



Reign

of the



Robots

By: Henry

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The year is 4010 and robots are trying to take over the world! The current young generation has only known life with the struggle of man against machine. No one recalls how it all began . . .

Chapter I: The Ghost

Suddenly, three computer-like robots came over to my hiding space behind a rock. I shuddered. As they approached, I took out my pistol (you had to have one now-a-days) and came out; the entire scene was battle and everything was in flames! I shot my pistol with a bang in an attempt to halt the charging robots, but I never knew if I succeeded because right then, a steaming hot ray hit my back. I screamed in agony and fell forwards into paralysis as the deadly beam hit my body, searing my flesh. My heart and veins shriveled up! Just then, I passed out. I was dying!

I woke up in a dark smelly cave. There was no one inside. I started to say to myself, “the robo...”, but I stopped because it even hurt to whisper. The darkness surrounded me coming closer and closer until I passed out again.

The next day a robot came into the cave. It looked like a regular computer (the kind they had 2000 years ago) but it had little red dots on the screen and huge metal arms and legs that looked like metal muscles bolted together. It walked towards me, its eyes glowing in the near-black.

I knew what it was coming for: to kill me. “But I am too young to die!” I thought. I was only ten years old. I lost my family when we became homeless, and I was only 6 years old at that time. I was too young to die! But because of yesterday’s injury, I was practically dead already! The metal mass approached to a mere three feet away! As the robot raised its laser, I closed my eyes tightly and clenched my teeth.

Then it hit me. The anticipated shriveling pain was, to my pleasant surprise, a cool stream of air flowing through me. I took it in giant gulps! Strength returned to my body. I rose and noticed a faint glow increasing in luminosity. The glowing object came out from the depths of the cave.

I couldn't perceive any details at first. It was just a blur. But as it came closer I could see it clearly. It was my dad!

"Dad!" I cried with joy, running towards him with open arms.

"Don't," he said sternly. He raised his hand. "I am just a ghost, an image."

I dropped my arms. Trying to hold back tears, I asked, "Why?"

"Because," he said, "you will turn into a ghost yourself if you come in contact with me. And you have a task to fulfill."

"Okay," I sighed. I turned to leave.

"Wait!" he called. "Wait here." He ran back into the cave. Five minutes later, he came back carrying another pistol. "Now you have two," he said. I was becoming well armed with yet another pistol to go along with the two sticky grenades, time bomb, and the other pistol that my holster already held. "I will be there when you need me. Just call my name." With that he vanished.

I stood there looking into the spot where my dad's ghost had been a moment ago. Creepy. That's what I decided it was. Just then I heard the robot beep. I had forgotten it was even there. I turned around and noticed a message on the screen.

Your father reprograms robots. He takes them to this cave to reprogram them. Then he sends them out to fight alongside humans.

The screen turned back into a face and the glowing eye winked at me. It ran out of the cave.

"Wait," I called after it. It stopped, turned and came back. "How can he reprogram robots when he's a ghost?" I asked.

The face dissolved, and a reply appeared.

First of all, humans that become ghosts when they die can only do so because part of their brain or heart still functions. At least half of your brain and heart have to be working to be able to touch things. Your father is a very strong ghost. Most of his brain and heart are still working. In fact, he is only barely dead. So, of course, like any other smart human, he can reprogram robots.

"Thank you," I said to the robot. It beeped proudly then ran out of the cave. I was again alone, the complete darkness swelling in around me, now more intense than ever.

Chapter 2: A "Friend"

I stood there for a minute or two then started to walk out of the cave.

Suddenly, I heard a faint sound from the back of the cave. The sound grew with increasing intensity. I turned my head slowly. It was a mega gunner, the most feared robot of all. I turned my whole body to face it. The giant hovering robot was a saucer with a dome and antennae on top of it, but no eyes. There was a rectangular shaped crease on the sides of the dome. I think those were hidden laser launchers; I read about that in a book once. But I wasn't afraid. I was sure that dad had reprogrammed it.

I took a few steps forward and jubilantly said, "Hi!" As it rumbled viciously in reply, my smile faded. I started to sweat and turned to run, my heart pounding. Then, I heard something whizz by and explode. The force was so tremendous it made me tumble to the ground. It was not a laser at all. It was a giant missile.

By the time I had started to get up it had fired again. There was no hope to dodge the missile. It struck me with incredible might, and caused me to scream. It felt like I was on fire. I managed one last little cry. Then my body lay limp on the floor.

The truth was I didn't know my dad's name, so of course I couldn't call him. Without a doubt my termination was imminent. As this terrifying thought swept through me, I closed my eyes. My heart stopped, and I died.

I didn't know what happened until what seemed like the next morning. I still hadn't figured out what was going on. At first I just thought I had simply fallen asleep. But after recalling what happened the previous night, the insight eventually dawned on me; I had become a ghost. "Lucky for me," I thought. "I could have ended up in a blank world right now instead."

