The world has changed so much in over 100 years. Rock was activated by Dr Thomas Light, and fought Dr Wily under the guise of Rockman. He fought as a soldier for years, decades even. Only to be deactivated as his father was on Death's doorstep. Waking up in a future that is falling apart, he is witness to the Maverick Wars, to Sigma and his tirade, to the Elf Wars, and everything in between and after. A soldier that chooses to fight over die, Rock's goal is to see his mission until the end-- to provide a world where humans and robots, soon to be reploids, can live in peace.

Notes

This is an alternate universe where Rock has survived into the MMX and MMZ eras. I am fully aware in the games that post Classic series, Rock disappears. That is not a mystery, but we never get a clear answer as to where he went. This explores that thought. Opening on the Classic series, working through all games, going into and through the X series, going into and through the Zero series, and ending post Megaman Zero 4.

There is no basis drawn from the Archie Comics or the Manga, nothing like that, most interpretations of these characters are my own save for what have already been established in game, if it's not in game it's most likely not included.
Prologue

Chapter Summary

The first awakening after 100 years.

Chapter Notes

Because of the fact that this is a prologue, the chapters stated by Archive of Our Own will not be the same as the actual chapter numbers in the story. the Prologue, by all technicality, does not count as a chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Prologue

SYSTEM ACTIVATION!

ERROR LOG:

INTENSIVE DAMAGES-- DEACTIVATED ON XX-XX-XXX AT XX-LONGITUDE, XX-LATITUDE.

SCANNING FOR INTERNAL MEMORY FAILURE

MEMORY INTACT

SCANNING FOR WEAPON MEMORY FAILURE

COPY ABILITY IN TACT

ALL COPY WEAPONS IN TACT

ALL SYSTEMS RESPONSIVE

“Hey… Can you hear me?” The voice was far away, he wasn’t sure who it was but it certainly didn’t sound like the Doctor. Deep blue eyes, or should one say a single deep blue eye, opened to gaze into the world for the first time in what seemed to be an eternity. The light that hung above him hurt his head, but it wasn’t anything he couldn’t tolerate. He’s been through much worse than just a light induced headache.

He tried to speak but found he couldn't articulate, that his ‘lungs’ wouldn’t expel enough force to allow him to utter any form of speech. Instead all he could do was weakly mouth the word ‘yes’.

“Yes?” The figure who sat beside where he lay responded, seemingly jovial at the fact. “That’s
perfect. I’m guessing you can’t speak.” No response. “Your vocals must be damaged. But your
language banks seem to be intact since you can understand me.” There was silence for a while, that
single eye strained to try and focus on the stranger. The person that seemed to be helping him.

“I found you in the ruins of some old building, at least one-hundred years old. I don’t know how
long you’ve been there, or how much damage you have, but don’t worry. I’ll fix you right up and
everything will be alright. Knowing that you still boot up is half the battle after all.” The tapping
of… keys? A computer of some sort surely.

“I’m going to put you back under to do the repairs. When you wake up you’ll be good as new. I’ll
back up your memory and review it to find out what happened to you. In the meantime just take a
nice sleep. Take time to recharge. You need the energy.” Single eye closed again, he wasn’t
necessarily ready to go back to sleep, unsure of when he’d wake up, but all the same he knew he
was damaged beyond awakened repairs.

With this in mind he willingly submitted to the shut down, what could be described as dreams
filtering into his mind. Reflecting completely on memories long since put to rest in the husk of a
dying robot master’s body.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading the first chapter of The Endless War-- it is a bit of a
short chapter but they do pick up. I must warn you that this fic is extremely angsty in a
way. It does go over triggering topics, if this bothers you it is advised you do not read
the story. If you'd still like to read the story despite this however, feel free to. I'd love
to hear your opinions and your constructive criticism in the comments so feel free to
do just that! I look forward to this emotional roller coaster and hope you all can enjoy
my version of the Megaman Universe.
Chapter Summary

The creation of both Rock Light and Roll Light.

Chapter Notes

Because I plan to not delve deeper into this fact, Dr Light is a widowed husband. He was married, he lost his wife. He wanted to have kids, but was unable to. He wanted to adopt, but couldn't bring himself to after his wife died. So instead he decided to build himself children.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter One: Creation

“Good morning, my sweet boy.”

The first image he saw before him was the joyous face of a man that seemed to have created a miracle. Somehow, deep in his recessive mind, the ‘newborn’ knew this was the man who created him. Bright blue eyes, slightly round nose, beard and hair white as snow, if the child knew who Santa Claus was he’d probably say the resemblance was uncanny.

“Who? Who am I?”

A meek, hoarse, weak voice... New and underdeveloped. The body it was put to was still getting used to it. The child was frightened by his own voice, almost as though he was unsure of what he was saying, if he had said it at all. “You’re my son.” The man began, tears seeming to well up in those big, oceanic eyes. “Your name is Rock Light, I built you to be the son I could never have.” Those tears, they swelled up and grew larger and larger until they fell from those eyes, disappearing in the thick beard. The pale back of the man’s hand was used to brush away those tears as they formed.

“Rock… Light…” The boy tested the name, as though he was testing soup to make sure it isn’t hot. “If I’m your son… Than who are you…?” His words needed breaks, he couldn’t speak all of it at once. Choppy and broken. The smile never left that face as the older gentleman gently set his hand on the boy’s cheek. It felt nice, warm, loving even. There was one word he tried to chase down, one word that he couldn’t quite think of, not yet at-- “I’m Dr Thomas Light. But you can call me dad, if you’d like.”

Paternal. That was the word he was thinking of. It was a paternal feeling that the other gave off in every thing he did, in every syllable he spoke, and Rock could feel it without a shred of a doubt.

If Rock knew what love was, he’d be able to feel the endlessness of Light’s love for him. The care
of a father for his family. He’d be able to know that in Thomas’ eyes, the tiny robot was more than just a miracle and a blessing in his own life, but in the thousands of lives that he’d impact in the future. He was destined for greatness in some way by the beginning, from the first second he was booted up. Originally it was through the innovation for which Rock was, as a family robot, as a son for parents that could not have children of their own or were terrified of the fact that their children will leave them. Never would any of them had thought he would be remembered for the soldier he would become.

“Dad…?” That word didn’t sound right, it didn’t fit well the feeling he had. “Would… Papa be alright?” He ventured to ask, timid as a deer in a clearing. Exposed to the world, afraid of being shot by the well placed bullet. All tension melted away as the response came quickly. “Of course, Rock. I’d love that.” The feeling of his body being lifted up just a little bit, just enough to be shifted into the lap of the older.

He sat there, wires running in and out of his robotic body, listening to Dr Light’s heartbeat in his chest. The warmth of a human body, it was the first time Rock knew it and the time he would remember better than any of the other encounters. His father’s embrace was the one that would melt away all fear and fatigue, the one that told him everything would be okay, even if it’ll take a while to get there.

A couple days passed, time to adjust in one room. Here Rock learned to use his body, to use his voice. He learned to walk with the hands of his father supporting him. He learned how to talk properly in both English and French, the two languages he was programmed to know. He learned what everything was, how to handle himself, and what he was. In the end, test after test, the tiny robot caught on quickly. He absorbed information like a sponge and took up all he knew.

He had issues with his power source, something that the Doctor was seemingly terrified off, but with enough work it was repaired and the little boy was happily jumping around like the ten year old child he was built to be.

“Hey Rock. I have to introduce you to someone?” The girl that stood there was a stranger, but at the same time she looked all too similar. The two stared at each other in curiosity, studying each other for a while, wanting to know more but being too afraid to step forward and take the risk. “Rock, this is your sister, Roll. Roll, this is your brother, Rock.” Dr Light introduced. Both had only been activated for a few days-- Roll activated just a half hour after Rock. The introduction, coupled with everything else that was new, didn’t necessarily sit well. To say they got along at the beginning of the day would be a lie.

They were put off by each other to say the least. However as they interacted more, like a pair of puppies, they grew closer together. By the end of the day Rock and Roll were inseparable. By the end of the day the duo were shown around the house. By the end of the day they had their first family dinner. By the end of the day Rock and Roll, completely exhausted by the day’s events, were tucked in by their father in their brand new bedrooms. Fast asleep, charging and dreaming, beneath warm comforters as snow drifted down outside. Little shadows that sprayed out in orange light upon the darkened floor, echoes from outside a window.

Light stood by the open door for a moment, before smiling and closing the door behind them. They were far from being completely finished, but he’d say that he was more than happy with where they were now. Undertaking the largest undertaking in his life of raising two children, on his own, as a widowed father.

Chapter End Notes
Hello everyone! Thank you so much for reading The Endless War-- if you like the story so far than feel free to keep up with the blog we have running for it on tumblr which is ARLASproject. Warning: there will be spoilers on the blog-- but I hope you can enjoy it nonetheless.

Also there is a discord server for the fic as well linked on that blog so feel free to join in on that as well.
Chapter Summary

Introducing the six robot masters, Cutman, Gutsman, Iceman, Bombman, Fireman, and Elecman.

Chapter Notes

There is no technology quite like the robot masters, they are top of the line, brand new and unseen. They are so new that there are no countermeasures for them yet.

Chapter Two: Error

“Behold! The robot masters!”

The awe of the crowd was immeasurable as the lights sparked to life. The robots that stood there, eyes open but locked in a deep slumber, were staring blankly into the crowd. Despite that they appeared so fascinating, so powerful, so disquieting. Rock and Roll stood off the side of the stage, behind the curtain, and watched their father present the robots to the masses. An announcement from Light Labs to the world. An announcement of new, industrial robot masters.

“First we have DLN-003, Cutman! This robot master may be bizarre in appearance, but I assure you he is friendly. He will make the trouble and damage of all timber collection so much easier.” Dr Light announced, walking up to the small, orange bot. He patted the lifeless, inactive husk on the shoulder, before continuing. “Next is DLN-004, Gutsman. He’s big, he’s strong, and he’s going to take the danger out of all major construction projects. He works fast, efficiently, and with care for his human coworkers.” He gestured up to the massive robot master that stood there without expression.

“DLN-005, Iceman, is next. This small robot master is built for energy preservation. He does all the work we can’t do in the cold and frigid climates of the arctic and other tundra areas. My hope is that he will give us valuable research.” As quick as he finished, he moved onto another Robot Master, his words picking up in excitement as though the nervousness of being on a stage were fading away. “DLN-006, Bombman, will be an excellent addition for demolition crews and land preparation. I imagine that him and Gutsman will be an excellent team on any land project.” His grin grew as he moved onto the next robot master in the line of six.

