got a job.

Matthew: I'll do my best. In fact, I'll do whatever it takes to become a commander.

Lucy: That's what you're father wanted, isn't it? At least, that's what it said in his will. You're a good boy. You could go for any job you wanted, but you don't want to let your father down.

Matthew: Yeah. I wonder, why did he want me to become a commander? I don't know why it was so important to him, but I ought to give it a try at least, huh? I'd like to see his last wish fulfilled. A commander, huh? Yeah, I can do it!

Lucy: Er. So, uh. What's a commander do?

Matthew: A commander is a person who controls a custom robo.

Lucy: Hmm. No I'm afraid I'm just not following you. Anyway, don't just think of me as a landlady. Think of me as a friend. If you need any advice, just ask.

Matthew: Thanks.

Lucy: Well then, you go get that job and become a commander at Stale Horse!

Matthew: I'll do my best. Bye!

Matthew leaves for Steel Hearts. He walks in. There is the boss sitting at his desk. There is a worker sitting on a couch. Matthew talks to the boss.

Ernest: So, you're here for the interview ? Right. Let's get this over with. You ever work as a bounty hunter before?

Matthew: Of course!

Ernest: Really!? So where did you work?

Matthew: I don't know.

Ernest: You're lying to me, aren't you? Listen, not everyone can pilot a custom robo, you know? Look, forget it. Moving on. Next question. You got a robo?

Matthew: I had one, but I must have dropped it somewhere.

Ernest: You don't know a thing about custom robos, do you?

The worker that was sitting on the couch walks up to the desk.

Harry: Hey, everyone's like that when they get started, aren't they?

Ernest: Anyway. I'm sorry, but I need an experienced guy with his own robo. I just can't afford to hire an amateur.

Harry: What are you talking about? We can't afford to hire anyone who's NOT an amateur! Besides, I'm sick of being the new guy! We need someone I can push around! (quietly) I'm sick of dealing with the chief on my own.

Ernest: You got something' to say? Listen, even if we did hire you, we don't have a robo to spare, so you'll need to get one somewhere.

Matthew: (in his mind) I gotta make a good impression! What should I say?

Matthew: Buy a used robo, then!

Ernest: That's not the way it works, pal! Besides, it's an awful lot of hassle for someone with no experience.

Harry: Oh, come on. He looks like he's got what it takes. Let's at least get him an old, busted-up robo.

Ernest: None of this really matters, though. The simple fact is we don't have enough money to buy you a robo. And so that's why I can't hire you.

Harry: Aw. But. But. We really need some fresh blood around here, Chief! We've got too much work and not enough people! Can't we get an old junker robo for him to use?

Ernest: You don't pay the bills around here!

A phone rings

Harry: Whoa! We've got a call! Maybe it's a job!

Ernest picks up the phone.

Ernest: Steel Hearts, your one-stop bounty-hunting shop. This is Ernest. Ah, how are you today? You're sounding lovely, as usual!

Harry: Lovely? What? Is that a woman? Chief, have you got a girlfriend!?

Ernest: (quietly) Shut up, you!

Ernest bangs on the desk.

Ernest: Huh? Oh, yes. Yes. Of course. No, we'll be as. Uh-huh. Yeah. Right. Got it. Yes understood. I'll send someone right away.

Ernest hangs up the phone.

Ernest: We've got work, Harry. Standard burglary. And the police squad's fighting them now.

Harry: Aw, man! I don't wanna go if the police squad's gonna be there. By the way, who just called?

Ernest bangs on the desk.

Ernest: Shut yer yap and get going! Head out to the Research Lab. The request comes from the lab director.

Harry: Linda?! Woohoo! I'll go! I'll go!! Leave it to me!

Ernest: Oh, and Harry. Take the kid with you. Once he sees a real fight looks like, he'll tuck his tail under his legs and run home.

Harry: What!? Oh, man! All right, come on. Just don't get in the way.

Harry leads Matthew out the door.

Harry: That was Linda on the phone. She's the director of the Robo Research Lab.

Harry leads Matthew right outside the lab.

Harry: She's really gorgeous, smart, and compassionate. Really, she's the perfect match for me! I think of her as a real sister. Sort of, I mean not really, but. Oh, forget it. Anyway, don't try anything funny with her, you got it!?

Matthew: Yeah, I got it. Don't worry. I'm not going to try anything. Sheesh.

Harry: Just see that you don't! All right, let's get moving!

Harry and Matthew run into the area in front of the lab. The police captain and lots of police members and burglars are there.

Captain: IT'S THOSE BOTTOM-FEEDERS!!

Harry: DON'T BE MEAN! We're BOUNTY hunters!

Captain: Whatever. You all prey off of the lowest of the low. You bounty hunters are all bottom-feeders.

Harry: Don't give me any static! We're here on assignment!

Captain: Oh yeah? Nobody here asked for your help.

Linda: I did.

All three turn to Linda.

Captain: What? Why? We've got this covered!

Harry: Woo-hoo!! Looking' good, as always, Linda!

Linda: Thanks, Harry. I need you to take care of those crooks right away. They're after Ray 01, our newest robo. It's still in development, and it WAS top secret.

Harry: Top secret!? That's so cool!

Linda: Mm. Yes. But there's no telling what could happen if it were to fall in the wrong hands.

Linda: So we can't let them take it! With your skills, you should be able to take care of them easily.

Captain: But that's what we're doing.

Linda: They're stealing our newest robo. One can't be too careful.

Harry: That's right. You heard her! You can't be too careful! And that's where we come in! And looking at the situation here, I'd have to say things don't look good for you guys. But you know, you can't always rely on the police squad. Some jobs are just too important!

Captain: Hmph!

Harry: OK, then.

Harry turns to Matthew

Harry: You wait here. Try not to get in the way. You just watch Linda. This one's for you!

Harry runs over to the a burglar that is standing there.

Linda: Good luck, Harry.

Burglar #1: What do you want? You don't look like one of those police-squad goons.

Harry: My name's Harry. I'm a bounty hunter!

Burglar #1: Bounty hunter?...What, you mean one of those mercenary scum bags? So what do you want with me? You want to fight or something?

Harry: BINGO!! Heh heh. Man, do I feel sorry for you. Your luck just ran out! For the love of Linda, I, Harry, of the Steel Hearts, will be your undoing!

Burglar #1: Wait a minute...Steel Hearts? Oh! You mean those BOTTOM-FEEDERS!!

Harry: WE'RE NOT BOTTOM-FEEDERS!! We're BOUNTY HUNTERS!

They start fighting. There is a purplish-black ball with blue rings above them

Linda: I'm counting on you, Harry. Please protect Ray 01.

Captain: (quietly) Sob. We're trying our hardest you know?

Matthew looks over his shoulder and sees purple and black balls with blue rings going around the people who are fighting.

Matthew: Um. Excuse me.

Linda: Hm? What is it?

Matthew: What are those people doing?

Linda: What are they doing? They're fighting, of course.

Matthew: Fighting? You expect me to believe they're fighting?

Linda: Um. Yes.

Matthew: But they're not doing anything. They're just staring at each

other.

Linda: No, no. They're using their custom robos to fight. Can't you tell?

Matthew: Huh? Where? I don't see any custom robos anywhere!

Linda: That's because they're fighting inside the holosseum, of course.

Matthew: Holosseum?

Shows a digital holosseum

Linda: Yes. A holosseum is a fighting arena created in a digital environment. The custom robos fight within that virtual battlefield.

Matthew: Hmmm. I think I get it. Oh, but.

Linda: Yes?

Matthew: Where's Ray 01? I haven't seen any robos since we got here.

Linda: Well, a custom robo remains in cube form until it is released into the holosseum to—Wait, you're teasing me, aren't you? Surely you know all of this already.

Matthew: No. I've never really seen.

Linda: You do work with Harry, don't you? Aren't you one of those Steel Hearts bounty hunters?

Matthew: Uh. Sort of. I mean, yeah, I'm with Steel Hearts. (quietly)
I think.

Linda: Well then, get to work! Go fight some burglars. What are we paying you for?

Linda: Take a look. Harry and the police are having a tough time. You should be helping them!

Matthew: Yeah, you're right. I gotta try to help.

Matthew then interrupts Harry while he's fighting.

Matthew: Harry, I'm here to help.

Harry: WHAT DID YOU!? YA!

Harry falls back on a bunch of boxes and knocks a tiny cube by Matthew's foot.

Harry: Ow! You idiot! Don't talk to me when I'm fighting! I lost the fight because of you!

Burglar #1: Heh heh. That's what you get for not paying attention.

Harry: Ow. I think I hurt myself. Shoot. They're gonna swipe that new robo if I don't swipe 'em!

Matthew: Harry, let me help.

Harry: But you don't even have a robo!

Matthew: Oh, yeah. That's right. Let me borrow your robo! I'll use that to fight!

Harry: That won't work! I've already done my eye-scan registration! I'm the only one who can use it!

Matthew: Eye-scan registration?

Harry: Gah! No time to explain!

Burglar #1: Hello? Can I go now? I mean, if you two are just going to fight amongst yourselves, you really don't need me here, do you?

Harry: Man, even the crooks are making fun of us. If only you had a robo.

Matthew: A robo.

Matthew then picks up the tiny cube that was by his feet.

Matthew: What's this box? Huh? There's a button on the back. I'd better press it.

He does so. It starts to make buzzing noises.

Matthew: Huh? It's starting to buzz.

Harry: Whoa there! Did you just do an eye-scan registration?

Matthew: You still haven't even told me what that is!

Harry: Eye-scan registration is when you look into the robo's sensor while pressing that button. BUT THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN! The point is, now you're now the only one who can control that robo! Hurry up and dive!

Matthew: Dive? This is a robo?

Harry: Shut up and do what I say! Beat that burglar!

Matthew talks to the burglar.

Burglar #1: Think about this, kid. You sure you wanna go up against me even though you've never used a custom robo.

Harry: This wise guy thinks he's tough just 'cuz he got lucky against me? Well don't be scared! He'll be weak from our last fight. Even you should be able to beat him! Now listen. Your robo will shoot out from the robo cannon on the left side.

Matthew: Robo cannon?

Harry: It's a machine that shoots out the robo cube. The robo cube transforms once it's been fired. When the robo cube counts down to 0, it completes its transformation. After that, fire your gun. Use your gun to BLAM BLAM BLAM your enemy's energy down to 0, and you win! ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM around, and fire! Got it!?

Matthew: Got it!

Harry: Good. The fight's made him weak. You'll do just fine! ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM!
BANG BANG!

Matthew and Burglar #1 dive. Matthew wins with no trouble. Burglar #1 falls back.

Harry: GOOD WORK!

One police members falls back in the same manner as Burglar #1.

Harry: Uh-oh. One of the police guys just blew it. Go over there and clean up his mess!

Matthew walks over to Burglar #2.

Burglar #2: Oh, come on! I just knocked that loser out. Don't I deserve a break!?

Harry: All right, listen up! That guy ought to be worn out from his fight, too. If you listen to my advice, you should be able to beat him. Fire bombs and launch an attack pod. Firing your pod doesn't stop you from being able to move freely. Run at your opponent, and keep launching pods! Drop the bombs and blast the pod! GOT IT!?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. One more thing. If you get caught in your own pod blast, you'll take damage! DROP THE BOMB! BLAST THE POD!

Matthew and Burglar #2 dive. Matthew wins again with no trouble. Burglar #2 falls back.

Harry: Not bad for an amateur!

Another police member falls back.

Harry: We lost another cop! Take the next guy!

Matthew walks over to Burglar #3

Burglar #3: Huff huff. The police squad ain't nothing. Still, I did break a sweat.

Harry: He looks pretty tired! If you listen to my advice, you should be able to win! Try to jump. You can air dash twice with the robo you're using. You can charge. You'll be able to knock your opponent down with one hit. A robo can't move when it's down, because its systems need to reboot. Jump and charge. CRASH! Got it!?

Matthew: Got it!

Harry: You can only do a charge when you're on the ground. It won't work if you're in the air! JUMP AND CRASH!

Matthew and Burglar #3 dive. Matthew wins. Burglar #3 falls back. Then, the third and final police member falls back.

Harry: There goes another one. The police squad's not doing a thing! Hey,

last one! Before you take him on, go over to the parts generator and get yourself some new parts!

Matthew: Parts generator?

Harry: I'll explain later! Just stand in front of it and press the button! You'll get a new part, one you can use right away!

Matthew: Got it. I just go in front of that machine and press the button, right?

Harry: Right! There's one more guy left. You can do it!

Matthew does what Harry told him to do and picks up the Twin Flank Pod F. He then walks over to Burglar #4.

Burglar #4: What happened here? I turn my back for one second, and all my men get wiped out! I'm worn out, but we need that robo!

Harry: The last guy's exhausted. This should be as easy as cake! Still, you'd better listen to my advice! Change the direction of the robo cube when it launches. When the cube hits the ground, the number shows how long it needs to charge for the transformation. If you transform before your opponent, you get to attack first! Aim the robo cannon where you want to shoot! Got it!?

Matthew: Got it!

Harry: OK, last one. Got get 'im! Turn, tappity-zoom zoom, jumpity-jump, bang bang, boom boom, blam, crash!

Matthew and Burglar #4 dive. Matthew wins. Burglar #4 falls back.

Harry: OK! We got all of them. You're not half bad.

A few hours later. Lab researchers are examining the ground. Mira walks up to Harry and Matthew.

Mira: You OK, Harry?

Harry: Gah! When did you get here?

Mira: What, did you hit your head? Listen, the reason you got beaten is because you're not properly trained. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. You need to get out of the mercenary business. Start studying, get yourself a Class-A license, and join the police squad.

Harry: Oh, don't start on that again! I told you I wouldn't be caught dead in one of those tacky uniforms.

Mira: Look, I'll pay all of your exam fees. It won't cost you a dime. Come on, what do you say?

Harry: It's not about the money! I just don't like studying!

Roy then walks up to all three of the commanders.

Roy: Captain Mira! We've sent the criminals over to HQ. We ought to head back there ourselves. (quietly) Can't believe we needed help from those bounty hunters. (normally) I'll make sure that all police squad members

present at this travesty will hit the training room hard! Captain Mira. We should get back to HQ. I'll be waiting at the front gate.

Roy then leaves.

Mira: See ya, Harry. I'll be working late, so don't wait up for me. Get some sleep. And keep yourself warm when you go to bed. You don't want to catch a cold.

Mira then leaves.

Harry: She always treats me like I'm a kid.

Matthew: Was that your brother?

Harry: MY BROTHER!?! (quietly) She's my older sister though she sometimes acts like a guy.

Linda walks over to the two.

Linda: Harry, are you hurt?

Harry: Linda! Yeah, I'm OK. Never felt better!

Linda: By the way, Harry, who is this? I've never seen him before. Is he new?

Harry: Um.

Linda: Well, he's got what it takes to be a great commander someday. Still, he's got a long way to go.

Harry: Oh, I TOTALLY agree, Linda. You're so observant like that! It's incredible! (in his mind) A great commander. Sheesh.

Linda: Say, Harry. I've got an idea. How about letting him use our new robo, Ray 01? He adapted to it pretty quickly, and I'd like him to gather some data on his usage and control integration.

Harry: What, this guy? He's not really, you know, with us. He came by today looking for work. The chief doesn't wanna hire him, though.

Linda: Oh, really? I'll recommend that Ernest hire him myself, then.

Harry: I can't wait to see his face! So can we go ahead and take this Ray 01?

Linda: Sure, go ahead. Of course he's already registered it, so only he can use it right now.

Harry: Haha. Yeah, I know. (in his mind) Dang! If only I made eye contact with it first! (out loud) Well, if that's what you want, who am I to argue?

Linda: Great. That's just fine. By the way, what's your name?

Harry: Ooh, another great question! I completely forgot to ask!

Linda: Huh?

Harry: Oh, uh nothing. Come on, tell her your name!

Matthew: Matthew

Linda: Matthew, huh? I'm Linda. Nice to meet you. Don't worry, Matthew. I'll talk to the chief.

Harry: Ain't that great, Matthew? By the way, Linda, you wanna go grab some lunch?

Linda: Oh, I'm sorry. I've just got too much to do. The whole lab's a mess, thanks to those burglars. Besides, your work here is done. Don't you have to go back to the Steel Hearts office? I'll give Ernest a call and ask him about Matthew later. See you later, Harry. Matthew, take care of Ray 01.

Linda walks back into the lab.

Harry: Mmm, she knows I'm a busy guy. She's got a lot of class. That Linda's awesome. Mature women are something. I almost forgot! Matthew. I was going to tell you about the parts generator.

Matthew: You mean that machine? I've got one in my apartment.

Harry: WHAT?! (quietly) What's a parts generator doing in your apartment? You don't have a custom robo, and you don't know a thing about them.

Matthew: It belonged to my dad. I never knew what it was supposed to do. It just kinda sits there.

Harry: Oh yeah? Well, I guess I'll just have to take your word for it. Anyway, I was about to explain. A parts generator registers new part data into your robo cube. When you buy a robo, it only comes with the standard parts. You won't have access to a lot of parts if you don't collect enough battle experience. When a robo gathers battle experience, the internal computer records the battle information. The parts generator automatically reads the record and gives you the new part. Any new parts you get, you can use them in the next battle. Whatever parts you want to use, is up to you. You can customize as much as you like. That's it for the hard stuff. It's best to check the parts generator after every battle. Your opponent's not gonna wait for you while you make a quick run to the parts generator. And, obviously, you can't slip out during a battle. That's why it's best to check with the parts generator after every battle. Even if you forget to check after a battle, you can still get the part afterwards. However, if it's just waiting for you to pick it up, why not go get it as soon as possible? The more parts, the more you can customize your robo. It gives you a real advantage in battle. So make sure you check the parts generator after every battle. Also, customize screen before a battle. You can practice with your new part. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: You sure? Well, if you don't understand, check the glossary while you're walking around. Let's get back to the office.

Matthew and Harry begin to leave. As they're leaving, Harry stops.

Harry: Hey, Matthew, before we go, why don't you ask these lab guys for some info? They're robo researchers. They probably have plenty of stuff they can teach you. Gimme a holler when you wanna leave.

Matthew walks to Lab Tech #1

Lab Tech #1: You want to know about the lab? This is a government-funded robo

research and development lab. You've already met Linda, right? She's the director of our lab.

Lab Tech #1 goes back to work and Matthew walks to Lab Tech #2

Lab Tech #2: Most commanders become better by fighting, by mastering each of their robo's abilities. By fighting, robos customize their programming and develop the ability to operate new parts. That's why robo's don't come pre-installed with all the parts. The custom robo needs battle experience in order to alter its code and learn new parts. Parts generators and your robo's battle log and install any parts your robo is able to use. That's why you should check the parts generators every time you finish a battle. After all, you don't want to miss an opportunity to get a new part!

Lab Tech #2 goes back to work and Matthew talks to Lab Tech #3

Lab Tech #3: Thanks for helping us. We're good at science, but not at fighting. By the way, did you know that people who are trained to pilot robos are called "commanders"? You did? Well, I guess you just know it all, don't you!?

Lab Tech #3 goes back to work and Matthew talks to Lab Tech #4

Lab Tech #4: Wait, so you're the one who's taking Ray 01 from us? And you already did an eye scan? Whoever makes eye contact with the robo first is its registered commander, the only one it obeys. That's what an eye-scan registration is all about.

Lab Tech #4 goes back to work and Matthew talks to Lab Tech #5

Lab Tech #5: I need to clean this place up. There are parts all over, and I've got no clue where to start. Custom robos are composed of five parts: a body, a gun, a bomb, a pod, and a leg unit. Commanders have the freedom to customize any of these five parts in any way they want. The custom part comes from planning your robo design based on your battle situation.

Lab Tech #5 goes back to work and Matthew talks to Lab Tech #6

Lab Tech #6: Those criminals nearly got away with Ray 01. Remember, even though it's a robo, once you dive into it, it's an extension of your own body. During a dive, a commander's thoughts merge with the robo's CPU, giving maximum control! When a robo receives damage, the commander experiences a kind of mental trauma. It's a sideeffect of the dive.

Lab Tech #6 goes back to work and Matthew talks to Lab Tech #7

Lab Tech #7: (quietly) Robo usually remain in their cube form, but when they enter the holosseum, they transform into full-fledged robo. A holosseum is a virtual battlefield generated by a commander's mind and memories. Sometimes, your opponents will be the ones whose memories are generating the holosseum. However, some commanders are simply unable to generate a holosseum. It's not that they're weaker or that they're worse commanders. It's an ability you either have or you don't. Just like now some people are tall and some people are short. There's not much you can do to change genetics. Commanders who can't generate a holosseum just use ones that are available on the market. They use a basic holosseum that comes pre-installed into the robos. There's even a machine called a holosseum deck that can create a holosseum. I'm tired from talking so much. I don't want to clean up this mess.

Lab Tech #7 goes back to work and Matthew talks to the final Lab Tech, Lab Tech #8

Lab Tech #8: Mmm? What? I'm busy, can't you see? What? You want info? Yeah, I've got some info for you. Here, let me let you in on a little secret. You see that parts generator? Well, there are others just like it all over the place. While you're moving around, you can see strategy tips and the glossary. Different guns have different ranges, from short to medium to long. Everyone here wears glasses except for Linda. That's all I know. Hope it helps.

Lab Tech #8 goes back to work and Matthew walks over to Harry.

Harry: All right, you all set?

Matthew: Yeah, let's go.

Harry: OK, let's roll!

Matthew leads Harry back to the office. They both go up to Ernest's desk.

Harry: Really, Chief! It's just like I said, this guy's got real talent!

Ernest: Listen, I don't know what just happened out there, but Linda just called and told me to hire him. Just so you know, we hired you for that robo of Linda's, and not because you're some hotshot!

Harry: All right! So it's settled then! Go home and get some rest. See ya tomorrow.

Ernest: BUT THE PAY STINKS!

Matthew and Harry each lower their heads in disbelief.

Harry: Well at least you got the job. You can go home for today. Just be ready to work hard tomorrow.

Matthew: Thanks! I'm tired, so I'm gonna head home. See you tomorrow!

Harry: Yeah, not if I see you first! See ya.

Matthew goes home and straight to bed. Lucy comes in to wake Matthew up.

Lucy: Matthew! Wake up!

Matthew does so.

Lucy: You don't want to get fired on your first day at work, do you!? No!!! Now, wake up and go to work!

Lucy walks out and Matthew gets dressed then he goes to his parts generator. He receives the 3-Way gun. He leaves too. He goes out to the lawn where Lucy is stretching waking up.

Lucy: It's time for you to wake up! Don't you start work today? Good luck with that.

Matthew: I'll do my best.

Lucy: Now, I'm still confused about all this. What does a bounty hunter do? Is that like a mercenary?

Matthew: It's hard to explain, but basically, we hunt down criminals whose crimes involves robo.

Lucy: But isn't that what the police squad does?

Matthew: We take requests that the police squad considers too small to bother with.

Lucy: Sounds almost like those private eyes from the stories. Are you like detectives or something? Well, I guess all that really matters is that you're a commander, just like your father wanted. So work hard, all right?

Matthew: Uh-huh. See ya!

Matthew leaves and runs to the office. Harry is sitting on the couch again and Matthew talks to Ernest.

Ernest: Ah, you're here. You probably noticed, but this is a small office we've got here. We don't have the manpower to spend long training you, so I need you to get up to speed quickly.

Harry walks up to the desk.

Harry: Say, Ernest. Where's Marcia? I mean, the new guy gets here right on time, and she's nowhere to be seen! What's up with that?

Ernest: Marcia's on duty right now. She's not a slacker like you, Harry.

Harry: Huh? On duty? This early!?

Ernest: I called you this morning, but you didn't answer.

Harry: Hm, really? That's odd. (in his mind) He ought to know I never answer my cell phone before noon!

Ernest: Well, that's why I sent Marcia.

Matthew: Who's Marcia?

Harry: Another of our happy helpers here.

Ernest: She's the local ace of Steel Hearts. A hard worker and a great commander.

Harry: Just remember, she's not QUITE as good as me.

Ernest: Yeah, right. That's a good one. Anyway, like I was saying before, you have to be ready for action at a moment's notice. Harry, I want you to take Matthew to the gym. Have him do some warm-ups.

Harry: A little training, huh? Got you. Let's go, Matthew.

Ernest: And keep your cell phone on.

Harry: Yeah, yeah. I hear ya.

Harry leads Matthew out the door and to the Training Gym. The Training Gym has a front desk, some stairs up to a platform, another set of stairs leading to 5 holosseum decks.

Harry: This is the training gym. Ernest got us a group membership here, so we can train whenever we want. Here, let's do a round. You versus me.

Harry leads Matthew to the first holosseum deck.

Harry: This table here's called a holosseum deck. It's a machine that projects a holosseum. Some commanders, like me, can create their own holosseum. Some can't. Just the way it is. Commanders who can't just use a holosseum built into their custom robos or they use holosseum decks like these to make one for them. OK. Before we start, I've got some pointers for you. You've probably noticed this, but you can change the direction the pod fires in. Tilt it where you want to aim and shoot. If you don't tilt it, it'll automatically fire in the direction of your opponent. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK, then let's start. Don't worry. I'll go easy on ya.

They both dive. Matthew wins.

Harry: Oog. Well done. Just remember, I was going easy on ya. Seriously. So don't go thinking that you're better'n me! I'm gonna rest for a bit, so why don't you just go up against the computers for a bit? They're programmed with some basic strategy tips for amateurs, so listen carefully. Oh, and don't forget to check the parts generator!

Harry walks away. Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Standard Bomb S. Matthew walks back to the computers and fights the 1st of 4 computers.

Computer #1: You become vulnerable after you fire a gun. Use a slide shot to cover this. If you shoot the gun while you're moving, you can fire your gun while sliding in that direction. If you use this skill properly, you can shoot while moving behind a wall for cover. Did you understand?

Matthew: I got it.

Computer #1: Good. Let's start the battle.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer #1: Expertly done. I look forward to challenging your skills again soon.

Matthew goes to the Parts Generator and receives the Speed Pod D. Matthew then walks to the 2nd computer.

Computer #2: Once a robo stops moving, it takes time for it to reach full movement speed again. As a result, it can be dangerous to stop moving. Did you understand that?

Matthew: Got it.

Computer #2: Good. Let's start the battle.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer #2: Expertly done. I look forward to challenging your skills again soon.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Criminal. Matthew then walks to the 3rd computer.

Computer #3: Allow me to explain the Trick Flyer model. My robo utilizes this body type. The Trick Flyer has excellent aerial abilities. However, it moves slowly on the ground. It doesn't jump far, but it can do a quick air dash up to 3 times. When using a Trick Flyer, you should approach your opponent with an air dash and then attack. Did you understand that?

Matthew: Got it.

Computer #3: Good. Let's start the battle.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer #3: Expertly done. I look forward to challenging your skills again soon.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Gemini Bomb P. Matthew then walks to the final computer.

Computer #4: You should take caution to prevent your robo from being knocked down. If you receive a powerful attack or repeated attacks in a short period of time, your robo will overload. When it overloads, it is knocked down and vulnerable to attacks for a short time. However, you will be invincible for a short time after you get up, while your robo's systems reboot. If you move quickly, your robo will rise rapidly. Did you understand that?

Matthew: Got it.

Computer #4: Good. Let's start the battle.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer #4: Expertly done. I look forward to challenging your skills again soon.

Matthew's phone rings.

Matthew: Ah, the phone. Who could it be?

Matthew picks it up.

Ernest: Matthew, where's Harry?! That idiot turned off his cell phone again! Tell Harry to call me back right now! Got it!?!

Matthew hangs up the phone. Then he goes to the parts generator and receives the Cockroach Pod H. Then he walks to the desk where Harry is. Harry is talking to the clerk Sophie.

Harry: Come on, what's your phone number?

Sophie: Ha! You want MY phone number?

Harry: Aw, quit fooling around. How about a date? Come on! Hm? What is it, Matthew? Ernest wants me to call him back? Aw, man. I was totally gonna get her number.

Harry calls Ernest.

Harry: Yeah. Harry here. What's up? I'm kinda busy right now.

Ernest: God damn it! *****!

Harry: Do you have to use language like that, Chief? Yeah, yeah I got it.

Harry hangs up the phone.

Harry: Hey, Matthew, we've got work. See ya, Sophie. Let's go on a date next time.

Sophie: Aw, you gotta go? What a shame. Good luck with work, Harry.

Harry: WOO-HOO! You better believe I'll be back! OK, Matthew, let's go. I'm all pumped up!

Harry leads Matthew out the door.

Harry: We're heading for Hub Park.

Matthew: Hub Park?

Harry: Yeah, you know the park with all the roads circling around it? The chief said something about a couple of young punks duking it out with their robo. Guess some girl called us up, asked us to make 'em stop.

Matthew: Hmmm. Sounds messy. We should get moving.

Harry: You're right. Come on, let's go.

Matthew runs after Harry toward Hub Park. They show up there to see 2 people fighting and a girl watching.

Harry: There they are. Wonder what they're fighting about.

Matthew goes up to the girl.

Mary: I'm the one who called you. These silly boys are fighting over me, because I'm so cute! Well, I mean, I guess I DID tell them I'd go out with them. On the same day and time. But I didn't know which one to cancel, so I thought I'd just come out and see what happened. And while I was waiting, they saw each other, and they started fighting over me.

Harry: (In his head) Well, what did you expect?

Mary: So anyway, I'm, like, freaking out here. I called the police, but they said they didn't have enough men.

Harry: (In his head) I think you've got more than enough men already.

Mary: But I'm not worried at all now that you're here! And so I'm gonna go home. OK? I'll leave the rest up to you.

Mary walks away.