I grabbed my weapons and walked out of the cave. The scene was worse than ever; bullets were everywhere and a wild fire covered the landscape. Robots and humans were getting hit rapidly.

I didn't know what happened to ghosts in fire so I decided to stay where I was even though I knew that ghosts can float. But what I didn't know, nobody knew, that the robots were mounting their most vicious, most deadly attack ever.

Chapter 3: Captured

A week passed. "One billion bottles of beer on the wall. . ." Two weeks. ". . . 20,000 bottles of beer. . ." After a month I had finally finished singing the whole "Bottles of Beer on the Wall" song all the way down to 1,235. But I couldn't finish because I got really bored. I sat facing the cave wall looking at the dark, cold stone. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw at least one billion gigantic space crafts of all shapes and sizes descending to Earth. Without thinking, I grabbed both of my pistols and started to fly as fast as I could towards the ships.

After about 1,000 feet I knew I had gone the wrong way. I tried to go back but I couldn't. The robots were pulling me into their flying domain by some unknown force! I kicked and thrashed about but it was no use. I was brought up through a hatch in the bottom of a ship. Immediately I was bound up as tight as could be. But was I? I was a ghost right? I should be able to go through everything. I then proved myself wrong with a thought. "Since I was able to grab hold of my pistols, I wouldn't pass through everything." Besides, I was bound by an energy, not chains and ropes. It was the same energy that pulled me into the ship. The laws of physics that I had been accustomed to definitely did not apply in this case.

Bang! Bang! I looked left; two speeding bullets were aimed at my head. But I thought, "Bullets can't harm ghosts?" I couldn't have been more wrong. The razor sharp burning pieces of metal sped towards me and . . . all of a sudden everything went blank.

"Captain, we have done your command."

"Brought him up and shot the memory bullets at him?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Very good."

Chapter 4: Hypnotized

I woke up feeling very strange. I couldn't remember anything except that I existed. I also had my flesh, my body back. Then, two silver and black masses approached. They looked like big, flat heads with arms and legs. They stopped in front of me. One of them introduced the pair, "I am Lipat. The computo general. And this is Lipot," he pointed to the other. "The computo ground leader. Will you help us in the war against the evil humans?"

I didn't recognize the word, "humans", but figured that fighting against evil made sense. so I replied, "Yes."

"Ha Ha Ha, oops, I mean, thank you." Something seemed fishy, but I couldn't quite figure it out. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, we are called robots."

This was an important piece of information if I was going to fight along with them. I shouted "Thanks!" but they had already walked away.

I stood there for quite awhile, still bound by that electrical force. Just when I started to get really bored, a robot came over to me and said, "Come we need to get you suited in your armor and weapons at the ready. We are landing in 10 minutes." The robot pressed a button and the electrical chains binding me vanished. We went through a winding dim hallway with weird, colorful moving patterns on the wall. Swirls and squares dancing around. It was very cool. Finally, we reached the armory. It was a lot like a clothing store, except it was for armor.

"Pick out any one you like," it said, "only one."

I looked around at the armory. There were thousands of suits (mostly for robots) but there were about 50 for humans so I had a decent selection. I chose one made of transparent, blue energy.

"You want that one?" The robot asked.

"Yes." I answered.

"It's extremely hard to work with. You still want it?"

“Yes.” I said firmly; but I wondered what he meant. And without another word, we walked out of the armory.

Boom! All of a sudden, we hit something. A speaker came on: “All to the battle ports! All to battle ports!” It said. Every robot started to scurry around.

“Do not worry,” the robot said when he saw the frightened look on my face. “Come with me.” We passed the room where I had been captured and then walked down a hallway much like the one leading to the armory. We turned right into a very open, yet dark room. There were hundreds of other robot soldiers in the room, too but since it was so dark, I could only see their glowing eyes.

The robot that had been with me pushed a button on a keyboard with millions of keys. Suddenly, the wall around us disappeared and light filled the room but it wasn't pale sunlight, it was orange, dim, firelight.

Chapter 5: My Own Kind

I walked forward out of the platform. I looked around searching for any sign of 'the enemy.' We walked for a long time, trooping over fallen trees and through burning patches of land with logs and tall grass.

I also figured out what the captain (my helper robot) meant by: "It's extremely hard to work with" (meaning my suit.) It meant that it had sensors to move whenever the body moved, but if you moved too fast, Zap! You get electrified. After approximately two hours, my legs ached; there was a giant hole in the calf of my pants because of getting electrified by running too fast, but despite the excruciating pain I managed to keep going.

At sunset there was no sign of the 'enemy.' I tried to find a place to rest that wasn't in flames, but the robots pushed on.

"Wait up!" I yelled.

