



Chapter One

SOUND OF SILENCE



Sound. Unending, powerful sound resonated through everywhere. Sound sent out as powerful waves, waves of energy that flowed through things, empowering them, pushing them, travelling through the deepest depths as they shook the heavens above. Such as the angry and fearsome yells of Zed that echoed throughout the bowling alley, just unintelligible rage spewing from his mouth, while he violently pounded on the walls of his room with his super strength and shook the foundations of the building like a powerful yet often earthquake.

The man's room was the bar, the former place where adults would get a little tipsy while their children played bowling on the adjacent lanes, once having large pane windows from where these parents could keep a close yet casual view, if not anymore. The resident mechanical man had to build thick steel walls in order to contain the angry behemoth within, the behemoth who would lash out at anyone in his madness – being angry at no one but himself.

“Mimi, cup,” Rec said offhandedly, as his black-lens eyes inspected a large steering wheel in his metallic right hand.

“Yes, Doctor,” came the tiny robot doll, with the blocky yellow pig-tails, big green eyes, and shaped blue body.

She walked to the end of the garden table, the stand-in desk

literally vibrating under the cacophonous racket, as she caught the blue mug before it fell to the floor. It then promptly slipped out of her screwdriver-styled hands and crashed onto the floor anyway.

“Sorry, Doctor.”

“It’s alright, girl,” he breathed, putting the wheel down on the table beside her. “Sigh, that’s the third one this week.”

Doc Rec was the team’s mechanic and resident inventor, apparent by the metallic plate hidden amongst his greasy royal blue hair, and the brown goggles that he always wore. He also had a metallic left leg to match his right arm, but you couldn’t see these at the moment, because he wasn’t wearing his regular brown leather jacket coat. He was wearing a distinctly restrained and only slightly stained black-tie suit, which looked so out of place on the usually ragged and messy boy.

“Are you ready, Rec?!” Came a frantic female voice, just barely heard over the roars and slams.

“Yeah, I’m all dressed! I’m just waiting for his royal snootiness.”

“You try tailoring a suit to a mutated appendage!” Declared a snobbish man’s voice from the tent over.

“Eim jush... addin’ thi lil... lash... tuchish!” Added a cheery girl in the same tent, as she apparently held something in her mouth.

“You’re still not coming, Onzera?”

“...I’m sorry,” awkwardly spoke the somewhat blandish voice, coming from the embedded speakers above. “I just... can’t.”

“It’s okay. Not judging, just asking. I’ll say you send your love.”

“Thanks, Rec. I’m sure sending a drone to a funeral is a bit of a faux pas, so we’ll both stay here to look after Zed... and *her*.”

Onzera was the resident female computer-guy, despite never coming out her room and only letting in the rare few past the reinforced steel door at the end of the alley. Generally, she would work through her avatar, a dainty gynoid called Alpha, but the machine was currently asleep on the floor of Rec’s tent-room and plugged into a large nest of cables.

The form was of a dainty girl in metallic silver, having a moderately sized inbuilt chest and a small bob of blue plates acting like hair, coupled with blue wing-like shoulder blades and black joints showing her inner-working gears. Her large glassy blue eyes were currently

shut, and the energy channels throughout her body now only a dark grey, leaving her deactivated state lacking the pulsing blue energy she often showed.

“Be nice to her. She’s our new teammate.”

“She keeps *quoting* things. It’s getting annoying.”

“She’s okay,” Rec shrugged, as he sat back in his office chair. “She read my university level textbook on semiconductors *in an afternoon*. That was impressive.”

“*Over-compensating* is what I’d call it. She also keeps using large amounts of my bandwidth.”

“I am done, you simpletons,” said that snooty voice, with it now outside the tent.

The cyborg got up and patted down his crinkled suit, before he pushed out of the blue nylon doors of his room and moved into the main part of the alley. Standing there were two people in dark and professional suits, both waiting by the meeting table at the centre of the hall. One was a handsome man, him just over 6ft tall and inspecting himself keenly, while the other was a cheery girl who was barely shorter than him and buzzing around excitedly.