Harry: Hey! She left! But what about her dates? They're so mad at one another that they haven't even noticed that she dumped 'em. Oh, well. Let's face them one-on-one, try to chill 'em out a little. Matthew pick a guy. I'll handle the other.

Matthew picks the guy on the left.

Anthony: Oh, and I suppose YOU'VE got a date with her, too!? OK, I'll straighten you out!

Harry: Now, I'm gonna get kinda specific here on combat techniques. The longer you hold up, the higher you jump. Tap up to do a short jump. You should try it out. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Just do whatever you can to beat him.

All 4 dive. Matthew wins easily. Harry won too.

Harry: Good grief. Let's get out of here.

Anthony and Thomas get up getting ready to attack them.

Marcia: HARRY! BEHIND YOU!!

Anthony and Thomas: You'll pay for this!

Marcia walks up to Matthew and Harry.

Harry: Thanks, Marcia. You saved me.

Marcia: Don't mention it. Oh, you must be Matthew. Our new partner, right? I'm Marcia.

Matthew: Yes! That's me! I just started. Today's my first day.

Marcia: Oh, um, well I have a Class-B license, Matthew. Say, Matthew, what's your license class?

Matthew: License? What's that?

Marcia: What? You, you don't have a license?

Harry: He's an amateur. Of course, he ain't got no license.

Marcia: But, if you're a bounty hunter and you don't have a license, you can get arrested!

Harry: OH! That's right. I forgot.

Marcia: Harry. How could you forget something like that? You know, that's why nobody's got any respect for the Steel Hearts. Forgetting stuff like that!

Harry: Aw, gimme a break. It just slipped my mind! Well, OK. We've got a problem. Let's head back to the office.

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia back to the office.

Ernest: A license? Oh yeah, that. I guess that's not such a bad idea. But licenses cost money. Money we don't have.

Marcia: Yeah, but no matter how good you are, if you don't have a license,

they'll arrest you!

Ernest: Well, that's your own business. It's not my fault if you guys get taken in by the cops.

Marcia: I could've sworn that the law places full responsibility on the employer of a robo commander.

Ernest loudly bangs on his desk.

Ernest: WHAT?! SERIOUSLY!? Mmm. All right, then. Harry, I want you to take him to get his license tomorrow.

Harry: What, me again? Well, OK. He shouldn't have a problem getting a Class-D license.

Matthew: Class D? What's that?

Ernest: Right, well. Let me explain it. If you work as a bounty hunter, you need a license. The license ranks go from D to A, but if you don't have one, you can't work.

Harry: Plus, if you wanna join the police squad, they say you need a Class-A license. But seeing how they did yesterday, it didn't seem like Class-A fighting to me.

Ernest: Don't say that. Taking a test and fighting an actual battle are totally different. Anyway, you take that Class-D license test tomorrow. If you don't pass, Linda's reward is out the window. That's not to mention that I'll get arrested! Listen, Harry! You've absolutely got to make sure he passes!!

Harry: That's impossible! What do you want a simple assistant like me to do?!

Ernest: Stop complaining! I don't want you to come back until Matthew passes.

Marcia: Which reminds me. You're a Class-D, too. Why don't you take the Class-C while you're there?

Harry: No way! Who do you think you're kidding?! As long as I'm in this business, a Class-D license is plenty! Hey, isn't it about you took the Class-A test? How many times have you tried? Class-A expenses are too high. And with my salary, I can't afford it.

There is a long awkward silence.

Ernest: (quietly) This isn't good. (normally) Hm. Everyone's worked hard today. You can all go home.

Ernest's chair moves back into that hole he came from.

Marcia: He left.

Harry: Ha ha ha. You should go home, too. Just come straight to the test hall. The place is called the Custom Robo Department of Licensing.

Marcia: Matthew, don't let anyone make fun of you for being a Steel Heart.

Matthew: Yeah, I won't. By the way, any tips on how to pass the test tomorrow?

Marcia: As long as you don't oversleep, you'll be fine. Good-bye.

Matthew: (in his head) She doesn't beat around the bush.

Harry: Matthew. Make sure you come straight to the testing hall tomorrow. It's right next to the training gym. OK, we're done for today. What're you doing after this?

Matthew: I'm tired, so I'm going home. See you tomorrow.

Harry: Yeah, don't be late tomorrow. See ya.

Matthew goes home.

Lucy: Matthew! Wake up! Don't you have that lying test today? You better get up if you don't want to be late!

Matthew: (quietly) Lying? I wasn't lying. It tastes good. No really.

Lucy: (quietly) What's he babbling about? (normally) Wake up! Wake up and take that test!

Matthew gets up and gets dressed. He then goes to the parts generator to get the Cockroach Pod H, the Reflection Pod, and the Long Thrust Legs. Then, he goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Good morning. Good luck with the test.

Matthew: Yeah, thanks.

Lucy: So what do you have to lie about?

Matthew: No, it's not a lying test! It's a LICENSE test! How many times do I have to tell you!?

Lucy: I don't get all this robo mumbo jumbo.

Matthew: In order to work as a bounty hunter, you need a Class-D license. I'm gonna take that test.

Lucy: It's all crazy talk to me, but it sounds like if you don't pass this test, you don't keep your job?

Matthew: Yeah that's right.

Lucy: Well, that's terrible! Hurry up and get going!

Matthew: Yeah, uh, where was it again? I think it was some place called the Department of Licensing Test Hall.

Lucy: Oh. Well, it's pretty easy to get there. Just go to the right when you leave.

Matthew leaves and enters the Test Hall building. He sees Harry talking to Trish, a red-haired girl.

Harry: So, your name's Trish? That's a cute name. Come on, how about it? Tell me your phone number. If something were to, you know, happen to you, I could rescue you. I'd even give you a discount!

Trish: A discount? Is that supposed to impress me? Still, you've got a kind of naive charm.

Harry: See? I'm charming! Here, write it down here.

Harry hands Trish a piece of paper.

Harry: Oh! Sorry, I didn't know you were there, Matthew.

Harry walks up to Matthew.

Harry: I got you registered. Leave the rest to me, and go take your test. All you gotta is this. To put it simply, stand in front of the exam machine, and insert your exam card and robo cube into it. Here's your exam card. Don't lose it.

Harry hands Matthew the exam card. He walks back to Trish.

Harry: So where were we? Oh yeah, write your number down there.

Matthew walks over to the exam machine. He puts his exam card and robo cube into the machine.

Computer: Will you start the test?

Matthew: OK, I'm ready for it. I gotta do my best.

Computer: Welcome. Your test begins immediately. This is the test for a Class-D license. The first test is knowledge. Please select the right answer. What is the name of a person who controls a custom robo? Captain, commander, or commandeer?

Matthew pushed commander. He got it correct.

Computer: What is it called when a person and his robo become one? A dive, a drive, or a live?

Matthew pushed dive. He got it correct.

Computer: What is it called when your robo is in its easy-to-carry form? Robo Dude, Robo Tube, or Robo Cube?

Matthew pushed Robo Cube. He got it correct.

Computer: What is the custom robo research center also known as? Labradory, Lavatory, or Laboratory?

Matthew pushed laboratory. He got it correct.

Computer: Which license class do you need in order to join the police squad? Class A, Class B, or Class C?

Matthew pushed Class A. He got it correct.

Computer: What is the name of the arena where custom robo fight? Colosseum,

Holossus, or Holosseum?

Matthew pushed holosseum. He got it correct.

Computer: What is the name of the machine that transfers custom robo data? Parts Giver, Parts Burninator, or Parts Generator?

Matthew pushed parts generator. He got it correct.

Computer: Which of the following is an actual custom robo part? Pod, Pork, or Bot?

Matthew pushed pod. He got it correct.

Computer: The proper name of this testing hall is called the Custom Robo... Compartment of Licensing, Department of Licensing, or Department of Fish and Game?

Matthew pushed department of licensing. He got it correct.

Computer: What question number are we on? 8th Question, 9th Question, or 10th Question?

Matthew pushed 10th Question. He got it correct.

Computer: End of questions. Knowledge test complete. Please wait for your results.

The computer makes various strange sounds. Then it makes a loud buzz.

Computer: Thank you for waiting. Your score has been calculated. 100 points. Congratulations. You passed the knowledge test. The next test is skill. You will have to fight a custom robo under my control. But before that, I will give you some advice. Never just run into an open area without a reason. You always want to be hiding behind walls, dodging shots, and looking for ways to attack. Did you get all that?

Matthew: Got it.

Computer: Then, let's begin. Please take it easy on me.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer: Congratulations. You have passed the Class-D license test.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and picks up the Feather Legs. Then, he goes back over to Harry.

Harry: Cool, so I'll give you a call tonight? Ah, Matthew. You done? So, did you pass?

Matthew: Of course!

Harry: Yeah, I figured you wouldn't have any trouble on such a basic test. Let's head back to the office.

Matthew starts to lead Harry out the door.

Harry: I'll see ya later, Trish.

Matthew leads Harry back to the office.

Ernest: How did it go? Don't tell me you failed.

Harry: It's OK. I was with him. He passed. Thanks to my training.

Ernest: Whew. Now, Matthew is a true bounty hunter. Harry, take Matthew home.

Harry: WHAT? WHY DO I GOTTA BE THIS GUY'S BABY-SITTER? I've got some business to take care of. I wanna leave right now.

Ernest: If you two are going to be partners, you ought to spend some quality time together. Chat on the way home. Get to know one another.

Harry: Partners? Why can't Marcia be his partner?

Ernest: Marcia can handle herself.

Ernest loudly bangs on his desk.

Ernest: And you're the one who told me to hire Matthew in the first place!

Harry: Why!? Why does everything bad always happen to me!?

Matthew leads Harry to his house.

Harry: Hmm, your dad, huh? And that's why you wanna work? Well, everyone's got a reason. Anyway, as of today, you're a full-fledged bounty hunter. Do your best. See ya.

Matthew goes inside his house.

Harry: OK! Gotta get back home and call Trish!

Harry runs off with the piece of paper with Trish's phone number flying out of his pocket. Matthew then gets woken up by Lucy.

Lucy: Matthew! Get up! Hurry up and go to work!

Lucy walks off and Matthew gets dressed. Then he goes outside.

Carmen: WHAT DO YOU CALL THIS!?

Walt: I, I DON'T KNOW!

Wendy: WAA! WAA!

Matthew: They're being awfully loud this morning.

He leaves and enters the office. Matthew walks up to Ernest.

Matthew: Good morning.

He turns to look at a dejected Harry.

Ernest: I know you just got here, Matthew, but I need you to go back to your apartment.

Matthew: Huh?

Ernest: There's a married couple fighting over at your apartment, and they're using robo. We got a call from the landlady. She said it's out of her control. She requested you specifically.

Matthew: I thought so.

Ernest: Hey, Harry. Go with him.

Harry: Let 'em fight. It sounds like a crummy job. Matthew can handle it by himself. I'm totally bummed today. I had my chance yesterday, and I blew it.

Ernest: STOP COMPLAINING AND GO!

Harry: Yeah, yeah. OK, I'll go.

Harry stands up.

Harry: (quietly) Oh, Trish. Where did I put that note with your number on it?

Harry goes out the door followed by Matthew. Halfway there, Harry stops.

Harry: (quietly) Sigh.

Matthew: Harry?

Harry: (quietly) Sigh.

Harry starts walking again. They enter the land outside the apartments and see Lucy there.

Lucy: Ah, thanks for coming back, Matthew!

Matthew: When did you call Ernest?

Lucy: Right after you left. It's so awful! Oh? Who's this?

Matthew: Mm? Oh, him. That's Harry.

Lucy: Oh, really? Is he a Stolen Horse, too? Oh, he's quite a hunk of man. Get me his number, will you?

Harry: Heh heh heh. That's sweet of you.

Matthew: Can we talk about the job here? What's going on?

Lucy: Oh, right right. Walt and his wife are fighting, and it's gotten crazy. They're using robo to fight, and their children are crying. I tried to stop them, but I don't know a thing about robo. You know that! I didn't have a clue how to stop them. And that's why I called Stolen Horse. I also wanted to see what you're like when you're at work.

Matthew: Thanks?

Harry: Matthew. Let's cut the chat and go stop 'em.

Matthew: Yeah, you're right.

Lucy: Good luck!

Matthew leads Harry into the apartment. Walt and Carmen are fighting in the holosseum.

Harry: Man. This is bad. Let's wrap this up quickly. I'll stop the husband. You go handle his wife. I've turned the safety switch on so that nobody gets hurt.

Matthew: What's a safety switch?

Harry: It's a switch that decreases your power. It's to prevent you from hurting your opponent. The switch is on the robo cube. If you turn the safety switch on and dive, the safety mechanism will automatically kick in. It won't look any different though.

Matthew: OK. I'll turn on the safety switch.

Harry: Then, let's do it. Let's get this over quick.

Matthew goes up to Carmen.

Carmen: ARGH! WHAT?! YOU'RE TAKING HIS SIDE?! Don't mess with me. I'll beat you to a pulp with my Metal Ape. It's a Metal Grappler!

Matthew: Metal Grappler?

Carmen: The Metal Grappler has extremely high defense. It's hard for it to get knocked down, but since it moves slow, I have a hard time dodging attacks. I can only do one air dash. I usually focus on attacking, rather than worrying about a little damage. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Carmen: HUH!? Why am I explaining all of this to you!?!

They dive and Matthew wins.

Carmen: Ow. Argh! That burns me up!

Harry: That was a waste of time. Let's head back to the office.

Walt: Ow.

Carmen: Are you hurt, dear? Who hurt you?

Walt: That crudely dressed punk over there.

Harry: What're you talking about? You're hurt 'cuz you got into a stupid fight with your wife. I only calmed you down.

Carmen: How dare you hurt my hubby!? Get up, dear! We'll defeat these evil villains and show them that our love is strong!

Walt: That's right! I love you!

Carmen: I love you, too!

Harry: Whoa there, wait a minute! Why does this have to happen to me? I'm just some guy! Hey, Matthew, come here! We ain't gonna let them beat me up! You've never had a 2-on-2 battle before, have you? It's when two people team

up on two others.

Carmen: WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!

Harry: Sorry! Just wait a minute, OK?! Hey, Matthew. Listen carefully. I'll explain 2-on-2 battles to you. The basic controls are the same as one-on-one battles, but there's one difference. The arrow on top of your robo's head locks on to one of your opponents. If you want to change your target, just turn the arrow. Remember, turn the arrow to change your target. Got it?! Oh, and your robo will still launch from the red robo cannon. I'll shoot from the blue robo cannon. Our opponents launch from the green and yellow robo cannons. The colors of the robo cannons indicate the colors of the robo battling in the match. For example, you're red and I'm blue, and our opponents are green and yellow. Every time you move the arrow, the colored arrow changes to either green or yellow.

Matthew: But not blue?

Harry: I told you, I'm blue! What good does it do you to shoot your own partner? Watch out, though. You can't fire your gun while you're changing targets.

Walt: Are you done yet?

Harry: Sorry! There's just a little bit more! Your opponents have colored arrows over their heads, too. When those arrows turn red, that means they're locked on to you. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Now listen. Look carefully at the colored arrows and see who's locked on to whom. Keep that in mind while you fight. OK?!

All 4 dive. Matthew and Harry win. All 4 are panting.

Harry: Ugh! Do you two have to be so, so, cute? Gimme a break! We've got our safety switches on, and they're going for real. This ain't a joke.

Marcia walks in.

Marcia: Are you two OK?

Matthew and Harry turn around.

Harry: Huh? What're you doing here, Marcia?

Marcia: The chief was worried about you. He said you weren't your normal self today.

Harry: Great, great. Well, you've got perfect timing. It's all over.

Marcia: I see. But how did things turn so ugly so quickly?

Harry: That's what I'd like to know! Man! What a mess!

Carmen: I was washing my husband's clothes this morning, and I found a note in his coat pocket. There was a phone number on it. I didn't know what it was, so I called it, and a young lady answered. I was certain that my husband was cheating on me.

Walt: But, honey, I told you I just found that note out front this morning!

Carmen: I believe you. You'd never do anything like that. I'm sorry. I just lost my temper. I'm sure it was only a prank.

Walt: Really. Who would've planted that thing out where you'd find it like that?

Harry: Prank or no prank, I hope you're sorry! We're bruised up 'cuz of your stupid fight!

Marcia: Harry, please stop. There are children here, and you're scaring them.

Carmen: You're right. I'm really sorry.

Marcia: Um, if it's all right, can I see that note you found?

Carmen hands Marcia the piece of paper.

Carmen: Here. We found it in front of our doorstep.

Marcia: Thank you very much. It looks like it was written by a girl. She has cute handwriting.

Harry: CUTE?! LET ME SEE! WA HA HA! I'll take that as evidence! Gimme that, Marcia!

Harry grabs the note.

Marcia: Harry?

Harry: It's nothing. Can't let a helpless girl carry around a heavy load, you know.

Marcia: It's just a piece of paper.

Harry: It's great everything worked out. Don't they look good together? And they lived happily ever after!

Marcia: Harry, are you all right?

Harry: Huh? What do you mean?

Marcia: Just a second ago, you were furious, but now

Harry: Furious? Who? Me? I'm made of love! Hey, Matthew. You need to lighten up! Married couples have their reasons for things. You gotta give 'em slack! Got it?

Marcia walks over the two children, Will and Wendy.

Marcia: Were you scared? Your parents are fine now. Everything's all right.

Harry: (quietly) Listen to me when I'm talking.

Marcia: Come on. Let's go play over there.

Harry: (quietly) Marcia.

Marcia: So you both want to be commanders when you grow up. How about a custom robo game?

Harry: Sheesh. Hm? What's wrong? Surprised to see Marcia being nice to the kids?

Matthew: Yeah, a little.

Harry: Brothers and sisters probably remind her of her own childhood. You see, Marcia's parents passed away a few years ago. It was just her and her big brother. Her brother was an elite member of the police squad. Marcia got along with her real well. Her brother took good care of her. But one day, Marcia's brother up and quit the police squad without a word. And then he just disappeared! No one's seen him since.

Matthew: Then, not only did Marcia lose her parents, but she also lost her older brother? And now she's alone?

Harry: Yeah, that sort of sums it up.

Matthew: I'm so sorry.

Harry: I feel the same way. For a long time, Marcia's been gifted with a strange power. Because of that, she's always been the quiet type. She used to be a lot happier. And now she's lost her parents and her big brother. Shut out from the world, and unable to reach out to anyone. She's gotten a lot better, though. The reason Marcia wants a Class-A license is 'cuz she wants to join the police squad. You can't join the police squad unless you got a Class-A license. She probably wants to track down some clues on her brother herself.

They cut to a scene with Matthew, Harry, and Marcia at the spot where Lucy was.

Harry: OK, let's head back to the office. (in his head) Awesome! I got Trish's number back!

Marcia's phone rings.

Marcia: Hold on. It's the phone. Hello, Chief? Yes, Harry and Matthew took care of it.

Ernest: Hurry up and head over to Bogey's Café! Marv's there!

Marcia: The one with the reward on his head?

Ernest: If we catch that Marv, we should get a big reward. If the police squad gets there before you, the reward's gone! Hurry up!

Marcia: Yes, I'll tell them. Can you hold on a second? Harry, Matthew. The chief wants us to go to Bogey's. Seems like Marv's there.

Harry: That guy with the reward on his head is at Bogey's, huh?

Matthew: What kind of a place is Bogey's?

Harry: Just some café. Guess Ernest likes the atmosphere or something. Hm? Just where did Ernest get that kind of information?

Marcia: Hold on, I'll ask. Hello, Chief? Where did you get that info?

Ernest: I saw him with my own two eyes!

Marcia: Huh? Um, if you're at the scene, then why don't you catch him yourself?

Ernest: SHUT UP! I'd had a lot of coffee! My eyeballs were twitching! And I was busy! BY THE TIME I REALIZED IT WAS HIM, IT WAS TOO LATE!

Marcia: I, I see. Harry, the chief said that he saw him at Bogey's with his own two eyes.

Harry: Really. And so what was Ernest doing hanging around the café while we were working our butts off here?

Marcia: I'll ask. Chief, what are you doing at Bogey's? Aren't you supposed to be working?

Ernest: I LIKE MY COFFEE! NOW, GET OVER THERE!

Marcia: He hung up. And he yelled at me. For no reason at all.

Harry: We've been working hard all day, and that good-for-nothing's been hanging out at the café!?!

Marcia: Let's go to Bogey's, and fast. We have to catch that Marv.

Harry: OK! Once we catch Marv and nab the reward, I'll force Ernest to give us a bonus.

Harry leads Matthew and Marcia to Bogey's Café. They walk in to see Evil and his 2 lackeys.

Evil: Huh? Harry and Marcia. What's going on?

Harry: Aw, great. Not HIM.

Evil: Harry, Harry, Harry. Still have the manners of a kindergartner, eh? I assume you're here for the notorious outlaw, Marv. I'm sorry, but you're too late. Dark Blue, or more specifically, I, Evil, have already captured the rogue.

Harry: Darn it! Dark Blue got the reward.

Marcia: But how did you know that Marv was here?

Evil: So, you want to learn my secrets? You hope to benefit from my wisdom, perhaps? OK, I'll tell you. Bogey, here, officially requested the services of my little mercenary crew. Dark Blue to the rescue!

Marcia: What? Bogey, why? But you told us you always go to Steel Hearts when you've got trouble.

Bogey: Well, your boss has been here all day, sucking down coffee and

Marcia: And what?

Bogey: And he was sitting in a dark corner all by himself, writing poetry and occasionally weeping. How can I rely on you guys when your boss is

such a space cadet?

Marcia: Poetry? (quietly) I'd be worried, too.

Evil: Ha, ha, ha! Young Ernest is a poet, and you didn't know it!? Oh, this is too delicious! Mm? Well now, aren't you the kid who came in looking for a job with Dark Blue not too long ago? Of course, that's right. Your name's Matthew.

Harry: You, you applied at Dark Blue, too?

Matthew: Yeah, but I didn't make it.

Harry: Well, of course not. You were a total amateur. Hiring you would be a totally idiotic risk.

Evil: Oh, what is with your ceaseless blathering? Harry, are you saying you know Matthew, too? WAIT A. Don't tell me. Did Steel Hearts hire this amateur? Oh, THAT is rich! Ha! Ha, ha, ha!

Harry: Shut yer face! Matthew has tons of talent, and someday, he'll be an excellent commander! (quietly) At least, that's what Linda says.

Evil: Really? I don't know what gives you that impression, but I look forward to seeing if you're right. Ah! I've got an idea! I got a nice reward for catching that Marv chump. How about I get you a nice latte or something? Oh, wait a minute. I forgot! When you Steel Hearts drink coffee, you start to wax poetic! I'm no art critic, but I know what I don't like, and I don't like poems! Not by any two-bit bounty hunters!

Harry: Oh, yeah? Well, I've got a few "versus" for you right here!

Evil: Oh, very witty. Harry. Have you ever considered a change of career? Perhaps as a clown? Enough chitchat. We're leaving now. Matthew, if you do turn out to be a worthy commander, we'll make you an offer.

Evil leads his two lackeys out the door.

Harry: Man, I hate that guy!

Marcia: Harry, let's go back to the office. We need to report this to the chief.

Harry: Yeah, you're right. Great. We get to report back to our stupid chief that we lost a reward because of our stupid chief!

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia back to the office. We see Ernest bang loudly on the desk again.

Ernest: WHAT?! So let me get this straight. Not only do you NOT catch Marv, but you let Dark Blue nab the ransom!? You know, that's why everyone keeps making fun of us! (quietly) If we'd caught Marv, we'd have gotten a HUGE reward. (normally) SO WHAT IN THE WORLD TOOK YOU SO

Harry: (interrupting) Heard any good poems lately?

Ernest: WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

Marcia: Bogey called in Dark Blue. Bogey said he didn't want to hire someone who'd rather write poems than catch felons.

Ernest: WHAT!?

There is a very long awkward silence.

Ernest: Uh-oh. AH, ERR. Well, these things happen. Good work, everyone. Let's call it quits for today. Dismissed!

Ernest's chair goes back through that door again.

Marcia: He got away again.

Harry: Let's go home. (in his head) Gotta call Trish. Gotta call Trish! (normally) Matthew, what're you doing after this?

Matthew: I'm going home.

Harry: OK. See ya tomorrow.

Matthew is at home and gets woken up by his phone.

Matthew: Hm? Who could be calling me this early in the morning?

Matthew wakes up and answers the phone.

Harry: Hey, Matthew. It's me, Harry. You awake?

Matthew: Uh, Harry. Yeah, morning. I'm up. What's going on?

Harry: Show time, partner. Seems like there's a robo fight at the Daimon Chinese restaurant. Ernest wants us up there ASAP.

Matthew: There? You mean, the office?

Harry: Nah, he wants us to go straight to Daimon. That thing at Bogey's yesterday has been bugging him, so he said he'd meet up with us there.

Matthew: OK, got it. Daimon, right?

Harry: Coolio. I'll see you there.

Matthew hangs up the phone and gets dressed. Then, he goes to the parts generator and receives the Metal Ape, the Vertical Gun, and the Spider Pod. He then goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: GAH! YOU SCARED ME! What happened!? You woke up on your own!?

Matthew: No, no. Harry called me. I've got work to do.

Lucy: Oh. And I was so proud of you for having woken yourself up for once. But you didn't. Oh well.

Matthew: Uh, yeah. Right. Look, I have to go. I have to get to the Daimon Chinese restaurant.

Lucy: Oh, Daimon?! That place is the best! The owner's a great chef. His name is Dendai Don. Tell him I sent you! He can make anything! Ramen, gyoza, fried rice, sour pork, egg and mayonnaise pizza. Oh, it sounds delicious! I'm making myself hungry.

Matthew: So, where's Daimon?

Lucy: You don't know?! Just go north and a little east.

Matthew leaves. He arrives to see Harry, Marcia, and Ernest all around a dead body.

Harry: You're late. Things have gotten pretty bad here.

Matthew walks over to Marcia.

Marcia: It was already too late when we arrived.

Matthew walks over to Ernest.

Ernest: Ah, Matthew, you're here. We were too late, it seems. Poor guy. He was dead before we arrived. Looks like mental shock must've killed him. You can take real, physical damage in a robo battle. But it takes a tremendous amount of stress to actually kill someone! I go to all this trouble of coming here in person, and this is what I get?

Mira and Roy walk in.

Mira: Harry? What are you doing here?

Harry: We got a call, but it came too late. Whatever happened, it was over before we got here.

Roy: Bounty hunters. Bah. We've got it from here, so why don't you all beat it?

Harry: Say what?

Roy: We've got a job to do, and you bounty hunters aren't part of it.

Harry: Oh, is that so? Sure, you show up for these cases, but for the small ones, you don't even bother!

Roy: That's easy for you to say. You bounty hunters are free to pick your missions, but we police have far more responsibility.

Harry: Where's the law when regular, average folks need it, huh? Can't be bothered? Is that it? You're not looking after the PEOPLE WHO NEED YOU!

Roy: Why do I even waste my time on a waster like you? You're nothing like your sister.

Harry: YOU!

Ernest: Leave it, Harry. It's out of our hands now.

Marcia: Harry, let's go. Come on, Matthew.

Mira: Wait. You got a minute? Roy, according to the witness, the victim was fighting some sort of autonomous robo.

Roy: What did you say?

Mira: And when it killed the victim, it fled the scene.

Matthew: An autonomous robo?

Harry: You don't know anything, do you? I'm really starting to worry if you've got the chops to be a commander. An autonomous robo moves itself without having any commander dive into it. They were designed for manual and repetitive labor. I've never heard of one that fights, though.

Mira: Which is why I have to ask you for a favor, Marcia. I need your help.

Marcia: What? Me?

Mira: You know what I'm going to ask you. I need you to do a half-dive and read the victim's last thoughts.

Marcia: What?

Mira: Please, I'm begging you. With your power, we should be able to find some clue we can use!

Marcia: But, but I

Mira: Hey, Roy. Ask her to help.

Roy: What? Why should I have to beg this mercenary nobody to help us in our investigation?

Mira: An excellent point, and well made. But if, for example, you had even a fraction of her skill and power, maybe you wouldn't have to. So swallow your foolish pride, and DO IT!

Roy: But, but I, argh! (quietly) Marcia, please.

Marcia: I, I.

Harry: You call that asking a respected fellow law enforcer for help? Say it like you mean it!

Roy: WHAT?

Ernest: SHUT IT, HARRY! Marcia, business is business. If you think you can take it, then give the cops a hand.

Marcia: I don't know, Ernest. I haven't done a half-dive in so long. I'm not even sure if I can still

Matthew: I'm not sure I'm following this, but I don't think Marcia can help out here.

Mira: I know. But we need her help. There's no one else we can turn to. Marcia, we understand if you can't do it, and we won't blame you if you fail. Please, help us.

Marcia: I, I. All right. Let me concentrate.

Matthew: What's a half-dive?

Harry: It's when Marcia dives partway into a robo. She's the only person who can do this. Remember what I told you a while back? Marcia's had this special power since she was young. Marcia can dive into a robo that's already been registered by eye contact. It doesn't mean she can control a preregistered

robo, though. However, she is able to read the commander's remaining cognition. So whatever the commander saw through his robo's eyes, she sees. She can even read that guy's last thoughts. Kinda gruesome, huh? Only thing is, when she does this

Marcia: I'm starting.

Marcia bends down and half-dives.

Marcia: Hh, hh,

Matthew: MARCIA!? What's wrong? What happened?

Harry: Matthew, calm down. I'll explain later.

Mira: Marcia, how did it go? What did you find out?

Marcia: Hh, hh. The victim wasn't fighting a custom robo.