"Humans," it muttered. They were robots, what was I; they needed no rest, I did. Then it came to me, I was a human. I remembered the robots saying, "the evil humans." I was their enemy, but before I could do anything, I fell asleep from exhaustion.

The next morning I wasn't where I had been when I fell asleep. I was lying on a street with burning buildings on either side. I woke up with about 10 humans surrounding me.

"Why are you wearing robot armor?" one asked.

"I'm not," I answered, "it's for humans."

"I know, but it's a robot made suit."

"Well I guess you can't argue with that," I muttered, a little annoyed, "Anyway, I need to find the enemy. Do you know where to find it?"

"No, but we can help you find them. By the way, my name is Sam. Now let's go before the enemy finds us first."

Chapter 6: The Vision

“Here,” Sam tossed me a small first aid kit. “What is your name?” he asked as we set off.

“What?” The question caught me off guard.

“What is your name?” repeated Sam. That’s when I remembered that I have no name. And it hit me like 1,000 boulders crashing down. Why had I not thought about this before? One simple question: Why had I not been given a name?

I was standing there, sweating like mad. I must’ve looked completely idiotic but I didn’t care. Then I was falling into a dark abyss. I landed with a thump in a small room. It was very dim with only a single candle lighting the room. There was a big desk on one end, in front of a fire place, and the door on the other.

The door opened and two figures walked in. One was tall and thin, he looked vaguely familiar. The other was short. It didn’t look exactly human but it was hard to tell. The tall one sat down behind the desk and the short one sat down in front of it.

“Well,” said that tall one coldly, “It’s about time I have my own son,” he said. His voice sent a chill up my spine. “I hate that I have to do this to one of my own robots. But it’s my only choice. “

There was a flash of light and what I realized was a robot, was now a boy. That boy looked exactly like me.

“You are now very powerful,” the man said, “Use your powers...” he smirked, “well.”

Chapter 7: Remembering

I woke up in a cold sweat. Sam was kneeling over me. He looked panicked.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“You’re what’s wrong!” he said as if it was obvious. “All of a sudden your face went all white and your eyes went into the back of your head!” Sam said, looking as if he had seen a zombie.

“That’s not how I experienced it,” I said. Sam looked confused. Then I told him my vision. After I had finished, Sam stood there gaping. He looked even more frightened then before (if it was possible). Finally, he broke the silence, “What do you think it means?”

“I know what it means,” I replied.

“Then what does it mean?” He asked impatiently.

“You don’t want to know.”

“Oh yeah I do.”

We started to fight and the rest of our group crowded around us. “This is private!” I yelled in Sam’s face. He staggered back. Everyone was silent. “I’m really sorry.” I said, startled by my own brutality “I’ll tell you.”

“That tall person was my dad. He is the leader of the robots.” Everyone gasped. “I used to be a robot and he turned me into a human.” I put my face in my hands and started to cry. Sam patted me on the back.

“It’s all right. You’re a human now. You fight with the humans.” This made me feel a little bit better. But fighting against my dad was heart breaking. Still, I had to do it. Then, without further ado, we set off once again.

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One night I woke up around 12:00 to the sound of the gun shot. Immediately after, something sped through the tent I was sleeping in. The holes in the tent were smoking. I knew what the small thing was: a bullet. We were close to finding the robots.

Chapter 8: The Enemy

That morning at the camp circle, I told the group what happened. Some of them said they heard it. But it only went through my tent.

“We’re close to our goal.” I informed. Our group let out a sigh of relief. But it didn’t sound like a sigh of relief; it sounded more like a war cry. It took us a moment to figure out where the sound came from but when we did (apparently Sam was the head of the group) he started barking orders that I didn’t understand. Everybody started to surge to their tents. When everybody was in their tents, Sam came over to me.

“Get out your pistols. You’ll need them.”

I had totally forgotten I had the weapons so it took a little bit before I actually got them out of my holster.

I was just in time. Right then robots started streaming into the clearing. Lasers were flying everywhere and Sam was shouting and small explosions made people tumble to the ground. I shot randomly and hit a robot. It exploded.

We were doing pretty well but one by one our group members got hit. Why did I not get hit you may ask? Well, if you remember, I had a suit made of electric energy (I had actually gotten used to it), so the bullets just bounced off.

We were fighting hard as we could but it was no use. A bullet sped towards me. I aimed and it bounced off my suit and hit the robot back.

Finally, Sam gave out the order I had been waiting for. “Retreat! We can’t afford to lose more members. Each carry at least one injured!” I ran to a member. A bullet sped past my ear. With tremendous effort, I hoisted him upon my shoulder and sped into the woods.

When we finally shook the robot off our tail, we sat down for a rest. Sam got out the first aid kit and started treating the wounded.

I counted out remaining healthy members; we only had 6 left, including Sam and me!