The man was odd though, for he had wild and bushy blonde hair which engulfed most of his face, it hiding the small white horns that poked out the top and the dog’s ears that stood out at the side of his face. He also had gills on his neck and irises that were seemingly feline, these not being the most bizarre things however, because the black-tie suit he wore was cut on the right arm to show his most ghastly appendage. It was an arm that was fiercely and horribly mutated, being made of several skin-coloured and veiny strands that made it bigger than nearly three arms put together, while it held three talons and a thumb made of similar yet sharper material.

The girl next to him was brilliant and bouncing with an aura of unrestrained childish wonder, even if she looked decidedly out of place in the drab black dress skirt and dark leggings that she wore. This might have been for a couple of reasons, as one was the long grass green hair that fell below her buttocks, which she usually preferred in massive girlish pigtails.

The other reason might have been because she was a zombie; stitched-together skin composed her entire being, leaving peach, tan,

brown, olive, faded blue, and even some green pieces throughout her, while she had literal pink cheeks from the actual circular pieces sewn into her face. She was kept securely together by visible black threads, each line perfectly holding each piece of skin together, but allowing her to detach herself if need be.

Still, this she always had an optimistic and friendly smile matched by large innocent eyes – turquoise on the right, green on the left – that always looked curious or happy even with such a grim matter as it was today.

“Look at ya, all dapper. Topped up to the nines, laddie.”

“Thanks, Patch,” Rec briskly smiled at her, before giving the man a nod. “Mera.”

“Cretin. Is she ready yet? She always takes ages to get ready.”

“When a girl feels that she’s perfectly groomed and dressed, she can forget that part of her,” recounted a slightly disinterested voice.

The bowling alley was a semi-large hall that surrounded the central table, with the fresh grey vinyl flooring newly installed, and the less harsh neon lights now hanging above, while the three tents crammed into it admittedly made it feel crowded. Down the wall that punctuated the lanes was a long hall that led from the entrance to the welcome desk, with the small staff area behind it having been refurbished into someone’s room. The desk itself was separated by a tall wooden bench that encircled the area, being the former place where employees would supply you with shoes in the alley’s working days, as it had now been refurbished into a small yet lacking front office.

Cut out of the bench was the greeting section, where a darkly dressed girl was now sat lackadaisically back in her chair with her feet perched atop the wood. She was swamped in a hooded black jumper detailed with white death metal skulls, while she wore thin and lacey stockings that led into thick black combat boots. She didn’t acknowledge any of them, she just closely read “One-Thousand and One Nights” in one hand and adjusted the glasses on her face with her other.

“Yes, that. She’ll take as long as she needs.”

“*She* was the one pressing *us!*” Mera growled, but composed himself by checking out his malformed arm. “...Thank you for doing

this, Patch.”

“No problem, Meh-meh! I’m gettin’ all good at the stab-stab of the clothes-clothes.”

“Remember, Patch, sad face today. Lucia died; you have to be sympathetic.”

“Can do, Onny!” The girl said excitedly, before catching herself, literally pulling her mouth into a frown, and affecting a deeper tone. “I mean... *can dooo*.”

“Good enough...”

A particularly loud and calamitous crash from Zed’s room suddenly broke any conversation.

“Jeez, is he *still* going at it?” The doctor scowled, pulling at his suit.

“Unfortunately...” Rec stroked the human part of his face exhaustedly. “...We can only maintain things until he snaps out of it.”

“Exactly. We finished the identification of the victims of St. Sicran,” Onzera backed him up, with a clearly twinge of relief to her tones. “I’ve been able to set up more temporary housing and keep the peace thanks to—”

“What are you idiots talking about?” Asked an ornery voice, walking in from the office room.