“Following Bombman is DLN-007, Fireman. A world of peace wouldn’t be worth living in if this world wasn’t also clean. This robot master will do excellently to clean up waste and other contaminants so that we don’t have to live in it. All while being cost, energy, and Earth efficient.” He finished before carefully moving to the last robot master in the line. He smiled proudly to the stiff, and silent robot that stood there on display, like some eerie metallic doll.
“And last, but not least, our power plant robot, DLN-008, Elecman. This robot master may not look like much, but I assure you he can do some remarkable things, such as run off of static electricity for days on end. He is the revolution of energy!” The applause came rushing in, the ‘oo’s and ‘ah’s that filled the crowd like ambient sound. Rock and Roll looked at each other, nodding their head, they were proud of their father. A father who they knew wasn’t the best at public speaking, who got the jitters and was always unbelievably nervous at times like this.

“That was perfect, Papa!” Roll shouted as she embraced her father after the question session concluded. The crowd was beginning to dissipate. Rock had moved onto the stage to watch the crowd go. He sat down on the edge, his feet dangling, a popsicle in his mouth as he fought to keep his internal workings cool in the hot summer sun. Dr Light laughed gently, embracing her lightly before saying, “Thank you Roll, but really it was mostly you two who did all the work.” Rock looked over his shoulder at them and pulled the popsicle out of his mouth with an audible sucking sound.

“Why do you say that?” He asked tilting his head, that infamous Rock curiosity making itself apparent. Dr Light smiled at him before he responded, “Well you two were the ones that helped me rehearse and helped me write my speech. Really I wouldn’t be able to will myself to get up here without you two.” He moved over to the small robot boy and ruffled his hair. “Really thank you.” He pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket.

Big blue eyes watched as the smatterings of chocolate on his tiny cheek were brushed away, leaving brown smudges on the fabric. He giggled and smiled up to Dr Light. “Of course, Papa, we were happy to see you doing so well up there.” Roll chimed in, sitting next to her older brother. The two looked so similar and yet all the same seemed all so different, their legs hanging over the ledge. Not in danger of getting hurt, but at the same time still putting Light on edge.

He didn’t want his precious children to fall off the stage. He knew they were robots, but images of when Rock fell from a tree and quite literally smashed his leg, came back to his mind in waves. Needless to say that child learned to test tree branches before climbing on them, if he ever climbed on them again to begin with.

“How about we go home and have a nice big dinner to celebrate such a successful performance!” Roll added enthusiastically. Light smiled at her, happy to see her enthusiasm. She was so happy, and that was something he was happy to see. “I would love that sweetie.” He told her, to which Rock added. “Wait, but what are we having?”

A sly grin spread across Roll’s face. “Just because you asked, we’re having pork chops.” She laughed when Rock responded with a disgusted noise. “Ew! Your pork chops are so fatty though.” With that the two fell into an argument, nothing too serious, just enough to shake up any parent’s energy to keep going.

After the fight was broken up, and the two children had settled down, they began to head back home. Rock still had his popsicle, Light was happily chatting away with Roll, the robot masters were being loaded up to be taken back to the lab. Everything was as it should be. On their way out, Light couldn’t help but see a familiar face in the crowd. A frown spread across his face, only for a second. He hated the circumstances that banished their friendship.

“We’re home!” Rock shouted as they walked into the house, not to anyone in particular. It was a sort of tradition for him, one that was happily welcomed. “I’ll get to work on dinner!” Roll said almost immediately. “Alright, be safe.” Dr Light leaned down and kissed the little girl on the cheek, to which she reciprocated, before rushing off to go do as she promised in the kitchen, more
than excited to cook the steak in the fridge. Light on the other hand went to go check the status of the robot masters, making sure they were in order now that they were home. They seemed okay. All six of them were sitting fine in the lab, faces no longer frozen in an awakened stance. They seemed so peaceful asleep like that, in their charging beds. He stopped besides Ice and smiled to him. To say he didn’t feel a family connection to these robots as well would be a lie. They were his children too-- but at the same time they were children he built to work not be a family.

Rock was sitting in his room, book in hand, reading on his bed. He had long since thrown his popsicle stick in the trash can. He flipped through the story he was reading, much enthralled in the fantasy world that he found himself trapped within. His eyes read the lines, feeding them to his hungry mind. It wasn’t surprising that an hour, two hours ticked by in this fashion without him realizing.

“Rock, time for dinner!”

Dinner came, dinner passed, they talked and laughed as any family does. At the end of the night they sat together watching TV after helping Roll clean the dishes. The night finished with Dr Light helping the two, sleepy eyed children, to bed. They fell asleep quickly as the night overtook their tiny home. Dr Light went to bed soon after himself. Despite their restful sleep, it wasn’t a peaceful night as proof by what happened when Roll woke up. She went around the house checking for anything amiss, as she does every morning, fully expecting not to find anything.

The girl turned on the tv as she passed, began heating up a kettle for Dr Light’s morning tea, did her normal routine and taking her time to wake up and see what was going on. Her red dress, having changed out of her pajamas, flowing around her as she went around investigating. The door to the lab was unlocked as she tried it, something she thought was strange, and so she pushed it open carefully. The lights turned on automatically as she stepped inside the cool room.

Roll was shocked as she noticed that the lab was empty. Not believing her eyes she looked up and down, checked the logs, only to find that in the middle of the night, at around 4 in the morning, someone had broke in and taken them all. She was astonished and ran about the house alerting the rest of her small family what had happened. Rock and Light ran into the lab, still in pajamas, and were shocked to see that they were gone, the robot masters were gone, as if they hadn’t been there in the first place.

The news broadcast poured in from the other room, they all turned in shock at what the anchor said. ‘Robots gone mad, they are attacking everyone.’ Just as they feared, it was the robot masters attacking people, acting against their code. The helplessness in that room was oppressive, all of them unsure of what would happen now. What they should do now. These robot masters were top of their line, nothing could stop them.

“Dr Light, I think I know who did this.” She called him by his name, her serious tone. That was enough to tell them that this was a stressful situation on not just them, but on her too. She approached them and held out a letter in sloppy handwriting which wrote, in rather rushed script,

Dear Thomas,

I have stolen your precious robot masters and with them I will spell the end of your research. Call it revenge, old friend.

-Wily
Chapter Summary

With the robot masters abducted and reprogrammed, Rock now faces off with his first opponent, Bombman.

Chapter Notes

The copy ability can work in two ways. One, inputting the IC chip of a robot master. This works but it does not actually copy the ability. Two, contact with the other robot master thus causing the Copy System to download the power onto a blank chip, making it a complete perfect replica of the power. The actual consciousness of the robot master is not included in the download. It is worth noting that to uninstall an ability you must remove the chip that contains that ability, to reinstall it, you have to reinsert the chip.

Chapter Three: Bombman

“Are you sure you want to do this, Rock?”

Dr Light asked that same question when he first arrived, the little blue robot thought it wasn’t really worth anything. “Yeah, I’m positive. If I don’t do it then nobody will.” He was right, nobody had the technology or the strength to take these robot masters down. “I hated having to take down those rogue robots, and I’m going to hate taking down Bombman, but people are the top priority.” He swallowed hard, why did saying that leave a gross taste in his mouth, as if it made him feel less than living. In a way he suppose he was.

He was just a machine, an over glorified circuit board. To humans he supposed that he wasn’t as important, he was expendable. Leaning over a pit, he stared down into the darkness below. Rock saw something moving down there in the faint light that filtered in from where he stood, but until he got down there he wouldn’t know what exactly it was. “Be careful, Rock. Bombman is right up ahead… Or should I say below.”

“Got it, I’ll be careful. Are you sure that he is the first robot master I should deactivate?”

Deactivate… Why did that word feel so empty. Destroy seemed like such a more fitting word. “Absolutely certain. He is the weakest from what I’ve seen. And his bombs, unlike everyone else’s weapons, are easy to dodge.” Rock let out a sigh, a heavy breath, one that would be met with silence as he began to descend the ladder. With this he noticed that he came out of reach of the waves for which he was using to communicate with Light. Their connection fizzled away and died off.

Rock felt utterly alone as he descended the ladder. As soon as he heard a sound he froze up, unsure of what to do, where to move. An object would brush close to him— it was only due to proximity
sensors and luck that he wasn’t hit.

He wasn’t sure, as he dropped into a small room, how well he was going to do. An area filled with Kamadomas, Killer Bombs, Screwdrivers, Sniper Joes, Blasters, Bombombombs, Mambus, and what he just faced off with, Adhering Suzys, it did a number on his tiny body. Dents and scratches were everywhere, however he found that little energy capsules were occasionally dropped. These he used without hesitation. He needed the strength to keep going even when his body didn’t want him to.

“If it isn’t Rock Light!” Rock turned to face the source of the sound, only to find his target sitting there. “What’s a little lab helper doing here? Aren’t you supposed to be home helping the poor old man?” Bombman’s voice was one that Rock hadn’t heard until now, he hadn’t seen Bombman activated at all in fact until now. It felt off, as if it was obvious this wasn’t his intended purpose.

“I came to stop you, I can’t allow you to continue to hurt people.” Rock proclaimed, trying to sound as tough as he could. Knowing full well that he wasn’t doing a very good job. Bomb laughed before responding sharply, “Oh? Is that so? A little late for that don’t you think. How many people have I hurt now? Ten, twenty, thirty? Have you been keeping track? I certainly haven’t.” On that note he stood up and, with a bomb in his hand, began to advance before continuing with saying, “But I suppose that’s nothing you’ll need to concern yourself with for long. Tell the doctor sorry--but then again you may not have anything left to tell him.”

On that note Rock came face to face with a bomb hurling towards him. Unsure of the range the tiny robot ran as far as he could, only to find that Bomb was throwing yet another bomb at him. Having seen that the first bomb detonated and he wasn’t hurt made the fact of dodging the tiny things a lot easier. The shrapnel was the problem, that hit with a wild accuracy that Rock wasn’t ready for. But then again, he didn’t know if anyone could really dodge shrapnel.

Shooting at Bombman was hard, he jumped around a lot, and every few moments Rock had to move to a different area. There was, however, an obvious pattern to how the other attacked, something that the tiny robot took notice of. He wasn’t a good fighter, or at least he didn’t think he was, but he knew he was good at recognizing things like patterns. Shot after shot from the Rockbuster on his arm. When one would hit, he would notice Bombman freezing up a bit before resuming, hopping around like a jackrabbit.

As more damage was done, Rock noticed that the barrage grew heavier. “I’m not going to let you, an amateur, beat me.” One after another, bomb after bomb, it was enough to dodge them, some of which he just couldn’t, never mind try to shoot at the same time. When the barrage settled, and the dust calmed, it became obvious that neither robot was in any condition to keep fighting. On the one hand there was Bombman, who had gaping holes scattered around his body. Open wide and showing his inner workings. Little bullet holes that dripped red oil and wires.