I decided to set up camp but Sam must have read my mind. “Don’t set up camp,” he said sternly. “The robots are still looking for us. We have to get going after the injured get medicine. Oh, and p.s. we’ll have to recruit more humans or we all will die.” He spoke through a grim face; the silence that followed was filled with the terror that we all felt inside of us...

Chapter 9: Worse Enemies

Weeks passed. We trained all day, lifting heavy weights and doing exhausting exercises. The suit had gotten so laborious to move around in that I decided to take the risk of not wearing it. I also learned the names of the members of our group. James was a tall, skinny boy with red hair that went down to his waist. Rob, his twin, was the same except shorter hair. They both were the best engineers in the group. Then there was Mary, shorter with long black hair. She was very good at climbing and had excellent vision. Connor was a good size, lanky with blond hair, a wonderful problem solver, and was fast.

We were not allowed under any circumstance to look at or touch the injured members (don't ask me why), so I can't explain them for you.

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One day our recruiter, Mary, came running back, painting. She earned the high position because of her excellent vision.

"I heard some clanking," she said, "It was definitely not a simple computo."

"Where?" asked Sam.

"About half a mile back that way." She pointed where she had come from.

"Let's go. Leave everything here. Who knows how dangerous this thing could be?!" Sam shouted. Following Mary, we darted into the woods.

Ten minutes later, Mary put out her hand to signal we were stopping. "Need to check something." She jumped and started to climb a tree. Mary was as nimble as a mountain lion, swiftly moving up the tree. She stayed there for a few minutes and was so high up that we couldn't see her! A few minutes later, we saw Mary climbing down.

Thwump! Mary jumped down and landed on her feet. She was very agile. "Follow me," she said. "Quickly!"

We ran off. When we stopped again, everyone was out of breath. Mary put the binoculars to her eyes. "I think I see it. I'll go."

"No, Sam should. He's the leader," said James.

"I guess you're right." She gave in. Sam snuck off.

As I watched him, I noticed the plants were green! So much life! So much beauty! I snapped back to reality. "Hey, did you guys notice the plants are green?" I asked.

"You're right!" exclaimed Connor; his eyes were narrow with suspicion.

"Yup," said Rob and James together.

"Maybe this area is protected against fire," I suggested thoughtfully.

"We might be in the future," Mary put in. We consulted for a minute or two then Connor made up his mind.

"It's probably a time portal," he decided though his eyes were still narrow in thought. I started to panic. "What if we can't go back?" My breathing was harsh. I was sure everyone could hear it.

"Relax. There's no more war here . . ."

"Wrong," I squeaked. I was wide-eyed with fear.

Chapter 10: The Chase

It had approached with great stealth during our conversation. There in front of us stood a giant three-headed lion. Its red fire drool sizzled when it hit the ground. This was curious. Red drool? Sizzling when hitting the ground? It didn't make sense. But it was not the right time to think.

The sound from our team came out as one, "AAAAHhh!" We turned around and started running as fast as we could in the opposite direction. But the lion was too fast. It started gaining on us. Then I got an idea.

"Let's fight it!" I suggested while still running.

"You're crazy!" Connor yelled. I didn't listen. I tuned and took out my pistols.

"Stop!" Connor shouted from behind me. Again I didn't listen. Bang! Bang! I shot but instead of sinking into the lion's flesh, the bullets ricocheted off and only left two tiny markings which should have left bloodshed. This just made it angrier.

Now that I got a closer look, I noticed little bumps in rows: bolts connecting metal pieces. The gleaming reflection of sun indicated that the lion was made of metal.

"Hello! C'mon!" Connor was running as fast as he could, trying to drag me along. "Wake up! It's not time to observe!" He let go of me and I started to jog on my own.

How could I have been so stupid? We *are* in the future! Better technology! This meant one thing, at least as far as I'm concerned: worse enemies.

Chapter II: The Palace

We ran and ran. Luckily, the lion never caught up to us but we couldn't shake it off our tail. Just then I figured out what the better technology was. The lion roared. But as we soon found out, it wasn't just a roar, it was a weapon. I wasn't sure what was going on but I heard a noise that sounded like a humming engine. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw a red laser beam hit Rob and he instantly straightened up like a soldier snapping off a crisp salute. I reasoned that the beam had come from the lion. "Rob!" I yelled. "Rob!" I didn't get a response. Still, I wasn't going to hang around long enough to find out. If it really was that powerful, I was not going to stop.

Then I heard the lion speak a weird language. Or at least I think it was the lion. But what was really weird was that I knew exactly what was said: Kill them. *Something responded.* "Yes, master." I never saw Rob again.

We kept running and I quickly realized that we would have no chance in taking it down. Rather, we would have to out-smart it.

Boom! I took a quick glance back. I saw a giant missile speeding toward me. It was caked in green slime. This time I was not going to die. Instead of diving out of the way, I rolled forward. Everything seemed to go in slow motion. I was in mid-roll when I felt the missile skim my back, tearing my shirt and slicing through a few layers of skin. The missile's amazing speed stung and the corrosive slime burned at the same time.