Mira: WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!

Marcia: It didn't look like a robo. I've never seen anything like it. It was like a living thing.

Roy: That's ridiculous! No living thing can enter a holosseum!

Mira: You're right. It's just not possible.

Marcia: But everything about it is different. It doesn't move like a robot, doesn't even look like one.

Roy: Did you see what it was?!

Marcia: Only vaguely. It's just

Roy: I've heard enough! There's no way that could happen!

Mira: Shut up, Roy! Marcia what? Just what?!

Marcia: I've never felt such overwhelming power.

Marcia exits her half-dive. There is a long pause.

Roy: Come with us to HQ. We'll want to make a composite sketch of the robo you saw.

Harry: HEY, WHOA THERE! Look at her! Marcia's in bad shape. The stress of the half-dive is getting to her. Now you see what she has to go through every time she does this.

Roy: We're sorry about that. But as a citizen, she must comply with any and all police squad orders.

Mira: Roy! We're asking for their cooperation, not their resentment! Be civil!

Roy: I. Forgive me.

Harry: As if! Look at you, barking like a dog, but still taking orders from my own sister! Loser!

Mira: Harry, you're out of line. Thank you for your hard work, Marcia. You must understand that this is extremely important, and we desperately need your help. I know you're feeling a little weak, but we won't ask you to do anything strenuous. I promise. So, please, would you come with us to police HQ and tell us more about what you saw?

Marcia: What? To police HQ?

Ernest: Marcia, you all right? You can rest up if you're not feeling up to it.

Marcia: No. I'll go! I want to go! I'm, I'm fine!

Ernest: Just don't overexert yourself. We'll wait for you back at the office. Well, Mira. Take care of Marcia. Hey, Harry, Matthew. Let's go.

Ernest leads Matthew and Harry back to the office.

Harry: What's taking Marcia so long? I wonder if she's OK.

Ernest: Marcia will be fine. She's got a strong will. She's not like you.

Harry: (quietly) Aw, that's not nice. (normally) But how come Marcia was so willing to help those cops? I mean, she hardly argued at all.

Matthew: Say, Harry, what's so special about a half-dive? Why can't anyone else do one?

Harry: I don't know much about it. It's a rare talent. I've never met anyone else who can do a half-dive.

Matthew: Really? But there might be others? I've never even HEARD about half-dives before now.

Harry: Well, according to my sis, Marcia's the only commander alive today who can do a half-dive.

Matthew: Wow. She's pretty extraordinary, isn't she?

Harry: Well, she's something, all right. But it doesn't sound all that great. Her power makes her extremely sensitive. Emotionally speaking, I mean.

Matthew: How so?

Harry: For example, you ever have times when there's something on your mind? Don't you get worried? Well, in Marcia's case, take those worries and multiply them by a hundred. She gets so stressed out, she just freezes.

Matthew: That's pretty sensitive.

Harry: Yeah. She's been like that since she was a child. That's why she seems so distant. She needs to keep from getting hurt by people. See, it's like this: Marcia's big brother always used to protect her.

Matthew: That's rough. Being that sensitive and losing both your parents and your brother.

Harry: Yeah, she really Sort of hit rock bottom. It took a lot of work for Marcia to get where she is now.

Ernest: Hey, that's enough outta you. If I even catch you guys treating her differently because of this, I'll whoop you both good.

Ernest's phone rings.

Harry: It's the phone! Maybe it's Marcia.

Ernest answers the phone.

Ernest: Steel Hearts: You squeal, we'll deal. This is Ernest. Ah, Bogey. Sorry about yesterday. Yeah, I knew he was a wanted man. I, er, forgot my robo. That's why I couldn't catch him on the spot. What? Oh, I get it. You gave Dark Blue the job yesterday, so now you're handing one down to us today? THANK YOU! You're absolutely right. I'm a very loyal customer. Your café has great atmosphere. Oh, you're starting a poetry slam night? Er. What makes you think I write poetry? Oh, you saw that? Well, I'll send the boys over right now.

Ernest hangs up the phone.

Ernest: All right, we've got work. Get over to Bogey's pronto. Seems like there's some guy making a killing on battle wagers. Bogey said the guy's incredibly strong, and he's gonna put Bogey out of business if this keeps up.

Harry: Huh? You're not coming, Ernest?

Ernest: I don't think so. I feel like bad luck right now, especially after seeing that guy at Dendai Don's. Besides, I've got some light filing to do around the office.

Harry: Uh, yeah, sure.

Ernest: Hurry up! I'll send Marcia over when she returns.

Matthew leads Harry to Bogey's café.

Harry: Thanks for the call, Bogey! Steel Hearts, at your service!

Evil: WELL, HELLO!

Harry turns around to see Evil and his 2 lackeys.

Evil: I've been waiting for you, Harry, and you, too, Matthew.

Harry: Oh, great. Not you again. Why are you here?

Evil: ME!? Oh, I'm sure it's mere coincidence. We thought we could use some nice tea after all our hard work, and we found a man in need! We would have resolved the situation right away, but Bogey insisted that we give you Steel Hearts fellows a fair shot. And fair's fair of course, so we're waiting until you screw up before we take over.

Harry: Fair's fair!? Bogey called us, not you! This is our job!

Evil: Oh, please, Harry. Are you even listening? We're mercenaries! The job goes to the fastest team! But we're a generous group, we Dark Blue mercenaries. We'll fight for it. How about a 2-on-2 battle?

Harry: Fight for what? It's our job! You're just trying to steal it out from under our feet!

Evil: Now that's rude. We thought we'd show some courtesy by waiting for you to arrive. You ought to be grateful! This will be a golden learning opportunity for you. Pay attention while I'm beating you down!

Harry: ARGH! THIS GUY'S GETTING ON MY NERVES! Hey, Matthew, we've gotta rip 'em apart!

Evil: I'm afraid our victory is already secured. The actual fight itself is a mere formality. But if you wish! Sorry, Bogey, but we've got a score to settle here. Just wait a sec, OK?

Bogey: I don't care. Just so long as SOMEONE takes care of my problem, all right?

Harry: Let me tell you a little more about 2-on-2 battles. In a 2-on-2 battle, your partner's gun shots and charges won't hurt you. However, you still take damage if you get hit by your partner's pod or bomb blasts. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK, full throttle! Let's rip 'em to shreds!

Matthew, Harry, Evil, and Lackey 1 dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Evil: Ha, ha, ha. Exhilarating! How best to measure one's skill than to permit him a victory? And did you learn something, too? Well, I certainly hope you succeed in this mission. You look like you're in need of a less shabby wardrobe! The clothes make the man, after all! Shall we go?

Evil leads his 2 lackeys out the door.

Harry: That jerk. Can't even own up to the fact that we beat him. Anyway, that was a nice little waste of our time. Now we'd better get back to work. Whew. OK, Bogey. Where can we find this guy you're after?

Bogey: Past that door there.

Harry: Door? I don't see a door.

Bogey: Oh, er. That's a false wall. There's a door hidden there. We hold robo battles in the back room. Anyway, this guy's been winning every match, and I'm losing money.

Harry: Hold on. Did you just say you're hosting gambling matches? That's illegal, man.

Bogey: Er, (quietly) Well, I mean. What IS illegal, anyway? I mean, it's such a vague term, you know?

Harry: I get it. That's why you called us instead of the cops. You didn't want to get busted!

Bogey: Maybe when you're older, you'll understand. Listen, don't tell anyone, OK?

Matthew: I won't say a word! Don't worry!

Bogey: Well, I'd appreciate your discretion. Anyway, get in there and talk to the waiter. I'm really counting on you here.

Matthew leads Harry into the false wall. There's a holosseum deck and a lot of people.

Harry: We should chat up the crowd for some info before we sign up.

Matthew goes to a parts generator. He receives the Left Flank Bomb H, and the Feint Pod F. Matthew goes up to a stranger.

Stranger: I'm entering the next tournament. I'll probably bump into one of you, depending on how they mix up the entries.

Matthew: Pardon me, but are you the one who's been winning all the matches?

Stranger: You got the wrong person, buddy. You wanna talk to Shiner. He's in the waiting room now, with the other combatants.

Matthew leaves and talks to Customer #1.

Customer #1: Today just ain't my day! I'll barely break even if I bet on Shiner, and he's the odds-on favorite! But nobody's gonna beat Shiner, so there's no point in betting on anybody else!

Matthew leaves and talks to Customer #2.

Customer #2: Shiner's been winning all of the matches, so it's no fun to bet. That's why it's slow today.

Matthew leaves and talks to Customer #3.

Customer #3: If you enter the battle tournament, you can win it big, but you can get pretty badly hurt, too.

Matthew leaves and talks to Customer #4.

Customer #4: That guy over there hasn't placed one bet. He's just been sitting there watching the battles. What's he even doing here?

Matthew leaves and talks to Customer #5.

Customer #5: I keep betting on the underdog, but Shiner keeps beating them! I'll never break even now!

Matthew leaves and talks to the waiter, Lloyd.

Lloyd: You must be Harry and Matthew. Bogey told me you'd be coming. We're hosting a battle tournament with 16 commanders. I was just making the entry lists for the next tournament. I'm determining your entry position now. Hold on a moment.

Lloyd pushes various buttons on the computer.

Computer: Beep!

Lloyd: Thank you for waiting. Harry is number 16, and Matthew is number 9.

Harry: Which one's been winning all the matches?

Lloyd: That would be Shiner. Entry number 1.

Harry: I see. He's number 1, I'm number 15, and Matthew is number 9. Dang! According to this, we won't get a chance to face him until the finals! And THAT means that Matthew and I have to fight each other in the semifinals. Can't we change?

Lloyd: Sorry. Everything's done by computers. It's totally random. I can't change your number for you. If I start messing around with the numbers, the guests will think I'm fixing the matches.

Harry: But I thought Bogey set this up for us! Aw, man. Well, I guess we'll just have to win your tournament!

Lloyd: Please wait here. I'll call you when it's your turn. It's your turn. Are you ready to go? Make sure you check the parts generator before the match.

Matthew: I'm ready. Let's start.

Lloyd: Good. Then we'll begin. The first battle will be Matthew versus Paulie!

Harry: Go for it, Matthew. Don't worry. I've got tons of advice to get you through this!

Paulie: Whoa, hang on a sec! Two against one!? That's not fair! They should be disqualified! I win by default!

Harry: Hey, chill. I'm not fighting. I'm just watching. HANG ON! AREN'T YOU A COP? What's an upright member of the police squad like yourself doing in a place like this?

Paulie: Sh! Not so loud. How could you tell?

Harry: (in his head) Doesn't he know he's wearing his uniform?

Paulie: Wait a minute! You're those guys who busted the lab burglary! You must have recognized my distinctive features.

Harry: (in his head) More like your distinctive uniform. You cops all look the same to me! (out loud) So, wait. That means you're one of those guys the burglars beat up!

Paulie: And you're one of those guys who SHUTS UP! Insurance didn't cover any of my bills, so I'm trying to make some scratch on the side, OK?

Lloyd: Listen, guys? I'm sure you got lots to catch up on, but we're trying to hold a tournament here.

Paulie: I'm gonna do better this time. This time, I'm in it for the MONEY!

Harry: Yeah, whatever you say, sport. OK, my advice for you is to beat this guy up, but good. This guy's using a Strike Vanisher model. Let me explain. Like the Shining Fighter, the Strike Vanisher model's abilities are well-balanced. But the biggest difference is that it has a stealth function built into it.

Matthew: Stealth function?

Harry: If you do an air dash, this function will make your robo disappear, dodging incoming gunfire. But compared to a Shining Fighter model, it moves slowly. If you're going to use a Strike Vanisher, take advantage of its stealth ability to dodge gunfire. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. And one more thing. There's a holosseum called a Diamond Cell that the police squad uses. There's a magma zone in that holosseum, so be careful.

Matthew: Magma zone?

Harry: Yeah, it's the red area. You'll take a lot of damage if you go into that area. Good. How's that for irony, though? You're not a crook, but you're fighting a cop! Comedy!

Matthew and Paulie dive. Matthew wins.

Paulie: Why couldn't I have drawn an easier first match? So much for paying my bills.

Harry: (in his head) With skills like those, how did he ever get to be a cop?

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Javelin. Then, he goes back to the holosseum deck.

Lloyd: The second match is about to start. Are you ready?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm ready. Let's start.

Lloyd: Good. I'll call your next opponent. All right, let's continue. The next match is Matthew versus Walt.

Harry: I won my first match, too. Shiner won his match, too, of course. Don't let your guard down. Your next opponent is

Walt: (interrupting) Let's have a clean fight.

Harry: Huh? Isn't that the guy who got in a fight with his wife?

Walt: Thank you for helping us out the other day.

Harry: What are you doing in a seedy place like this?

Walt: Well, it's like this. My wife handles all our money, and I don't get much allowance. So I figured this would be a good way to make some extra money.

Harry: That's gotta be tough.

Walt: You'd better believe it. By the way, I have a favor to ask. Could you take it easy on me? You know, so I could win?

Harry: No can do. Sorry, but we've got our reasons.

Walt: Please. I'm begging here. My wife and poor children are starving. We need this to LIVE!

Harry: Oh, what a pile of lies! You just said you wanted the money for yourself, you jerk!

Lloyd: Oh, not again. Listen, you really need to get on with your battles, people.

Walt: I beg of you, please. You won't help me?

Harry: Nope. Think where you're going to fire when you use the pod. You can do all kinds of things with the pod. You can block your foe's way by firing ahead of 'em. Also, use the corners of the holosseum to corner your foe. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Don't go easy on him just 'cuz he's your neighbor.

Matthew and Walt dive. Matthew wins.

Walt: Oh. Oh I'll never afford that lovely toupee now!

Harry: (in his head) So that's what he was after?

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Left 5-Way Gun. He goes back to the holosseum deck.

Lloyd: The semifinals are about to start. Are you ready?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm ready. Let's start.

Lloyd: Good. Then, let's start. At long last, it's time for the semifinals! Up next, Matthew versus Harry!

Harry: It doesn't really matter which of us gets into the finals, so let's make this for real. It'll be good practice. We don't get a lot of opportunities to really go at it, you know? It'll be exciting!

Lloyd: Excuse me. I hate to interrupt, but could you start hurting each other now?

Harry: Yeah, yeah. Let's start, Matthew! You're still a novice, so I'll give you just a bit more advice. The higher you jump, the more vulnerable you become. Same goes for an air dash. You'll be vulnerable when you land after an air dash. So when you jump or air dash, try to land behind a wall. The wall will protect you from attacks. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Then, let's go at it for real. You better not take it easy on me.

Matthew and Harry dive. Matthew wins.

Harry: Man! I didn't think you'd be so good, I've trained you well! Well, I know I told you not to hold back, but I didn't feel right going full strength on you. Heh, (quietly) heh. (normally) Anyways, you're our man. Make sure you don't screw up, 'cuz this is an important job!

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Caboose Pod C. He goes back to the holosseum deck.

Lloyd: Let's start the finals. Are you ready?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm ready. Let's start.

Lloyd: Excellent. I'll call your opponent. At last, we're at the finals. Has everyone placed their bets? Then, let's begin. It's time for the finals! The ultimate showdown between Shiner and our newest star, Matthew!

Shiner: Doesn't matter what you do. Everyone will bet on me. I'm the best. No one wants to throw away his money on an obvious loser. And you know what? I don't care at all about whether these losers make this place a profit. As long as I'm making money and the masses go weak at the knees when they see me, I'm happy. So tell me. Are you jealous of my skill? Do you hate me? Eh? What do you say?

Harry: Sorry, what was that? We were busy polishing our robo cubes.
(in his head) What is wrong with this guy?

Lloyd: Excuse me.

Harry: Yeah, yeah, we know. Don't want to keep 'em waiting. All right, chew him up, Matthew!

Shiner: That's a laugh! I'm the one who's gonna eat him alive! I'll show you the power of my Breaker, my Lightning Sky robo!

Matthew: Lightning Sky?

Harry: The Lightning Sky model is the newest addition to the custom robo line. It can attack and change directions while doing an air dash. It can only air dash once, but it travels for a long time. It almost looks like it's flying! However, it moves really slowly on the ground. It's got a low defense, and that's its weakness. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: This looks like it'll be an interesting match. Well, good luck.

Matthew and Shiner dive. Matthew wins.

Shiner: Blast! Oh, well. I've done my job here.

Harry: What's this idiot talking about? Hm? Wait a sec. Is this guy from Z?

Lloyd: Huh? You mean the Z Syndicate?

Harry: Well, duh! Didn't you notice the big Z on his collar? Well, big surprise, but that's the Z Syndicate's logo. My sis showed it to me once.

Matthew: Z Syndicate? What's that?

Lloyd: Nobody's really sure. I mean, other than that it's some kind of, er, syndicate.

Harry: Real helpful, pal. But he's right. No one knows what the Z stands for. How's that for mysterious? You've never heard of 'em? Nobody knows where they're based, who runs them, or what the Z stands for. The only thing we know is that they're planning something with their custom robo. This is the first time I've ever seen one of 'em, but why are they wasting their time in these gambling pits? Maybe we should just ask this joker here. So, are you

with Z or what?!

Shiner: I don't know nothing.

Harry: Oh, man! Could you BE any more suspicious!?

Shiner: What, you got any proof!?

Harry: You want proof? Explain those clothes! You're wearing a Z right there on your shirt!

Shiner: Er, that's not a Z! It's, it's, (quietly) a weird-looking Z?

Harry: YOU THINK I'M GONNA BELIEVE THAT?!

The lights flicker. They go off after a few seconds of flickering.

Lloyd: What?! What's going on?!

Harry: THE LIGHTS! Hey, Matthew! Don't let him get away!

Matthew: How am I supposed to stop him? I can't see a thing.

The lights come back on. Shiner is gone.

Harry: AH! Darn it! He got away!

Marcia walks in.

Harry: Marcia!

Marcia: Sorry, I'm late.

Harry: Did you see anyone rush outside?

Marcia: Huh? What are you talking about?

Lloyd: I'm sorry, everyone. As a result of today's weirdness, I am closing up early for the day.

The customers leave. Sergei leaves and runs into Marcia.

Marcia: Oh! I'm sorry.

Marcia turns around surprised.

Harry: What's wrong, Marcia?

Marcia: (in her head) That. That couldn't have been.

Marcia runs out.

Harry: HEY, MARCIA! WHAT'S WRONG?! Marcia. What's wrong with her?

There is a long pause.

Harry: Oh, well. Listen, we did what we came here for. Let's get outta here. I'll give Ernest a call. You do what you want. What're you gonna do?

Matthew: I'm tired, so I'm going home.

Harry: OK. See you tomorrow.

Matthew goes home. Lucy wakes Matthew up.

Lucy: Matthew! How long is it going to be before you can finally get yourself out of bed!? Get up! You have to go to work!

Matthew gets up and gets dressed. He goes to the parts generator and receives the Flame Gun. He walks outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Ah, you're all dressed and ready to go. Good luck at work! I've decided to go to Daimon for some Chinese food today. Yum! Just thinking about it makes my mouth water!

Matthew leaves and enters the office. Ernest isn't there.

Harry: Hey.

Matthew: Hey, Marcia, you're here! So what happened yesterday?

Marcia: Nothing. It was nothing. Really.

Harry: She's been like this all day. I try to talk to her, and she just clams up, all clam-like. We're supposed to be partners, but she's not acting real partnerly, you know?

Marcia: I'm sorry for leaving.

Harry: I can't figure her out.

Matthew: Harry, give her some space. She'll talk about it if she wants to, but you can't force her.

Marcia: Matthew.

Ernest's power chair comes from behind that wall and he enters.

Ernest: I see you're all here. Good. Now, listen up. Lately, we've had a really bad run of luck. You all seem overworked and a little stressed. Marcia, I'm looking at you. Anyway, SURPRISE! I've entered you all in today's battle tournament!

Harry: YOU DID WHAT!? Come on, Chief! You know how tired we are, so why not just give us the stinking day off.

Ernest: Hey! I paid your entry fees! You should show a little appreciation. And you better win, you hear? If you do, it'll be GREAT PUBLICITY for our office.

Harry: So that's what this is about. You couldn't care less how tired we are. He's not worried about us at all, isn't that right, Marcia?

Marcia: (in her head) It must have been him. It looked just like him.

Harry: HEY, MARCIA!

Marcia: Huh? Oh, the tournament? Um, it sounds like fun.

Harry: Oh, not you, too. Why did I even bother getting out of bed this

afternoon?

Ernest: All right, team. You've got your assignment. The tournament is at the training gym. Do whatever it takes to win. Remember, it's for the good of the office. For Steel Hearts!

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to the training gym.

Harry: There still aren't too many people here.

Marcia: We've got a little time before things get started.

Harry: I'm gonna go look around. You guys better win your matches. Here's how we'll do it. I'll win first place, Marcia can have second, and Matthew, you take third.

Matthew: Why's that? Why don't we each try our best and see what happens? Right, Marcia?

Marcia: (in her head) But why now?

Matthew: Marcia, are you listening?

Marcia: Oh, huh? Yeah, that sounds good.

Harry: Right! See you at the finish line! Or, holosseum. Whatever. Matthew, chat up some of the competition. You're still an amateur, no matter what you might think. See what you can learn from these people.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #1.

Boy #1: It looks like 32 competitors have signed up for the tournament. They're not all here yet. By the way, I'll explain the robo graph. DWN is endurance. It shows how much abuse a robo can take before it's knocked down. The higher the bar, the harder it is for the robo to get knocked down. DEF is defense, the amount of damage a robo can take. The higher the bar, the less damage your robo takes from attacks. Some of the others here can probably tell you more.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #2.

Boy #2: This is just the first step on my road to becoming a great commander! I'm gonna win today! Too bad my father couldn't be here. I guess they've got something going on at the lab. I'll make him proud, even if he's not here to see me win in person.

Matthew: Tell me something about robo.

Boy #2: Mmm? Oh, yeah. Let me tell you a little something about the robo customization. On the robo graph, SPD stands for speed. The higher the bar, the faster your robo can move. SKY measures your robo's aerial abilities. That's how well it moves in the air. Same deal here. The higher the bar, the better its maneuverability in the air. ATK stands for attack. It's your robo's base attack strength. The higher the bar, the more damage your robo can do. That's all I can tell you. Ask the others for more info.

Matthew leaves and talks to Walt.

Walt: We wanted to avoid the lines, so we got here early. Now, we all just want to go home. The kids are bored, my wife is bored, and heck, I'm bored,

too. Maybe talking to you will make me a little less bored. Let's talk about the gun graph. That should be interesting. There's attack. That's how much damage the gun will inflict. The higher the ATK bar, the more damage the gun does. There's speed. That's the speed of the fired rounds. The higher the SPD bar, the more quickly the gun's rounds move. Well, I'm still bored. Why don't you go talk to my wife for a while?

Matthew leaves and talks to Carmen.

Carmen: Oh, it's you, Matthew. Oh, I'm not competing, I'm just here to root for someone. I'm not rooting for you. Anyway, what's taking them so long to start? Care to talk for a bit? I mean, what else are we gonna do? Let me tell you about the gun graph. There's nothing more interesting than the gun graph! HMG stands for homing. That's how long the round follows its target. The higher the bar, the longer it pursues its target. RPD is short for rapid fire, which is just a fancy way of saying how fast the gun fires. The higher the bar, the faster the gun's rounds fire. DWN is the gun's knockdown power. That's how good the gun is at knocking robo down. The higher the bar, the more force the gun's rounds have. Well, that's all. I'm done talking, and we still haven't started. Maybe I should take a nap.

Matthew leaves and talks to Girl #1.

Girl #1: You've probably noticed, but custom robo remain in cube form until they go into battle. Once a robo transforms, it's only about 30 centimeters tall. Just so you know. All right, I'll tell you something more useful. Have you seen the bomb graph? You'll see ATK, which is how much damage a bomb does. Obviously, the higher the bar is, the more damage your bomb does. SPD shows the speed at which the bomb moves. The higher the bar, the faster the bomb moves toward its target. Useful info, huh? A little TOO useful, don't you think?

Matthew leaves and talks to Girl #2.

Girl #2: It doesn't look like all of the contestants are here yet. Well, if we've got some time to kill, maybe I can give you a little information. Let me tell you a little bit about the bomb graph. SIZ refers to the bomb's blast radius. That's how big the area affected by the bomb will be. The higher the bar, the bigger the blast radius. TIM refers to the blast time. That's how long the blast effect will remain after the bomb explodes. Same deal here, too. The higher that bar is, the longer the blast sticks around. DWN is the bomb's knockdown power. That's sort of like how much force the bomb has. The higher the bar, the more knockdown force the explosion has, you know what I mean? Anyway, I shouldn't say too much, since we're both competing, so I think I'll shut up now.

Matthew leaves and talks to Sophie.

Sophie: Hello, Matthew. I'll be the emcee for our little tournament today. We still have time before the tournament starts. Wanna chat? Right, so let's chat about the pod graph! ATK is attack. You could have probably figured that out on your own. It shows how much damage your pod does when it hits. The higher the bar, the more damage. Got it? Oh, and SPD is speed. That's how fast your pod moves. The higher the bar, the faster the pod. That's all I've got to say. I don't play with robo myself, but you learn a lot working here.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #3.

Boy #3: You have to win five consecutive matches to take the championship.

It's tough! I might be young, but I've put in a lot of hours on the training machines here! Here, let me show off some of what I've learned. Do you know much about the pod graph? HMG means homing. That's how far a pod will chase its target. The higher the bar, the longer it chases its target. SIZ shows the size of the pod's blast. A higher bar means a bigger blast. TIM is the amount of time the blast remains after the pod detonates. Again, the higher the bar is, the longer the blast lasts. So what do you think? Am I a genius or what?

Matthew leaves and talks to Marcia.

Marcia: It's been a while since I was in a tournament. I'll have to focus really hard. (quietly) But I don't want to fight now.

Matthew leaves and talks to Harry.

Harry: I'll be the winner, Marcia will be 2nd and Matthew will be 3rd. Piece of cake. What? You got a problem with the plan?

Matthew leaves and talks to Will.

Will: When is it gonna start? I'm tired of waiting.

Matthew leaves and talks to Wendy.

Wendy: This is boring. Why don't they start?

Suddenly, Sophie starts talking.

Sophie: Thank you all for waiting. Let's begin the battle tournament! All the competitors should now take their assigned places.

Matthew goes to the first holosseum deck to face Will.

Harry: Isn't that the kid that lives next door to you?

Will: Don't expect me to go easy on you just because you're my neighbor!

Harry: That kid's got guts. Try not to let him beat you, Matthew. When you charge, your robo is invincible while it is lit up. If you time your charge right, you can approach your opponent while dodging his attacks. Watch out, though. You'll be vulnerable to attacks right before and after you charge. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Don't underestimate him just 'cuz he's a kid.

Matthew and Will dive. Matthew wins.

Will: I lost on the first match.

Harry: Oh, hey, kid. Don't feel too bad. You did good. You put up a good fight!

Will: Phooey. If I'd been fighting Harry, I'd have won for sure.

Harry: Huh? Oh, yeah. Uh, I'm sure you would have done better. (in his head) In your dreams.

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Twin Flank Pod G. He returns to the holosseum deck to see his next opponent, Don.

Don: After that little incident you saw, the police made me shut down the restaurant. They said I should have called them first. Anyway, I need money, so I've joined this tournament.

Harry: I'm sorry to hear that. I hope your battle goes well.

Don: Thanks. Maybe once they let me reopen, I can advertise Daimon as the Restaurant of Champions!

Harry: (in his head) I'm not sure robo battle skills really make for a better restaurant. (out loud) You can use the air dash in a bunch of different ways. You can pretend you're gonna land and then fool 'em with a feint, or you can charge right in! You can also dodge bullets if you time it right, but you'll be vulnerable when you land. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Now, I figure you've got it made here. Seriously, how can you lose against a cook? But play it safe.

Matthew and Don dive. Matthew wins.

Don: My hopes. My dreams, my restaurant of champions. All gone, gone!

Harry: You know, maybe it'd be better advertising if you entered, like, a cooking contest instead.

Don: You. You're right! I'm sure I could win a cooking contest! Thank you! Thank you! I'd never thought of that!

Harry: (in his head) I don't have a clue what you were thinking in the first place.

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the High Jump Legs. He returns to face his next opponent, Mary.

Mary: Oh. You look familiar. Have we met?

Harry: Uh, back at Hub Park? It wasn't that long ago, maybe a few days?

Mary: Did you take me out for a date there or something? I'm sorry, I really should remember. I only remember the good dates and the really awful ones. You look like you'd be memorable.

Harry: Uh, um, thanks? (in his head) How do I tell her we didn't date? (out loud) Anyway, how did you get this far in the competition?

Mary: I've met all these cute boys today, and I told them we could go out on a date if they lost to me. So they did!

Harry: (in his head) She might not be a good commander, but she's got some mean skills.

Mary: What about you? You probably want a date, too, don't you? You boys are all the same.

Matthew: YOU KNOW IT!

Harry: Hey, whoa there, Captain Swoon! Don't go mixing business with pleasure.

Mary: So, you're actually going to try fighting me? Well, just because I'm adorable doesn't mean I'm a pushover!

Harry: (in his head) She could push me over any time.

Mary: Oh well. I guess I'll show you what Earth, my Aerial Beauty robo, can do!

Harry: An Aerial Beauty, huh? The Aerial Beauty model moves excellently in the air. It can't do an air dash, but it can do something called a continuous jump. It can move quicker than a Shining Fighter, but its offense and defense are lower. If you're using an Aerial Beauty, you're not going to attack directly. Instead, you'll probably spend a lot of time dodging and moving to get the best position. Marcia's Milky Way is also an Aerial Beauty model. She's told me that's how she fights. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Just 'cause you wanna go on a date, doesn't give you the excuse to lose.