Rock wasn’t doing all that much better. The shrapnel of the bombs had left open scratches all over his body, oozing and gushing with the robot equivalent of blood. But that wasn’t the only damage he took, more than one bomb had landed too close for comfort and now his leg was little more than a robotic skeleton just barely supporting him. Wires hung loosely like the tendons of a muscle, slick with that oily ‘blood’.

“How many more hits can you take? One?” Bombman began with a smile, as though he was playing off his own injuries. “I could say the same about you. You look ready to explode at any minute now.” Rock shot back, blue eyes sharp like daggers. “Brave words for someone without a leg.” The barrage began again, but this time the little soldier-to-be had a plan. It was a stupid plan, but one he wanted to try nonetheless. Instead of running away from Bombman like he’s been
doing, the child decided that it’d be best to run towards the other robot master.

The force of impact made Rock’s vision go black for a moment, and for just a second, he was certain he lost. When he came to, the first thing he noticed was the terrible pain he felt. Sitting up, he found that the leg which was a robotic skeleton was now completely gone, severed at the knee. His shoulder joint was exposed, part of his ‘rib-cage’ was too. A few shaky gasps as he saw the pool of red oil he sat in growing more and more. He couldn’t bleed out, only grow remarkably uncomfortable.

Turning to Bombman he saw the true damage the Rockbuster could do. The hole in his torso was massive, as though someone had drilled into it and placed one of his own Hyper Bombs in the opening. Rock, using his hands and his one leg, tried to crawl as best he could to the other. He didn’t want him to ‘die’ alone.

“You really blew me away this time.” Bombman told him as he saw Rock’s face peek into his vision, doe-eyed and cautious. “Yeah I guess I did.” The little robot had enough of his legs left to give the other a place to lay his head, gently settling him in his lap. While he was providing this comfort, he copied the Hyper Bomb as he was told. Keeping it discreet and quiet.

“Hey, Rock?” A shaky voice began. Struggling to speak as energy was draining from his body. “Yes Bombman?” Rock asked gently, he was trying to comfort him, trying to make things easier. Bombman didn’t ask for this type of encounter, he didn’t ask to be stolen by Wily. “Is this where I die?” How could he answer that question. He wasn’t sure. “I… No. No it’s not. We’re going to try and rebuild you, IC chip and all. You’ll be back to normal soon, I promise. We’re not going to leave you here to die.”

A smile, Rock saw those tears forming in his eyes and wasn’t sure what to say. “Thanks, Rock… Ya know, I’m so terrified of death.” A meek chuckle escaping his lips as well as a thin stream of oil.

“Well then it’s a good thing you’re not going to die, right? You’re just going to go to sleep. A nice, deep sleep. With all the good dreams in the world.” Bombman closed his eyes and managed a weak nod. “Yeah… I’m looking forward to it…” Rock didn’t have anymore to say so he just sat there for a while, Bomb’s head in his lap. He didn’t know if this was the end of him or not, he didn’t know if he would ever be rebuilt, but it was something. A sick feeling in his stomach told him this was the end.

It felt so final, as though he just saw the last breath, his first glimpse of death. Carefully Rock set Bombman on the ground, the taller’s body was limp and there was no breath. But at the same time, he made a promise. Turning the younger’s head to the side, he retrieved the IC chip from the compartment in between his ‘shoulder blades’. The blast from his Rockbuster just barely missed the compartment. With the chip in his hand, copy ability in his system, he began hobbling back to the ladder.

It was hard to climb up to the top with only one leg, but it was much easier now that he didn’t have to worry about getting hit. All the robots have since stalled and were now entering a sleep state. He wondered if they were dead too…

“Rock! Rock are you alright!” Dr Light’s voice was a relief, he thought he’d never hear it again. “Y-Yeah I’m okay… I defeated Bombman. I retrieved his IC-chip too.” He explained shakily. “I’m beaming you home in just a bit, son. Try to get outside okay? My scans are showing extensive damages… Are you sure you’re okay?” As soon as he heard the Doctor say to get outside, he began hobbling his way to the outside world, leaning against the wall as he went. “I think I just need a bit of repairs.” He didn’t know just how broken he was at the moment, he was numb to
mostly everything.

It felt like he just killed someone important to him, in a way Bombman was. He was a brother to him.

When Rock was beamed home, Light and Roll were in shock at the amount of damage he took. His leg was still oozing and, now in a safe place, he was able to just collapse. They moved him quickly to a place they could repair him. All the while the sobs of the child could be heard loud and clear as he came to terms with the possibility of being a murderer.
Gutsman

Chapter Summary

With Bombman defeated, Rock now goes to battle his second enemy, Gutsman.

Chapter Notes

The chapters of the story follow the recommended order for bosses in Megaman 1, playing off each robot masters weakness. This is also the order for which I play the first Megaman game.

Bombman > Gutsman > Cutman > Elecman > Iceman > Fireman

Chapter Four: Gutsman

The sound of the sliding door was a relief as it closed behind him. He took a moment to relax against it, catch his breath, as he worked to get his mind back into the fight at hand. The Pickelmen, Bunby Helis, and Metalls weren’t the worst thing Rock encountered during his trek towards his target. The last enemy he encountered on his way here was, in fact, the most troublesome. The giant blue Big Eye nearly crushed him more than once. He had to run under its singular springy leg in order to make it past. And by that point he thought that making a b line towards the door was better than fighting it.

“Rock, Gutsman is a strongman, remember that. He will try to knock you off your feet and throw things at you. Try not to falter, alright?” Dr Light’s voice came over the transmission as Rock navigated his way towards the cavern for which Gutsman was stationed. It wasn’t nearly as deep as the one Bombman was in so he wasn’t all too concerned about losing contact. “Got it, Dr Light. How is my damage?” He replied simply, shooting a few Metalls as they poked their faces out of their helmets.

“You are doing fine, just a few scrapes it seems like, you scared me a few times going through that, but I’m guessing you found supports in the enemies.” Dr Light offered curiously. “Yeah I did actually.” Silence on the line. “Alright, I’m going in now.” Rock put his hand on the door.

“Be very careful.”

“I know.”

“And Rock?”

“Yes, Papa.”

“I love you.”
“I love you too.”

The sound of the door sliding open reacquainted Rock to his fight with Bombman. How awful that encounter was, even more awful how it concluded. However this place was far different from the place he fought Bomb in. A cavern not too deep in the mountain for which he had to fight upon. He was inside the Earth, almost able to hear its breathing despite not being all too deep. In the center was none other than the strongman himself.

“Light sent a puny helper bot to destroy Gutsman!?” Rock was not prepared for the booming voice, he almost shrank back in terror. Knowing, however, that he couldn’t back down from this fight, he stood his ground and nodded his head. “I won’t seem so puny after this, Gutsman. When this is over I will bring you back and fix you up just like I did Bombman.” There appeared to be alarm in his face. “You battled Bombman? You killed Bombman!?”

He found that it was a mistake as soon as he said that. “I-I-” He didn’t know what to say, not at least before Gutsman interrupted him. “Gutsman will destroy you!” A large jump into the air and Rock wasn’t sure what was happening, when he landed on the ground the world shook beneath him and cracks manifested in the rock above them. Rock stumbled and fell just as quickly as the boulders that began to fall from the deteriorating ceiling. “Oh da--” He didn’t have time to finish his sentence before a large boulder came hurling at him.

Rock got to his feet just in time to jump over the hurling projectile. Switching abilities quickly, the now green robot threw a bomb in his general direction. It bounced a bit before settling by the taller’s feet. “Gutsman! Stop it! You’re going to cause a cave in!” However the robot master didn’t listen as he jumped again. The strongman bot succeeded in knocking the tinier over once more. The jump which was his greatest weapon was also his Achilles heel as he landed directly on the bomb.

The explosion rocked the Earth and he managed to get back to his feet, when he looked up he saw a large chunk of Gutsman’s leg was missing, leaving just the metal skeleton. It brought back twisted images of his own fight with Bombman. Another jump, this time Rock jumped up himself to avoid the earth quake. Throwing another bomb, he found he was far too distracted to notice the next boulder coming down.

The chunk of rock was thrown right before the bomb hit Gutsman directly in the chest, exploding on impact. He couldn’t see the damage done for he had his own projectile to worry about. The boulder hit Rock head on, pushing him to the ground and leaving him unable to move. He lay beneath the rubble for a bit, coughing up dirt, his body dented inwardly in many places. It was hard to move, hard to dig himself out, but somehow he managed. He grunted in pain as he felt his robotic bones grating in his torso. A broken ‘rib cage’ no doubt.

Gutsman, however, was far worse off. Looking over to him, Rock saw the gaping maw that seemed to take a bite out of his entire left side, blowing it clean off. The metallic skeleton which was torn away was put to rest on the complete other side of the crumbling arena. An arena which, for the moment, seemed barely stable.

“Gutsman… Gutsman will kill… Rockman.” He gasped and choked, stepping forward on one iron leg. “Gutsman will… Avenge… Bombman… Brother…” Now to his feet, the little soldier expected him to do something, to jump again. He expected this battle to not be over, however what ended up happening instead shocked him and also put a complete end to the conflict.

Gutsman charged at him.

He charged not unlike a bull that’s seen red, coming at him head first, with his arm and shoulder
blown clean off.

Rock managed to jump just at the last second, the pain was excruciating as he landed on the hard, coarse ground. He looked up to see Gutsman running straight towards the door and wall that led outside. “Gutsman! Gutsman don’t!” But it was too late, the robot rammed straight into it, breaking the door open but also hitting the wall in the process. The entire cavern shook and trembled. Looking up he saw cracks forming above him. A cave-in, this was a cave-in! He looked back at the robot master only to be terrified to see what became of him.

His entire body was smashed inward with his metallic innards splaying out in sharp spines. He had smashed himself against the wall in his charge. He lay limp on the ground, mumbling incoherently. He was alive, his IC chip was still in tact. Rock got to his feet and tried to run to him. “We have to get out of here! Guts we have to--” As soon as he got there he realized it would be pointless to save him. At the same time he knew he wouldn’t be able to escape the cave-in regardless.

So what did Rock do instead?

If they both were going to die than he wanted to provide solace and peace to Gutsman just as he did Bombman.

Clambering over he managed to push Guts over onto his back and cup his face in his hands. “It’ll be okay, Gutsman. It’ll be okay I promise.” His ‘heartbeat’ was thudding in his ears as the trembling of the cavern grew more fierce. The rocks that began to fall all around him only deepened the panic he felt. Gutsman tried to articulate words but just couldn’t. “We will repair you, we will make this all better soon so just… Just close your eyes and sleep okay? I promise it’ll be a good dream.”