She was a sight of a woman, having dark caramel skin and standing 6ft tall, with long natural purple hair and deep sky-blue eyes. Her hair was usually down to her waist but it was currently tied up and adorned with a small black hat, while a deeply dark veil obscured her face almost completely.

This was above the expensive short sleeve and knee-length black dress she wore, it coupled with some elbow length black gloves, some black high-heels, and the almost strikingly dull makeup she showed instead of her usual purple. The dress showed off her muscled arms, defined calves, and sizable chest, baring the chaotic patterns of red, blue, and black that decorated every inch of her up to the neck.

“You... look lovely, July,” Rec instantly turned and said fondly.

“Thanks, idiot. You all *finally* got ready?”

The mutated doctor growled and stepped forward to say something, but the cyborg pushed in front of him.

“Yep! We’re all slowpokes. Mera’s arm got in the way as it always does, so Patch helped him.”

"Thanks, Patch," July patted the girl on the head, and she rubbed against it like a cat. "At least *someone* around here does *something*."

"D'aww, thankies."

"I guess we better be off," the cyborg gestured eagerly towards the front door.

"...Yes, I guess... we should. I... I just need to get Zed."

Even with the goggles, Rec looked profoundly wide-eyed as July then walked past him. The hooded girl lowered her book, Mera crossed his arms defensively, and Patch promptly hid beneath the table, before July came to knock heavy-handedly against the reinforced walls.

"Zed, it's time to go!"

Nothing came back.

"ZED!" She yelled, hammering the wall with a fist. "Come on, it's... it's the funeral! You *need* to show up."

WHAM, a massive impact struck the wall and shook the entire alley, followed by unabashed sobs that mixed in with incoherent roars. *Wham, wham, wham*, the force struck repeatedly again and again, leaving July staring angrily at the wall, as she felt the forces of the blows resonate near her head. Dry wall and dust came barrelling down from the ceiling with every hit, as the four others looked on with awkward silence.

"Zed, come on, the Lady is expecting us. You need to stop throwing a fit and come out already."

Then came a sudden and desperate scream, with the man sounding terrifying enough to scare some of the resident creatures. Slams, crashes, and even a shatter followed, as he just took back into raging; raging without end.

"Well, fine! You continue throwing a tantrum, **LIKE A CHILD!** I'll be doing **YOUR JOB!** AND I *HAVE* BEEN DOING YOUR JOB, WHILE YOU'VE DONE *FUUUUUCCCKING NOOOOTHING!*"

Zed ferociously yelled and threw something twice the size of himself into the wall, it being probably his desk, as the flutter of several pieces of paper resounded from within. July snapped around and stomped past the team towards the entrance, with her heading down the corridor and out the double doors with an angry slam of

her own.

"It's okay," Patch said calmly to the horned, furry critter in her lap, as she stroked it. "They love each other, they're just very sad."

"A little bit *more* than sad, I think," Mera remarked worriedly.

"They'll... they'll be okay," Rec plainly gathered his resolution again, before making an urging gesture to the door. "Come on, we've got a funeral to go to."

The girl put the imp beside her and got up from under the shadow of the table, letting her cheerily skip towards the entrance to join July, while the doctor disinterestedly stepped after her in his over-sized black shoes.

"Bye-bye, Patch."

"Byyyeee Gaaazey," she sung, as the double doors closed them, leaving only the cyborg behind.

"Keep an eye on him, Onzera. Gaze, you know what to do."

"Of course, Rec."

"Will dooo," the girl hummed in turn, despite being buried back in her book.

"I'll see you fair ladies later," he then said gallantly, making a small jaunty bow, before he followed the rest.

That left the alley silent once more, for in the moment the door swung closed once again, all the violent rage abruptly calmed down.

"You can come out now."

To the desk girl's words, the large metal slabs in front of the Overlord's room began to screech and groan as they moved apart with relative ease, despite being clearly inches thick and some several tons heavy.

"Thanks, Gaze," said the deepish voice in a lacklustre tone.

And outstepped Zed.

He wasn't doing so good.