Matthew and Mary dive. Matthew wins.

Mary: Oh, I lost. You're not too bad with a robo! Even though you can beat me, we can still go out if you want!

Matthew: HUH!? REALLY!?

Harry: YOU LIE! TELL ME YOU'RE LYING!

Mary: Oh, hey, cutie! Are you busy right now? Let's go grab some food!

Mary runs away. There is a long pause.

Matthew: What just happened?

Harry: Great job, Matthew. You've made it to the semifinals. Well, I made it, too! I beat my three matches, and my next opponent is YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING! MARCIA!?

Marcia and Harry fight. Marcia wins.

Harry: AH! I LOST!

Marcia: I'm sorry. Are you all right, Harry?

Sophie: Marcia wins the match! All right! Marcia moves on to the next round!

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Earth. He returns to face his next opponent, Evil.

Evil: Hmmm. Not bad if you've come all this way. Had a little luck with the drawings? But! You're going to lose here so I guess you aren't that lucky.

Harry: Darn it! I lost to Marcia! Matthew, you're definitely gonna bump into Marcia in the finals.

Evil: Ha, ha, ha! Foolish, er, fools. What are you talking about? I'm the one going to the finals!

Harry: Because Marcia's robo has excellent aerial abilities, you'll

Evil (interrupting) HEY, DON'T IGNORE ME! Huh? Oh, hey, Evil. What's up? Matthew, hurry up and put Evil in his place. To change where your bomb is targeting, aim first. Some bombs change their drop zone. You can use them to block your opponent's path. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Don't worry. That Evil's nothing.

Matthew and Evil dive. Matthew wins.

Evil: IMPOSSIBLE! How did this happen? Matthew. You tried to trick me. You had me believing you were an amateur. No newcomer possesses the skill to defeat me! You, sir, have lied to us all. Impressive!

Harry: WAY TO GO! WE'RE IN THE FINALS!

Evil: HEY, STOP IGNORING ME!

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Gatling Gun. He returns to face his final opponent, Marcia.

Marcia: I don't really want to fight you.

Harry: You didn't say anything like that when you fought me! (in his head) Hmph. (out loud) All right, here's the deal. We all work for the same place, so I can't officially take sides. But I'm secretly rooting for you, because I know I could've beaten you if I'd had a real chance.

Marcia: Harry, quit being such a weasel and give Matthew some tips before we start.

Harry: (in his head) Why's she bossing me around all the time? (out loud) No way! Good luck, Matthew! You're on your own this time!

Matthew and Marcia dive. Matthew wins.

Marcia: I can't believe it. When did you get so good? Matthew, you're amazing!

Harry: Heh, heh. Yeah! The guys pull off the win!

Marcia: Harry. You lost. I beat you. Why are you celebrating?

Harry: Uh. (in his head) Why did you have to remind me?

All the other contestants gather around Matthew and Sophie.

Sophie: And so, this year's winner and new champion is MATTHEW!

All the contestants clap and cheer.

Sophie: How do you feel about this, your greatest victory?

Matthew: I'm exhilarated. It's like a dream. Thank you so much!

Harry walks up to Matthew.

Harry: Hey, Matthew, you're wasting an advertising opportunity! Ernest will kill you!

Harry walks away.

Matthew: Oh, yeah, I forgot. Excuse me, but I've got something important to add.

Sophie: What's this?! The winner has something important to say! Stop the music!

The music stops.

Matthew: Um, if you happen to have any problems, don't hesitate to call Steel Hearts. We're in the book! Look us up and give us a call!

There is a very long pause.

Marcia: (quietly) He really went through with it.

Harry: Suddenly, I'm glad I didn't win.

They wait until everyone leaves and it's late at night.

Harry: Hmm. I thought we agreed that I'd be in 1st place, Marcia in 2nd, and you in 3rd place, but. Oh, well. At least one of us won. Marcia's already gone home. Matthew, what're you doing after this?

Matthew: I'm going home.

Harry: OK, then. Maybe Sophie will wanna go do something with me. I'm gonna bug her until she agrees to a date.

Matthew leaves and goes home. He gets woken up by the phone.

Matthew: Oog. The phone? Yeah, yeah.

Matthew answers the phone.

Ernest: Matthew. We've got work. Head over to the research labs.

Matthew: The lab?

Ernest: That's right, Linda called us. She wants us on guard duty. Harry and Marcia are already there. They're waiting for you.

Matthew hangs up the phone and gets dressed. Then, he goes to the parts generator and receives the Booster Legs. He goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: WAH! YOU SCARED ME! Oh, it's finally happened! You woke up on your own! I don't have to get you out of bed anymore!

Matthew: Uh, no. The phone woke me. I got a call from my chief about work.

Lucy: Oh. So you didn't actually get up by yourself.

Matthew: Uh, yeah, no. I gotta hurry up and get over to the research center.

Lucy: I see. Well, I guess you don't have time to chat. Have a good day at work!

Matthew leaves, goes inside the lab, and goes into the reception room to see Harry, Marcia, and Linda.

Harry: What's up, Matthew?

Matthew: Good morning, Harry. Good morning, Marcia.

Marcia: Oh! Good morning.

Matthew: What's wrong?

Marcia: (quietly) I don't want to do this job. I don't like this place or the researchers here.

Matthew: Marcia?

Marcia: Oh, I'm sorry. But it's our job. We have to do it.

Matthew: Good morning, Linda.

Linda: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for showing up.

Evil walks in.

Evil: I see the gang's all here.

Harry: Evil! You again?

Evil: You show up late and that's all you got to say?

Linda: Oh, yes. Dark Blue has been assigned to guarding this area since the attempted burglary. Please, Harry. No fighting in the lab.

Evil: Initially, my men were standing guard, but I've opted to take the assignment myself. As you know, I did a fine job last night. You're wasting your money on these guys, Linda. But do what you want. Just keep them out of my way, dear.

Evil walks out.

Harry: Man, I hate that guy.

Marcia: It must be a lot of work, if you're hiring both us AND Dark Blue.

Matthew: What happened?

Linda: We're very worried. The lab has been targeted for something, but we're not sure what. These past few days, dark figures have been sighted, and security devices have been destroyed. We've found our labs in disarray in the mornings.

Harry: Those guys at Dark Blue are jerks, but they're good mercenaries. So whoever it is must be really good if they're getting past Dark Blue.

Linda: Yes. Evil said he was ashamed, so he's been here since yesterday to restore his honor. But I still feel like we need the additional support here.

Harry: You sure you're not just worried about Dark Blue? They're clearly dropping the ball here. That's why you should just stick with Steel Hearts.

Linda: Please don't say that. Evil's the one who insisted on guarding these labs. He said he would feel horrible if something happened here, so he's volunteered to work for free.

Harry: THEY'RE WORKING FOR FREE?! (in his head) Ernest would never do that.

Marcia: Excuse me. Can you think of any reason why your labs have been targeted?

Linda: Well, we're funded by the government to do cutting-edge robo research. It could be anyone.

Marcia: Why haven't you called the police?

Linda: The police? They're too busy sponsoring tournaments and distracting the populace.

Harry: I hadn't noticed, but, yeah, you're right.

Linda: Also, this is a fine chance to gather more data on Matthew's abilities.

Harry: HIS abilities!? Why are you wasting time with him when you've got a real star right here!? For example, ME!

Linda: Oh, Harry. Of course I'm counting on you. There's no need to be childish.

Harry: Yeah, heh, heh! She thinks I'm manly!

Linda: Well, I appreciate it. Matthew and Harry can use this room. Marcia, would you mind staying with me? There's something I need to talk to you about.

Marcia: Uh, um.

Linda: It's all right. We'll talk over a cup of tea. Remember, I'm on your side.

Harry: Well, if we're going to have to stay here all night, I'll just put my things in Linda's room.

Marcia: Oh. All right. That means I'll have to share a room with Matthew.

Harry: NO WAY!

Linda: Ha, ha, ha. Maybe next time, Harry. But don't hold your breath. Keep a close watch on the research labs, but you'll have free reign of the facilities. Come with me, Marcia. You can share my room, and we'll talk.

Linda leaves followed by Marcia.

Harry: OK, so how about we take a look around? Let's split up. That always

sounds like a good idea. Go talk to the techs. See what info they've got. And don't go off and catch a nap or chat up the girls.

Matthew: (quietly) I thought that was YOUR job.

Harry: Huh? You say something? OK, I'm gonna go look around.

Harry leaves. Matthew leaves too. Matthew enters Lab Room #1. He talks to Lab Tech #1.

Lab Tech #1: The emergency exit outside this room is always locked. You need a card key to open that door. All of the researchers here carry a card key.

Matthew walks away and talks to Lab Tech #2.

Lab Tech #2: The custom robo in this room are still under development. When we're finished, we shrink them into cube form. Anyway, what did Harry come in here for?

Matthew walks away and talks to Sherry who is next to Harry.

Sherry: Is he always like this? Because he's really getting on my nerves. Is this his idea of flirting? Because I'd feel bad for anyone who actually went out with him.

Matthew leaves Lab Room #1 and enters Lab Room #2. He talks to Lab Tech #3.

Lab Tech #3: The guy from Dark Blue wearing the sunglasses was guarding here, but, Evil, the Dark Blue boss, took his place yesterday.

Matthew walks away and talks to Lab Tech #4.

Lab Tech #4: Two days ago, someone found that part of our security system had been sabotaged. We got it back up and running right away, though.

Matthew walks away and talks to Lab Tech #5.

Lab Tech #5: The emergency exit is normally locked, but yesterday, it wasn't. I locked it right away, though.

Matthew leaves Lab Room #2 and enters the Presentation Room. He talks to Lab Tech #6.

Lab Tech #6: I always keep my card key in my drawer, but this morning I found it on top of my desk. The card key is the only way to unlock the emergency exit, but why was it on top of my desk? Should I be telling you this?

Matthew walks away and talks to Lab Tech #7.

Lab Tech #7: It's odd. I feel like someone's been in the research lab, but the tapes don't show anyone in there.

Matthew walks away and talks to Lab Tech #8.

Lab Tech #8: (quietly) You're probably thinking we scientists all look the same, huh? Well, I'll have you know we're all quite different! I, for example, develop robo legs, while my partner develops, er, different kinds of robo legs.

Matthew enters the Director's room. He talks to Linda.

Linda: Do you mind? This is a private room, after all.

Matthew talks to Marcia.

Marcia: Linda and I are talking. We're fine, all right? Would you please go somewhere else? This is private.

Matthew leaves the Director's Room and sees Evil in the front of the lab.

Evil: Gathering information? Good boy. Just make sure I don't have to look at you too long.

Matthew goes back to Lab Room #1 and talks to Harry.

Harry: So you've talked to everyone? Good. I'm all done here, too.

Matthew: (in his head) Done with what? With getting shot down?

Harry: Let's go back to the reception room.

Matthew, Harry, and Marcia are all in the reception room.

Marcia: How did it go? Did you find anything?

Harry: I found that girl Sherry is awfully cute.

Marcia: I'm amazed you still have a job. Do you ever work?

Harry: I was just joking. My interrogation revealed that no one could have gotten in. And that Sherry's busy all week.

Marcia: Linda said the same thing. I mean, not about Sherry. I mean about the security being solid. What did you find out, Matthew?

Matthew: I trust no one here. It had to have been an inside job.

Harry: Yeah, with things locked up as tight as they are around here, it had to be an inside job.

Marcia: You might be right. Linda certainly agrees.

Harry: Yeah, I'm sure she knows her own colleagues well enough to know if she can trust them.

Marcia: It's like you don't want to believe that the person you've trusted for so long will betray you.

Matthew: Marcia.

Harry: I understand how you feel. Let's just worry about catching the culprit. We'll need some evidence if we're going to sort this out. Let's snoop around when the employees go home tonight.

Matthew: WHAT!? Don't you think that's unethical?

Harry: Dude, I don't even know what unethical means. Besides, Linda gave us total permission. Free run of the place, right? Right, Marcia?

Marcia: What? Oh uh-huh.

Harry: OK! IT'S SETTLED! I CALL DIBS ON LINDA'S ROOM!

There is an awkward pause.

Harry: It's just a joke.

Matthew, Harry, and Marcia wait until the employees are gone.

Harry: OK, looks like the researchers went home. Let's split up and look around. Listen, Matthew. If you think something's suspicious, check it out.

Matthew: Got it. Check it out.

Harry: That's right. Check out anything suspicious.

Matthew: OK, OK. Check out anything suspicious. It's in my head. I got it.

Harry: Right, let's go!

Harry and Marcia leave. Matthew leaves too. He enters the Presentation Room. He goes to the back of the room to see a button.

Matthew: There's a button here. I wanna press it, but I shouldn't.

All of a sudden, we hear glass break.

Matthew: WHAT WAS THAT!?

Harry: MARCIA, MATTHEW! THE RECEPTION ROOM!

Matthew returns to the Reception Room. Harry, Marcia, and Evil are there.

Evil: Look, the glass is broken.

Harry: Did you see anything?

Evil: I saw a dark, cloaked figure run outside right when I came into the room.

Marcia: But why?

Evil: Why? Why raid the lab? Who knows? Anyway, let's investigate. If they planted a bomb here, things could get ugly. Let's split up! Again!

Harry and Marcia run to opposite sides of the room. Matthew goes around and investigates everything.

Matthew: Just rows of complicated books. Doesn't look suspicious. No bomb here! I wonder if Harry and Marcia found anything. What a mess. There's no bomb.

Harry: I can't find anything!

Marcia: Wait, why do we think there might be a bomb here?

Evil: You can never be too sure. I'm sure I scared them off before they

could set it up.

Harry: I've got a bad feeling about this. Let's go check all the other rooms again.

All 4 leave the Reception Room to see boxes opened, stuff all over the floor, and miscellaneous parts on the floor.

Harry: What's going on here?!

Evil: Curses! You were tricked! They broke the window to lure us into the reception room!

Marcia: They might still be inside.

Harry: LET'S SPLIT UP!

Harry, Marcia and Evil run away. Matthew enters the Presentation Room. There is a Z Lackey there messing with stuff. Matthew tries to stop him.

Z Lackey #1: You want to mess with me? I'll take you down!

They dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #1: Curses! You'll regret the day you messed with Z!

The Z Lackey runs away. Matthew goes to the parts generator to receive the Throwing Pod D. Matthew leaves to see another Z Lackey outside waiting for him.

Z Lackey #2: Ah. You want some? I'll show you something you'll never forget!

They dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #2: He's too strong. You'll pay for this!

Z Lackey #2 runs away. Matthew goes back into the presentation room to go to the parts generator. He receives the Double Mine Bomb.

Matthew goes back to the reception room to see a third Z Lackey messing with stuff.

Z Lackey #3: Company, eh? I'll get rid of you first.

They dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #3: Hmph, not bad. But with your skills, you're no match for Eliza. Long live Eliza!

Matthew leaves and goes to the presentation room parts generator to receive the Straight Bomb T. He goes outside to see Marcia and Eliza.

Eliza: Resisting Z? Such a brave young girl. But you were just a tad overconfident about your strength, it seems. When you meet your better, the wisest course of action is to flee, you see?

Matthew: MARCIA! ARE YOU OK?!

Matthew runs over in front of Marcia.

Marcia: Matthew, run. I've never been in such a strenuous holosseum. She's too strong.

Matthew: I'm next! It's payback time!

Eliza: Oh, this boy is my next opponent? Well, well. This should be fun.

Matthew: You like hurting people, do you? Well, see how you like feeling the hurt yourself!

Marcia: Matthew, don't! Forget about me. Please run away!

Matthew: Don't worry, Marcia. I'm gonna give it my best shot. But I wish you'd cheer me one instead of telling me to run away. It'd make me feel more confident.

Marcia: Matthew.

Eliza: Oh, how touching! But you two obviously have some issues you'll need to work out on your own time. I've got a little lesson for the two of you. I'll teach you how foolish your notion of justice is.

Matthew: You make me sick.

Eliza: Ha, ha, ha, ha. So much anger for a such a nice young boy. Looks like you need a spanking! Oh, don't cry about it. After my lesson, you'll find you have many better reasons to cry.

Matthew and Eliza dive. Matthew wins.

Eliza: Oh, what a surprise! Not bad. It looks like you're good enough to stand up to the Z Syndicate after all. Well, I must be going. Things to do, you see. But you've done well, so I'm willing to forgive you this time. And I did have fun. So, until we meet again, adieu! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Eliza leaves. Matthew goes over to Marcia.

Matthew: Marcia!

Harry runs out from the lab.

Harry: ARE YOU TWO OK?

Marcia: Mmm. The woman from Z was too strong.

Harry: Don't tell me you lost, Marcia?! You're kidding!

Marcia: I'm sorry but I lost.

Harry: And Matthew defeated her?! Hey, hey, hey! You're not half bad!

Matthew: No, that's not right. During the battle, she said that our time was up and left.

Harry: Huh?

Marcia: Even though Matthew knew he was going to lose, he still fought.

Harry: Well, anyway, she was strong. Good work, Matthew! You did well!

Matthew: Look, I didn't do anything.

Harry: Just accept it, OK! By the way, the guy I just fought dropped his robo cube when he escaped. This is it.

Harry pulls out a blue robo cube.

Marcia: Let me see it, Harry.

Marcia takes it.

Marcia: I'll try to half-dive.

Matthew: Don't be so rash! You're still hurt from the last battle!

Marcia: Matthew. You set the example yourself. I have to keep going, no matter the odds. Now it's my turn. I'm going to be fine leave it to me.

Marcia half-dives.

Marcia: Hh, hh, hh.

Matthew: Are you OK, Marcia?!

Marcia: I'm fine. Z's boss? The one in charge died. Factions? Groups? They've split up. Scattered.

Harry: What was it, a power struggle or something?

Marcia: A dispute among the groups. Something like that. I'm not too sure.

Harry: Hmmm, a dispute over power. So what was the reason for hitting the lab?

Marcia: That I don't know. They were looking for something.

Harry: I don't get it, but they must think there's something powerful here that will help them out.

Matthew: So whatever they're looking for is here?

Harry: You'd think so.

Marcia: We need to ask Linda.

Matthew, Harry, and Marcia find Linda.

Harry: Just what are they after, Linda?!

Matthew: Don't hide it from us. You have to tell us if we're going to help you.

Linda: I'm sorry. I can't think of anything. Nothing comes to mind. I'll check to see if anything's been stolen. It looks like the researcher's desk and shelves have been tampered with.

Harry: (quietly) Oh, sorry. We did that.

Matthew: (quietly) I TOLD you we should have been tidier!

Harry: (quietly) Well, it's too late now! You were the one who was tearing through all the paperwork!

Marcia: (quietly) Harry, you were the one who told him to!

Harry: (quietly) Marcia, you were in on it, too!

Marcia: (quietly) I know.

Matthew: (quietly) Let's just pretend it didn't happen.

Harry: (quietly) You're right.

Linda: What is it? What are you whispering about?

Marcia: Oh, nothing. Should we report this to the police?

Linda: Yes. It involved a Z Syndicate strike. We should report it.

Harry: We better split if the police squad's gonna show up. I don't wanna run into my sister here.

Linda: Thank you, everyone.

Harry: Matthew. Good work. We're done for the day. What're you gonna do after this?

Matthew: I'm going home. I'm tired.

Harry: Yeah, you do that! See ya.

Matthew goes home. The phone rings. Matthew answers it.

Matthew: Yeah, yeah.

Ernest: MATTHEW, GET UP!

Matthew: Uh. Chief. Good morning.

Ernest: GOOD MORNING? DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS? Get over to Bogey's! Right now! You'll meet up with Harry and Marcia there.

Matthew: Bogey's? Again?

Ernest: I don't know much about it, but some strange robo is make a scene. Get over there!

Matthew hangs up the phone and gets dressed. Matthew goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: You're finally up. I've decided to stop waking you up. It's time you were responsible for getting yourself out of bed!

Matthew: Yeah. I only woke up 'cuz the chief just called. He told me to go to Bogey's.

Lucy: Well, you'd better hurry on over there.

Matthew leaves and enters Bogey's Café.

Harry: What's up, Matthew? We just got here ourselves.

Marcia: Good morning, Matthew.

Matthew: Good morning, Harry, Marcia.

Bogey: What are you standing around for? Do something! Some weird robo is trashing up the room back there. Help me!

Harry: What is it with you?! We can't go two days without getting called back over here!

Bogey: Why does this stuff always happen to me?

Harry: That's what you get for running an illegal gambling operation here!

Marcia: But why would a robo be running amok here, of all places?

Matthew: Custom robo can't leave their holosseums. They can't harm anything in the real world!

Marcia: It's not possible.

Bogey: You're right. It's impossible. And if you look at it, it doesn't look like a robo at all. Maybe it's not a robo.

Harry: Maybe it's some top-secret thing being developed in the lab. Maybe it even escaped on its own!

Marcia: On its own? You mean it might be an autonomous robo?

Bogey: Well, whatever it is, it's still going crazy in the back room. Please take care of it.

Harry: OK, OK. Matthew, Marcia, let's go.

Harry leads Matthew and Marcia behind the false wall to see everything destroyed and a robo, Rahu, shooting at everything.

Marcia: Oh. Oh no! That's the robo I saw in my half-dive at Daimon! What's it doing here!?

Harry: Are you saying that's the same one that killed that guy at the restaurant?

Marcia: I think so. But it looks different from last time.

Harry: Hm. It doesn't even look like a robo to me.

Matthew: Yeah. For starters, a custom robo is in a cube form when it's in the real world, right?

Harry: Mm. Matthew, you have stop it!

Matthew: What?

Marcia: Harry, you can't! Don't let Matthew face it alone! It's already killed once!

Harry: No way. I wanna see what this thing's holosseum looks like. If you or

I go, we could wind up fighting in one of our holosseums instead of its own. Matthew can't make a holosseum. That means that, no matter what, he'll be fighting in that thing's holosseum, right?

Marcia: You think that robo can create a holosseum?

Harry: Well, it can either make one or it has one built into it. We already know it fought a robo once, right? OK, Matthew. Hop to it! If it gets ugly, we'll help you out.

Matthew: Fine. I'll do all the work around here. But if it gets bad in there, you'd better save me!

Matthew walks up to Rahu. Rahu turns around.

Harry: Now listen, Matthew. It won't do any good if you use the gun, bomb, and pod separately. Your opponent will be moving fast. It's gonna try to dodge your attacks. You have to figure out a way to block your opponent, stop him from moving, or hit him! Surround him with a pod, then fire a bomb and finish him off with the gun. It's easy. Sort of. Of course, this all depends on what weapons you've outfitted with your robo with, you know. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Be sure to get a good look at that holosseum!

Matthew and Rahu dive. Matthew wins.

Harry: Well. That was easy. So, how was it? The holosseum, I mean.

Matthew: Indescribable. It looked like it wasn't made by a machine.

Harry: Like it wasn't a machine?

Matthew: I've never seen anything like it. There were trees, but they weren't made out of metal or plastic. There was grass, too, but it was soft. It wasn't just rolled-out plastic like in the park. It was really pretty.

Marcia: Trees not made of metal? And the grass, it was soft? I wonder what it was made of.

Harry: Was the holosseum built into it, or did that robo make it from its own memories?

Oboro: Looks like it finally nibbled on our bait.

Matthew, Harry, and Marcia all turn around to see Oboro and Sergei.

Sergei: That Z member we sent into the gambling room last night just kept on winning. And he filled every one of those gambling weaklings with greed, envy, and hatred. The whole room filled with all that negative energy, and the beast wanted to feed on it.

Oboro: Hey, you kids over there! I'll take that. It's Z Syndicate property now. Hand it over.

Harry: These guys are from Z? Hey, Marcia, Matthew. We gotta fight 'em! Mm? Marcia?

Marcia: (quietly) I, I can't. I can't fight!

Harry: WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MARCIA?!

Marcia: Please, Matthew, Harry. Don't! Please! Don't fight them!

Matthew: Marcia.

Harry: Stop it, Marcia. We have to! This is our big break! Matthew, you take the blue-haired guy.

Matthew: Huh? OK! Let's do it!

Sergei: Hey, you're the kid who beat Shiner. Interesting. Let's see how good you are.

Marcia: No!

Matthew, Harry, Sergei, and Oboro all dive. Matthew wins. Harry won his fight too.

Sergei: Hm. I see. No wonder you beat Shiner.

Rahu somehow revitalized itself and went away.

Oboro: Hey! It escaped! Blast it! We should've just ignored these kids. Now our chances of getting a head start on Eliza are LET'S GO!

Oboro and Sergei run away.

Harry: Ouch. They got away. You OK, Matthew?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm OK.

Harry: Good, glad to hear it. Anyway, it felt like that Oboro guy. He was toying with me. That guy you went against was pretty skilled, too.

Matthew: (in his head) Is it just me or did that guy's holosseum look exactly like Marcia's?

Harry: Which reminds me! Hey, Marcia! What was that all about?!

Marcia: I'm sorry.

Matthew: Listen Marcia.

Mira: What happened, Harry?

All 3 turn around to see Mira and Linda.

Harry: Huh? Sis? AND LINDA. It's rare to see you and Linda together. Why are you here?

Mira: We got a report from the locals about a bizarre-looking robot busting out of this place.

Harry: It's the same robo from the restaurant. But Marcia said it looked a little different.

Mira: That's what I thought. Linda, here's a sketch of that robo.

Mira hands Linda a piece of paper with a picture of Rahu on it.

Linda: No! It couldn't be!

Mira: Now you see why I called you.

Harry: What's wrong, Linda?

Linda: This robo.

Harry: What's wrong? Was it some robo under development at your lab?

Linda: No, it's nothing like that. But, I can't believe it's. What do you think, Mira?

Mira: I haven't seen it firsthand, so I really couldn't say. However, top officials are currently discussing the situation in the greatest secrecy. It seems to be exactly what you feared, Linda.

Linda: Hm, I see.

Harry: Um, I have absolutely zero idea what's going on here. What's this all about, Sis?

Mira: Sorry, Harry. I can't talk about it. Linda, you probably ought to come with me to HQ soon.

Linda: I agree. Let me return to the lab and grab the files. I appreciate your calling me on this matter, Mira. (quietly) Two distinct manifestations. Signs of evolution. Order? Or chaos? (normally) Oh, Harry, Marcia, Matthew. I'm sorry, you'll have to excuse me.

Mira and Linda leave.

Harry: What was that all about?! What's going on here?! I have no idea what's going on. Not with Mira, not with Linda, and certainly not with Marcia. I GIVE UP! I'M GOING HOME! MATTHEW, DO WHAT YOU WANT!

Matthew: But, but, Marcia.

Marcia: (quietly) I, I'm sorry. I want to be left alone, please.

Matthew: OK, I understand. I'll see you later. I'm going home.

Harry: Yeah, you do that! I'll see you later.

Matthew goes home. Matthew wakes up and gets dressed. Lucy walks in.

Lucy: Why, Matthew! It's not even noon, and you've gotten out of bed! I'm so impressed!

Matthew: Good morning.

Lucy: I guess my work here is done. If you're already up and about, I'll just see you later.

Matthew: See ya. Matthew leaves and enters the office.

Ernest: I see you're all here. Let's get started. The police squad announced a battle tournament today. It's intended as a goodwill gesture.

Harry: Hey, I don't know where you're going with this, but we don't have time to spare fooling around!

Ernest: Normally, I'd agree. However, I've received a phone call strongly urging that we enter this tournament.

Harry: What? Oh, come on, Chief. Let's skip it. We don't got time for that.

Ernest: Your sister made the request herself, Harry. If you have any questions, ask her.

Harry: Why would she want us there?

Ernest loudly bangs on his desk.

Ernest: I SAID ASK HER! Just go do the tournament! It's at the police squad HQ, inside their training room. Get moving!

Harry: What's that all about?

Ernest: Get moving! Did you forget where the police squad HQ is? What do I keep you around for?

Harry: I'M GOING! Come on, Matthew, Marcia. Let's go.

Harry leads Matthew and Marcia out the door.

Harry: Man. I really don't want to go. My sister's there. Roy's there. It's gonna stink.

Harry leads Matthew and Marcia to police squad HQ. Matthew leads Harry and Marcia into their training room. The chief of police is there giving a speech.

Chief: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We appreciate your coming on such short notice. In the many decades since the police squad was first founded, we have worked to bring peace and security to the public. We have worked to hire the most dedicated and diligent officers and they train vigorously each and every day. I hope each of you appreciates the effort we make to cultivate the most talented law officials, and we hope you give us the same support and encouragement you always have. We work for the good of the people, and we hope to do so for a great many years. And so, in the spirit of the community, of fellowship with citizens and bounty hunters alike, we have decided to host this, the largest tournament of its kind. We have had our differences, but the police appreciate the effort bounty hunters make in law enforcement. We hope this tournament strengthens the spirit of goodwill in our city. The tournament will begin momentarily. Thank you again for attending!

The chief walks away.

Harry: This guy's nothing but a politician! A whole lot of words that say a whole lot of nothing! And what's with the sudden change of heart? I thought these guys hated us! Not that I care. What do you want to do? There's a 2-on-2 division and a singles division. Which one you wanna enter?

Marcia: I, I can't. I'm sorry. I can't fight. I won't enter.

Harry: Hey, chief's orders. You have to enter!

Marcia: I'm sorry. Really, I can't.

Harry: Hey, what's up with you? Hey, Marcia! Snap out of it!

Marcia: I'm sorry. I really am! Good luck with the tournament, Harry, Matthew.