I took my best tool out of my holster, sat up just slightly, and came away from my roll with a bang of my pistol. I achieved my goal, but it backfired. The missile blew up all right, but its explosion should have only covered a small area, but as it did so, the green slime caught fire, but without flame. It was a mass of powerful embers and developed into a massive eruption, a roar of flame and gas. It was like being next to a rocket as it blasts off. The bang flung me from my feet! I hurdled backwards. I landed with a thud.

When the dust cleared, I was on my back looking up at a golden face. The face growled. At once I knew the face was one of the lion's three heads. "I wish Sam or Connor or someone with me right now," I thought. My heart pounded. I started to sweat. There was no hope of escaping.

The lion opened one of its mouths. I was done for. Wait, was I? I took a sticky grenade out of my holster and chucked it at the beast. The lion roared as it tried to get the sticky grenade off. The bomb stuck to it though.

I took my chance. I got up and ran as fast as I could over thorns and tree roots. The beast's bellows echoed behind me then, BOOM! I heard the lion shatter as the explosion's roar took the place of the lion's. I ran for a few minutes past grass and green trees. Strange, I thought. After the slime explosion the grass should have been dark brown and the trees should have been black, crisp and fallen. The place looked like the explosion earlier had never happened.

I stopped to take a rest. I heard a rustle to my left and spun around. Nothing. I heard it again. Again, to my left. But it didn't stop. The sound seemed to go away from me.

Should I follow it or should I go back the direction I was running when the lion was chasing me and find my friends? I hadn't seen them for almost an hour. They could be anywhere.

I pondered on this decision. I made up my mind. I can't skip an adventure. Even though I was abandoning my companions. I followed the sound over bushes and roots. Finally, I reached an opening. I thought I was sure to find what was making the noise. I found nothing.

Suddenly, a hand grabbed my shoulder. A raspy voice said, "He has been conquered by evil, but you, and only you, can save Him!" Mist sprayed everywhere. I spun around. No one was there, just the hazy substance spewing forth from nothing. The area around me started to get foggy. As I stood there in awe, the fog became more intense, so intense I couldn't see anything around me.

The fog gave a haunting appearance as if in a gloomy forest. I looked around and noticed everything was silent. No screams, no lion. The surroundings held an eerie feeling. The misty fog chilled me. No, not the mist; something else filled the fog. Then I realized what it was - danger. Something was very wrong. "Well," I thought, "I'm not going to let the danger find me." I started to walk around, calling for my companions, "Connor! Mary!" No response.

What's happening? Where is everything? Questions raced through my mind. Then out of nowhere, fire sprang upward, gushing fierce flames like a geyser. This attack from the earth completely encircled me. No escape. The visceral heat that spewed forth from the wall of flame caused the cold mist to evaporate. The eerie feeling went along with it. A new feeling took its place: fear. It filled my body from head to toe. The screaming fire was so scorching my fluids began to boil and I began to cook.

Slowly, a room started to appear. The room was colossal. So colossal, it was more like a cavern. The light was fire orange. A lava river ran through the middle of the cavern which parted and met again, leaving an island in the center. I was on that island. The ring of fire encircled the edge of the mini island. I turned. At one end of the cavern stood a gargantuan throne. It was made entirely of rubies except for the cushioned seat. The throne must have been at least fifty feet tall! To my horror, on that throne . . . sat my dad. His eyes were gleaming red and he was huge! Big enough to fit the throne. Mega gunners hovered beside the throne but it was so big the giant M.G.s looked like tiny ants.

"D-D-Dad?" I stammered.

"Yes!" he cackled like a wildly lapping fire.

"No! Nooo!" I wailed. My eyes welled up with tears. I mean, I remembered my dream in the dimly lit room, but secretly, I had hoped there might still be some good in him. This scene, the sound of his voice, however was indisputable evidence that there was none. I fell to my knees and put my hands over my eyes. I was filled with anger.

“Well, hello!” he screeched. “Nice to see you again!” The voice gave me a chill even with the enormously intense heat that filled the room.

“Now let’s not get into fighting mode just yet!” He laughed an evil laugh. That’s when I noticed my dad was flesh; he was not a ghost anymore.

“You’re not a ghost . . .” my voice trailed off.

“Of course, stupid boy!” He laughed and sent another chill through me.

“Remember when you got shot by the memory bullets?” he paused.

Instantly, memories flooded back: getting killed, my family becoming homeless, the cave. These were a few of many memories. Then, the memory bullets. I remembered I was dead before I got shot with them. And when I woke up, I was alive, with flesh.

“You got shot with the memory bullets,” I guessed wide-eyed. Even though I know the answer was yes.

“Finally, you guessed!” he was acting so casual that you would think we were on a beach.

“But how can you remember?”