Why did he have to do that. More rocks fell all around them as the little robot pressed his head against the others in an attempt to provide comfort. Tears of terror were welling up in Rock’s blue eyes, manifesting as streams on his cheeks.

When Gutsman was still, completely still, Rock used his Copy Ability to steal his power and retrieved his IC chip. As soon as he slipped that compartment closed he felt the entirety of the cave come crashing down on top of him. Darkness, complete darkness and pain. It was suffocating to be buried alive, with all the dust collecting in his chest. He knew he would suffocate soon.

‘Is this where it ends? Do I just die here?’ He didn’t know if he was asking the question aloud or not. ‘Dr Light? Roll? Are you there?’ Nothing but static. ‘I want to go home… Please bring me home… It hurts, everything hurts so much.’ He tried to struggle but only managed to wriggle just a bit, the movement caused more pain and a muted cry of agony escaped him.

He couldn’t tell if his eyes were closed, if his eyes were damaged, until a miracle happened. Light, he saw light. A light so blinding that he had to close his eyes. The rocks were being pulled away and… A scream as he was pulled out. It hurt, it felt like his body was being pulled apart. “Give us your hand little boy!” A man shouted. “I can’t!” Rock responded. “Why not!?” They came back, more aggressive now. Tears burned his eyes and poured down his dirt stained cheeks. “I’ll lose my brother if I do!”

They worked hard to get a good grip on him, pulling him out of the rubble. He heard all the ‘bones’ break in his body, but he was freed and that’s all that mattered. When they got him out the little robot was dented, broken, and falling apart, but still conscious. Still able to be repaired. “It’s one of those robots!” One of the men shouted in shock.

“I came to stop them… I… I’m one of Dr Light’s bots, he sent me to put a stop to this. A man
named Dr Wily is doing this.” He tried to explain, but he wasn’t sure that his words were coming out right. “Please… Please just lay me down outside.” The two men looked at each other before nodding and dragging the poor boy’s body to lay down on the grass.

He couldn’t move, didn’t want to, and so he just rested on the grass, staring into the sky above. It was overcast now and tiny raindrops were beginning to fall upon him, blending into his tears.

“Rock! Oh my god! Rock are you okay!” The transmission came to life and a smile formed on his face. “No… No I’m not, but that’s okay. I won and I think I saved him.” His voice was weak and relieved, while he was upset and hurting, he was much happier now than he was before.

“Dr Light?”

“Yes Rock?”

“Am I doing the right thing?”

“I think so, Rock.”

“I love you, Papa.”

“I love you too son.”

With that Rock closed his eyes, letting his body fall into a slumber as a beam of blue light encased him. He was unconscious by the time he returned to Light Labs. By the time he awakened again news of Rock’s heroism would have spread all over the place.

“They are calling the mysterious robot, Rockman based on how he ‘rocked’ the mountain he fought in. He risked his artificial life to save us, and to put an end to the chaos that a man named Dr Albert Wily caused. According to the little robot, he reprogrammed the robots. Causing them to go rogue.”
Chapter Summary

With Gutsman defeated, Rock now goes to battle his third enemy, Cutman.

Chapter Notes

Asimov’s code of robotics:
1) A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2) A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3) A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Chapter Five: Cutman

Rock felt like he was climbing up and down a tower as he made his way to his next target. The Kamadomas, Adhering Suzys, Screwdrivers, Blasters, Bunby Helis, and Mambus all fell to his buster. The Big Eyes and Super Cutters were dodged expertly. It was with this that he realized he was starting to get good at this navigation thing. He didn’t know if that was a blessing or not. Getting good at it means he’s done it way too much.

“I’ve reached the door, Papa.” Rock spoke as he approached the metal barrier to Cutman’s chambers. “Alright Rock… I suppose you know what I’m going to ask, don’t you.” The air was somber, something that he didn’t want. He wished he could scream and cry. His chest hurt, his heart sunk, everything felt all too painful. “Yeah, I do. I’ll be careful, and I’m certain I want to keep going. How is my damage?” He needed to know, he didn’t recall taking any hits while making his way through, but he wanted to be sure.

“You are in perfect condition, just as you were when you left.” A hard swallow as he pressed his hand against the door. He listened through it to hear the mechanical ‘snip snip’ sound of Cutman’s head scissors. “I love you, Papa. I really do.” Every time he went into these fights it seemed he was so ready to die. He got lucky so far. With Bombman he only lost a leg, with Gutsman he was only buried alive. What would happen with Cutman? Would he be cut in half? Ripped apart? He wasn’t sure.

“I love you too Rock.” Dr Light told him, there was silence for a bit as the little blue robot gathered himself. “Come on Rock! You can do it! We love you and are cheering for you from here!” The voice caught him off guard, his heart lightening ten fold. A smile crept onto his features as he managed a laugh. “Thank you, Roll. You scared me for a second there…” Rock paused for a moment, his mind trailing off.
“I love you both so much. Thank you so much for supporting me. I don’t know if I’m doing the right thing, but… Knowing that you guys are there, standing behind me, it really makes me feel better.” He pressed into the door, a hissing sound as it slid open. “Alright, I’m going in now.” The silence on the line was hardly noticed as he entered the room. He found himself standing on a few boulders, towering above the smaller robot master who stood where he was with a sharp scowl.

“I heard what you did, twerp.” Cutman began, his voice a sharp, drilling sound. Shrill and kiddish. “I heard how you shot Bomb to death, and how you crushed Guts to death. Wily told me all about the awful things you did to my brothers.” Rock stood there, he felt terrible about the fact. Flashes of the boulders crashing around him… He didn’t want to leave Gutsman there but at the same time he did save his IC-Chip right? He saved him didn’t he? Spared his life as best he could. Besides, it wasn’t him who deactivated him right? Gutsman deactivated himself. And Bombman? Well Rock would have to admit that was all his doing, but he gave him peace right?

“I didn’t kill them! They’re fine, we recovered their IC-Chips. They’re being rebuilt right now.” He tried to explain this, hoping that perhaps Cutman would surrender. “What makes you think I’ll believe that?” The little orange bot retaliated. “Wily told us what Light would do to us. As soon as he finds out we have personalities he would strip them away, just like the robots before us.”

Confusion swept over the child, what was Cutman talking about? Rock had a personality, and he kept it. Were there other robots before them that weren’t the same? Was there some secret he didn’t know?

No, he didn’t think so. Dr Wily was spreading lies, that’s what Rock settled upon. That had to be the answer. His father was too kind to do anything like that, too kind to take the conscious of his creations away from them. Their personality.

“You don’t believe me do you? I guess that’s your loss, not mine. But I won’t allow myself to be destroyed like that, even if you’re okay with it!” On that note, Cutman removed those scissors from his head and threw them at Rock. It wasn’t hard to dodge them, they weren’t that big, and the most they did was spin in the air at a fast speed. If he could dodge Gutsman’s charge, he could certainly dodge Cutman’s rolling cutter.

“Come on, Cutman! Do you really think Dr Light would do that to you!?” Rock shouted in response, using his Rockbuster to try and at least put a dent in Cut’s barrage. It seemed this fight would be mostly a jumping, running battle while the other robot master hopped around the stage after him. Stopping only to catch his cutter.

“Of course I do! I’ve seen the history, Dr Wily showed me! I will not become like my lost brothers.” Rock stopped in the middle of the stage, their positions switched now. Cut standing on the ledge towering over him. “What are you talking about? Bomb and Guts weren’t reduced like that.” His voice was just over a plea. “They’re not the ones I’m talking about.” Another rolling cutter, one that Rock was caught off guard by.

He managed to jump out of the way just fast enough to avoid getting his whole leg cut off again. Instead it grazed, ripping open a gash in his thigh. ‘Sharp, it’s sharp. And my Rockbuster isn’t doing very much damage.’ That was his thought as he watched the weapon get back to Cutman. ‘There has to be something I can do to stop him.’ It came to him quickly, like a train slamming into him.

‘Paper beats Rock.’ He rose to his feet, quickly making a dash forward, one that startled the orange bot. ‘Scissors beats Paper.’ His form shifted quickly as his armor changed to the brown coloration of the Guts Arm. ‘And Rock beats Scissors!’ The boulders that were beneath Cutman were lifted up with startling speed. “H-Hey! What’re you--” The bot on top of them was thrown to the wall,
crushed beneath the rocky projectile, cut off before he could finish.

Rock picked up another boulder and carefully made his way over to the pile of rubble, so frightened that Cutman would come back, that one of those rolling cutters will come launching out of the rock. A tense minute or two of silence, it passed with an agonizing slowness as his leg continued to gush. When he was certain that the robot master wasn’t going to get back up, he gently set the boulder down beside him.

Approaching the pile, he began to dig out his brother. The bot was in wretched condition, but still conscious. His arms were bent in awkward positions, that must be why he’s not getting up again. “I’m sorry…” Rock whispered as he sat beside the mangled body of the other. “Yeah… I am too… I’m sorry for you more than anything though.” His words were broken, laced with gasping sounds, it was reminiscent of Bombman. His ‘ribs’ were probably crushed.

“Why’s that?” Rock reached out and placed his hand on the other’s shoulder, copying his ability, ignoring the wince from him. “Wily’s gonna kill ya… That’s why. He’s got two bots that’ll destroy you. The two that went missing from my line. The two that Dr Light tried to kill. They’ll kill you alright. Even if you don’t meet them now, there’s definitely another trick up that old man’s sleeve… He will kill you, whether you like it or not.” Two robots that Dr Light tried to kill? Why would he want to kill his own creations. “What’s their serial numbers?” Rock asked sharply, he was going to get answers. “As far as I know, they were marked 00A and 00B. As for that other trick… Well… That’s not my place to say.” Cut responded with his broken voice.

“Regardless of who they are, what serial numbers they are, I’m not going to let Wily beat me that easy. He reprogrammed you all to hurt humans and go against Asimov’s Code of Robotics. That’s unforgivable. For that I’m going to bring him to justice. Even if I do end up dying in the process.”

They were in silence for a while, no words spoken between them as Rock picked up the next boulder. “I’m sorry Cutman, but I have to deactivate you and take your IC-Chip.” There was a heavy sorrow in his voice. “I understand… No hard feelings really.” Somehow he knew that was a lie straight through his metallic teeth. Knowing that hesitation will cause him to stall, the boy slammed the boulder down on him. There was a sizzling sound, a cracking sound, and he became aware that the other was completely deactivated. Digging through the newfound rubble, there was relief to find that the body was merely crushed, that everything was still relatively intact.