Harry: Oh, well. Let's you and me join the 2-on-2. I'll go enter our names. We've got some time, so go scope out the competition, see how they look. Now remember, you're still a bit of an amateur. Talk to the people here. You might learn something.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #1.

Boy #1: Nameless characters like us don't really stand out. That's why we're hanging out by the walls.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #2.

Boy #2: I'm just a minor character. I don't even rate having a name. I'm just here to balance out the numbers.

Matthew leaves and talks to a Police Squad Member.

Police Squad Member: Not too many people here yet. People are showing up late so that they could skip the speech. There are a hundred people registered for the match.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #3.

Boy #3: This is the first time I've entered a tournament sponsored by the police. Wanna bet that they win? I just think they probably rigged things in their favor, that's all I'm saying.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #4.

Boy #4: Wow! I get to show off my skills to the police squad! I can take any of 'em down in a fair match! I want to take out Captain Mira! Oh, uh, I meant in a fight, of course. When we fight. Er, yeah.

Matthew leaves and talks to Mira.

Mira: Thanks for coming, Matthew. Do your best. And take care of my brother.

Matthew leaves and talks to Evil's lackey, Lackey 1.

Lackey 1: Hmph! I'm not gonna let anyone from Steel Hearts beat me.

Matthew leaves and talks to Chief.

Chief: So, you're Matthew. I've heard about you. I'm expecting a solid match.

Matthew leaves and talks to Roy.

Roy: Ah, Matthew. A closer bond with the bounty hunters. What's the chief thinking? Especially at a time like this.

Matthew leaves and talks to Girl #1.

Girl #1: There are about a hundred people in the tourney today, but I don't see anywhere near that many. I'll bet everyone else is trying to be

fashionably late or maybe they wanted to skip the speech.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #5.

Boy #5: That was a pretty surprising speech. Most cops think bounty hunters are nothing but bottom-feeders.

Matthew leaves and talks to Evil.

Evil: Hello there, Matthew. You're entering, too? Well, good luck, I suppose. You'll need it if you want to keep up with me.

Matthew leaves and talks to Sophie.

Sophie: I'm performing temporary duties at the tournament. I'm going to be the commentator! It's such a huge tournament that they're using the training gym, too.

Matthew leaves and talks to Harry.

Harry: I talked to Sophie! She's entered us in the 2-on-2 division. We still got time so go talk to the people here.

Matthew leaves and talks to Marcia.

Marcia: I'm sorry. I need some time alone. Please.

Matthew: (quietly) I'll leave you alone.

Matthew leaves and talks to Wendy.

Wendy: The waiting room's full. You should have seen how many people they squeezed in there.

Matthew leaves and talks to Will.

Matthew: Huh? What are you doing here unsupervised? Where are your parents?

Will: Mom and Dad are here, too. Mom's stuck in the waiting room, and she can't get out.

Matthew leaves and talks to Girl #2.

Girl #2: I can't wait for our match! I just know we can win in B Block, darling.

Matthew leaves and talks to Boy #6.

Boy #6: I entered us in the 2-on-2 division. Looks like we're in B Block, honey.

Sophie makes an announcement.

Sophie: Thank you for waiting. We'll begin the first round of 2-on-2 division matches.

Harry: First round?

Sophie: That's right. There are eight blocks within the first round of matches. The team that takes first in its block moves on to the finals!

Harry: That's harsh.

Sophie: Participants in blocks A through D will battle here. Participants in blocks E through H will battle at the training gym.

Harry: We should stay here since we're in D Block.

Sophie: Will the teams go to their designated blocks?

Matthew goes to the designated D Block section with Harry. Their first opponents are Will and Wendy.

Wendy: Hey, neighbor! Hi, Harry! Let's go!

Will: Last time, we lost, but this time, we're gonna win for sure!

Harry: So our first opponents are not only children, but they're also your next-door neighbors?

Will: (quietly) If we concentrate on Harry, we might just win.

Harry: (quietly) I heard that.

Wendy: (quietly) I wanted to fight against Marcia. Harry's too much of a jerk.

Harry: (quietly) Hello! I can hear you!

Will: It's OK, Wendy. With Seal Head, my Funky Big Head robo I'll take down that jerk Harry!

Harry: (in his head) Hey, that smarts. (out loud) I'll explain that kid's robo. The Funky Big Head model has excellent defense and aerial capabilities. It can also do a continuous jump. However, it moves really slow on the ground. That's why when you use this type, you should jump constantly and attack from the air. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Good. By the way, you don't think I'm a jerk, do you?

Matthew: You're not ALWAYS a jerk.

Matthew, Harry, Will, and Wendy dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Wendy: Wah! We lost!

Harry: Aw, hey. Don't cry. (in his head) I don't like winning like this.

Will: It's OK. We lost one match, but all we need to do is win the next one.

Wendy: (sniffling) Really?

Harry: That's right! You'll win the next one for sure!

Wendy: But if we lose, I'd rather lose to Marcia. At least she's nice about it.

Harry: (in his head) Why doesn't anyone like me?

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Seal Head, and the Umbrella Pod. He returns to face his next opponents,

Harry: So we fight you next? Piece of cake.

Thomas: Hm? Do you know them, Anthony?

Anthony: Their faces ring a bell or two. Do you know them, Thomas?

Harry: Hey, weren't you two guys fighting each other at Hub Park a few days back?

Thomas: Oh, I remember you now! You're those bounty hunters!

Harry: But you guys were fighting. Why are you guys a team now?

Anthony: Well, you know how it goes. We'd been through so much. We had a lot in common, it turns out.

Thomas: And we can't even remember why we started fighting in the first place!

Anthony: Yeah, that's right! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Thomas: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! You're the best, buddy!

Harry: (in his head) These guys are really odd. (out loud) OK, listen, Matthew! I'm gonna tell you how to deal with rapid fire, like from the gatling gun. Move as though you're drawing a circle around your opponent. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Let's finish these guys off quickly!

Matthew, Harry, Anthony, and Thomas dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Anthony: That can't be! How could we lose? We had the power of friendship on our side!

Thomas: Anthony. What if? What if our friendship energy is drained? We need more friendship energy.

Anthony: You're right! Wanna go slug it out at the park again, Thomas?

Thomas: Yeah! That should strengthen the bonds of our friendship!

Anthony: That's right! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Thomas: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Let's go beat each other up!

Harry: (in his head) What is wrong with these guys?

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Crescent Bomb P, and the Trio Pod H. He returns to the holosseum deck to face his next opponents, two police squad members.

Harry: We're finally going against the police squad. This will be fun!

Police Squad Member #2: We're supposed to be putting aside our differences, so we'll go easy on you bottom-feeders.

Harry: No need. Let's do this for real, pal.

Police Squad Member #1: No way! We just want to get along!

Harry: I told you, you don't have to! We'll go at it for real!

Police Squad Member #1: We can't! If you win, it'll be because we took it easy on you!

Police Squad Member #2: That's correct. (quietly) We have to say something. We're starting to look really bad out here!

Police Squad Member #1: SHHHH! (quietly) Don't give away our plan.

Police Squad Member #2: (quietly) Oops. It slipped.

Harry: (quietly) Let's just get this over with. (normally) Listen, Matthew! If you tilt the bomb toward your opponent and shoot it, the bomb will fly far. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. Let's see how good the police squad really are!

Matthew, Harry, Police Squad Member #1, and Police Squad Member #2 dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Police Squad Member #1: Oh, no! We lost!

Police Squad Member #2: Of course we did. We took it easy on them. In the interest of friendship.

Police Squad Member #1: That's right. That's why we lost!

Police Squad Member #2: We lost on purpose, so we have nothing to be ashamed of!

Harry: (in his head) I'd be pretty ashamed.

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Right Flank Bomb H, and the Short Thrust Legs. He returns to face his next opponents, Carmen and Walt.

Carmen: Well then, Matthew and Harry. Let's have a clean match.

Walt: Thank you for last time.

Harry: What? The whole family entered?

Walt: Yeah, we thought it would be a good experience for the kids and increase our odds of winning!

Carmen: But things didn't work out the way we'd planned. We're in the same block as our kids!

Walt: It's nothing to worry about, though. We just have to survive the first round, Carmen!

Harry: (in his head) Carmen?

Carmen: You got that right! I'm going to buy an expensive bag with our winnings!

Walt: A bag? But I was thinking of buying a nice, stylish toupee.

Carmen: Oh, don't be absurd. What use would I get out of a toupee?

Walt: It wouldn't be for you! It would be for me! For my head!

Carmen: What? If you put anything on your head, it would just slip off!

Walt: WHAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY?

Harry: Um, hello? Can I interrupt? This tournament isn't for money.

Carmen: (quietly) That can't be.

Walt: (quietly) You're kidding.

Carmen: (quietly) My bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my bag, my lovely bag, my bag.

Walt: (quietly) My toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my toupee, my stylish toupee.

Carmen: You and your stupid tournament!

Walt: You're the one who suggested I take the day off to fight!

Carmen: You're the one who absolutely agreed with me!

Walt: YEAH, I DID! SO!?

Carmen: Argh! What am I going to do?! I've got this pent-up rage. I know, dear! Let's use it to beat up these destroyers of dreams!

Walt: You're right! Let's work together and beat them, Carmen!

Carmen: Yes! Let's!

Walt: Oh! I love you.

Carmen: I love you, too!

Harry: Whoa, wait a minute! Don't blame us! We just set the facts straight! Listen, Matthew. Every different robo has a totally different charge ability. You should try out all kinds of robo charges and plan them out. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Good. By the way, are they always like this?

Matthew, Harry, Carmen, and Walt dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Walt: Ouch. Are you all right, Carmen?

Carmen: Yes. How about you?

Walt: Yes, and I'm sorry. I should never have mentioned the tournament.

Carmen: No, it's my fault. I jumped to conclusions about the money. I'm sorry.

Walt: It's fine. Next time we'll just enter a tournament that actually mentions prize money.

Carmen: Yes, and we'll win that prize money and buy a lovely bag!

Walt: A bag? But I'm going to buy a stylish toupee!

Carmen: What are you talking about? Why don't you just color your head black with a marker?!

Walt: WHAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY?

Harry: (in his head) Not again.

Matthew leaves and goes to the parts generator. He receives the Right 5-Way Gun, and the Wide Jump Legs. He returns to face his next opponents, Bogey and Lloyd.

Bogey: I look forward to our fight.

Harry: Bogey. (quietly) What's a legitimate businessman with an illegal gambling ring like you doing at a tournament sponsored by the police like this?

Bogey: (quietly) If I become friends with them, they won't get suspicious.

Harry: (quietly) Clever.

Lloyd: (quietly) Plus, there are plenty of people here who love to battle, so I'm promoting my café.

Harry: (quietly) I get it. You're going up to the participants and gathering contestants for your gambling matches.

Bogey: (quietly) That's right. Don't tell the police.

Harry: (quietly) I won't. But don't you think they'll get suspicious if we keep whispering like this?

Bogey: (quietly) You, you think they might? Well, we ought to do something!

Lloyd: (quietly) Like what?! (normally) I LOVE ROBO BATTLES! Feel the power of my Peregrine! Little Raider, GO!

Harry: (quietly) You're overdoing it. (normally) OK, Matthew. The Little Raider can move real quickly on the ground. Its aerial abilities are high, too, but its defense is unbelievably low. It gets knocked down easily. When you're using this type of robo, it's best to move as much as you can. Don't ever stop. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK. But you think Bogey can fight?

Matthew, Harry, Bogey, and Lloyd dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Lloyd: Bogey, we lost.

Bogey: We sure did. (quietly) But winning didn't matter. We promoted the café and the battle nights!

Lloyd: (quietly) Yes, of course.

Bogey: Well, Harry, Matthew. Give our regards to Ernest.

Lloyd: Good luck with the rest of your matches.

Harry: Sure. (in his head) When they talk all nice like that, they don't sound like criminals.

Sophie makes an announcement.

Sophie: The preliminaries for blocks A through D are finished. Congratulations to the winning teams.

Harry: Thank you, Sophie! Looks like we're first place. Obviously.

Sophie: The winners at the training gym have also been announced. We'll begin the drawings with the winning 8 teams. Once we pair up the teams, we'll begin the matches to decide who goes to the semifinals.

They do so.

Sophie: We would now like to begin the first match of the semifinals!

Matthew leaves and goes parts generator. He receives the Swift and the Satellite Pod. He returns to face his next opponents, Mira and Roy.

Mira: So. It's finally time for a good, solid match between the police and the bounty hunters.

Harry: Sis.

Roy: You're always bragging about how tough you are. Let's see how you hold up now.

Harry: Hmph! Yeah, and we'll just see how good you police goons really are!

Roy: I guess we will.

Mira: Quit it, you two. I'm looking forward to this. It's been a while since I looked forward to a fight.

Harry: I'm glad you're relaxed about this. Every time WE have a battle, it's always life or death! All right, listen up. My sister's no pushover, so I'll need to get you some advanced tips, got it? When you approach enemies from the air, circle around them. Never fly straight toward them. That way, you can dodge incoming fire while you're circling. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: OK, good. I really don't wanna fight my sister.

Matthew, Harry, Mira, and Roy dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Roy: We. We lost. I'm sorry, Captain Mira. I underestimated them.

Mira: Roy, let's face facts with dignity. We lost. Harry. You've gotten really good. You should consider joining the police squad. What do you think?

Harry: Not that old song again!

Mira: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. I'll let it go. For today. By the way, Harry. Is Marcia OK? She's not competing, and when I try to talk to her, it's like she's lost in the clouds.

Harry: That's right. I forgot about Marcia.

Matthew: I hope she's doing all right.

Mira and Roy leave. Matthew attempts to talk to Marcia.

Marcia: Oh. Matthew. Please. I need to be alone. Don't mind me.

Matthew returns to the holosseum deck where Harry was and talks to him.

Harry: Did you talk to Marcia? How was she?

Matthew: Not good at all. She's still sad. I can't tell what's bothering her.

Harry: OK. Let's go see Marcia together.

Matthew and Harry walk up to Marcia.

Harry: Marcia. Sorry, but my stomach ain't doing to well. Change places with me.

Marcia: But. I can't. And we just change contestants in the middle of a tournament.

Harry: Not a problem. Sophie will take care of it. She's a pal of mine.

Marcia: No. I.

Harry: Man. Can't you see how much pain I'm in? And you still won't help?

Marcia: It's not that I don't want. It's not that.

Harry: GREAT! THANKS! Hey, Sophie. Marcia's changing places with me!

Sophie: OK. That's fine!

Marcia: Wait! But, but.

Sophie makes an announcement.

Sophie: And now, it's time for the semifinals!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Bubble Gun, and the Wall Bomb. Matthew walks up to the middle holosseum deck to face Evil and Lackey 1.

Evil: Huh? Weren't you supposed to be fighting with Harry? Well, this last-

minute change in the roster won't affect us the slightest. Do what you want.

Marcia: I, I can't fight.

Evil: You can't fight? Well, now that IS a problem. It wouldn't be fun if it were a 2-on-1 match and forfeiting just isn't my style. I know! Hey, you! Take a break!

Lackey 1: Sir, yes, sir!

Lackey 1 walks away.

Evil: And so, Matthew. It's just you and me now. No one to hide behind. No one to save you. And after all, it's only a game. Who cares if we change the rules a little? Shall we begin? After this little helpful tip from me? I don't want this match to be TOO easy, so I think I ought to give you a pointer or two to even things. Some guns and bombs change abilities when they're fired during a jump. You didn't know, did you? Give yourself a little variety by switching between ground and air attacks. Take it from me. Aren't you happy I shared that? DID YOU FOLLOW ALL OF THAT?

Matthew: Got it.

Evil: Excellent. There may yet be hope for you. You listen well, after all.

Matthew: (quietly) What an egomaniac.

Matthew and Evil dive. Matthew wins.

Lackey 1: Impossible. Evil lost?

Evil: Calm down! This tournament offers no prize! It's only for sport. Our glory lies elsewhere. I was done with the match, and so I simply decided it was time to be done with it. That's all.

Lackey 1: So, you threw the match on purpose?

Evil: Naturally. And I think perhaps I gave Matthew some confidence in the process.

Lackey 1: You are truly amazing, Evil! So concerned for the feelings of your foes! Such compassion!

Evil: Heh. What can I say? I have a big heart. Let's head back, shall we?

Evil leads Lackey 1 out of the police squad training room.

Sophie: Ladies and gentlemen! We have the teams that will go on to the finals! The training gym has announced the winners of its semifinals as well! Once that team arrives, we'll start the final match!

They wait for a while.

Sophie: At last, we have come to the final match of the police-squad battle tournament!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Left Pulse Gun. He returns to the center holosseum deck to face his final opponents, Linda and Ernest.

Harry: Hey, what's going on here? Why are you fighting Linda and Ernest?

Ernest: Why? We entered our names and won all of our battles. That's all. Right, Linda?

Linda: That's right. We were just lucky.

Harry: But, Linda. You were freaked out from the lab attack. And what about that robo yesterday?

Linda: Oh? That's why I've come. To refresh myself.

Harry: What's going on here?! I gotta give some tips! You need to watch out for Linda, but your main target is Ernest. Good luck, Marcia!

Marcia: Matthew. I, I can't do it.

Harry: Not again! We need you! You're against Ernest and Linda!

Marcia: I'm sorry. Really.

Matthew: Forget it, Harry. Marcia, you stay here and watch. I'll fight by myself.

Harry: Matthew. Let me help out a little! Some more advice, maybe. You'll see a letter marker, like D or C, next to the names of bombs and pods. That indicates what type of blast effect that weapon has. Got it?

Matthew: Got it. Thanks, Harry.

Matthew dives.

Linda: Marcia?

Ernest: It's OK, she'll be fine. And this way, we'll win for sure.

Linda: But. But.

Ernest: Don't worry. If she needs the rest, let her sit this out.

Ernest dives.

Linda: Marcia.

Harry: What's wrong with you, Marcia?! Matthew may be good, but he can't win alone!

Marcia: (quietly) No, no! My brother.

Harry: Huh?

Marcia: My brother. He's watching me from somewhere! Please help me! PLEASE, HELP ME!

Harry: Did she say her brother? (quietly) This was all about your brother? (Normally) YOU DUMMY! NOW, YOU LISTEN TO ME! Stop asking your brother for help! He's gone!

Marcia: What?

Harry: Come on, do you care about what happens to Matthew or not? You don't know how many times we've worried about you, fought for you. This here's the guy who saved you even though he thought he was gonna lose! Remember? But, no! You've been busy thinking about your brother while we're risking our lives for you! Marcia! Snap out of it! Your brother is gone! Face reality! No matter how sad you get or how hard you cry, your brother's not coming back! You don't want to face the facts! Your brother left you alone, and you're not facing the truth!

Marcia: The truth about my brother? I haven't faced it?

Harry: How long do you plan on living in the past!?

Marcia: But the past. And my brother. Something about the past?

Harry: ****in' *****!

Marcia: (in her head) I, I've only been looking to the past for my brother? That, Harry might be right. I've always been strange. Friends made fun of me. Adults laughed at me. I never trusted anyone except my brother, who always protected me. He said. Marcia, one day, you'll find someone who understands you. Trust me. I was so young and I just wanted to believe him. He was my only friend. But what if? No, my brother told me that one day, I would find someone who would understand me. And told me to be patient until that day came! That's what he said! I, I, I never realized I was being so selfish not thinking of others. (out loud) Harry.

Harry: What?

Marcia: I'm sorry. I see it now.

Harry: You see what?

Marcia: What I. What I want to do. Right now, I want to help the people that I care for! That care for me!

Harry: Then fight! Help Matthew!

Marcia: I will! (in her head) Matthew, I'm so sorry! Now it's my turn to help you!

Marcia dives.

Linda: Thanks for waiting, Ernest, Matthew.

Linda dives.

Ernest: YOU'RE HERE! I thought I was gonna lose to Matthew! Hey, Matthew! Marcia and Linda are here! Let's start over! (in his head) Man, did I get lucky!

Matthew and Marcia win.

Harry: YES! WE WON!

Sophie: CONGRATULATIONS! THE WINNERS ARE MARCIA AND MATTHEW FROM STEEL HEARTS!

Chief: Mmm.

Marcia: Matthew, Harry. Thank you. That battle helped me realize.

Ernest: Marcia. You've tried to become stronger by fighting only for yourself. But there's a limit to what you can do alone. Just now, you fought to save Matthew for the first time. Maybe now, you can break down that wall you've built around your heart.

Harry: Did you hear that? Ernest actually said something nice. Almost poetic. Hm.

Linda: Oh, Ernest is quite the poetic spirit. Graduated with honors from Takuma University.

Harry: Takuma? Takuma University? Only the best of the best go there. The best of the best.

Linda: Yes. We graduated in the same class. No matter how hard I studied, I could never catch up to him.

Harry: I, I can't believe it. (in his head) I guess you really can't judge a book by its cover, huh?

Ernest: Ha, ha, ha, ha! What do you think of me now?!

Harry: (in his head) I also can't believe that Linda's the same age as Ernest.

Mira: Marcia, I look forward to you taking your Class-A license test. We'll have to talk more then.

Marcia: Uh, sure. Thank you.

Mira: I know, Harry. Let's invite Marcia and Matthew over for a celebration.

Marcia: Um. That would be very nice.

Mira: Ernest, would you like to come over, too?

Ernest: Are you kidding? Why would I celebrate losing to my own staff? Thanks, but no thanks.

Linda: Well, why don't you join me, and we'll have ourselves a little consolation party?

Ernest: Great idea. Let's do that.

Harry: What? You're going out with Linda? Can. Can I come with you?

Mira: No dice. You're with us.

Harry: (quietly) Fine.

Mira: Matthew, Marcia. Stop by our house later. Harry, let's go home and get ready.

Harry: WHAT!? YOU MEAN I HAVE TO HELP, TOO?

Mira: OF COURSE! LET'S GO!

Harry: (quietly) Man.

Mira and Harry leave.

Ernest: We're done for today. Marcia, Matthew. Don't give Mira any trouble.

Marcia: I'm going to stop by my house first. What about you, Matthew?

Matthew: I'm tired. I'm going home, too.

Marcia: I'll see you later. Thanks for today.

Matthew goes home. It's in the late afternoon.

Matthew: I guess it's time to head over to Mira's house.

Matthew goes to the parts generator in his house to receive the Right Pulse Gun and the Acrobat Bomb. Matthew leaves and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Oh, Matthew. You're going out? Got a date tonight? It's starting to get dark out!

Matthew: Yeah, I'm going out.

Lucy: But it's so late! Let me guess. You and Harry are hitting the town tonight? I thought as much. That Harry's a bad influence, I tell you.

Matthew: No, no, no! It's nothing like that. Harry and his older sister, Mira, invited me over for dinner.

Lucy: Oh really? I thought as much. That Harry might seem like a bad egg, but inside, he's a sweet little boy.

Matthew leaves and enters Harry's home. It's dark in their house.

Matthew: Hey, I'm here.

Mira: Ah, Matthew. I'm glad you could join us tonight.

Harry: Don't mind the mess.

Mira: And whose fault is that, HARRY!?

Marcia: Matthew.

Matthew: Marcia, you beat me here!

Marcia: Matthew, Mira made a feast for us. She's amazing.

Harry: I HELPED OUT, TOO!

Mira: YOU ONLY CARRIED THE FOOD!

Harry: (quietly) Uh. Yeah, but.

Marcia: (quietly) Hee, hee.

Matthew: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

The lights come on.

Harry: Hey, Sis! I'm begging you, mellow out tonight and don't go all cop on us, OK? Just don't embarrass me!

Mira: Ha, ha, ha. I promise, I won't embarrass you if you don't embarrass me! By, for example, wasting the rest of your life and never making yourself an officer of the law!

Harry: I told you. I don't want to! It's nothing against the police. I just don't want to work for you! I'm not gonna be a kid forever, you know!

Mira: You're right. And you won against us today. You've really grown up, Harry.

Harry: Sis. Uh, by the way, what's the police squad been up to lately? You know, what with the tournament they hosted and everything.

Mira: Didn't you hear the speech? We want a good relationship with the public.

Harry: Sounds weird to me.

Marcia: And what are they doing about the robo that showed up at Daimon's and Bogey's?

Harry: Yeah. What was that robo?

Mira: Don't worry about it. Today's a celebration. Let's not dwell on work and stuff like that. Um. Say, Matthew, that's an interesting watch. Where'd you get it?

Matthew: This? I don't know where it's from. It was a gift from my dad when I was little. He told me to wear it all the time as a reminder. It's all I have left of him, really.

Mira: I see. Sorry for snooping.

Harry: What brought the watch up, Sis?

Mira: Oh, nothing. It's just, it looked unusual.

Harry: Hmmm. Yeah, you know, I don't think I've ever seen a watch like that before. It belonged to your father, huh? You've never told us about him.

Marcia: What did he do?

Matthew: I don't really know. He was pretty busy, though. I only saw him about once a month when I was a kid. For the past few years, I haven't seen him at all. Money shows up to pay for expenses, but that's it. Then, suddenly, I get this letter saying he'd died at work. There was no return address.

Marcia: That must have been awful for you, Matthew.

Harry: That's strange. A letter with no return address?

Mira: I would have thought someone from his work would at least have stopped by to explain.

Marcia: Wasn't there anything else?

Matthew: Just a will that came with the letter. And all it really said was "Son, become a commander."

Harry: What? Had he ever said anything to you about that before? That's just so weird.

Mira: I'm sure your father must have known for some time that you had what it takes to command robo.

Harry: You think so? Marcia's older brother's missing, and then Matthew's father. What were they doing?

Mira: HARRY! Don't be rude!

Harry: Oh, uh. Sorry, I was just thinking out loud.

Mira: Don't pay any attention to my brother or his manners.

Marcia: Oh. I'm fine. Matthew, were you offended?

Matthew: Not at all.

Marcia: We're fine, Harry. We're not offended.

Harry: I really am sorry.

Mira: What a team.

Harry: Team?

Mira: Yeah. You three really make a good team.

Harry: You think so?

Mira: Marcia, Matthew. Take care of Harry for me, OK?

Harry: What? You say it like I'm a burden.

Marcia: (in her head) I wish I were this close to my brother.

Harry: Hm? What's wrong, Marcia?

Marcia: What? Oh, look at the time. I think I should be going.

Matthew: Yeah, I think I should be heading off, too.

Harry: Sure, I'll see you tomorrow.

Marcia: Oh, and thank you for dinner.

Mira: It was my pleasure. Stop by anytime.

Marcia leaves.

Harry: Matthew. What're you doing after this? You going home?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm going home. It's getting late. Thanks for dinner, Mira.

Harry: Glad you came. I'll see you tomorrow.

Matthew leaves. Matthew goes home and goes to sleep. He wakes up. He gets dressed and then goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Ah! You're still getting yourself out of bed! Good, good. All my hard work has paid off. It was worth the effort. I think I might cry. Sniff. Next, we should work on getting you married! I can't wait until you have kids of your own!

Matthew: I wouldn't hold my breath if I were you.

Lucy: Don't be silly. Just remember to work hard. After all, you've got a child to support! Or you will. Someday.

Matthew leaves and enters the office.

Ernest: Ah, you're all here. Good work in the tournament yesterday. I never thought you'd beat me!

Harry: (in his head) Huh? I thought he didn't even want to hire him. Wasn't it me?

Marcia: And I was thinking that Matthew and I made a good team yesterday.

Harry: (in his head) Yeah, but yesterday, you were all "I don't want to fight." and we had to trick you into fighting with him.

Ernest: As a result of yesterday's matches, the police have asked us to join them in a practice round.

Harry: Huh? What do they mean? Sis didn't say anything about a group practice.

Matthew: Something's not right here.

Ernest: I feel the same way. They called me directly, at it sounds like they really want us to participate.

Harry: What? Why?

Ernest: Like always, ask your sister, not me. She'll answer your questions.

Harry: You really don't know?

Ernest loudly bangs on his desk.

Ernest: HOW SHOULD I KNOW?! GET OVER THERE! NOW!

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to police squad HQ. They enter the training room and talk to Chief.

Chief: It's good of you all to come.

Harry: Hey, Chief, how about a shorter speech today, huh?

Chief: Ha, ha, ha. I don't always talk like that. Only on special occasions, public appearances and such. After watching you fight, I asked for a training match since you were so good.

Harry: Yeah, sure. So what're you after?

Mira: HARRY! You're talking to the chief!

Harry: I mean isn't that odd?! A crazy robo is running amok and we're enjoying a practice match?

Mira: HARRY!

Chief: Ha, ha, ha. It's alright, Mira. Of course, he'd think it's odd. To tell you the truth, we have a plan. I'll tell you after the match.

Harry: (quietly) Hmph. Well, I don't like it.

Chief: Let's jump straight into the training matches, shall we? Who would like to start?

Harry: I'LL GO. (in his head) And then I'll find out what they're up to.

Chief: So, we'll start with Harry. You'll be fighting two squad members, Roy and Mira, with no breaks.

Harry: WHAT?! NO BREAKS!?

Harry won all of his matches.

Harry: I, I won all my matches. I even beat my sister!

Mira: Harry. You've improved so much! When did that happen?

Chief: You surprised me, too. Magnificent work. Marcia, you're next.

Marcia: Yes.

Marcia won all of her matches.

Chief: Another surprise! First, Harry, and now Marcia. That's four in a row!

Marcia: I, I can't believe it. I beat Mira.

Mira: Outstanding, Marcia. Fantastic work. You win!

Chief: Well, well. That speaks very highly of your skills. I didn't think both Roy and Mira would lose.

Roy: I'm sorry, sir. I've disgraced the police squad.

Chief: Don't blame yourself, Roy. You fought well. Both Harry and Marcia are quite skilled, though.

Harry: HA! YOU HEAR THAT!?! IT WAS SKILL!