“Jeez! Do you think the memory bullets would hurt the maker?”

“You made memory bullets?”

“Why does it have to be my son that is like the stupidest person in the world!” he remarked, rolling his eyes.

That did it. My fear instantly transformed into powerful conviction and bravery, a feeling I have never had in my entire life. I was more confident. Nothing would get in my way anymore.

Chapter 12: The Battle

"I will kill you!" I shouted. Tears were in my eyes, I was full of vengeance. He had betrayed my family!

Without warning, four figures fell out of the sky. They landed next to me on my mini-island.

"Sam, Mary, Connor, James?" I asked.

"Yep," Sam answered.

"But . . .," I started.

"No time for explanation," Sam said. "Your dad's attacking!"

Indeed he was. A laser beam shot from my dad's hand, right at Sam! He ducked just in time.

"Attack!" My dad yelled to the mega gunners at his side. Two huge missiles flew at us.

"Dive!" Sam yelled. We obeyed his command. The missiles missed Connor and Sam by about 3 inches and would have hit them if we hadn't dove out of the way. My dad caught us off guard once again. Another missile was shot; it flew through the air then hit James just as he was getting up from being sprawled out! The explosion knocked us all off our feet. While most of us got back up, James wasn't moving. Not breathing. Nothing. He was dead.

But we didn't have time to take in the dreadfulness right now. We had a battle to win. Sam shot a bullet at my dad. But it missed, bounced off my dad's throne and narrowly missed me.

Mary, Connor, and I threw our sticky grenades at my dad. Mine hit him in the left shoulder while Mary's hit him in the right. James' smashed my dad in the knee.

"We did it!" I yelled. He was bound to blow any second.

"Not quite," Mary pointed out. She was right. Only the parts of my dad's body we had hit with our sticky grenades had actually exploded! Both of his elbows and arms, along with his right knee and leg were

boiling in the lava river, but his head, torso, and left knee were still raging mad.

“Ha!” My dad yelled. His eyes were narrowed and his teeth were gritted. “Your powers are no match for mine, boy!”

Powers. That’s when I remembered my dad’s last line in my dream: “You are now very powerful. Use your powers well.”

But what powers? I didn’t know what powers I had. I puzzled on this but couldn’t think of anything. “Hey, could you do me a favor?” I asked my dad, trying to keep calm.

“What favor?” he questioned.

“I want to know what kind of powers mine are.” My friends looked at me, all of us knowing that this was the wrong question to ask at the wrong time.

“Why, may I ask, would I tell you what your powers are?”

That was a good point. It looked like I had hit a dead end. After all, I was going to use them against him. He knew that. The offering had to be very persuasive. Then I got an idea. One that he couldn’t refuse.

“If I promise to side with robots. . .”

This clearly caught my dad and my companions by surprise. My dad didn’t move a muscle. But the thing was, he didn’t recover. He just sat there, like he was petrified.

What had happened? Was my dad faking me? I decided that he was. It would be a good strategy: to make us think won. Then, when we were off guard, he would kill us. .

“You are not fooling me, traitor!” I shouted. Still, he did not move.

“Something is wrong,” Mary said.

Suddenly, I heard a rumble. I looked down. A crack split down the middle of my mini island. “What’s happening?” Connor said, frantically. The crack got bigger. We backed up. I noticed the whole room was falling apart. I remembered the flames behind us. We were trapped. I

would fall eventually, so I took the only chance I had and jumped into the crack, which was now a pit. As I fell, the opening closed. Everything was pitch black.

Chapter 13: The Second Vision

After what seemed like days of falling, I landed with a thud. Luckily the thick air slowed my fall so I didn't die.

"Oof!" I muttered. "Sam? Mary? Connor?" No response. They had not fallen in. I would have panicked, remembering the room was falling, but something else grabbed my attention.

I touched my back in pain. I had landed on the same spot that that missile with the green slime had seared. The memory of that moment was clear in my mind. The approaching missile. The corrosive slime. The explosion. The thought of it made me shiver.

I checked my first aid bag. There wasn't much left, but the remaining potions would work.

I took some green viscous fluid out of the bag and smeared it on my back. The wound would be okay, for now.

Then there was James. Dead. It couldn't be true. Yet, it was. The horror sank in. He was gone. The thought was terrifying. The stone around me was as hard and cold as stone could get.

Slowly, my surroundings appeared around me. Wait. What? Surroundings? I was in a pit! Was this another vision? I hate visions.

There was a road with grass on either side of it. Down the road were buildings made of brick. Some buildings were houses and others were businesses.

With a jolt, I was uncontrollably lifted from my feet and I "flew" down the road and landed in front of a yellow house with white columns and some stairs which lead up to a front deck. Why did the vision take me here? Another jolt and I again "flew" right to the door. It opened without someone touching it. It shut and I stopped abruptly in front of a woman. The woman looked about 42 years old. She had blond wavy hair and blue eyes. She wore a beaded necklace and a blue t-shirt. She also had holey jeans. Suddenly, the woman flung her arms around me.