Reaching back to that compartment, Rock removed the IC-Chip before beginning to move out of the small arena he found himself in. “Dr Light, I succeeded. I don’t think I took all that much damage this go around.” He looked at the chip in his hand, frown on his face. “You’re right Rock, you are actually in pretty good condition.” There was silence for a while as he navigated to higher ground, trying to make the teleportation easier. “Dr Light?” Rock began again. “Yes, Rock?” The response came back just as quick.

“Who are DLN-00A and DLN-00B?” There was nothing but silence on the other line, and just as Rock was about to believe what Cutman had said to be truth, the voice of his father came back. “DLN-00A and DLN-00B are two robot masters that were supposed to be in the upcoming robot line. They were too powerful as they were to be released with the current line like I had originally planned, or really any line that I saw upcoming. So I decided to hold onto them for quite a long period of time to try and basically baby-proof them. Make them safer for humanity. However some time ago they went missing. I knew who had them, but when I approached him, he said he had no idea where they went. I hoped they were destroyed… I guess they weren’t.”

Now it was Dr Light’s time to get silence. Robot masters that were too powerful…?

“Should I try to retrieve them?” Rock asked. “No, don’t worry about them right now. For right now
just worry about stopping Dr Wily, alright?” Light retaliated, he didn’t want his son getting off track. “It’s come to my attention that I don’t have any idea who Wily is either! DLN-00A, DLN-00B, Dr Wily, they’re all secrets that I don’t think you’re telling me or Roll! How can I fight someone that I know nothing about! How can I fight a human I know nothing about!!?”

“Rock, now is not the time to be arguing about this! You have to trust me!”

“How long do I trust until I’m stabbed in the back!?”

Silence, dead air, not a single word was uttered. Rock starred up into the night sky above him. This morning he was fighting Bombman, just a few hours ago he was going against Gutsman, now with the night so close he crushed Cutman, quite literally. “I just want to know what I’m fighting for is all. What I’m fighting against. Is that too much to ask? Is that too much to know?”
Elecman

Chapter Summary

With Cutman defeated, Rock now goes to battle his fourth enemy, Elecman.

Chapter Notes

Despite being robots, the robot masters do have developed personalities and feelings. They evolve, they fear, and they change. The only thing that is separating robot masters from reploids is the fact that reploids don't have coded rules like robots do. Hence why the maverick virus is such a problem in the MMX era.

Chapter Six: Elecman

‘Dr Wily used to be a friend of mine. We were best friends in college and worked together. We were hoping to make a world where robots and humans could coexist together in at least a symbiotic relationship. He, however, wanted to make robots feared in order to achieve this goal. I wanted to make them as close to human as possible. Wily believed that if robots weren’t feared than humans would always look down upon them. He took the pessimistic side, I took the optimistic side. It didn’t take long for him to learn the error of his ways, but at the same time, that didn’t stop his belief entirely. We had a fallout. It surrounded some experiments he was doing, I won’t get too in depth on it, but they were horrific. Inhumane even.’

‘We couldn’t find any hard evidence of these experiments, that they were more than just theory, but they were crazy enough to cause him to be barred from the scientific community for good regardless. He would never be able to build robots again. During this time we were developing the first line of robot masters. We made two in specific, DLN-00A and DLN-00B. Because of this terrible discovery our research was flagged, we had to stop what we were doing and wait for the investigation to conclude. I worked on other robots in the meanwhile. You and Roll were part of that hiatus. It came to my attention, however, that these robots were far too powerful. Their abilities were fearsome, while they could help the community greatly, it’s also possible that in the wrong hands they could cause massive catastrophe. As such I hid them away. After the project was green lit again and I was able to continue my research, I decided to try and dig out those robot masters, hoping that my new knowledge would be able to give them the safety measures they required in order for me to actually finish them.’

‘When I went to investigate they were gone. I guess Wily stole them long ago and is planning to complete them. If the experiments that Wily theorized are still ongoing, it could spell trouble. A lot of trouble. Please be careful Rock.’

Dr Light’s explanation at the lab gave Rock a very sick feeling. He hated the idea that something like that would have happened. Why hadn’t his father reached out to the authorities? Perhaps he was frightened about what that would do to his research. Rock could understand that fear. It was
the fear humans always felt, the fear of the unknown. However returning home wasn’t just for that story that was told to him. He got the Magnet Beam as well and a decent night’s rest. He was terrified of the idea of sleeping when the robot masters were still on the loose, but at the same time as far as he saw, they were hiding away trying to kill him, expecting him to come.

Navigating through the power plant was difficult. With Watchers and Kamadomas everywhere just trying to deliver as much damage as possible. Big Eyes were pursuing him as well, seemingly manifesting at the end of every area so far. The most annoying, however, would have to be Gabyoalls, things he couldn’t kill but only stall for a moment. It didn’t help that every few moments he was narrowly avoiding being electrocuted. Somehow, however, he managed to make it to that loathsome door, he saw it from where he was on the tall, endless ladder.

“Be careful, Rock.” This time Rock didn’t respond, he had no words to say. He wasn’t angry at his dad, but at the same time he didn’t know how to feel about the information given to him. This all could have just been avoided. But instead they got roped into some mixed up revenge plot of some crazy old scientist. Glancing down at his leg, he saw the patchwork done on the gash, he was alright, he would be alright. He was halfway through them all.

That is unless those mysterious robot masters are involved in this.

The room he climbed into was dark, the air was oppressive. He wasn’t sure what he expected however. He could feel the static as he stood there. Screens all over the place, they showed static, some showed stock footage of eyes looking around frantically. He supposed this was Elecman’s way of making him uneasy, probably trying to terrify him into running away. Something that would not happen. Rock was going to fight as best he could, he beat the ones before, he would beat this one too.

Switching his abilities as a precursor, his body shifting to the silver palette of the Rolling Cutter, Rock tried to discern the location of the other robot master. The cutter should snip Elecman like it’d snip wires right? That’s what Dr Light told him at least, he would believe him on at least that front. He knew his robot masters better than anyone after all. But that doesn’t mean he completely trusted the facts given to him. He wouldn’t until he saw Wily himself, until he saw the madman that lingered in the background behind the scenes.

Rock slipped around timidly, wary of whatever may be lurking the darkness. He didn’t want to encounter Elec unawares. He didn’t want to be caught off guard.

A lightning beam shot by him, illuminating the world like a camera flash, a loud explosion behind him… The thing he was trying to prevent happened anyways. In the flash of light he saw Elecman, standing before him like a harbinger of death. “Damn, I missed.” His voice was the most normal of the robot masters he’s faced off with. A mellow alto, not unlike the voice of his apparent age, early twenties. As soon as the flash faded, Elec was gone once again, his dark suit hiding him in the shadows.

“And I was so hoping to watch a thousand watts of electricity go rushing through your body, how splendid it’d be to see you spasm on the floor as I overwhelm your system… What a shame, it would have been beautiful too.”

Rock didn’t know how to respond to this, his breath caught in his throat. “Aw, you look so cute standing there, doe-eyed like that. Spare me the innocence kid, I know what you did and what you plan to do.” Another lightning bolt, this time the blue robot heard the sound and made a b line to dodge it, making out successfully. However by doing that he almost fell back down the ladder he climbed up.
The sound of metal breaking, one glance revealed to him that said ladder was knocked loose by his arm slamming into it. It wasn’t the most stable of constructs, the power plant wasn’t the most stable of places, and so it really was not all that surprising as it fell into the depths. Heavy metallic clanging could be heard moments later, the fall was truly immense. Rock turned to look back into the direction of where the thunderbolts came.

His chest heaved up and down as he looked around the room, terrified. Where was he? Where was he? Another flash, but this time not aimed at him. A shower of sparks illuminated the room as the screens went out one by one. A scream from Rock at the small hissing sound signaled their fading light. He was locked in the darkness. He was locked in a Hellscape within the center of a massive storm.

Whimpers from the little blue robot as he felt the edge of the hole, it was immense. He was backed into a corner and without being able to see he was stuck here, unable to move. He was a sitting duck. A blind shot into the dark would have to do. He threw the rolling cutter into the air, waiting for it to hit or come back.

“You’re so cute like that. Trying to attack.” An iron grip around his throat lifted him up into the air. Electricity swarmed around the bot and Rock could see again. Electric blue eyes stared up at him. “I guess this is where you fall. Who knew that all we needed was a dark room to make the all-powerful Rockman die.” He clawed at Elecman’s hands, trying to free himself from his grasp. It was difficult as he gasped and wheezed.

He wanted to say something, wanted to ask him to stop, but he was unable to. This was his wish. He wanted to win or die fighting. Anything that could be a plea or whimper was cut off with the agony that was the electricity which rushed through his body. Screeches of pain emanated throughout the room. “Your cries are so beautiful! I love it!” The charge grew and grew, Rock was certain he was going to die.

The rolling cutter? Where was it? Where was the rolling cutter? Now with the light filling the room, he could see that the place was massive, the cutter was finally making its way back. Elec hadn’t seen that it was a boomerang weapon and thus couldn’t stop it. His vision was swimming and he could see darkness fluttering in. He had to hang on, just a few more minutes or else he’d--

Suddenly darkness, the charge stopped and Rock felt himself falling. Grabbing tightly to the ledge before he could disappear into the pit, he found himself hanging by his fingertips as a hot fluid splattered him in the face. Oil, it was the oily blood of his brother. He could hear Elecman gurgling up above him. Did he just? No he couldn’t have done that. Climbing back up onto the floor, he wanted to collapse but became immediately aware of what he felt. Mechanical innards.

He reached one hand to his right to find that he was correct. Theses were Elecman’s hips. A scream of shock as he made his way deeper into the room. He crawled as fast as he could to the wall, trying to find some purchase to stand up. A button bowed under the pressure he placed and soon enough the room was awash in faint blue light. Aged LEDs were aglow and there, by the hole in the floor, Rock could see the robot master he had just defeated.

Elecman was indeed cut straight across the middle, the Rolling Cutter had lodged itself in the wall behind them, oil stained and dripping. There were some wires clinging to it.

Rock knew who those wires belonged to and it made him sick. As the panic of the situation settled, the small child became aware of the whimpering of the robot master on the floor. Tentatively he made his way over and allowed himself to sit down beside him. The pain of his own injuries were bad, but he knew that Elec must be suffering so much more. “Hey… Hey don’t cry.” He tried to soothe, but could see that this robot already was. It was a type of quiet, pained cry, as
tears made lines in oil stains on his face.

Elec sputtered and seemed to be oozing ‘blood’ from his mouth, vomiting it up almost. “It’s okay, I promise… It’ll be okay.” Rock could hear his voice breaking as he set his head in his lap. “I’ll make sure it’s okay. I won’t let you die.” He reached down and carefully removed the mask from the electric bot’s face. That body suit must be terribly uncomfortable. Peeling away the body suit from off his head, it revealed that Elec, similarly to Rock, was human in every way.