Marcia: But, Harry, you almost lost. You got lucky at the end.

Harry: (quietly) Don't rain on my parade. I won, so who cares.

Chief: Ha, ha, ha. Well, that just leaves Matthew. Just come talk to me when you're ready to start.

Matthew goes and talks to Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Good. Let's bring on your first opponent.

Matthew's first opponent is Police Squad Member #1.

Police Squad Member #1: If I lose three matches in a row, I'll never get promoted. The chief told me not to hold back. I've got to take this seriously. (quietly) But I still think I'm going to lose, so please take it easy on me.

Harry: Listen, Matthew! While you're on the ground, do a low-air dash. It's a good way to move quickly without having to move too high in the air. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Police Squad Member #1: That's not fair! He's giving him advice! But I heard every word of it, so HA! Now I know your secrets!

Matthew and Police Squad Member #1 dive. Matthew wins.

Police Squad Member #1: I, I lost! My promotion! No! I'll never get it now!

Chief: Good, good. We'll continue when you're ready.

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Straight Bomb G. He returns to Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Good. Let's start the second match.

Matthew's opponent is Police Squad Member #2.

Police Squad Member #2: I have an obligation as one of the tournament champions. I can't lose three matches in a row! I'm doing this FOR THE DEPARTMENT!

Harry: Listen, Matthew. Be sure to use the holosseum's obstacles to your advantage when you're attacking. Lob bombs over walls, or try shooting from behind a wall while doing a short jump. You're vulnerable right after you fire your gun, so it's good to hide behind a wall until it passes. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Police Squad Member #2: Behind a wall. Yeah, I got it!

Matthew and Police Squad Member #2 dive. Matthew wins.

Police Squad Member #2: Was the singles division easier than the 2-on-2 division?

Chief: Mmm. All right, you two can return to your duties.

Police Squad Member #1: Yes, sir!

Police Squad Member #1 and Police Squad Member #2 leave.

Chief: Roy, you're next.

Roy: Yes, sir!

Linda: Excuse me, Chief.

Chief: Yes, Linda?

Linda: Before Roy fights, would you mind if I had a quick match against Matthew?

Chief: Hm. I don't see why not, but I'm not sure I see why, either.

Linda: I saw him in his very first fight, when he'd just started. I want to see how he's progressed.

Chief: Fair enough. Go right ahead. Matthew, let me know when you're ready.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Submarine Bomb K. He returns to the Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Good. Linda, you may begin.

Linda: I'm ready whenever you are. You might not believe me, but I've been well trained. Don't hold back, OK?

Harry: Man, you get to fight Linda. Lucky dog. I'm not sure I want to help you beat her.

Marcia: Harry.

Harry: All right, all right. Listen, Matthew. Dodge slow rounds with strong homing abilities by letting them come in really close to you. Once it closes in on you, just jump over the incoming attack! Don't forget, though. You'll be vulnerable right when you land, so try to be careful. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Why does Matthew get to fight with Linda?

Matthew and Linda dive. Matthew wins.

Linda: Oh, my! It's just as I thought. You've become a tremendous commander.

Chief: Good, good. Roy, you're next.

Roy: Yes, sir!

Chief: Matthew, your next opponent is Roy. Come see me when you're ready.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Dual Bomb C. He returns to Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Good. Roy! Let's begin the match!

Roy: Don't get the wrong idea. I don't have anything against bounty hunters personally. I just want to know that the police have the best and most skilled people defending our city.

Harry: Listen, Matthew. This is an important tip. When two robos fire guns at one another and one of the robos is knocked down, that's called a system overload. What that means is, if you fire your gun and knock his robo down before he hits you. The other robo's rounds vanish, and you won't get hit by his rounds! If you use the system overload to your advantage, you'll stand a good chance of winning. Don't forget, though. You can only overload a robo's system with your gun. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: If you listen to my advice, Roy shouldn't be a problem!

Matthew and Roy dive. Matthew wins.

Roy: Hm. That gives me a good idea of where my skill level is. I still have a lot to learn.

Chief: Hmmm. Well, that just leaves Mira!

Mira: Yes, sir!

Chief: Matthew, your last opponent is Mira. Come see me when you're ready.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Wave Pod. He returns to Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Good. Mira! Let's start the battle!

Mira: I really think that my brother wouldn't have come this far without your help. Thanks for being there with him, but let me warn you. This match is for real! Let's do this!

Harry: Listen, Matthew. I paid close attention when I fought her, and I think I've got some advice. Be careful around the four corners of the holosseum. If she fires pods from both sides and a bomb from above, you'll have nowhere to run. Make sure you keep moving, and stay away from the corners. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Good, good. My sister's strong, but I'm sure you can handle it!

Matthew and Mira dive. Matthew wins.

Mira: You three are really something. Like I said at dinner, you're a good team. The ultimate team, even.

Chief: Well, I was planning on ending this with Mira. However, you look like you could handle one final battle with me.

Mira: Chief, you're going to fight?!

Chief: Yes, I think I understand Linda's reasoning now. I want to see this boy's skill firsthand.

Roy: Incredible! This is unheard of! The chief's battles are the stuff of legends here in the squad!

Chief: That's not true. I'm just an old man who's been retired from active duty for years. I'm sorry, Matthew. Just one more match. Come to me when you're ready.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Float Pod F. He returns to Chief.

Chief: Are you ready? Shall we start?

Matthew: Yes, I'm ready. Let's begin.

Chief: Thank you. Then, let's start. I appreciate you listening to a selfish old man's request. It's been a long time since I've gotten excited for watching a fight. Shall we start?

Harry: I'm not sure it'll help at this point, but here's a little advice. If your opponent has a gun with a slow rate of fire, it's best to rush in directly and go for a system overload. For example, if your opponent has a hornet or a rayfall gun, that's a good time for an overload. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: I don't know how strong the chief is, but good luck.

Matthew and Chief dive. Matthew wins.

Chief: I concede. Roy, Mira. What do you think of these three?

Roy: I'd hate to say it, but they have magnificent skills.

Mira: Definitely close to Class S.

Chief: And, Linda, what is your opinion of their mental abilities?

Linda: I think these three are the most stable and reliable, not to mention trustworthy, of bounty hunters.

Chief: I see. Well, shall we make them take the license test?

Harry: TEST?! What do you mean, test? I don't wanna have to study.

Mira: Harry, it's just a skill test.

Marcia: Excuse me, but license tests cost money, and

Roy: (interrupting) You don't have to worry about expenses for the Class-S test. It's free.

Marcia: Class S? I thought licenses only went as high as Class A.

Linda: Normally, that's true. Class A is the highest rank a civilian can hold. But the Class-S test is different. In order to qualify for this test, you must be recommended by a Class-S commander.

Harry: This is all so sudden, you know? I'm not sure I'm following all this. It's confusing!

Chief: I must apologize. Yesterday's tournament and today's matches were simply to test your skills. And you now have the recommendation of no fewer than four Class-S commanders? Naturally, I am Class S.

Roy: I've earned my Class-S license, too.

Mira: Me too.

Harry: WHAT?! I THOUGHT YOU WERE CLASS A!

Mira: Well, I can't exactly tell you that I carry a license whose very existence is classified, can I?

Linda: I'm Class S, too, incidentally.

Harry: WHAT?! Linda, you're Class S? But you're a scientist, not a commander! Now, I'm totally confused.

Chief: We'll discuss this more later. Right now, you need to take this test. If you'll all just follow me, I'll direct you to the examination hall.

Marcia: Yes, sir.

Harry: I get the feeling we don't have any choice. Oh, well. As long as it's not a written test.

Chief: Ha, ha, ha. Follow me.

Chief leads Matthew, Harry, Marcia, Linda, Mira, and Roy to the examination hall.

Chief: This is the examination hall. We need to upgrade you to Class S as quickly as possible. I want each of you to go through a door. You'll find a test machine inside. All you need to do is simply defeat the test robo. That's it. Understood?

Marcia: Yes. I understand.

Marcia goes through the right door.

Harry: With my skills, I'm sure I'll do fine, but I'm still not gonna join the police squad!

Harry goes through the left door.

Chief: Well, Matthew, you might as well go take your test right now.

Matthew goes through the center door. He goes to the parts generator and receives the Sword Storm gun, and the Standard Pod F. He goes up to the computer.

Computer: Welcome. We will now begin your Class-S license test.

Matthew: OK. I'm gonna pass this test.

Matthew dives and wins.

Computer: You win.

Matthew: My opponent. Was it that robo?

Matthew goes back outside.

Marcia: What's going on? My opponent was. Somehow, I managed to win. What about you, Matthew?

Matthew: I had to fight that robo, too. And its holosseum was really pretty, just like the other robo's.

Marcia: Yes. I've never seen anything like the environment in that holosseum. Harry, how about you?

Harry: I had to fight that freak robo thing we saw the other day. I won, but GIVE ME A BREAK! That thing was super strong! It practically turned my robo into scrap metal!

Chief: How are their results, Mira?

Mira: All three of them have officially passed the Class-S test.

Chief: Congratulations. As of today, you each are Class-S commanders.

Marcia: Class-S.

Chief: Now listen, all of you. What I'm about to tell you is very important. Only Class-S commanders know this. It is considered highly classified by the government.

Harry: WHO CARES! WHAT ABOUT MY ROBO?

Chief: All right, all right. We'll repair it for you here. Remember, this is classified. You are being trusted with information that you can never reveal.

Matthew: We understand.

Chief: Very well. The robo you fought is called Rahu.

Marcia: Rahu? That's a type of robo or something?

Chief: Not exactly. Rahu is not a robo in the traditional sense.

Harry: Then what is it?

Chief: Rahu is a living being, just like us.

Harry: Eh, so it's not a robo. It still fights like one. What's the difference?

Chief: Rahu. Several hundred years ago, Rahu nearly destroyed the human race. When you took the Class-S test, you fought a simulation derived from Rahu's behavior.

Marcia: Destroyed the human race? Impossible! We'd have heard something about it.

Chief: No, it's been kept absolutely out of the public domain. No citizen knows a thing about it.

Marcia: And that holosseum?

Chief: Its holosseum is built from an entirely natural environment.

Matthew: Natural? What do you mean?

Chief: Before Rahu came, much of the world was covered in wild growth, entirely uncontrolled by man. Rahu took that from us, covered the world in a darkness. Nothing natural remains. Everything that lives here does so because men control every aspect of its growth artificially. The word nature itself has lost almost all meaning in our modern world. But once, real trees, grass, and soil covered the earth with little to no artificial controls.

Harry: ARGH! You're spewing nonsense about trees, and my robo is broken! I shouldn't have come here!

Mira: HARRY, LISTEN TO WHAT THE CHIEF HAS TO SAY!

Roy: Chief, Captain Mira. Excuse me for interfering, but maybe they've had enough for one day. They're tired, and they can't possibly take in all this information at once.

Chief: You may be right. Mira. Let them go home for today. They'll need to rest.

Mira: Roger. Good work, everyone. You may all go home. We'll talk more later.

Marcia: Yes. Well, I'm going home. I'm going to think it over. Harry, Matthew.

Marcia leaves.

Harry: If Sis wants me to think about this, I guess I'd better go think about it. See ya, Matthew.

Harry leaves.

Mira: Matthew. What're you gonna do?

Matthew: I'm going home, too.

Mira: OK. Get some rest.

Matthew leaves. The phone wakes him up.

Matthew: Mm? The phone? Who's calling me this early?

Matthew answers the phone.

Matthew: Hello?

Ernest: MATTHEW, WAKE UP! That robo is back! It's at the Daimon Chinese Restaurant. Dendai Don called up and said the thing's tearing his place up! Get over there and help out!

Matthew: Where's Harry and Marcia?

Ernest: I've already contacted them. They should be on their way. Get over there and meet up with them.

Matthew hangs up the phone and gets dressed. He goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Good morning. Oh, you're all grown up now and waking up on your own. That's so nice. Anyway, isn't it a glorious day? It's so peaceful. With all of this peace, the bounty hunter business must be slow.

Matthew: It's not all that peaceful. There's a case at Daimon's, and I'm just heading over there now.

Lucy: Oh, a case at Daimon, eh? Probably some customer disputing his bill, huh? There's no worse criminal in the world than a man who won't pay his restaurant bill, I tell you.

Matthew: I, I'll see you later.

Lucy: Be careful.

Matthew leaves and enters Daimon. Harry and Marcia are there watching Evil fight Rahu.

Marcia: Oh, Matthew. You're here. Rahu's grown stronger. Evil's having a terrible time with it.

Harry: Evil was already here fighting Rahu when we got here. LOOK!

Somehow, Evil beat Rahu.

Harry: Incredible! Evil defeated Rahu!

Marcia: Evil, the police squad's after that robo. We need to turn it over to them.

Evil: Not a chance. I'm taking this robo with me as a prize. Call it my reward for a hard day's work.

Marcia: A prize?

Evil: Actually. When, I bring it, I'll (quietly) ha, (normally) I'll (quietly) hh (normally) JOIN THE Z SYNDICATE!

Harry: WHAT?! So that's your game, is it? Man, always thought you were stupid, but this takes the cake!

Evil: Hmph. Say what you will. If it will help the beautiful Eliza, I'll do anything in my power.

Marcia: Eliza?

Evil: You've met her. She's extremely beautiful and strong. The most amazing person in the world.

Marcia: Oh! You mean that strange woman?

Harry: But if you're going to give them that robo then that means

Isabella: Well, well. You know about Rahu? What a surprise.

Harry: Sure! I know a lot more than Evil, and I'm better looking to boot!
Come on, let's go!

Isabella: Evil? Who is this Evil you're about? Such an unusual name. I don't really like to fight with robos, but if you insist.

Harry: Heh heh heh! Just you watch! I'll show you what I'm made of. OH, MAN!
I FORGOT! MY ROBO IS BROKEN!

Isabella: What's wrong?

Harry: Uh.

Marcia: I'll, I'll.

Harry: Marcia, you lost to this woman last time.

Marcia: Thanks for worrying. But I won't lose this time.

Isabella: You people make no sense to me. What are you talking about? I don't seem to recall ever fighting a young girl like you before.

Harry: You lie!

Evil: (quietly) Sob. She's forgotten me. Sob.

Matthew: Don't worry, Harry, Marcia. I'll take care of this.

Marcia: Matthew.

Harry: That's right! Matthew, you do it! You already beat her once!

Isabella: Such utter nonsense. Already beat me once? What's that supposed to mean? Well, I don't see how it matters very much. So, we are to fight? You're such a young boy. You need every advantage you can get. Go visit the parts generator before our match.

Matthew does so, but receives nothing. He returns to Isabella.

Isabella: Are you ready?

Matthew: Yeah, I'm ready. Let's start.

Isabella: Very well. Stand in front of me.

He does so.

Isabella: Then let's begin. Let me see if you're worth the trouble.

Matthew and Isabella dive. Matthew wins.

Isabella: Interesting skills. You leave me no choice. I didn't want to hurt you, but I'm going to have to turn off the safety switch. I hope you don't mind all too much, darling.

Oboro: HOLD IT.

Oboro and Sergei walk in.

Marcia: Ah!

Oboro: I said hold it! All of you! Rahu belongs to me!

Harry: Oh, not more freaks!

Isabella: Well, if it isn't Oboro? How about you just leave the robo with me? After all, we both work for the Z Syndicate. Courtesy has never been your strong point, but whatever happened to ladies first? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Oboro: This is no time for jokes! You want Rahu for yourself, like always! But it belongs to Z, do you hear me!? Or do you want me to use skill to take it away? There are two of us, you know?

Isabella: (quietly) Even I couldn't handle two foes at once. (normally) I am in no rush. I'll leave for now, but mark my word, I'll be back. I'll come back for Rahu. In the meantime, take care. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Oboro: Talk is cheap.

Isabella: I do hope we meet again, children. Good-bye.

Isabella leaves.

Oboro: Heh heh. Let's grab Rahu and get out of here. You kids better not get in our way.

Harry: They're gonna take Rahu. Man, if only I had my robo.

Marcia: Matthew. Let's pair up. We have to stop them!

Harry: Marcia? The last time we bumped into these guys, you said (quietly) "can't fight." (normally) Remember?

Matthew: Are you gonna be OK?

Marcia: I need to fight this battle. I need him to tell me why he changed, why he's there. He's my brother.

Harry: YOU'RE BROTHER?!

Matthew: What?!

Sergei: Marcia, you knew.

Harry: (in his head) It. It really is Marcia's brother, Sergei. That explains a lot.

Oboro: What? She's your little sister? I suppose we'll have to take it easy on her now.

Sergei: I'd appreciate it, Oboro.

Matthew, Marcia, Sergei, and Oboro dive. Matthew and Marcia win.

Oboro: Hey, hey! Your sister and her friend here are pretty good!

Sergei: Yes, I'm surprised. Marcia, you've grown strong.

Oboro: If she weren't your sister, I would've killed her, but we'll let her go for now.

Sergei: Thank you.

Oboro: And then we'll take Rahu.

Marcia: Sergei, wait!

All of a sudden, the lights get very, very bright.

Harry: Hey! What's this?! I can't see a thing!

The lights go back to normal with Oboro, Sergei, Evil and Rahu gone.

Harry: Darn it. They got away.

Matthew: And they took Rahu.

Marcia: Sergei.

Harry: Evil's gone, too. Must've snuck out during the fight.

Marcia: We need to contact the police squad.

Harry: Yeah. This is all happening so quickly. Yesterday, we hear about Rahu, and now this. Which reminds me. Sis wanted us to go back to the police HQ today anyway. She wanted us to hear the rest of the story about Rahu.

Marcia: I feel bad. We're going to have to tell them Rahu was stolen.

Harry: I know what you mean. But we'd better head over there now.

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to police squad HQ. They enter the Chief's room to see Chief and Mira there.

Chief: Thanks for coming. Did you get some rest? It's time for us to continue our discussion from yesterday. What I'm about to tell you is something only Class-S commanders know about. As with what I told you about Rahu, this is classified. You cannot discuss it with anyone.

Matthew: Um. Actually, we just came in direct contact with Rahu.

Mira: WHAT?! WHERE?!

Harry: At Daimon, where Rahu first showed up.

Chief: And where is Rahu now?

Marcia: The Z Syndicate showed up after Rahu was defeated. We couldn't stop them from taking it.

Chief: Hmm, I see.

Mira: Why didn't the restaurant's owner contact us?

Harry: After Rahu attacked last time, the police shut his restaurant down. He didn't call the police because he was afraid you might shut him down again.

Chief: We shut his restaurant down because he didn't call us LAST time. It was

a punitive measure. But it looks like it didn't have much of an effect. We'd better work on improving public relations.

Mira: Chief, we should get back to the main topic.

Chief: Mmm. Roy is currently investigating the location of Z's hideout. We do know that it's somewhere in the outside world.

Harry: The what?

Chief: You heard me. The outside world. That's what we need to talk to you about.

Marcia: I'm not following you. What is the outside world?

Chief: It's what it sounds like. The world outside.

Harry: But what does it mean? Outside of what?

Mira: What do you know about the world, Matthew?

Harry: Mira, quit joking around! We learned everything about the world in elementary school.

Mira: I'm asking Matthew. Well, Matthew?

Matthew: The world is round. Like a sphere.

Harry: Hey, hey! You can't be serious! You KNOW the world is flat! You're talking crazy!

Marcia: Matthew, please don't joke around.

Matthew: I just think it's round.

Mira: The world is flat, like Harry said. That's what we were taught all through school. Try to be serious now. What is the end of the world like?

Matthew: The world has no end. If you keep going in any direction, you'll go all the way around the world.

Harry: Matthew, I'm disappointed! I told you, the world is flat! Didn't you pay attention in school?

Marcia: You know about the wall, don't you? The wall that surrounds the world? You're just joking, right?

Matthew: Um, uh yeah. I was joking.

Mira: Marcia's right. The world is surrounded by a giant wall. A wall that encircles the whole of our world.

Harry: It's common knowledge, man!

Marcia: Why are you asking us such obvious questions?

Chief: You paid attention during your classes, at least.

Harry: I wasn't much of a student, but even I got that much!

Chief: Now, follow me.

Harry: What?!

Mira: Harry! Shut up and follow the chief!

Harry: (quietly) Jeez. You don't have to get mad.

Chief leads Mira, Matthew, Harry and Marcia into a bathroom.

Chief: Here we are.

Harry: Here we are? The bathroom? You're joking, right?

Mira: We're not joking around. We're serious.

Harry: (quietly) Sis. You've gone insane.

Mira: STOP CRYING! We're just getting to the important stuff!

Marcia: Um. This is just a restroom, right?

Harry: Of course it's a restroom! Look around! Man. It's a nice one, too. A lot nicer than mine. So what did you bring us all in here for, anyway?

Chief: We had to think of a place that no one would ever suspect. The bathroom is the least suspicious of any room.

Harry: Huh?

Chief walks up to a picture of a hand.

Chief: Take a look here. What does this look like to you?

Matthew: A picture of a hand print.

Chief: Yes, it looks like an ordinary piece of art. It is, however, a sensor.

Matthew: A sensor?

Chief: Class-S commanders have had their hand print images stored in our computer networks. When a Class-S commander presses his hand against this sensor.

Chief puts his hand on the sensor. The bathroom starts moving.

Marcia: Ah!

Harry: WHAT!?

Matthew: IT'S AN ELEVATOR!

The elevator stops. All 5 leave the bathroom to see a subway station.

Chief: All right. All aboard.

Chief leads Mira, Matthew, Harry and Marcia over to the subway?

Harry: What is this place?

Marcia: I've never seen anything like this, above ground or below.

Matthew: And I thought the bathroom elevator was strange.

Chief: We'll talk more later. Let's get in.

Marcia goes in followed by Harry, Matthew, Mira, and Chief.

Mira: Hey, Harry! Scoot over! That's the chief's seat. Make some room!

Harry: Ow, ow! Don't push!

Marcia: Harry, what do you think you're doing?

Harry: It wasn't me. It must have been Matthew!

Matthew: HUH?! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

Marcia: Matthew wouldn't do anything like that. And he's way over there, but you're sitting next to me!

Harry: Actually, you probably don't know this Marcia, but Matthew has really long arms, and he

Matthew: WHERE DID YOU COME UP THAT!?

Mira: QUIT FOOLING AROUND! THIS AIN'T NO FIELD TRIP!

Chief: Ha, ha, ha. Don't worry, Mira. I'm glad they have a few moments to relax. Let's go. It'll shake a little, so hold on.

The subway doors close and the subway leaves.

We see Daimon Chinese Restaurant shaking.

Don: YA! NOT AGAIN! EARTHQUAKE! I have terrible luck. Robos, earthquakes, police. I just want a nap.

We see the subway come to a stop. We see Chief lead everybody out.

Chief: We're here. We're going to have to walk a little, so follow me.

Harry: How much longer? Just where are you taking

Mira: (interrupting) Just shut up and follow the chief.

Harry: Yeah, yeah.

Chief leads Mira, Matthew, Harry, and Marcia through a door which leads them to dark nothingness.

Marcia: Where are we?

Matthew: I've never seen anything like this.

Harry: Why is this place connected to your bathroom?

Chief: Let's go. We're almost there.

Chief leads them to a gate.

Chief: Here we are. This is what I wanted to show you.

Harry: What is this place? There's nothing here.

Chief: Do you know what this place is?

Harry: How should I know? I don't even know why we're here.

Mira: I think you've seen it from the outside, though.

Marcia: What?

Mira: You know that tall structure near Daimon?

Marcia: You mean the custom robo statue?

Mira: Yeah.

Harry: What?! You mean we're inside that statue?!

Chief: Of course, nobody knows about this. It's built so no one can enter from the outside. Let me ask you one more question. The wall in front of you. Do you know what this is?

Harry: Let me guess. That's the wall you were talking about. The wall at the end of the world.

Chief: That's right. This wall is the end of the world. And do you know what's BEHIND it?

Harry: It's the end of the world. There's nothing behind it.

Chief: Mmm, good. Just like it says in your schoolbooks. You're right. There shouldn't be anything behind this wall. However, in reality,

Chief goes up to the gate and presses a button. The gate opens.

Chief: The world continues far beyond these artificial boundaries.

Marcia: The wall!

Harry: The wall's opening. But it. How can there be anything behind it?

Chief leads them past it.

Chief: This is the outside world.

Mira: Well?

Marcia: I'm speechless.

Harry: THIS IS WRONG, SIS! HOW COME YOU NEVER TOLD ME?! My whole life, I thought there was nothing beyond this wall! And now you're showing me this!

Mira: It's confidential, Harry. Even I didn't know until I joined the police and became Class-S.

Chief: Look behind you.

There is a dome behind them.

Chief: The world you live in lies entirely within that large dome. And the wall of the dome is what you've been told is the end of the world itself.

Marcia: But why? And this world. It's like a ruin. A wasteland.

Chief: Do you remember what I talked about yesterday? Rahu tore through the outside world and reduced it to this utter ruin. This wasteland you see before you is the world Rahu destroyed centuries ago.

Marcia: What? This?

Matthew: But how? How could it cause all this destruction?

Chief: Let's go back to my office. We'll continue there.

Chief leads them back to his office.

Chief: Now remember, you cannot tell anyone about what you have seen today.

Marcia: Um, excuse me.

Chief: Yes, Marcia?

Marcia: Everybody thinks the world ends at the wall, that there's nothing beyond the wall. All our lives, we've been taught this, and we've believed it.

Chief: Exactly.

Harry: That's just wrong, man. Everyone's been fooled.

Chief: Wrong? You think so? Harry, now that you know the truth about the outside world, how do you feel?

Harry: Feel? Well, surprised, I guess.

Chief: And?

Harry: And? And nothing, really.

Chief: Is your life better for knowing? Were there problems in your life that required you to know this?

Harry: What? No, not really.

Marcia: I, I don't feel satisfied. Comfortable. When I saw that ruin, it made me feel unsafe. Like my world is unstable.

Chief: Marcia, if you didn't know about this truth. If you died without ever knowing the true nature of our world, would there have been a problem?

Marcia: What? No, I don't think so.

Chief: Right? Some things are best left alone.

Chief: It's like you said, Marcia. Anyone who sees that wasteland feels unsafe, uneasy. Knowing that the world beyond the wall is the ruination of the world that was once our home. It does no one any good. If people are happy living in ignorance, why ruin that happiness with the truth? Our prime duty as Class-S

commanders is to hide this awful truth from the people, to protect THIS world and to ensure the happiness of the people who live in it.

Harry: Mmm. Well, it was a shock. But, I guess it doesn't make much difference to me, knowing what I know now.

Marcia: I think I understand that there are some things you're better off not knowing.

Chief: Now you're thinking like a Class-S commander. You're quick. There are others who know the truth, though, and they are trying to use it to their own advantage.

Mira: The Z Syndicate.

Chief: We still don't know how Z found out about the outside world. To be honest, we have no idea what they plan to do with that knowledge, either. However, we do know that Z's hideout is somewhere in the outside world.

Mira: However, if the public knew the truth, other, more dangerous, syndicates might form.

Harry: Hmmm. I see. You may be right.

Chief: There is no question now that Z is planning something. As you told us, they now possess Rahu. Roy has been investigating the outside world for the past few days. With his findings, we're starting to understand more about their operation. Roy says he's close to pinpointing the location of their hideout. Once we find out where the hideout is, we'll send Roy and Mira over to destroy Rahu and take out Z. Only someone with a Class-S license can walk into the outside world. That's where we need your help.

Matthew: Our help?

Mira: You know, we really didn't want to have to bring you into this.

Chief: Mira is right. I'm ashamed to admit it, but there simply aren't enough people in the police squad with the skill and mental strength and stability to acquire a Class-S license.

Harry: So that's why you had us take that S-rank test. To help you guys out.

Chief: That's not true. We do think you have the talents. This is the truth.

Matthew: But if you wanted us to help, you should've told us before we took the S-rank test.

Harry: Yeah, that's right! You shouldn't have told us later!

Mira: We couldn't tell you about it until you passed the S-rank test. It was confidential.

Chief: I can understand if you feel like you've been deceived. But think it over. We can't let this thing pass, knowing what Rahu did to this world hundreds of years ago. History may well repeat itself. Rahu is here again, and the citizenry is in danger. Your lives will be in danger, but in a sense, they already are. I won't force you, but I would like your help. I don't ask for you to answer right away, but time is running out. Rahu is too dangerous to ignore. So think about it. Consider carefully whether you will help us to protect this, our world.

Marcia: We will.

Mira: I'll be staying here at HQ for a while. Think it over, Harry.

Harry: I will.

Chief: I'm sorry that we have to ask you to do such a dangerous task. However, think of the people around you, your fellow citizens. Think of them before you answer.

Harry: Marcia, Matthew. I'm gonna go. I've got some thinking to do.

Harry leaves.

Marcia: Matthew, I'm going home, too. And then I think I'll take a walk.

Marcia leaves.

Mira: Matthew. Think it over, will you?

Matthew: Yes. I'll go home and think about it.

Mira: Good.

Matthew leaves and goes home. He is eventually woken up by the phone.

Matthew: Yeah?

Matthew answers the phone.

Ernest: Matthew. We've got work. Haul yourself over to the office now.

Matthew: He didn't yell at me this time. I wonder what's wrong.

Matthew hangs up the phone and gets dressed. He goes outside and talks to Lucy.

Lucy: Good morning, Matthew. Good luck with work today! Everything's been so peaceful and quiet lately. It makes you wish something exciting will happen. Maybe I ought to go out more. I might meet myself an exciting man or something!

Matthew leaves and enters the office.

Ernest: Good, you're all here. I got a call from the chief of police. Seems like they have a job for you three.

Marcia: (in her head) They must have found Z's hideout.