“Son!” she cried. “I’m so glad you are here!”

I had a mother? I thought I used to be a robot. My father created me, right? Now I was confused. Also, my so-called mother could interact with me. Was this really a vision?

“Come in! Come in!” my mother said. She took me by the hand into a kitchen. The kitchen was skinny. To the right was a counter with a sink. To the left was a fridge, stove, then some cabinets. A slide-out doorway led to a dining room. In front of the sink was a man, peeling some vegetables. He looked exactly like dad!

“Son . . .,” he started, “find the star of hope.” With a thud, I landed back in the pit.

Chapter 14: The Star of Hope

What was the star of hope? Did I really have to find it? I was mad. How was I supposed to save the world if I didn't know anything?

I kicked the wall angrily and fell over. It wasn't there! Was I in a cavern or a cave? I went to the other wall and felt it. It was there. Ugh! I didn't need more confusion! I decided to walk the direction opposite the wall.

By the way, did I mention it was cold in here, wherever I was? It was freezing! But, nonetheless, it actually felt good because of how hot it got these days.

Hour after hour I walked. This tunnel seemed endless.

Suddenly, I saw a faint glow. An exit! I ran toward it, but I came out in a huge cavern. I stopped. The glowing light came from an *étoile d'espoir*, a rare flower with five wrinkled petals. There was a walkway to the flower, but beside that, there was no floor.

"If you want to find nectar, cut the flower in half. But be careful. I'm warning you," said a voice in my head.

"What? What are you warning me about?" I called out loud, even though I knew the voice had come from within my head. There was no reply. "Please!" I cried, "Please! What should I look out for?" But the voice was gone. I stood, frozen in silence.

Did I really need the flower? I decided I didn't. Besides, I needed the Star Of hope, not an *étoile d'espoir*. I started back in the direction I had come from.

Suddenly, I heard a roar. I spun around. Nothing. I backed up, searching for signs of any living being.

Unexpectedly, a sizzling, extremely hot substance landed on my head. I whipped around. Shining metal plates in the shape of legs blocked my view. I didn't want to think what the thing was. But I looked up. Three metal heads stared down at me: the metal lion.

The metal lion had come to get me. But how did it know where I was? No time to consult this. I had to defend myself. But how? How was I going to defend myself? Pistols don't destroy it and that is the only thing I have. That's when I remembered the *étoile d'espoir*. I grabbed the flower and ripped it in two. A scream pierced the air. My free hand shot to my ear but I was determined to keep the flower in my grasp. I threw the bottom half of the flower blindly at the metal mass. It disintegrated. But I didn't have time to take in the fact that the lion was gone. I could no longer bear the ear-piercing noise; it had to stop. My eardrums were about to burst. I screamed in anguish. Then suddenly, I heard a pop, then nothing.

Chapter 15: The Final Decision

Everything was silent. I heard nothing. Not even a slight wind. What had happened? Then a terrifying thought came to me. Had the world come to an end? Had the robots taken over the world? The silence was maddening. However, the lion was gone, which was comforting. The flower had disintegrated it. The flower. The flower that looked like a star. The flower that had just given me hope. It all made sense. The *étoile d'espoir* was the star of hope.

I got up. I had to keep going. I walked carefully to the exit I had come from. Once again I walked for hours, not stopping. Finally, I came to the wall. I looked up. That was where I needed to go.

But how? Even if I knew how to climb (which I don't), I would have to do it single handed because of the half of the flower I still held in my hand. I pondered the challenge that lay before me. The voice in my head came back.

"I will help you once more, but you will do the rest by yourself."

Suddenly, the rock wall shifted to make a staircase. I started to climb up. I did so slowly, with great attention because there was no rail. After a while, I looked down. I started to shake. I was extremely high up, probably about one hundred feet. But I couldn't fall off now, it would be such a long drop and I would most certainly die. I kept climbing and decided not to look down again.

Finally, after my exhausting climb, I reached the top, which was the mini island me and my friends on. The place was as I left it, a crack down my mini island. Flames blocked any escape, and my dad- he was still in that giant throne. He was still in the trance state.

I felt the squeeze of arms around me. When they put me down, I saw what had picked me up. It was Connor! He mouthed something, but I couldn't hear what he was trying to tell me. Then it came to me; the *étoile d'espoir* had indeed burst my eardrums! I was deaf! I told that to Connor even though, of course, I couldn't hear what I said. Then, he gestured to Sam who came over. He took a white piece of metal out of

his pocket, and then he gestured to me that I should put the thing in my ear, and handed it to me. I put it in my ear. I couldn't even feel it!

"Is that better?" Sam asked. I could hear him!