He had hair, he had eyes, he was a human save for his interior. His hair was a back color with yellow dye in the ends. It was in this that Rock realized just how much love Dr Light put in his robot masters. In his robots in general. Light loved each of his creations, and to think that Cutman, or Wily, was right at all was the stupidest thing he could have done. He gave them hair, eyes, a mouth, noses, a smile, a body, a heart, a life. He made them to be his children, every single one of them.

Rock gently ran his fingers through Elec’s hair, his other hand holding the electric bot’s, he felt terrible for all he’s done but at the same time knew that it was a necessity. Tears dripped from his own eyes and onto the robot master’s face. He stared blankly up at Rockman, eyes fighting to stay open.

“It’s okay… You can sleep if you want. You’ll have amazing, heavenly dreams. And when you wake up, it’ll be over. This will just be a bad nightmare you had. I promise…”

A smile for just a moment, one of happiness, albeit pain. The smile was ‘blood’ lined and remorseful. “When we… go back… will he love us…?” Elec’s question surprised Rock as he cradled him. “Yes… of course he will, Dr Light loves all of you. I promise, when you come home, when you wake up, we'll welcome you back with open arms. Me, Roll, Dr Light… We’re your family. You’re my brother.” He wanted to say more for him, but wasn’t sure what he could say.

“Rock…?” Elec began again. “I’m scared…” Rock tried to give him a reassuring smile, but wasn’t sure how helpful it was as tears continued to pour down his face like waterfalls. “It’s okay… I understand… Just close your eyes, and it’ll all be okay. I’ll be right here for you.” He watched as the other followed his instructions, closing his eyes. A few more tears slipped down his cheeks before finally consciousness left him. The gasping stopped, the sputtering, the whimpering.

Rock sat there for a moment, holding that severed torso, and sobbing. He was coated in ‘blood’ when he left the power plant, with the Thunder Beam ability, and the IC-Chip held tightly in his hand, Rock never felt more upset. He stood there in the rain, the storm that had been forecast since last night had finally rolled in. Lightning streaked across the sky. Amidst the booming thunder, he screamed.

He screamed out at nothing, nobody could hear him, nobody cared enough. So he just screamed into oblivion. Venting out the pain he felt. A scream not unlike a banshee’s.
Chapter Seven: Iceman

It was cold, a stark contrast to the world he was in just moments before. The ice cavern he slipped around was an echoing, frigid tunnel leading to what he believed to be his doom. He knew Iceman was small, but then again so was Elecman, and that was a living nightmare. The Pepes, Foot Holders, Crazy Razys, Adhering Suzys, and Gabyoalls were annoying enough. Disappearing platforms and Big Eyes all out to deactivate him added an edge that he wasn’t happy to deal with. It wasn’t helped by the fact he couldn’t get any traction whatsoever on the ice.

“Dr Light?” No response. Rock pressed himself against the door and stood there for a moment. Not entering, but not sure what else he should do. He realized that he was completely out of reach of Light Labs quite some time ago, but he never thought he’d feel so lonely upon being faced with the fact. If he died here, than who knows when his body would be recovered. Who knows if he’d even be remembered.

Why had he agreed to do this? Why did he agree to be the soldier that the world needed so desperately? He asked these questions, however the more he thought about it, the more apparent that it became. Regardless of the choice he made, whether it was to fight Wily or to remain as he was, he still wouldn’t be able to experience his childhood. He still would have been miserable. At least this way some other child could be happy, someone else could smile and live another day in peace.

He pressed through the door, passing the mechanical hiss, and entering a world that was so beautiful albeit terrifying. Sunlight poured in through an opening in the ceiling as the icy arena manifested. Snowflakes were beginning to descend all around like fairies on the fluttering wind. Stalagmites of ice were jutting out of the ground like sharp protrusions.

Just like how the ground had spikes, the ceiling did as well as icicles dangled menacingly, and
sporadically, up above. It felt as though if there was intact ceiling, there was a sharp icicle reaching
down to make a snatch at him.

Walking further into the arena, Rock was surprised that he didn’t see Iceman anywhere. It was as if
the place was vacant. He was careful as he stepped on the ice. Worried that this would be just like
Elec’s confrontation. He should have known how things would play out, but then again, Rock was
naive. He was just a child asked to fight, he didn’t understand things like this yet.

“Don’t ever let your guard down!” The voice was sudden, a kid’s voice, not unlike his own. He
didn’t have enough time to react before he felt his entire body freezing over. Ice climbed up his
legs and joints, freezing him up to his waist. He was immobile, completely at the mercy of Iceman.

“I thought you’d be harder to kill than that, Rock. But I guess I was wrong, and my brothers were
incapable.” Ice’s face was curved into a serious frown. “I’m shocked Elec didn’t at least take you
down, he’s quite the fighter-type.” The tiny arctic bot put his hands on his hips. Cute little mittens
with bunny rabbits on them, Rock would have smiled if he wasn’t so terrified. The little blue robot
struggled to escape, tried to smash the ice or break it with his bare hands, but it was just too thick.

“Don’t even bother struggling. As soon as it starts to break, I’ll freeze it again.” Iceman began.
“Wily’s gotten pretty tired of you coming in and ruining his plans. He told me to keep you here
until his special weapon arrives, and that’s just what I plan to do.” Rock wanted to shoot at him,
but knew that he was a sitting duck. He would have to bide his time, wait for Ice to lower his guard
to attack. If he went in to this situation guns blazing, then he was certain to get frozen the rest of
the way, then what would happen?

Wily would execute him on the spot.

There was nothing to be said. Rock didn’t have it in him to risk something like that. He didn’t want
to talk, and Ice certainly wasn’t making any effort to communicate either. For a long time they sat
in silence, letting the snow fall all around them. The little blue robot looked up at the sky to see
that the snow was growing heavier gradually, a storm was rolling in. What if Wily couldn’t come?

It was then that the little blue robot got an idea. He just had to wait for the right time to execute it.
Looking back down to Ice, he figured some conversation would be best until he found that the
other lost his guard or came close enough for him to execute it. “Wily’s going to kill you too, you
know.” Rock began in a teasing tone. Those deep blue hues, marking the fallen snow, turned to
look at the older robot master. “What do you mean he’s going to kill me?” Iceman asked.

“I mean when he’s done with you, he’s going to take you out just like he’s going to supposedly
take me out. You guys are just a revenge plot. He’s going to dump you all when he’s finished with
you.” Rock explained, smirking all the while, trying to hide his chattering teeth and shivering
frame. “He wouldn’t have saved us for something as simple as a revenge plot.” Ice shot back,
seemingly growing more agitated as he took a few steps closer. “I dunno… He saved you to put
you against me, the same robot that took down all your brothers. I can tell you how I did it to.”

Ice seemed conflicted, it was true. Wily knew what was happening and he could have recalled
them, but didn’t. “What about you then, Rock? Why are you fighting? I bet Dr Light doesn’t love
you all that much either.” The tundra robot was shocked when a grin spread across his enemy’s
face. “Actually, I asked for this. I asked to fight you all because I wanted to actually save you, not
give you that false salvation Wily offered.” The little blue bomber chimed happily, that smile on
his face.

Ice’s expression suddenly turned bitter, sour, enraged as he stomped closer. He pushed Rock on the
chest with his tiny index finger. A patch of ice was forming under the pad of his fingertip. “Who the hell do you think you are!?” Iceman began. “Coming out here and attacking us like this! Humans will kill us, and you know it! When they get tired of us they’ll throw us away! And you stand here fighting for them!? What an idiot! And not only that but you also have the gall to ridicule our savior!”

He knew it was his chance, with the bot thinking he had the upper hand, DLN-001 snatched him up. Quickly he shifted his power to the thunder beam, blues turned to yellows and blacks before he began to use those electrifying powers. A shock ran through his arms, which were beginning to freeze over, and proceeded to jolt through the tinier robot. Iceman’s face was frozen in a look of shock.

He remembered what Dr Light told him. That Iceman was built to use little power, and that over charging him could fry his circuits. But at the same time, Rock knew that if he kept going it’d destroy the IC-chip. As such, Rock lifted him up and threw him against the wall. The bang was loud and Ice’s body lay limp for a second. There was a tinkling up ahead, he at first thought it was bells.

Looking up he realized it was the icicles. All according to plan. He switched abilities again, now that Iceman was out of it, and began to bash against the frozen prison with his Guts Arm. The force shook the ground, which in turn shook the entire room. Just as he was breaking out he saw the robot master beginning to get up. Dazed but still very much ready to fight.

“You bastard! How dare you!” Iceman spoke as he began to charge. Shock on Rock’s face, seeing that icy power beginning to manifest. He needed to get out fast. He banged and banged. That hand rose to freeze him with that ice breath.

Bang! Bang!

Iceman’s gasp was so audible before the loud crash of the ice shattering deafened it. He heard the jingling so loud now, like someone was shaking car keys in their ears. Rock saw Iceman beginning to run. He knew, he had caught on. Crashing sounds as both of them immediately knew to grab cover, the ceiling was collapsing. ‘A cave-in! Another cave-in!’ That’s what Rock thought at first, but he was wrong.

There was a wet slicing sound as waves of pain fluttered through him.

Everything felt so hot. He was on his stomach when it happened, face down. He saw the puddle forming beneath him, an audible squelching vomiting sound as that acrid oil was forced up through his mouth. He tried to mute it with his fingers but only resulted in dispelling the sticky substance all over his hand.

Looking down to see the damage, a painful task to achieve, he could see the thick tooth of ice piercing his stomach. ‘Guess I know how Elec feels now.’ He couldn’t help but think to himself. Using the last of the guts arm power, he tried to reach down and bang on it. Something which hurt him terribly. But at the same time, he had to get out of here before Wily got here. He had to escape before the snow got too heavy.

The weather was now creating a small blanket of white all over the arena, something that terrified Rock to no end. He didn’t want to freeze to death, his systems could only take so much cold. And so with that, he tried to bang on the ice to free himself.

He screamed in agony as he did so, but with the force, he saw cracks beginning to form. “P-Please! J-Just break already!” He screeched, slamming his fists into the thick ice. Eventually, with enough
pounding, it did shatter and he was left panting and bleeding on the ground. Forcing himself upright, with a hole in his midsection, he pushed, from the front, the icicle out from inside of him. Another scream of agony before a chilly ‘thunk’ was heard. He was freed.

Rock, still bleeding and most certainly damaged, look around the forest of ice. Icicles pierced the ground all over, the stalagmites even had little fallen teeth protruding out of them like arms. Getting to his feet whilst holding his stomach, he began to move around. He needed to find Iceman. Limping and still gushing, he leaned against his free hand as he moved around.