Ernest: He told me that he had a job, but that it was confidential. But, it's going to be a long one. He also said that it was up to you if you want to take the job, but he also wanted my permission.

Harry: You don't sound like you want us to take the job. It's good money, isn't it?

Ernest: Yeah the money's good, but, if you want my opinion, I'm against it.

Marcia: What?

Harry: BUT WHY!? WHAT'S WRONG!?

Ernest: I'm not an idiot. I can tell you guys are getting into something dangerous here. I know I'm just your boss, and I have no idea what you think of me, but I like you. I, I don't want to see you die on some fool mission. And I have no means of knowing of what you're all about to do.

Marcia: (quietly) I, I'm so sorry, Chief. We swore not to tell.

Ernest: It's OK, Marcia. I understand.

Harry: (quietly) Ernest.

Ernest: Anyway, it's up to the three of you to decide whether or not you want to accept this assignment. I don't know the situation. I don't have the right to tell you what to do right now.

Harry: AW, CHIEF!

Ernest: Go see the chief of police. He'll give you all the details. I'm sure. If you're going to take the job, then follow it through to the end! And with that YOU'RE DISMISSED! THE REST IS UP TO YOU!

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to police squad HQ. They enter Chief's room.

Chief: Thanks for coming. Roy just returned. He has pinpointed the location of the Z Syndicate hideout.

Roy: As I thought. Their hideout's in the outside world.

Chief: Then, it's time for you two to break into the hideout.

Mira: They've got Rahu. We need to hurry.

Chief: I would like to reiterate how desperately we need your help, if you're willing to give it. What are your answers? Of course, I can't force you to go into the outside world.

Marcia: I. If you told me not to come, I would still follow.

Harry: I hear you, Marcia. What do we do if it turns out your brother's involved in this?

Mira: Brother? YOU MEAN SERGEI?! What about Sergei? You found him?

Harry: Oh, yeah. Sergei used to be part of the police squad, right? You were his boss, weren't you, Sis? He's a member of Z.

Roy: WHAT?! That must be why he vanished. He left once he found out the truth about the outside world. Sergei. THAT SCUM!

Mira: ROY! Marcia's right here. Think before you speak!

Marcia: It's OK. I understand now. My brother was Class S, too.

Harry: Oh, well. It sounds like Marcia's going, so I might as well go with her. But I'm not doing this for the police squad! This is for Marcia, because I'm her partner.

Marcia: Harry, thank you.

Harry: Forget it, OK. Hey, Matthew. What about you?

Matthew: I'll go. We're a team.

Harry: That's right. We are a team.

Chief: Thank you. First, you'll need to go into the outside world. From there, follow Roy's lead. He'll show you the way.

Harry: I'm not sure I like the sound of that. Follow Roy? Ah, sure. Why not? What the heck!

Roy: SAY WHAT?!

Mira: Stop it, you two! This isn't a playground!

Roy: I'm sorry.

Chief: Good luck out there. Return to us safely.

Mira: We'll return safely, Chief!

Matthew leads Harry, Marcia, Roy, Mira into the bathroom.

Mira: Matthew. Place your hand on the sensor.

Matthew does so. The elevator goes down.

Mira: Everyone ready? Let's go!

They enter the subway. We see Daimon again.

Don: Ho hum. Another earthquake. They're getting so common that I think I've become used to them.

We see the train stop. Everybody gets out.

Mira: All right. Not much farther. We're almost at the entrance. Let's go!

Matthew leads them to the gate.

Mira: We're almost outside. If any of you want to change your mind, now's the time to say it.

Roy: I'll follow you, Captain.

Marcia: I'll go.

Harry: We've come this far. I'm not gonna back out now.

Matthew: Me neither.

Mira: Thanks, everyone. OK! Matthew, open the door. Push the button.

Matthew does so. The gate opens.

Mira: Roy will guide us from here. We're counting on you, Roy!

Roy: Yes, Captain! Follow me, everyone.

Roy leads Mira, Matthew, Harry, and Marcia to Z's hideout.

Roy: This is it. This manhole will take us underground. That's where we'll find Z's hideout.

Mira: LET'S GO!

Roy leads them all in.

Harry: Whoa. What in the world is the place?

Marcia: I don't like it here.

Roy: Let's go, Captain.

Mira: OK. Matthew, we'll follow your lead from here.

Matthew leads them to a split in the path.

Marcia: Which way do we go?

Mira: Let's split into groups. Roy and Marcia, you two go that way. Harry, Matthew, you follow me. Our primary goal is to destroy Rahu. Got it?

Roy: Yes, Captain.

Marcia: Yes.

Harry: Marcia, be careful. Don't let that Roy pull anything funny!

Roy: WHAT?!

Mira: HARRY! Ignore him, Roy. Good luck.

Roy: Thank you. You take care, Captain Mira.

Marcia: Harry, Matthew. I'll see you later.

Roy and Marcia run away on the right path.

Mira: OK. We should get moving, too.

Matthew leads them down the left path. They reach a door.

Harry: I wonder where this door leads.

Mira: Be careful. There's no telling who might be on the other side.

Matthew leads Harry and Mira through the door. They see a lounge containing 3 Z lackeys.

Harry: A lounge?

Mira: Looks like it. We'll have to get past them if we want to go any farther.

Z Lackey #1: I'd go with Oboro. His skills are incredible, and he's a great fighter.

Z Lackey #3: That's only because Sergei's helping him out. I think Sergei

might go off and form a splinter group on his own.

Z Lackey #1: No way I'd go with him. We should be following Eliza. If we're gonna have a boss, I'd rather follow a beautiful woman than that Sergei guy.

Harry: Matthew, let me give you some advice. If you want to dodge gunfire with a continuous jump, let the shots come real close and jump once. If you're constantly jumping, you won't be able to dodge any other shots fired at you.

Matthew: Got it. When dodging gunfire with a continuous jump, only jump once.

Harry: That's right. Jump once.

Mira: What are you doing? Are you just about finished? Let's go!

Z Lackey #2: Mmm, that's a tough one. I heard Eliza treats the men in her group like dirt.

Z Lackey #3: Huh? The police squad?!

Z Lackey #1: What are they doing here?!

Mira: Harry, Matthew! Let's take 'em on!

Harry: YOU GOT IT!

All 6 people dive. Matthew, Harry and Mira won.

Z Lackey #1: Ooh. What happened? As soon as we spotted 'em, those police squad guys knocked us flat!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Needle Gun. Matthew leads them through the next door. They see Shiner. He is at the beginning of a hallway.

Shiner: YOU GUYS? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Mira: What? You know him, Harry?

Harry: Yeah. I saw him over at Bogey's

Shiner: (in his head) No way I'm gonna win three against one. It doesn't look like I can get away, either. What should I do? (out loud) Hey, you. It's payback time. Let's go, you and me!

Harry: Huh? Are you challenging Matthew? Interesting.

Shiner: If I win, I go free, you got it?

Harry: Why would we just let you get away? Oh, it doesn't matter. Matthew will win anyway. OK, Matthew! Let me tell you a little something about Shiner's Lightning Sky model. With the Lightning Sky model, you can rush your opponent aggressively with an air dash. However, when you land after an air dash, you become extremely vulnerable. Also, you can only do a single air dash. If you see him dashing around a lot, you'll have a chance to hit him when he lands. And if you're ever going to use a Lightning Sky model, be sure to hide behind a wall after an air dash. Got it?

Matthew: Got it.

Harry: Let's get this done quick and move on.

Matthew and Shiner dive. Matthew wins.

Shiner: I should have just run away while Harry was blabbering at you.

Matthew leads Harry down the hallway and through another door. It's a training room with 3 more Z lackeys.

Mira: We're in the training room.

Harry: And look who's training! A bunch of Z's monkeys!

Z Lackey #6: Lately, I've been into combos.

Z Lackey #4: Combos? What's a combo?

Z Lackey #6: A combo is a chained attack. Blow your opponent away with a bomb or pod and finish with a gun.

Z Lackey #4: Really? Blow your opponent away with a bomb or pod and finish with a gun, huh?

Z Lackey #6: For example, hit opponent with a Straight Bomb G and fire your Vertical Gun. This will knock your opponent down right away. That's a Straight Bomb and Vertical Gun combo.

Z Lackey #5: Hey, listen to me. I've invented short-jump shooting.

Z Lackey #4: Short-jump shooting?

Z Lackey #5: Sometimes, don't you just want to attack as soon as you're in the air? When you want to do that, short jump. When you want to do a quick aerial shot, jump and shoot simultaneously.

Z Lackey #4: So if you short jump and fire your gun, you can do an aerial shot quickly?

Z Lackey #6: And if you simultaneously jump and shoot, you can do an aerial shot instantly?

Z Lackey #5: Exactly! Isn't that great?

Z Lackey #6: Everyone does that.

Z Lackey #5: YOU'RE KIDDING!

Z Lackey #4: Really. Short-jump shooting is a popular technique.

Z Lackey #5: I see.

Z Lackey #6: Ha, ha, ha. Anyway, you guys have gotten pretty good.

Z Lackey #4: Nah, not really. I've been training a lot, but I can't say I've actually improved much.

Z Lackey #5: How about it? You want to see how strong you've gotten? Perfect timing. We've got some visitors.

Mira: Don't let your guard down. They look pretty strong.

Harry: Yeah, I know.

Harry and Mira take on Z Lackeys 4 and 6. Matthew takes on Z Lackey #5.

Z Lackey #5: You're my opponent? I look forward to it. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Matthew and Z Lackey #5 dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #5: It can't be. I can't believe it!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Defender and the Standard Bomb F. He returns to see Mira, who appears to be hurt. Matthew fights Z Lackey #6.

Z Lackey #6: Oh, you want some of this? You'll wind up just like your friend!

Mira: Thanks. Let me give you some advice. When using pods that need to be set, such as the Spider and Satellite, spread them out. Your opponent will have a hard time moving around if you place three pods in his way. Don't place them too close or far from another. I hope that helped. Did you get that?

Matthew: Got it.

Mira: Thanks, Matthew. Be careful.

Matthew and Z Lackey #6 dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #6: That can't be. I always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always train.

Harry wins his fight.

Harry: Whew. Sis, are you OK?!

Mira: Yeah. It's nothing.

Harry: You're hurt! Matthew, you stay with Sis! I'll go find an emergency kit! I may find one in that lounge.

Harry runs away.

Mira: Thanks. I know we don't really have time for this.

All of a sudden another Z Lackey walks in. He is in his boxers.

Z Lackey #7: Ah, that felt good. Nothing beats a shower after a good workout. Yikes! What happened here?! You!

Matthew and Z Lackey #7 dive. Matthew wins.

Z Lackey #7: Oh, no. I don't want to pass out like this. Don't want to. Need pants!

Harry comes back.

Harry: I found it! I found it! Huh? Who's this? Oh, well. Here, let's fix you up.

Mira: We've got no time to lose. I can take care of myself. Go on without me.

Harry: What're you talking about?! Matthew, you go ahead. I'll catch up with you later!

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Shotgun and the Seeker Pod F. Then, he goes through the door. He enters a research room. He sees a Z Tech.

Z Tech #1: Who are you? This is the Z research lab. You should never have been allowed to get this far.

Matthew: Research lab?

Z Tech #1: That's right. We're making the kinds of parts those idiots aboveground are scared of even considering! I don't know who you are, but I won't let you interfere with our research!

They dive. Matthew wins.

Z Tech #1: Argh. Even if I pass out, I'll continue my research when I wake up. Ooh.

Matthew goes to the parts generator and receives the Formula Legs. He returns to where he was to see Z Tech #2.

Z Tech #2: My partner's been defeated. I have no choice but to fight you. We're just peaceful researchers. How dare you try to attack us?

Matthew: (in his head) What do you mean peaceful?

Z Tech #2: I have no choice. I'm not good at robo battles, but I will fight you!

They dive. Matthew wins.

Z Tech #2: If I'd finished developing my precious illegal parts, I'd never have lost.

Matthew: Illegal parts?

Z Tech #2: YOU WANT TO KNOW!? HUH!? DO YOU!? Very well, then. I'll explain. Custom robos all meet certain safety standards and regulations. For example, the government has prohibited the development of parts that can actually take a life. An illegal part is a weapon that violates these standards and regulations. Those fools at the research labs aboveground are all government tools and lackeys. They only make parts that adhere strictly to the regulations. However, Z is different! We don't let safety regulations interfere with pure research! Oboro, Eliza, and the other leaders of our group use the illegal parts that we develop here. Currently, we're developing a new set of parts for use by our normal members, too! All illegal! So? Do you understand the importance of our work now?

Matthew: Yeah, yeah, I get it. You guys are pathetic.

Z Tech #2: Hmph! You wouldn't understand how we researchers feel! Since I'm done explaining, I'm going to pass out. Oomph!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Tomahawk Bomb B. He goes through the next door. There is a long hallway. He goes down it and gets ambushed by two more Z lackeys.

Z Lackey #8: Hm? Who are you?

Z Lackey #9: You broke into Z? By yourself? Impressive, fool.

Z Lackey #8: Heh heh heh. You think I'm weak, don't you?

Z Lackey #9: Ga ha ha! We wouldn't lose if it were a 2-on-1 match!

Z Lackey #8: Heh heh heh. I think I'll beat the living daylights out of you.

Roy: MATTHEW! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

Roy runs in.

Z Lackey #8: UH-OH! WE'RE IN TROUBLE. It's 2-on-2 now.

Z Lackey #9: But after all of that big talk, we've got no choice.

Z Lackey #8: OK, LET'S DO IT!

All 4 dive. Matthew and Roy win.

Z Lackey #8: No wonder we always get passed up for promotion.

Z Lackey #9: We should have just ran away.

Roy: They're nothing but talk. I never thought I'd pair up with you. By the way, where are Harry and Captain Mira?

Matthew: Mira got hurt. Harry's taking care of her now. He told me to go ahead.

Roy: What? Is she all right?!

Matthew: Yeah, she said she was OK.

Roy: I see. Well, I'm sure she'll catch up with us later. Marcia and I separated, too, but I know she'll be fine. Look. You guys are really something. When I was fighting with Marcia and just now, when I paired up with you, I realized how incredible you both are.

Matthew: Roy.

Roy: But Harry's different! HE'S DIFFERENT, AND I REFUSE TO ACCEPT HIM!

Matthew: Heh heh heh.

Roy: Ha ha ha. Let's hurry!

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Submarine Bomb P and the Dolphin Pod.

Matthew leads Roy farther down the hallway. They get ambushed by 2 more Z Lackeys.

Z Lackey #10: We were waiting for you! We won't let you go any farther! This is where it ends.

Roy: An ambush. They're on to us! Let's go, Matthew!

All 4 dive. Matthew and Roy win.

Z Lackey #11: They're too strong for us.

Matthew goes back to the parts generator. He receives the Meteor Storm Gun and the Jumping Pod B. He leads Roy to the end of the hallway. Marcia is there.

Marcia: Roy, Matthew!

Roy: Marcia! You're all right.

Marcia: I'm fine but I don't have any idea how many of those Z Syndicate followers I had to fight to get here.

Roy: Mmm. You and Marcia really are something.

Marcia: Hm? Did I do something?

Roy: Huh? Oh, no. I was just thinking about how incredible you two are. BUT HARRY'S DIFFERENT!

Matthew: Heh heh heh.

Roy: Ha ha ha ha. All right, Matthew, Marcia, let's move on!

Matthew leads them down the left path. They enter another room.

Z Lackey #12: There they are!

Z Lackey #13: Don't let them get any farther!

3 Z Lackeys run up to Matthew, Marcia, and Roy.

Z Lackey #14: Don't let them get into that room!

Z Lackey #12: We have to stop them!

Roy: Hmm. It sounds like something's in that room! I'll take care of this! You two keep moving!

Marcia: What? But

Roy: (interrupting) Don't underestimate me. These three are nothing. I can handle them. Let's do it! I'll take you all on!

Matthew leads Marcia into the next room. Oboro and Sergei are there.

Matthew: OBORO!

Marcia: Sergei.

Oboro: Ah. We had an intruder report, but I never suspected it would be you.

Sergei: Marcia. What are you doing here?

We see Rahu in a capsule evolving.

Marcia: (quietly) Rahu.

Oboro: So you know about Rahu.

Marcia: What are you planning on doing with Rahu?

Oboro: It has nothing to do with you. But since you came all the way here. I'll tell you. Our Z researchers are remodeling Rahu. We're making a model people can dive into. Once we control Rahu's destructive powers, we'll be invincible. The government, the police squad, everyone in the world will be under our command. GA HA HA HA HA. THE WORLD IS MINE!

Marcia: But Rahu is a horrific entity. It destroyed our world and nearly wiped out the human race.

Oboro: You know a lot. That's why we're remodeling it! So I can control its horrific powers!

Sergei: I was wondering why you showed up here in this outside world. I didn't know you knew about Rahu. You're Class S, aren't you?

Marcia: Yes. Sergei. Why are you doing this? There must be something that's on your mind. At least. At least tell me your reason. Why, Sergei?

Oboro: I hate to interrupt, but, sorry, Sergei. Even though she's your sister, she's seen our hideout. We can't let her leave.

Sergei: I understand.

Matthew: YOU CAN'T!

Marcia: Sergei.

Oboro: AH HA HA HA HA. Poor girl. Looks like Sergei understands that a well-ordered world is more important than his own little sister!

Matthew: I can't believe you'd do this! THAT'S AWFUL! You don't know how much Marcia's worried about you. She's placed her trust in you, when no one else would! SHE'S ALWAYS THINKING OF YOU!

Marcia: Thank you, Matthew. It's over. My memories of my brother can never be replaced, but those memories have nothing to do with this battle now. (quietly) That's why we can't hold back against him!

Matthew: But Marcia! He's your only brother!

Marcia: If I had to choose, I'd rather fight my brother than betray my friends. Sergei. I still believe in you! Let's go, Matthew! WE WON'T LOSE!

Oboro: AH HA HA HA HA. WELL SAID! Don't overdo it, though. FORGIVE ME, SERGEI! LET'S GO!

All 4 dive.

Sergei: OBORO!

Marcia: Sergei.

Oboro: SERGEI! YOU!

All of a sudden, Sergei switches to Matthew and Marcia's team. It's now Matthew, Marcia, and Sergei against Oboro. Matthew, Marcia, and Sergei win.

Oboro: What is the meaning of this, Sergei?

Sergei: It's simple, Oboro. I've deceived you. All this time, I've been following the orders of another.

Oboro: You. You've betrayed me for Eliza, haven't you? I know! You want Rahu for yourself!

Sergei: You're wrong, Oboro. I don't work for Eliza, nor do I want to keep Rahu for myself. Rahu does not belong to anyone. Nor should it be tampered with. Rahu is a dangerous entity. We must stop it before it evolves. My main objective was to bring someone here who could stop Rahu.

Oboro: What kind of nonsense is that? I don't care what your goals are, Sergei. You've deceived me, and you're trying to interfere with my work. YOU SCOUNDREL! How dare you deceive me. I won't forgive you for this. I won't. Rahu belongs to me. I won't let anyone take it!

Sergei: Give it up, Oboro. There's nothing you can do to stop me. Not in the state you're in.

Oboro: GIVE UP? GIVE UP!? A worthless scoundrel like you, telling me to give up? Me!? The great Oboro!? I'll crush you. You think you can get away with this? I'll crush you all! Just you wait. I'LL DIVE INTO RAHU AND CRUSH YOU ALL!

Oboro goes over to Rahu and attempts to dive into Rahu. Rahu starts flying away.

Sergei: FOOL! THE REDESIGN ISN'T COMPLETE! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES ARE?!

Marcia: We have to stop Rahu! Matthew! Help me, please!

Sergei: MARCIA, DON'T! WE HAVE TO RETREAT!

Matthew, Marcia, and Rahu dive. Matthew and Marcia win.

Marcia: We did it.

Oboro: That. That can't be Rahu. It refused to listen to me. How could it reject me? The mighty Oboro? How did I lose?

Sergei: Rahu can't be controlled. Not by Oboro. Not by anyone. When Oboro dived, Rahu's strength was drained as it tried to eject Oboro from its system. It was still too strong for Oboro. The idea of controlling Rahu is just impossible.

All of a sudden, Rahu takes off.

Marcia: Rahu!

Sergei: Rahu.

Mira, Harry, and Roy run in.

Mira: Are you two OK?

Roy: Sergei.

Sergei: Roy, long time, no see.

Mira: Sergei.

Sergei: How have you been, Captain Mira?

Harry: What's Oboro doing on the floor? And why's Sergei with you? What's going on here?

Marcia: Sergei fought alongside us. He defeated Oboro.

Roy: What happened?

Harry: So, Marcia, where is Rahu now?

Marcia: It escaped.

Roy: Escaped?

Matthew: Oboro tried to dive into Rahu, but it didn't seem like Rahu liked it, so it rejected him and flew away.

Harry: DIVING INTO RAHU? WHAT!?

Mira: Sergei, what's going on?

Sergei: I'll explain it in detail, Captain Mira. But let's go to a different room. Please follow me.

Sergei leads Matthew, Harry, Marcia, Mira, and Roy into another room.

Mira: Where are we?

Sergei: This room belonged to our leader, who passed away not too long ago.

Roy: Z's leader!?

Sergei: Yes. Someone here needs to hear my leader's final words. This is why I brought you to this place.

Harry: Someone? Who? Who is it?

Sergei: Please, listen. These are my leader's final words.

Father: Matthew, you'll never know how proud I am that you have come so far.

Harry: Hey, Matthew! How come he knows your name?!

Matthew: No clue. I've got no idea who it is.

Sergei: Think back. Don't you recognize the voice on the tape?

Matthew: Hm? It's. Is it my dad?

Harry: WHAT?!

Marcia: It can't be. The Z Syndicate leader is really Matthew's father?

Sergei: Let me continue playing the message.

Father: Matthew, if you're listening to this message, that means Rahu has returned, and our time is short. I wish that I could have been here to see you, to fight with you in this final, glorious moment. However, if you are hearing this, it also means my time has come, and I am gone from this world. I have given my loyal friend, Sergei, details on your mission. Trust him as you would have trusted me. You do not have much time left. Give Sergei the watch I gave you to care for so long ago. With the power contained in that watch, you can defeat Rahu. I've failed you as a father in life, and my final wish in death is nothing but a fool's errand. I'm sorry, Son.

Sergei: That was his final message.

Matthew: The watch. My dad told me to keep it on at all times, never to take it off. He said it over and over. I promised him so many times. And he then, he left me.

Marcia: Matthew.

Mira: Sergei, what's going on?

Sergei: Like you and Roy, I learned about the outside world when I became a Class-S commander.

Roy: Though, you disappeared right after you found out about it.

Mira: Sergei, why did you leave without telling us?

Sergei: Because I met my boss.

Mira: Boss? You mean, Z's boss?

Sergei: When I found out about the outside world, I became curious. I wanted to explore it. And there, I met my boss. I was surprised to discover somebody living in the outside world.

Roy: And?

Sergei: He asked me: "Why are you here?" And I told him that I wanted to know the truth about the outside world. Then he asked: "Is there something you need to protect?" And I said yes. Marcia, my sister, you were the one I wanted to protect.

Marcia: Sergei.

Sergei: We spoke for the first time, discussing life in our dome and outside. Finally, he asked me: "Do you want to protect this world from annihilation?"

Mira: Annihilation?

Sergei: Yes, I have to admit, I really didn't understand his question, but I could see in his eyes that he was very serious indeed. I stopped to think and I said yes. Then he said: "As long as you remain in your world, you will never see the truth. The truth lies in darkness. If you discover an inconsistency in your perfectly ordered world, where all things are controlled, anything that cannot be explained, come see me again, and I may be able to help you. Tell no one that we met. Tell no one what we discussed." With that, we parted ways. I thought about what he said, but I couldn't find any inconsistencies.

Roy: That's because there are none!

Mira: Roy. Be quiet and listen. Continue, Sergei.

Sergei: Then, suddenly, I found it. It was right in front of me from the start. When I returned home, I saw my sister waiting for me, and it struck me. The inconsistency, that single, unexplainable thing. It was Marcia, her special power. Her strange power was a gift, and my late parents, they were suffering.

Marcia: Sergei.

Sergei: To all appearances, Marcia is an ordinary girl. And yet, the kids teased her. The scientists poked and prodded, and still they learned nothing. Marcia didn't want to go, but the researchers forced her, kicking and screaming.

Matthew: (in his head) So that's why Marcia hated the robo researchers.

Sergei: I found out what they did to Marcia at the research center. It wasn't science. It was torture. They say that all people are created equal, but my sister's power stole equality from her. If this isn't an inconsistency, then what is? How did I go so long without questioning this? I couldn't wait. Once I'd seen the inconsistency clearly, I had to leave, to meet that man again. I told him about Marcia, and he said: "In order to understand, you must know everything." And he told me the real truth. Something even most Class-S commanders do not know. The real truth.

Mira: What? What do you mean?

Sergei: You're all aware that, centuries ago, Rahu nearly wiped out the human race.

Harry: Yeah, we were told that Rahu annihilated all of the domed cities people lived in except for ours.

Sergei: You were never told the truth about the outside world. You believe we lived in domes up here?

Harry: Well, yeah. I mean, where else would we live?

Roy: We lived free, in the outside world. We lived in vast cities, in the open air. Rahu destroyed all of that.

Harry: WHAT?! REALLY?!

Roy: Originally, humans didn't live in domed cities. We lived outside. The outside world was our home.

Mira: Rahu destroyed all of our cities centuries ago. The few who survived, they found an area that had minimal damage. And with the help of robo technology, they built a dome to create a livable environment for a new community.

Marcia: I see.

Harry: We hadn't heard about that part. We thought people had always lived inside those domes.

Sergei: You are correct, but there is still more that you do not know. The dome-builders left Rahu inoperative in the outside world before they sealed themselves in.

Marcia: Sergei. It sounds like you're saying we deliberately chose to live in a cage, like animals.

Sergei: That's right. The dome protects us, but it also keeps us trapped. Caged.

Harry: Wait a sec. You said Rahu was inoperative. So how did we stop Rahu last time?

Sergei: Rahu possessed no form of its own. Its was more like a spirit than a living creature.

Matthew: What!? No form? That doesn't make any sense. We saw it! It looked like a custom robo!

Sergei: I'll explain that later. Let me continue, though. Originally, Rahu was invisible formless, but still physical, still capable of inflicting damage. We couldn't see it, but it was a real creature, and it evolved rapidly.

Roy: Evolved?

Sergei: Not in the traditional sense, but yes, that's correct. Rahu has two fundamental behaviors. The first is to acquire new targets, in this case, us. Once it identifies its prey, Rahu destroys it, swiftly and utterly. It appropriates any useful abilities its victim possessed, anything it has not encountered before. Then, like a chrysalis, it goes dormant, awakens with new skills, and continues its hunt.

Roy: Metamorphosis. Hm. I guess it really is evolving.

Harry: So, what you're saying is that it targets a creature with abilities it doesn't have and steals 'em. Then it turns into a pupa, rests for a bit, and changes into an even scarier monster?

Mira: Yeah, that's just about the size of it.

Sergei: That's just a secondary behavior, though. Its primary function is to annihilate every living thing.

Harry: So, it's invisible, it can learn to do everything we can do, and all it wants is to kill, er, everything?

Sergei: Right.

Harry: So, what can we do? I mean, other than just roll over and die? How did they stop it hundreds of years ago, when it was running amok?

Sergei: Custom robos. It was because of custom robo that they were able to defeat Rahu.

Mira: Custom robos?

Sergei: Yes. Back then, custom robos were nothing but children's toys, like robotic action figures. It may sound strange, but even now, there is much we do not know about custom robos. Rahu's destructive rampage was at its peak, and we were all but extinct. When, suddenly, Rahu targeted a young child's robo toy. Then, something inexplicable happened. Rahu merged with the robo, melded itself with the robo.

Harry: That's weird. Why did it do that?

Sergei: I'm not sure. Some people think there's a connection between Rahu and the custom robo.

Harry: It almost sounds like Rahu did a dive into that custom robo and, I don't know, got stuck or something.

Matthew: And that's why Rahu looks the way it does now. That's why we can even see it in the first place.

Sergei: That's correct. Now that our enemy was visible, we had a chance to fight back, and we seized it. The government remodeled custom robos as weapons to battle Rahu's new robo form. Finally, after many grueling battles, we defeated Rahu. Actually, let me correct myself. We didn't defeat it, but we were able to trigger its dormant cycle. The dormant Rahu had no new information to assimilate, and so it didn't evolve and didn't awaken. We couldn't destroy Rahu, though. Instead, we bought ourselves some time.

Mira: Hm. So that's the rest of the story. We didn't know. But wait. Don't you think that's a little funny? Rahu was capable of destroying the entire world, and we stopped it with a child's toy.

Sergei: I know what you're thinking. Rahu couldn't be stopped simply with the custom robo. There was something else. A device designed to stop Rahu by targeting his robo systems.

Mira: A device?

Roy: Sergei, why should we trust you? You're a member of the Z Syndicate now, and a traitor! Even if you're telling the truth, why does it matter? What's your point?

Sergei: You're right. It doesn't matter. Let me ask you, Roy. When did you first find out about Rahu's attack?

Roy: Why are you suddenly? I first learned the truth when I became a Class-S commander.

Sergei: How about you, Captain Mira?

Mira: It was the same. I didn't know a thing until I was promoted.

Sergei: Don't you think that's odd?

Mira: What?

Sergei: This is the single most significant and traumatic event in human history, and no one knows?

Mira: It's classified knowledge. The government dictates who should and should not know.

Sergei: But how could they stop the survivors from passing on these stories to their children?