"Yes!" I answered happily. "Thank you very much!" I beamed at everyone. "I thought the cavern had crumpled to pieces and you were all gonners!" I thought out loud.

"Well... It really didn't. When you fell, everything came back together," Sam answered.

Suddenly, we heard a noise coming from my dad's throne. "You thought you could actually kill me didn't you? Well you can't. I will kill you." He was there, his limbs had grown back. How? It was like magic! But it wasn't. It was just advanced technology. *Very* advanced technology. But don't ask me how it works. My dad clapped his hands together, which emitted a wave of transparent force that plowed straight towards us. Walls shook when it came into contact with them, and it was clear we would be dealt a severe blow if we didn't quickly find a way to protect ourselves.

I realized that I had but one hope. The flower, though the only thing I had, was extremely powerful. The force went right through the wall of fire as I flicked the *étoile d'espoir* so the nectar would fling at the wave of air. When the nectar hit the force, it immediately ceased and disappeared. The power of the flower was very strong indeed.

My father gasped. "So you have found it! I'll...I'll...I'll find a way," He contemplated to himself.

I knew he was talking about the *étoile d'espoir*. I needed to do something with it, that part I already knew. But what should I do? That's when it came to me. If the lion disintegrated when the *étoile d'espoir's* nectar touched it, and same happened with the wave of force, then maybe if the nectar touched my dad, than he would disintegrate too! The thought was heart-breaking, but it had to be done.

"Guys! I've got a plan; no time to explain! All you have to do is defend me. Pretty simple. Go!" I commanded. I got right to work. I took

the flower, squeezed some liquid onto a bullet and loaded it into my pistol. I took aim and fired. It hit him in the chest with a great thud. He belted out a scream of anguish.

I heard a gurgle and the lava river immediately drained. The fire around my mini island subsided and two bridges appeared, one from my island to a door that I had never noticed before, and one from the throne to my island. Then, my dad completely disappeared. Just as he faded, a regular-sized man replaced him. He started to walk over to me on the bridge. As he came closer, I realized who he was, my dad! Not my evil dad, but my loving caring dad. He had his arms open wide. I stood rooted to the spot. He came to me and hugged me. "It's good to see you son!"

"I should thank you," my dad said. "You saved me and you saved the world, you should be very proud!" He smiled at everyone.

"Can I ask you a few questions now?" I asked.

"Of course," he answered.

"First, who or what gave me the visions?"

"Your mom," he said simply. "She has a special power. She can see into the future and give people information in special ways. So she gave you the visions."

"Who was talking to me when I was at the place where I cut the *étoile d'espoir* in two?"

"Someone was talking to you?" he asked.

"Yep. Inside my head," I answered.

"Well, if it was from inside your head, it was probably you!" he replied.

It was me. The whole time, the voice was me! My dad smiled.

"How did you know I was coming if I was originally a robot?"

“You weren’t,” he explained. “Your mother’s visions don’t mean exactly what you see in them. She only wanted to tell you that I was the leader of the robots,” he smiled.

“What was that metal lion?” I asked.

“Ah yes,” he said nodding. “That was one of my more brilliant, diabolical plans when I was under the influence of evil! The lion was programmed to track and kill you while also killing everybody around you.”

“One last question,” I said. “Why did you get stunned when I asked to side with the robots?”

“Well,” he began, “I simply couldn’t bear for you to offer it! It was the love you had for me! Deep down inside you had it, whether you realized it or not!” He smiled again. “Let’s go.” I was so happy; I forgot to ask about my powers.

Suddenly, I remembered something, “We can’t forget James.” All the joy filling the room turned to sorrow. I had forgotten him until the last minute. But there he was. His dead body lay limp on the floor. It was clear he had not become a ghost.

“I’ll take him back to the house,” my dad offered.

“What house?” I asked, confused.

“You’ll see.” My dad managed a weak smile. “You want to come?” He asked my friends.

“Sure,” Sam replied. “We’ll all come.”

We walked over the bridge and to the door. My dad opened it. I could not believe my eyes! Green grass, green trees, no war or fire! It was paradise!

“Wow,” Connor exclaimed.

My dad beamed. “This was because of you guys! Because you destroyed the evil in me!” I couldn’t help but smile too.

We walked, turned a corner and kept walking, James' limp body in my father's arms. The buildings were nice and clean. Finally, we went on a walkway onto a deck and we opened the door. My mom was right there, arms open wide.

Later that day, we buried James in the backyard. To show our honor, we all buried our pistols with him. Truly a great warrior deserves a proper burial.

Then Sam spoke up. "He was the first." Sam spoke through tears. "He was the first recruit." Nobody said anything after that.

We went inside to have a cup of tea. "So," my mom said, "you're all orphans?"

"Yep. Every one of us," Sam replied.

"Well then," my mom started, "do you want to become part of the family?"

My friends' eyes widened. "Yes!" they cried with joy.