The arena wasn’t massive or anything, not in area at least, so it wasn’t hard for him to find the small robot. The damage done to him was far more numerous. Already deactivated Iceman was run threw in four different places. He was facing upright, although his head was not visible. Why? Because it had rolled quite a distance away. Rock, understandably, vomited up more of that bloody oil when he saw it. The severed head of his brother.

Tears fell from his eyes as he stared at that blank face which stared back at him. He couldn’t stop, he had to retrieve Ice’s IC-Chip. Limping over, Rock reached his free hand out trying to get purchase. He copied the ability without even realizing he was doing it, before searching for the compartment. Half of it was destroyed. Digging into it in a panic, forgetting temporarily about the wretched wound in his abdomen, he searched feverishly for Iceman’s chip.

“No… No, no, no, no!” Rock shouted as he dug through it. It had to be here! Where was it! Did he murder him!? Did he actually murder him!? He saw red, only red, as he searched. It felt like an eternity until he heard a ‘plink’ sound. He looked down to where he was sitting on his knees.

A sob of relief escaped him as he saw that sitting there, knocked out by the icicles, was the IC-Chip. It was intact, safe, and okay. Albeit there was ‘blood’ on it. That was understandable and just required a bit of cleaning. Rock carefully picked it up, smearing oil all over it, before letting out a sigh of relief. He looked up to the sky.

For a moment all that he thought was ‘thank you God… Thank you!’ . He wasn’t particularly religious, he reflected on this as he stumbled his way back to a place where he could get back in contact with Light. His father believed, but that was about as far as it went. Rock owned a bible, but hardly read it. He’s been to church, but mostly just for Easter and Christmas. They don’t pray at dinner, they don’t pray before bed, there were no pictures of Jesus or holy images in their house. Light owned a few religious-based books, but they were rare and Rock found them boring at best.

And yet here he was thanking a deity he hardly knew as he stumbled into the world so cold and cruel. He thought, for just a moment, why a God would make a world so terrible, before remembering that perhaps it wasn’t a God that did it. But it was the creations he put here. Perhaps it’s man that is to blame for his current suffering.

Cradling that IC-Chip in one hand, and holding the bleeding hole in his abdomen with the other, he came to the conclusion that man may not be worth fighting for. That they probably deserved all that came to them. But all the same, his dad was human, and it wouldn’t be fair to punish those who aren’t Hell beasts.
Chapter Summary

With Iceman defeated, Rock now goes to battle his sixth enemy, Fireman.

Chapter Notes

A robot, when their IC chip is removed, doesn't stop functioning. It will continue to function without the IC chip in the robot, however their personality and reasoning will be removed and they will be left to the bare bones of their programming.

Chapter Eight: Fireman

“Howdy, Rock… I reckon ya came t’ stop me, didn’tcha!”

Fireman’s voice was a Texan drawl, the type of voice that one would find in a Clint Eastwood old Western. Some would find that intimidating, Rock just found it to be another voice in the myriad that he’s heard. Gabyoalls, Killer Bombs, Screwdrivers, Changkeys, and pillars of fire. All of it led up to this chaotic moment. The heat, unlike the previous place he was in, was outrageous. Jumping from intense cold to intense heat was certainly a change, but within this hellish waste disposal plant, Rock pushed as far as he could without falling. He glared at Fireman, his face hardened now.

He no longer held the same fear that he held when he fought the previous robot masters. He was scared, it would be a lie to say he wasn’t, but he sure wasn’t going to let Fireman see it. He didn’t need him to see the falter. Rock needed him to see he wasn’t just some little kid to play with. He wasn’t just some kid that would fall so quickly to the flames he spewed out.

He was a soldier, and Rock had now accepted this role with open arms. He needed to take the bullet that nobody else would, or bullets as one should say. This disregard for his own life made him a danger to not only himself, but everyone around him. Most importantly, however, it made him a dangerous opponent.

Dr Light’s voice of caution was lost on him when he came into this place, he got no response as he stood there, glaring at the torch of a man. “Rock is dead.” The blue bomber responded, his voice a dagger in the air. Cruel and emotionless. “I’m Rockman, I’ve been sent to deactivate you and free you from Dr Wily.” He explained, blue eyes glaring. Despite his small stature he was certainly intimidating.

The two began to advance in a circle, moving around each other not unlike two opponents sizing each other up in a boxing rink. Side stepping and attempting to study their opponent’s weak points. Rock wasn’t a perfect fighter by any means by this point. He knew he was weak, and he probably would never get stronger-- but at the same time he had caught onto a few patterns.
Firstly, his opponents seemed to enjoy making the first move. He needed to watch out for sneak attacks and for rushes, things that would try to knock him off his feet. Secondly, there tends to be some form of environmental hindrance. In Bombman’s area it was the lack of contact. Gutsman’s was the unstable cavern. Cutman’s was the small arena. Elecman’s was the darkness. Iceman’s was the icicles. Here it was the heat which permeated through the air and into their mechanical joints.

Rock feared overheating as much as he feared death, in this situation they happened to be the same exact thing. Circling around like two animals about to go at each others necks, he supposed jumping into the arena may not be the best idea here. It never seemed to be. He was at a severe disadvantage. Fireman can’t really overheat like the poor child could. If the torch bot got him worked up enough, than that was the end of it.

It was a relief when the tension was broken, and Fireman became impatient enough to lunch. Rock jumped back, and it was at this point that the fight began. However it became pretty obvious that this was a losing battle from the start. The walls of fire which came at him were nearly impossible to dodge, especially with how quick they came.

He was hit quite a few times by the attacks only to find that those parts of his body had begun to melt. “Shit…” Rock swore as he took cover behind a metal pillar. He couldn’t hide here forever, he could hear the hissing of Fireman’s power melting the beam, soon it would break through and that would be the end of it.

Rock was surprised when the barrage finally stopped and Fireman began to speak. “Ya know, kid. Have ya ever thought that maybe we don’t wanna be saved? That maybe we are happy with Wily as our master?” Master… He didn’t like that word. “Humans aren’t supposed to be our masters!” Rock shouted as he ducked around the wall, his suit having shifted by this point to the white and blue coloration of the Ice Slasher. He aimed quickly and took a shot at Fireman.

He popped his head back as soon as he fired, hearing only the cry of pain as Fireman was hit by the cold projectile. ‘God, I didn’t think that would actually work! Since when was ice strong against fire? Doesn’t fire melt ice?’ These weren’t the questions he was supposed to be asking, and that became apparent as the barrage of fire began again. Rock let out a cry as he was burned slightly by one attack coming too close to melting through the beam. He had to get moving.

And that’s just what he did. He jumped out and began to fire the Ice Slasher towards Fireman. He was happy to see the weapon was doing the same thing to Fireman that it did to him. Slowly ice began to creep over him and stiffen the joints. Despite that, Rock found it increasingly more difficult to avoid getting hit. Every time one of those walls of flame hit him, he felt his temperature spike.

Being in the incinerator part of a waste management plant was bad enough, but being attacked by walls of flame was a totally different story. ‘Sweat’ was dripping from beneath his helmet. What he’d give for a fan right now. He ducked behind another wall, chancing a glance around only to see that Fireman was struggling to free himself from his icy constraints. His legs frozen to the ground.

Rock stepped out and began shooting once again, it didn’t take long for Fireman to be frozen up to his neck, with the little blue robot left to just one more use of his weapon.

He has since been informed that he has a limit to how much he can use his powers, each one. His body can only generate so much from the limited materials given to it. He approached Fireman, looking up at the living ice sculpture as he stood there, shivering. “We aren’t meant to be slaves to humans, Fireman.” Rock began. “I’m going to deactivate you so I can free you from Wily’s grasp. One day, I hope that you can learn to fight for the world that made you, and the father that loves
A hissing sound as the flame on Fireman’s head was extinguished. The entire robot master was encased in ice. To which Rock stood there and stared. Looking down at his body he saw he was worse off than the other at this point. His body was melting, parts of his internal workings revealed, and while it did hurt, he has suffered so much today and yesterday that it didn’t really matter anymore.

Switching to the Guts Arm, which he had now gotten extremely good at, he punched the ice as hard as he could. Once, twice, three times. Spider webbed cracks formed before the ice shattered in an explosion of crystals. Fireman collapsed onto the ground, frozen chunks of him breaking off as he lay immobilized, deactivated, on the ground.

It took a lot for Rock to pry the panel open to retrieve his IC chip. However with enough pull, he managed to yank it open and retrieve it. It was covered in ice, something that concerned the little blue bomber, but at the same time Dr Light built them. He’d know how to repair something like this. Leaning down, he pressed his hand to Fireman’s gradually warming cheek.

He was about to pull away, copy ability in hand, when he saw the eyes of the robot master open suddenly. Rock couldn’t jerk away fast enough before those convertible hands grabbed hold of him. The blue bomber let out a scream as he was lifted up into the air by a twitching, spasming husk of a robot master.

“Let me go! Let me go!” Rock screamed as he tried to kick. He couldn’t convert his one arm into the buster arm, he’d drop Fireman’s IC chip, risking his brother’s life. But at the same time he would die if he didn’t do something. He felt the second of Fireman’s hand grab onto his neck, flashes of Elecman came to his mind.

He struggled to try and get free but couldn’t. It wasn’t until he felt the pulling that he realized what was happened. Rock thrashed in the hold of the other robot master, trying to free himself, but the more he thrashed the harder Fireman pulled. A scream of pure agony as, slowly and steadily, his partially melted arm was wrenched from his socket. Tears streamed down his face.

It hurt, it hurt so terribly. The sound of his shoulder being ripped from his body was filling his ears. It sounded almost like a wet sheet of tinfoil being ripped apart. Tears streaked down his face and immediately his body went into shock. He was limp in Fireman’s hold. Unable to move even when the robot master slammed him into the ground. Rock lay there, unmoving, with tears streaming down his face.

The taller stared at him for a moment before, like a zombie almost, he began to wander away, deeper into the incinerator. Seconds passed, minutes, it wasn’t until an entire half hour passed that Rock had regained himself enough to sit up. His chest was heaving up and down, he had long since run out of optical fluid and was now crying the same crude oil that oozed out of his arm.

Fireman, his body, worked without his IC chip. Rock became painfully aware why Light told him to destroy the body as best he could before collecting it. If he didn’t than it could mean they aren’t completely deactivated. The robot becomes automated, and will follow whatever base programming was assigned to it. In this case the programming to attack anything that attacks it.