Roy: The people respect the word of the government. They knew it was confidential.

Sergei: Do you actually believe that the government has the power to silence such a terrible thing? Can you think of any other reason why no one talked about

this horrific event?

Mira: It does seem difficult to imagine. So many years have passed, and nobody knew the full scope of it. Even becoming a Class-S commander didn't explain everything.

Sergei: The reason this is such a well-kept secret is not because the survivors chose to keep it secret. It's because their memories were wiped clean. It is a secret because no one was allowed to remember.

Harry: What!? Oh, for crying out loud. Look, this is all starting to get REAL confusing here. What you're saying is that everyone, and I mean everyone, forgot about Rahu entirely?

Sergei: That's correct.

Mira: That's impossible! What could possibly make everyone just forget about this all at once?

Sergei: Oh, nothing could make that happen naturally.

Mira: Are you saying someone devised a way to erase every living human's memory entirely?

Sergei: Yes. The engineers of this foolish plan wanted to erase everyone's memories and implant false ones. Our government carried out this plan hundreds of years ago, once the dome was completed.

Roy: What?

Mira: The government found a way to make everyone forget about Rahu?

Sergei: Yes. "The world exists entirely within this dome. Outside the dome, there is nothing." We are all raised thinking that this dome is our true home, where we will live and die. That is the great lie. The memory implant told us all that this dome contained mankind's entire world.

Roy: But why?

Sergei: Rahu WILL awaken. It is inevitable. Could you live a normal life, knowing Rahu would return?

Roy: But never knowing when. I see. It was to give us a sense of security, even if it was just a lie.

Mira: But how is that possible? What could possibly erase everyone's memory like that?

Sergei: I don't know, but they did it. They made a device that could erase everyone's memory.

Mira: I can't believe it. I'm sure we would have heard of something like that.

Sergei: Captain Mira, I've already told you. There are some things not even Class-S commanders have been told.

Roy: How do we know you didn't make the whole story up?

Sergei: I suppose you have no evidence. Except that one of these devices still exists to this very day!

Matthew: Really? Where is it?!

Harry: I GOT IT!

Marcia: Harry, you do?

Harry: It's at the lab! The custom robo research lab! That's why the Z Syndicate was there!

Matthew: You're right! You're the man, Harry!

Harry: HA HA HA HA.

Sergei: No, it's not at the lab.

Roy: I thought so. Harry's not THAT smart. There's no way he could have figured it out before me.

Matthew: So. Where is it?

Sergei: Matthew.

Matthew: Yes?

Sergei: Your father's watch. That's the device. It can erase people's memories. You've had it all along.

Harry: WHAT?!

Marcia: Matthew's watch?

Mira: That's why Z's leader said something about defeating Rahu with Matthew's watch.

Roy: I see. The device that was used to defeat Rahu was the one that could erase people's memories.

Sergei: Yes. Hundreds of years ago, that very device helped us defeat Rahu.

Marcia: Sergei. Why does Matthew have it? How did something like that wind up with him? What was Matthew's father like?

Sergei: He was a distinguished scientist, one of the highest-ranking officials in the government. That is why he was told the truth. We all live with false memories implanted by the government. When he learned that people had been deprived of the truth for so long, he began to have doubts. He questioned the ethics of the plan, and he knew that Rahu would rise. Marcia. My leader told me where your power came from. It is a result of the erasure, a side effect. Right now, every aspect of the brain's development is controlled. The side effect was unexpected. Nobody realized that the dramatic change in environment and the memory blocks and implants would generate this effect. No one could explain what exactly created Marcia's power. Marcia. Your power is born from the tragedy humans suffered hundreds of years ago.

Harry: Let's get back to the subject. You said that Matthew's father had doubts about the false memories? Was he the only one in the government who felt this way? He must've been something.

Sergei: He was. He stole the only remaining model of the memory-erasure device.

He escaped to the outside world with several of his colleagues.

Mira: I'm sure the government must have been quick to send someone after them.

Sergei: Yes. The government's soldiers had one goal. That was to retrieve the memory-erasure device. They searched all over the outside world for him, but he was always one step ahead. Instead of taking the device with him into exile, he hid it inside of the domed city itself. He reconfigured it into that watch so that no one would be able to identify it.

Mira: And then he gave the watch to Matthew.

Sergei: Yes. To the one person he could trust, someone who didn't know the power of object he held.

Mira: And that's when your leader formed the Z Syndicate.

Roy: And all this time, the Z Syndicate's goal has actually been to inform the people of the truth.

Sergei: It was at first. We wanted people to know the truth, to prepare themselves in case Rahu did attack again. But as time passed, he began to worry, to doubt himself. He began to worry that informing everyone of the truth would only trigger mass panic. He realized that it might be best to find a way to stop Rahu without the people having to know it. That was the moment when my leader formed a syndicate made up of the strongest fighters.

Roy: Strong fighters. And that's why he recruited you?

Sergei: I wanted to save this ruined world. In order to do that, I knew I would have to help him. He told me he need someone to support him, no matter how insane his orders might seem.

Matthew: But you could have told Marcia before you left. You owed her at least that much, didn't you?

Sergei: To be honest, I had planned on leaving Marcia before I met your father. My sister would do anything I told her. If I'd stayed, she would never have left my shadow. It was unacceptable, unthinkable. I wanted her to think for herself, to grow into the commander she is. I thought that, if I weren't around, she would have the opportunity she needed to think for herself. That's why I left the way I did. But I always watched over her. I would have come to her aid in a second if she were ever in danger. I left, even though I knew I ran the risk of alienating her, of making her hate me for leaving her.

Marcia: Sergei, I've learned something. My partners taught me something more valuable than I'd realized. Spoiling something isn't love. Sometimes, you need to be strict in order to be compassionate. That's when I figured it out. That's when I knew that my older brother still cared about me. That he still loved me. And I wondered if that wasn't why you had left me in the first place. They helped me understand, and that's why I still love you. Thank you, Sergei.

Sergei: You've grown so strong, Marcia.

Mira: The more I hear about this, the more complicated the situation gets!

Roy: I agree.

Harry: Still, after hearing all of that, it sounds like Z formed in order to help out mankind. But what about Oboro? That guy wanted Rahu for himself.

Sergei: When our leader grew ill, Oboro and Eliza made a grab for power. That's when it began to crumble. The more they knew about Rahu's amazing powers, the more they wanted to possess it. They'd forgotten our leader's goals, and they planned such foolishness as diving into Rahu.

Harry: Hmmm. I guess there's always one selfish sicko in every group.

Sergei: I acted as his subordinate while looking for the chance to strike back.

Harry: But wait, why was Eliza at the lab? Did it have something to do with Rahu?

Sergei: Oboro and Eliza both knew that the memory-erasure device was the key to destroying Rahu. But they didn't know our leader had already stolen it. He was never sure he could trust them. They wanted that device so they could tame Rahu for their own ends instead of destroying it. Eliza must have thought that the custom robo research lab would have such a device. That's why she attacked the lab.

Harry: SEE?! Just as I thought! Eliza thought the device was at the research lab! I AM smart! I think just like the Z Syndicate's leaders!

Roy: Which simply shows how flawed her thinking truly is.

Sergei: We've spoken long enough. Matthew, may I borrow your watch? I have a chip your father gave me. I'm going to insert it into your watch now. Once I've inserted the chip, the watch's memory-erasure functions will be restored.

Matthew: I understand. I'll give you my watch!

Sergei: Thank you. Please wait while I insert the chip.

Sergei does so.

Sergei: I've inserted the chip into your watch. The memory-erasure device is now functional. Matthew, I believe this is still yours. Your father put it in your hands for a reason. Point towards your target and activate it.

Matthew: I understand.

Sergei: We're almost near the end. Let's go destroy Rahu.

Mira: Do you know where to find it?

Sergei: I've attached a tracking device to Rahu. If it's transmitting, we'll know where Rahu is. Let's hurry. With every passing second, Rahu continues to evolve.

Roy: It's still evolving?

Sergei: Like I said before, Rahu evolves. Rahu is especially drawn to negative feelings. Hatred, envy, greed. It absorbs that mental energy, uses it to fuel its metamorphosis.

Marcia: So that's why it's looked different every time we've seen it.

Sergei: It's not just its appearance that's changing. It's growing stronger with each evolution. The device will erase Rahu's genetic memory, so that it stops evolving. I fear that Rahu is resting now, preparing for its next

evolution. We can defeat it if we erase its memory and eliminate its advantage. LET'S GO!

Matthew leads Harry, Marcia, Sergei, Mira and Roy back through all of the doors and hallways and they exit Z's hideout.

Sergei: Everyone, please follow me. I'll use the tracking device to locate Rahu.

Mira: Got it. We're counting on you, Sergei.

Sergei: All right. Let's move on.

Sergei leads Mira, Roy, Harry, Matthew, and Marcia to the ruins of an old amusement park.

Sergei: The signal's getting stronger. Rahu must be around here somewhere.

Marcia: What is this place?

Sergei: I don't know much about the world before Rahu came, but I think it was some sort of amusement park.

Harry: What's an amusement park?

Sergei: I think it was designed as a place for people to have fun, judging by the odd look of the buildings.

Harry: Really? It don't look all that amusing to me.

Mira: No place is amusing once it's reduced to rubble.

Roy: We have to hurry. Captain, we must go.

Z Lackeys #15, #16, #17, #18, #19, #20: HOLD IT!

6 Z Lackeys run up to them.

Sergei: You're one of Oboro's loyalists.

Z Lackey #15: Sergei. What are you doing here? And with the police squad?

Z Lackey #16: We found Oboro unconscious at the hideout. Did you do that?!

Sergei: His own greed did it. I merely helped.

Z Lackey #17: Shut up, you traitor!

Sergei: What are you talking about? You and Oboro are the ones who corrupted our leader's vision! Who ruined all that Z stood for! You're the traitors!

Z Lackey #18: Oh, quit the stupid posturing. It's too late for us to join up with Eliza, but we've had a better idea.

Z Lackey #19: We'll nab Rahu ourselves and seize control of the Z Syndicate!

Sergei: Have you all forgotten your duty?

Roy: We've got your back, Sergei.

Mira: Harry, Marcia, Matthew! Let's go!

All 12 dive. Matthew, Harry, Marcia, Sergei, Mira, and Roy win.

Z Lackey #20: Argh. What were we thinking?

Sergei: We've wasted precious time. We must hurry.

Sergei attempts to lead Matthew, Harry, Marcia, Mira and Roy into the amusement park.

Z Lackeys #21, #22, #23, #24, #25, #26: HOLD IT!

6 more Z Lackeys run up to them.

Harry: Not again.

Sergei: It's more of his men.

Z Lackey #21: Yeah, but don't assume we're gonna be as feeble as those last guys!

Z Lackey #22: We're 2-on-2 masters!

They split up into 3 pairs.

Z Lackey #23: Let's go, 2-on-2!

Mira: Interesting. Sergei, why don't you pair up with Marcia? I'd like to see the two of you in action.

Sergei: Hm?

Marcia: Sergei.

Sergei: Yes, I'd like to see how strong Marcia's become on her own.

Mira: Matthew, you're with me. I've always wanted to see what you're like as a partner.

Roy: Wait a minute. That only leaves

Harry: ME AND ROY?!

Roy: YOU! IT CAN'T BE!

Z Lackey #24: (quietly) You guys aren't taking this seriously at all, are you?

All 12 dive. Matthew and Mira, Marcia and Sergei, and Harry and Roy win.

Z Lackey #25: Maybe we should have gone 2-on-1 instead.

Z Lackey #26: From now on, let's be 2-on-1 masters, OK?

Z Lackey #21: Yeah. Then we'd outnumber them. I'm pretty sure we could win that way, Ooh.

Sergei: We should move. The longer we're out here, the more likely it is that Eliza's lackeys will find us, too. Let's hurry. We don't have time to fool around.

Sergei attempts to lead them in once again.

Z Lackeys #27, #28, #29, #30, #31, #32: HOLD IT!

Harry: Oh, for crying out loud. We're not gonna get anywhere at this rate!

Roy: Leave them to me. You go on ahead. I can take care of these guys myself!

Mira: No way, Roy. I'm staying with you. We'll stop them together. Sergei, you get the others out of here.

Sergei: Yes. Heh. It's been a long time since I've taken orders from you, Captain Mira.

Harry: Take care, Sis!

Mira: Yeah, I will. You be a good boy and listen to Sergei, OK?

Harry: HEY!

Marcia: Hee, hee.

Sergei: Let's go!

Sergei leads Harry, Matthew, and Marcia into the amusement park. Harry stops suddenly.

Harry: Wait a minute.

Sergei: What is it?

Harry: I kinda gotta go to the bathroom.

Marcia: Why didn't you go before we left?

Harry: Like we had any time! Look, there's a bathroom right there. I'll be really quick, all right?

Sergei: Yes, it's a bathroom, but I doubt anything's working. This whole area's been ruined for centuries. Does it matter where you do it?

Harry: I don't care! I gotta go! Anyone else have to go? Marcia?

Marcia: (quietly) I'm fine. Thanks.

Harry: OK. Matthew, come with me, OK?

Matthew: Yeah, I'll go.

Harry: That's right. We should stick together out here.

Sergei: Be quick about it. We don't have much time.

Harry leads Matthew into the bathroom.

Harry: Ah!

There are 2 Z Lackeys in the bathroom at the urinals.

Z Lackey #33: Where did you come from?!

Z Lackey #34: They're not with Z! But who else would be in the outside world?

Z Lackey #33: They've gotta be with the police! Get 'em!

Z Lackey #34: Yeah!

Z Lackey #33: Uh, can you give me a second?

Z Lackey #34: Uh, yeah. I'm still, er.

Harry: Matthew, let's get em.

They run up to them.

Z Lackey #33: WAIT! JUST WAIT A MINUTE!

Harry: OH, MAN! WASH YOUR HANDS!

All 4 dive. Matthew wins. Harry won too.

Z Lackey #34: I can't believe we lost in a bathroom

Z Lackey #33: The cool tile feels kinda good, though.

2 stall doors open. 2 Z Lackeys come up off the toilet.

Z Lackey #35: Keep it down out there!

Z Lackey #36: I'm trying to think!

Z Lackey #35: Whoa!

Z Lackey #36: What's going on out here?

Harry: What's with this bathroom?! Is this your secret clubhouse or something!?

Z Lackey #35: This is the only bathroom for miles! You don't want to pass up a bathroom, especially out here!

Harry: But this whole place is a ruin. Why not just, I don't know, find a bush or something?

Z Lackey #36: IT'S ABOUT BEING SANITARY!

Z Lackey #35: But enough talk!

Harry: Matthew, can we get this over with quickly? I still have to go!

Z Lackey #36: Heh heh heh. And you know what? We haven't even washed our hands yet!

Harry: GAH! THAT'S GROSS! STAY AWAY FROM ME!

All 4 dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Z Lackey #35: Lying on this nasty floor is the last place I want to be.

Z Lackey #36: Still, it's nice to get a chance to lie down.

Harry: I gotta go! Wait a minute, OK?!

Harry runs into the stall and goes.

Harry: MUCH better. Thanks for waiting. We can go now.

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Geo Trap Bomb, the Diving Pod, and the Ground Legs. He goes back outside to Marcia and Sergei.

Sergei: What took you so long?

Harry: We had a little run-in with some guys from Z.

Marcia: Are you all right?

Harry: Yeah. I'm just glad I convinced Matthew to come with me.

Sergei: It looks like Eliza's here, too. We've wasted enough time. Let's go.

Matthew leads Harry, Marcia, and Sergei farther down the path.

Z Lackey #37, #38, #39, #40: Hold it. You're not going any farther.

Harry: More of Oboro's men?

Sergei: No, they're with Eliza.

Z Lackey #37: It's only a matter of time before Eliza finds Rahu.

Z Lackey #38: We've been ordered to get rid of anyone who tries to interfere with Eliza's work.

Z Lackey #39: That goes for you, too, Sergei. We can't let you go any farther!

Z Lackey #40: That's right! We're Eliza's Fabulous Fighting Four!

Marcia: Sergei. Are they good? Have you ever heard of them?

Sergei: I've been with Z for a while, and I've never heard of them. Weird.

Harry: Well, I don't know. The Fabulous Fighting Four's a pretty fabulous name.

Z Lackey #37: Ha ha ha ha ha ha! You're afraid of us, aren't you?! If you want to run, now's the time!

Sergei: Well, I guess we have to fight them. Don't underestimate them. Eliza keeps only the best by her side.

Z Lackey #38: What? Are you sure you wouldn't rather run away?

Marcia: No, that's OK. I think we'll be fine. Thanks for asking, though.

Z Lackey #39: Wait a minute! There's no way you can defeat the Fabulous Fighting Four!

Harry: Well, I guess there's a first for everything, isn't there?

Z Lackey #40: Hey, think real carefully! You're about to fight against the Fabulous Fighting Four!

Sergei: Yeah, we know. We heard you the first time. All right, everyone! Let's do it!

Z Lackey #37: Ya!

Harry, Marcia, and Sergei take on Z Lackeys #37, #38, and #39.

Z Lackey #40: Oh, so you're running away, eh? Don't you know who we are?! We're the Fabulous Fighting Four! Hey! Wait! Come back!

Matthew and Z Lackey #40 dive. Matthew wins. Harry, Marcia, and Sergei won too.

Z Lackey #40: We were hoping you'd run away when you heard our name.

Harry: Ha ha ha ha! We beat the Fabulous Fighting Four! Rahu shouldn't be any problem at all!

Marcia: They weren't that tough at all. But I thought they were elite. Shouldn't they have been better? Maybe they weren't feeling well. It is flu season, afterall.

Sergei: The Fabulous Fighting Four. Bah. They were a mockery. But then, even a skilled commander can have an unlucky match. Ah, well. We should keep moving.

Matthew goes to the parts generator. He receives the Afterburner Gun. Matthew leads them farther down the path. Eventually, they get to a fun house.

Sergei: Here. Rahu is in here.

Marcia: This place is scary.

Sergei: They used to call it a fun house.

Matthew: Fun? They had a pretty strange idea of fun back then.

Harry: Oh, yeah. Looks real fun. And Rahu's in there?

Sergei: This is it. Let's end this!

All 4 enter the fun house.

Harry: Weird. It's a maze!

Marcia: I can't see. It's too dark.

Sergei: It's part of the fun house, designed so that people would get lost. Stay close, Marcia.

Sergei leads Harry and Marcia on. Matthew follows but a Z Lackey jumps out of the floor. They dive. Matthew wins. Matthew goes through the maze fighting various Z Lackeys. Finally he gets to the end of the maze.

Sergei: Good, you made it. I was starting to get worried.

Harry: I thought you told us not to get separated!

Marcia: Did you get into any fights, Matthew?

Matthew: Yeah, I did! They jumped out of the floor and attacked me!

Marcia: I knew it! We were worried about you. I'm glad you're all right.

Sergei: It looks like Eliza's already here. We have to find Rahu before she does.

Harry: I'm more worried about how we get out of here. It's a dead end!

All of a sudden, Eliza and 3 of her lackeys come through a warp hole.

Eliza: Ha ha ha ha ha. So close and yet so far, Sergei.

Harry: ELIZA?! WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?!

Sergei: A warp hole.

Marcia: A warp hole?

Sergei: They allow you to teleport anywhere you want. It was a common technology hundreds of years ago. Before Rahu came.

Harry: SERIOUSLY!? COOL!

Sergei: That's how advanced their technology was. Unfortunately, we've lost so much knowledge.

Matthew: Was it because of the memory-erasure device?

Sergei: Perhaps.

Eliza: Are you done with your history lesson? You're too late. We've already found Rahu. Rahu was sleeping peacefully, awaiting its next evolution.

Sergei: Eliza.

Eliza: Sergei, don't interfere! Rahu belongs to us now.

Sergei: It's idiotic to think you can control Rahu! You have to stop this foolish plan of yours!

Eliza: My, isn't this a surprise? And all this time, I thought you were after Rahu for yourself!

Sergei: My only wish is to see Rahu destroyed. I remain loyal to the vision of our leader.

Eliza: Ha ha ha ha ha ha. If I remember correctly, you were always the boss's favorite pawn. Maintaining your loyalty to a corpse! How touching. Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Sergei: You.

Eliza: Sergei. So honorable, so loyal, so handsome. Rahu, on the other hand, is a different story. I find it rather enjoyable to beat handsome men in a robo battle. Will you let me have my fun?

Sergei: I'll handle Eliza myself. You take care of the others.

Marcia: Sergei.

Sergei: Don't look so worried. I should be able to handle her alone. Her madness ends here. Let's go!

All 8 dive. Matthew, Harry, and Marcia won.

Marcia: Sergei!

Sergei: I'll keep her occupied. The rest of you go! I'll catch up with you later!

Eliza: How dependable. I'll be there in a little bit, so please wait for me.

Sergei: Hurry! Go! We have to hurry! Destroy Rahu before it awakens!

Harry: Got it! Let's go, Marcia, Matthew!

Marcia: Sergei, we'll be waiting for you!

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to the warp hole. Suddenly, Isabella comes in.

Isabella: Well, if it isn't you! We meet again.

Harry: What? What's going on here? She caught up to us already!?

Isabella: You really do say the most curious things.

Harry: Did Sergei lose?

Marcia: What? That can't be.

Marcia runs up and dives.

Marcia: I'LL KILL YOU!

Harry: MARCIA, DON'T! YOU CAN'T WIN ALONE!

Isabella swats Marcia away.

Harry: MARCIA! Hey. Are you OK?

Eliza comes through the warp hole.

Eliza: Having fun, Isabella?

Matthew: ALL RIGHT, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Marcia: Did I get hit a little too hard? Or are there two Elizas?

Harry: Don't worry, Marcia. I see 'em, too.

Isabella: Oh, Eliza. Where have you been?

Eliza: Sorry. I was just finishing up with Sergei. It was so fun! Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Isabella: I can't leave you alone for a second, can I, Sister?

Eliza: Oh, you've got it all wrong, Isabella! I was giving him a reason! I was teaching him that interfering with us was an act of almost inconceivable idiocy.

Harry: They're twins.

Matthew: Twins.

Harry: Yeah. Eliza's the one we fought at the lab.

Matthew: And Isabella's the one we fought at Daimon.

Isabella: Eliza. Do you mean to imply that you killed Sergei

Eliza: Oh, don't be ridiculous. I'm nothing like that lunatic, Oboro. I just toyed with him until he decided he need a nap. Ha ha ha ha.

Harry: We have to get past them if we're going to reach Rahu. And we've gotta stop Rahu from evolving.

Isabella: Did you just say that you were going to stop the evolution? Does that mean you have our memory-erasure device?

Harry: Oh no!

Eliza: Oh, this IS good. I searched everywhere in that lab, and I couldn't find a thing! I didn't know you had it. All that wasted effort!

Isabella: Now, now. Calm down. All we have to do is take it from them. We must not hesitate.

Harry: Matthew, let's do it!

Eliza: Such enthusiastic lads. Well, I won't go easy on you this time. Say good-bye!

Matthew, Harry, Eliza, and Isabella dive. Matthew and Harry win.

Eliza: How? All our hopes. Our dreams.

Isabella: I can't believe it. We fought our best!

Eliza: When was the last time we lost a match where we fought so hard?

Isabella: Yes. This has happened before.

Eliza: I remember. It was the boss.

Harry: The boss? Z's leader?

Isabella: He's gone now.

Eliza: We disobeyed him. Thought we could handle him together. Couldn't lose.

Isabella: He was so powerful. He beat us in an instant.

Eliza: But what is this? This feeling of loss. Things made sense when he was with us.

Isabella: I feel the same. Ever since we fought with him. What have we done?

Eliza: I feel like we're being punished for when we betrayed his trust.

Isabella: Yes. You may go now.

Eliza: Quickly, before we change our minds.

Isabella: Go.

Eliza: Hurry.

Harry: We did it, Matthew. Let's finish this. Marcia, you wait here.

Marcia: What? Why? Let me come with you.

Harry: But you're injured.

Marcia: Harry. We finish this together. We're a team, right? Don't worry about me.

Matthew: Harry. I know you're worried, but she should come with us. Marcia's been treated differently all her life. We can't leave her out now. It wouldn't be right.

Harry: Marcia. You're right. Let's all go.

Matthew leads Harry and Marcia to the next warp hole. There they see Rahu.

Marcia: Rahu. It's evolving. This place looks like Rahu's holosseum.

Harry: Hurry, Matthew! Use the memory-erasure device! Wipe its genetic memory!

Matthew: OK!

Matthew pushes the button on his watch. There is a blinding light. It goes back to normal after a few seconds. Rahu comes toward the 3.

Harry: IT'S COMING! EVERYONE, DIVE!

They do so. Matthew, Harry, and Marcia win.

Harry: YEAH!

Marcia: We won? Matthew, look! Rahu. It's ready to fall!

Rahu suddenly falls. We see Matthew, Harry, Marcia, Sergei, Mira, and Roy at the Z Boss Room again.

Sergei: Matthew. I have one more message for you from Z's leader, your father. I was ordered to play it only once you had destroyed Rahu forever.

Father: Matthew, I know I'll never see you again, and so I want to give you these last few words. I'm sure people had their reasons for wanting to forget what had happened to them centuries ago. And for those reasons, we live now in an age of darkness, of forgetting. We didn't have to remember the horrors Rahu had created. But there was a problem. We also didn't remember that Rahu was still out here, waiting for its chance to return. It seems obvious in retrospect that this all should happen. After all, nobody knew to prepare a defense against it. Nobody even knew Rahu existed anymore. In fact, the government-created false memories told us all that the dome was the extent of our world. The ruins of the

outside world would only bring doubts to the minds of those who saw it. They would want to know what had caused all that destruction. And slowly, over time, the odds became greater that someone would discover the truth. Rahu. The government could not abide this threat of instability. It did away with all knowledge of outside. This was theft, plain and simple. The curious had been robbed of the ability to discover, to learn. People learn from their mistakes. We learn, and our thinking grows, leads us to a higher level. As long as there is an unknown, humans will pursue it and seek to unravel its mysteries. The government had stolen our growth, those things that force us to evolve and explore. The memory-erasure device is a powerful tool, if used properly. Our government, despite its pure motives, used it to an evil end. They used it to stop us from evolving and growing. Now that you've stopped Rahu, you must ask yourself how best to use the device. Will you erase everyone's memory of Rahu to prove that we have not grown as a species at all in the past few centuries. Mankind will be frozen, static, incapable of bettering itself. Only death lies down that path. Matthew. I'm sure your friends are listening with you. And I beg of you all. We cannot repeat the mistake of our forefathers. Consider carefully how you can use that device for the benefit of us all. I leave the rest up to you. Take care, Matthew.

Roy: Captain Mira. What will benefit the people? I just don't know anymore.

Mira: I don't know either. We've destroyed Rahu, and we've completed our mission, but

Harry: (interrupting) Hey, that reminds me, what do we do with all the Z Syndicate guys we knocked silly? There's no way we can bring all of them back. Are you going to call in the police squad?

Mira: They're not coming. No one comes out here. Never again. Especially if they don't know about the outside world.

Harry: So what happens to them!? Are you just going to leave them out here?

Mira: Our mission was to stop Rahu.

Harry: No, something's not right there!

Sergei: Captain Mira. We must tell people the truth. The Z Syndicate's work is done. The people see us as criminals. We have to repair that image. After all, as long as the truth about the outside world was kept secret, the police squad was unable to stop the Z Syndicate's wayward members. If we have to keep this secret, others could exploit that knowledge. The people have a right to know what happened centuries ago. It's their history, too. Even if the truth were to disturb the people, it will make them stronger. If it confuses the people, we will have to think of measures to stabilize them. And if the government still wants to hide the truth, then I will bring the truth to the people myself.

Roy: Captain, I'm with Sergei. We can't keep this secret.

Marcia: I will, too. Won't you, Matthew?

Matthew: Yeah. Of course I will.

Harry: Yeah, same here, Sis.

Mira: Don't worry. I feel the same way. We need to speak with the chief and our leaders. We'll tell them that the people have a right to know.

Harry: Yeah, that's my sis!

Mira: OK! We'll bring Z's leaders back to HQ.

Marcia: Excuse me, Mira. What's going to happen to Sergei?

Sergei: Marcia, you heard the captain. They're taking the leaders of the Z Syndicate in. I'm one of Z's leaders. I won't resist.

Marcia: You can't, Sergei.

Harry: Hey, Sis. You're not really going to arrest Sergei, are you?

Roy: Captain.

Mira: Sergei. Return to the police squad!

Sergei: Captain, I no longer have the right. I abandoned my

Mira: (interrupting) THAT'S AN ORDER! Sergei took the initiative to begin an independent, undercover investigation that helped us out. However, you will be given a warning for acting without specific orders!

Sergei: Captain Mira.

Marcia: Mira. Thank you.

Roy: Captain.

Mira: Matthew, let me borrow that memory-erasure device. I'll have Linda take a look at it. I won't let it get in the wrong hands. Will you let me borrow it?

Matthew: Yes. I trust you, Mira. Um, and Mira. Can I ask you a favor? I just remembered something. When my dad gave me that watch, he said he wanted me to take care of it because he got it from my mother, who was also gone.

Mira: Matthew.

Matthew: I think my dad placed a lot of memories into that watch. This watch is the only thing I have left of my parents. I don't care if you use the memory-erasure device on me or if you take it out of my watch. Just bring back the watch to me. That's all I ask.

Mira: OK. It must mean a lot to you. I'll make sure you get it back.

Matthew: Mira, thank you very much!

Harry: OK, let's go home! I can't wait to see Ernest's face when we tell him the truth!

To be continued (Grand Battle).

4. My Thanks

Thanks to the following people:

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