He was a short guy, being exactly 5ft tall, with black hair tipped with red in a way that was too precise to be dye, while having crimson eyes and a veiny crescent scar down the left side of his face. Red coated the sides of his stubble-ridden cheeks, it being a side-effect of his crying outside leaving his eyes heavy and dull, as he lifelessly marched out of his room. He had massive rips in the now unreadable shirt and lazy slacks that constituted his basic pyjamas, showing him

coming out with a barefooted yet sluggish step, before he winced to the neon lights above.

“Do you want something to eat?” Gaze asked casually, while still looking at her book.

“Nah... not yet. I want to go to the roof.”

Giving himself an idle scratch, Zed listlessly and miserably walked to the front of the table at the centre of the alley, as the girl gestured with her hands and made them glow in an orb of ethereal green.

Using that, she motioned down and the aura grabbed a small tether out of his reach, it pulling it down with a simple smooth motion, before a set of metal stairs unfolded to land directly in front of the barefoot boy. The dark figure then stepped simply up them, leaving his arms hanging lifelessly by his side – unless he gave himself another errant itch – until he climbed up the ten or so steps and emerged onto the dark tarmac that made the bowling alley’s flat ceiling. He came to sit down at the building edge and from then looked out into his Domain, as tiredness and exasperation became the first thoughts to come to him.

Hallowville was its name; although he now owned the Dominions of Devilsnight, Muerton, Alsoulán, and St. Sicran. The World was split up into Dominions, sections of the planet that varied anywhere between the sizes of towns to the sizes of continents, where each could be radically different from one to the next. Zed here, was a Supervillain, one with defiant dreams of World Domination and to conquer all Dominions. Well, he might have been, but this all seemed rather up in the air at the moment.

Hallowville itself was somewhere between the size of a town and a city, where grey stone paths led between tightly packed buildings of red brick and mostly flat roofs. Zed’s base sat on top of a precariously large hill which sat at the centre of the Dominion, it overshadowing everything within sight, while having the bowling alley that had been oddly built atop it.

So, as he sat on the building’s edge, he could look out through the linger last days of the warm months, him seeing the sun today being almost spiteful in its vibrant way, as his dark-adjusted eyes found it a sting to the sight. Still, he felt the warm ambience and shifting breeze hovering over the flat houses, with it whistling between the

labyrinthine streets below and rushing to the river that could be seen in the distance.

“How... is Hallowville doing?”

“It’s doing okay.”

Up floated Mimi – Rec’s omni-tool doll – as she used her built in pig-tails to ascend like a helicopter up the steps. Her blocky blue feet touched down beside Zed and her porcelain white face with big glassy eyes looked up at him, while Onzera’s voice came out of the speaker that she had for a mouth.

“I’ve been managing it well. It’s like playing the most real-time strategy game; I just have to make sure supplies are equally regulated and space is afforded.”

“Good, thank you, Elie. I’m sorry to put such an onus on you.”

“It is... *much* work,” she said, with a touch of exhaustion and sass to her bland tones. “I understand your job a little better now.”

“There’s *so many* moving parts. People, all different, all unique, all... *astoundingly* idiotic.”

“Even I can’t quell the unsettling, you know that, Zed? We can feel it; everyone can feel it. There’s fights and arguments breaking out every day, July’s been doing her–”

“ENOUGH!” He thundered, burying his face in his hands. “I can’t *deal* with this right now. I just want to enjoy the fresh air.”

“...*Fine*. But it’s not going to go away, *boss*. You either have to seize control, or let it fall apart. There is no other option.”

“Dismissed! Onzera! You are not one to talk to me about *confronting* things.”

A deep growl came from the other end of the line, before Mimi ascended back into the air with her pigtails and floated back down the stairs. However, as the machine fluttered down, the girl in the black hoodie came up the stairs in turn, showing her using the green aura coming from one of her hands to levitate a small platter of food.

“You’re a bit of a bbb-bastard, you know that?”

“I’m not getting a lecture from you too.”

“I don’t care, do what you want. I’m your prisoner after all.”

She sat on the building edge beside him and laid the platter down behind them with her powers, but as she did so, she began errantly picking at sugary cereal and crunching it herself, while Zed sat beside

her in silence.

"I thought you were my secretary now?"

"Potato, patato. Secretary is a meaningless and demeaning job, but I don't have any other offers."

"Well, *someone* spent their entire life sheltered. It's not my fault you don't have any qualifications, *Princess*."

"Still doing more with my life than you, it seems. I organise, I file, I deal with contacts for the boss lady. I'm rather good at my meaningless job."

"Hmmm, you wait until *you* fail. Then you'll be singing a different tune."

"I've failed most of my life, *boss*," Gaze said nonchalantly, continuing to steal more food from his tray. "Or have you perhaps forgotten the years I spent as Elagabalus' puppet?"

"Yes, but..."

"I got many people killed. I pretended I healed them, they died of their diseases. I tried to sneak people out, and not everyone got out okay."

"But you didn't..."

"I can only move ahead, or what did those people die for?"

Zed grabbed her by the shoulder and turned her towards him with force. He showed his face contorted in hurt, him plainly sniffing and having blood red tears running from his crimson eyes, as he stared into her larger-than-average and glowing green ones.

"I failed myself! I failed to think things through! I failed to account for the pathetic whims of snivelling cowards and lost the good ones because of my fucked-up piece-of-shit brain!"

"You didn't mean for Lucia to die. That was beyond your control."

"*Beyond*?" The man's eyes flickered viciously, abruptly forcing him out of his sobbing. "*Nothing* is '*beyond*' me. Everything is mine; everything is under *my* purview and is *my* responsibility."

"That's... that's impossible. You can't do all that."

"Tough. It's what I *have* to do, it's what this World Domination thing is like."

"Then why... why do this at all? Just stop it! Stop it and do something sensible with your life!"

Zed just turned from her and wiped his face like a child.

“Go Gaze. Leave the food, I’m okay.”

“Zed...”

“Go away, Mab. Go back to your post.”

“Grrr... fine!” She snapped, getting up and kicking some food off the tray. “I’ll leave you to rot! I’ll look for job listings in the morning.”

She then stomped back down the staircase, and the man was all alone again, leaving him silent in front of the midday sun. Still, he soon picked out some of the remaining cereal that hadn’t been thrown to the winds, and he drunk from the luckily still intact yet bent juice box, while he then chewed on the sandwich that had only barely touched the black roof.

They...

Just...

Don’t understand.

I need more,

But I just keep losing.

The small victories.

Losing what matters,

With every inch.

Is this what it means to be a Villain?

Gaining the World,

But

Losing,

Losing everything you care about.

The bloody tears dripped onto the gravel path of the entrance beneath, for Zed looked out into Hallowville as he ate his food through a continuous stream of red.

“I *could* call Grandad. He’ll probably be mad at me, but he’s usually got some kind of advice, *regrettably*.”

Where’s that phone? The man sluggishly rummaged around in his black pockets, looking for that glassy rectangle, as he hoped he hadn’t broken it in one of his many fits of rage. He eventually pulled it out, showing a mostly fine small black slab that was clearly part of his Villainous organisation, as it showed the symbol of the Red Hand on the back. The symbol was a circle surrounded by two pieces, one

being a small jagged piece for the thumb, while a big curvy piece surrounded most of the circle with four shark-fins coming off for the fingers.

He unlocked the phone as he readied to dial, but before he did, it immediately began to buzz with a dark and heavy rock song, in as much as modern phones ring. *Blip*, he pressed the phone button and held it up to his ear to answer.

“Hey, boss,” said a gruff older man in a slight fervour. “Is this you?”

“Mr. Bly? Something I can—?”

“Could you come over? She’s... she’s proving to be a bit of a handful. I need your help.”