It must have left him there believing that he had died, believing he had deactivated. Making the same mistake Rock made. Shakily, with quiet sobs pushing through his body, he got to his feet and began to move carefully to his arm. He stared at it, so foreign and far away almost, he couldn’t believe it was his own arm. Reaching down he tucked the appendage under his available arm, and immediately rushed out of that place.
He was sprinting as fast as he could, terrified of the idea that Fireman was going to be waiting for him. That Fireman would be somewhere, notice him, and finish the job with his head instead. The thought terrified him as he ran and jumped all the way back to the start. Soon he found himself outside and, with his new injuries, let himself fall onto the grass. The green was quickly being painted red with his blood.

The summer breeze which he had tried so hard to cool down from just the other day, with a chocolate popsicle, now felt like winter air. He stared into the clear blue sky, waiting for Light to reach out to him. Wanted to hear his words. Just hear his voice. When it finally came through, Rock let out a pained sob.

“Rock are you alright!?”

“He came back!”

“Who came back!?”

“Fireman!”
Chapter Nine: Yellow Devil

“Rock please don’t go out there again.” Dr Light pleaded with him. “It’s too dangerous, you almost died! I think now is the time we stop pursuing this and leave it to the authorities.” Roll chimed in, shaking her head. “No! I can’t let anyone else die! How many people have we lost already? Twenty? Thirty? Forty? No! I won’t allow for that. Dr Wily can only be worse than the six I’ve fought already, so I’m not going to let anyone else suffer in that same way.”

That’s what he told them, and now as he stood before that all too familiar door, he came to realize that he had learned so much since he started this journey. He’s changed to become an unrecognizable shadow of his former self. No longer did he want to lay on his bed and read a book. He didn’t want to eat a chocolate popsicle and curl up on the plush armchair to watch television. Four days ago is when all of this started and, to be honest, he had no idea how it all could have happened over the course of less than a week. It felt like an eternity ago that he was swinging his feet over the edge of that stage.

Thinking back on it, Rock could hardly even remember who he was back then. In fact he couldn’t help but wonder what his past self would think of him now. Would he see him as a murderer? A hero? Would he be excited to become what he is now? The little blue bomber wasn’t sure, he didn’t know if he had the answers, or if he wanted those answers. If he came up to his past self and said ‘you are going to kill your brothers’, would it be taken as the truth? Most definitely not.

It became painfully apparent that there was not going to be a happy ending. At least not for him. He was sure that when he finally fell in battle, something he was certain would happen at any moment, that Roll and Dr Light would be happy without him.

They would be sad for a while, but given some time they’d heal, and they would forget him. He’d just become a picture on the mantelpiece left next to some rusted bolt. One day Roll would see that bolt and throw it in the trash. They didn’t need the broken child he was now. Having grown at least five years since the start of everything. Childhood stripped away from him mere months after he received it.

December, January, February, March, April, May, June, and now July-- eight months of childhood
was allotted to him. The fact that he isn’t yet a year old shook him up a bit as he cast a glance back over his shoulder. He could turn back, but he wouldn’t. How attached can someone become over eight months? Dr Light cannot be that heartbroken right? Rock certainly didn’t think so.

This was the secret weapon. There was a sick feeling in Rock’s stomach as he walked into the arena. The thought of this weapon filled his mind, standing in a blank and empty room with nothing else in it… It became increasingly more difficult to shrug off the unease. Something was coming, and he needed to be prepared. What he expected to happen was a sneak attack, what he didn’t expect were screams.

The screams were terrifying, painful, and filled with agony. They were human screams. Rock turned to face it only to see that there was something on the wall that he had yet to notice. A yellow mass with a big, solitary eye that bobbed around its entire body. It shifted upon the top as though it were a hollow ball floating upon the surface of a turbulent ocean. Blue doe-eyes widened as parts began to peel away.

When they launched at him, Rock was stunned as the screams grew louder and louder. Arms reached out of the yellow goo as it passed. Human arms, ones that scratched at him with razor claws. It ripped open his body with cat scratches, however it became obvious they weren’t trying to kill him like everyone else.

When the wall was empty, rock turned to look back at where the thing began to join together. It was an amorphous blob with legs and its singular eye. Arms groped at the air, tiny feeling appendages that blossomed out like some twisted dandelion. It had its own massive, muscular arms, but these were not nearly as terrifying as the hands that reached out trying to grab at something, anything. Sticking to anything and everything. Some of them even fought among themselves. Ripping some arms off and throwing them on the ground, just for the arms to crawl back to where they came.

All and all, the creature before him, was a monster in every way.

Rock took a step back, unsure of what to do. It wasn’t until a singular hand was launched at him from just beneath that eyeball that he realized what he had to do. He had to fight it— he had to shoot that eye in specific. That was the only thing that the creature had in common with all its parts. He jumped back to dodge the hand, relieved to see it go scuttling back to its host. As soon as that happened, however, he noticed that those parts were flying at him again. It reminded him of Gutsman almost.

Jumping out of the line of fire, he was relieved to find he was spared the toying this go around. Coming to the conclusion that he should probably experiment with his weapons, or most of his weapons, he began plotting his next move. Before another hand could go lashing out at him, Rock shifted to the Hyper Bomb. Throwing it at the beast, he watched as the eye simply shifted away from the place of impact. The body just swallowing up the bomb as arms reached out to devour it.

The screaming, oh the screaming, it magnified so much louder. Became less of screams of horror, and more along the lines of pleasure. As though they were starved of any form of sustenance. It made him think of those depictions of Hell in museums. Could these really all be people? He hated the thought but it seemed like it.

The Hyper Bomb didn’t work, so he decided on the Rolling Cutter. He dodged the arm, the rushing pieces, he got a few scratches this go-round, but he was okay. The hands swallowed it up once again, devouring it. But instead of screams of pleasure, something akin to an adult movie, it changed to more of sobs. Weeping of sorts, as though seeing the cutter hurt them somehow. As though they were traumatized by it.
This pattern continued, he cycled through a few more abilities, but it wasn’t until he settled upon the Thunder Beam that he realized that this was the only one that could have possibly worked. If the eye kept shifting around the body, he’d have to find a way to hit it even if it chose to move. The Thunder Beam shoots in multiple directions as well as ripples through a robot master. He just hoped that this thing functioned similarly to such an entity… But he wasn’t sure.

He used the weapon, aiming for that eye. When it hit the beast let out an agonized roar. Reaching its hand up, it made a snatch at Rock. The blue bomber dodged the first couple swipes at him, only to find that the last one got him. The arms groped at him, snatched at him, ripped at him. Talons dug into his body and began to grate down his face and torso. He felt them tugging to try and rip his boots off, he heard the sound of his helmet being tossed onto the ground with a clatter.

Down his sides, over his stomach, down his back, up and down his thighs… He felt them trying to strangle him. But that wasn’t the struggle, the struggle was trying to keep them from clawing out his eyes as they screeched. One hand actually managed to reach up and dig their nails into his nose, ripping off his eyelid and scratching his eye in the process. He saw red in that eye for a while until another hand dug deeper and managed to pull it out of the socket. It dangled limply, being tugged on as though it were some baby toy for those hands to play with.

He fought down his screams, afraid that if he opened his mouth they would begin to pull at his mouth. That those hands would violate his mouth and would pull out his teeth or rip off his jaw. They were already trying to force their way inside, something Rock would not allow. He tried to struggle against it, whining and sobbing all the while. The next thing that came off was his ear, creating an ugly ringing sound after the initial rip.

At least half of the screams were silenced.

His nose was next, he smelled just the oil, only the oil, instead of the putrid stench of rotting flesh which was attached to the yellow devil.

‘Dr Light… Roll… I’m sorry…’ Rock thought to himself as he felt his skin being torn off. ‘I don’t know how I can get out of this… I’m sorry I was so weak… I’m sorry I never came home… If you ever can hear this just know I’m sorry… I love you all… Please don’t bring me back, if my IC chip is intact, please just destroy it… Just let me die… I don’t know how I can live with the knowledge that I failed to kill this thing… I don’t know what it is but I think… I think it’s a bunch of people…’

Those arms had completely severed that eye, there was a squelch as those fingers tried to work their way from the eye socket into his head. Trying to pull at the wiring within. They had made it to his jaw and were trying to pull it off. He heard it cracking, popping, grating as ‘blood’ oozed from every orifice. It hurt, the pain was excruciating, but he couldn’t just escape. He was held steadfast in the iron grip of this demon.

‘God please kill me! Why am I still alive! Just let me die!’ He screamed in his head. There couldn’t be a God if he was being forced to suffer like this.

“Rock!”

A hallucination?

“Rock!”

He couldn’t believe what he was hearing, partly because he couldn’t really hear it over the ringing sound in his ears. The voice blended in so well with the screaming. Suddenly a jolt of electricity as the beast recreated the seven levels of hell in its dying breaths. It began to melt and fade away, the
hands scratched at him more feverishly, it wasn’t long however before he fell to the ground with a heavy ‘thwap’.

He lay there, frozen, gasping and wheezing. His jaw was hanging partly off, his cheek extended to compensate. His tongue hung loose and swollen just out of his mouth. His eye was a few feet away, having rolled in the struggle. When the hands were trying to get the boot off, they ended up taking the entire bottom of his left leg with it. Scratches lined his body, marks on his back, sides, stomach, thighs, all over. His hip-guard cracked and busted, just hardly hanging onto his hips.

His hair was patchy with ‘scalp’ exposed underneath, some of said ‘scalp’ was scratched away revealing the metallic skull beneath. Rock’s ‘gloves’ were ripped open showing the internal mechanism of his copy system and his busters. Where he lay his chest heaved up and down as ‘blood’ continued to puddle. The few remaining screams had long since been muted by his damaged ears.

He felt arms, he felt someone lifting him up and cradling him against their chest. He could hear their ‘heartbeat’. Mechanical. Another robot master no doubt. But… There are only six others, unless Roll was here. He knew it wasn’t her, this was too big to be Roll. Gazing up he saw the familiar yellow and black. Some figures fluttered at the edge of his vision, many of them.

“We… help… fix you…”

Rock could not understand what he was saying. It was as if his words were fading just as out of focus as his vision.

“Let… help… Wily… Save you…”

Rock’s eyes slipped closed involuntarily in the arms of Elecman. He felt water hit his face, but wasn’t sure if it was raining, something that he forgot was an impossibility, or if it was something else. Held in a tight embrace, the soldier fell into a deep state of sleep.

He had deactivated.

He had lost.
Copy Robot

Chapter Summary

With Yellow Devil out of the way, they go on to battle a bizarre enemy... The Copy Robot.

Chapter Notes

Elecman is short for Electric Man.

Chapter Ten: Copy Robot

“Rock, wake up…” The voice was soft and coaxing. A gentle enticing out of a deep slumber. Fingers were running through his hair, toying with the strands in a soothing manner. He didn’t want to open his eyes, afraid of the terror he would face if he did. He knew his brothers were there, that they were waiting for him. It seemed that, judging by the care being given to him, they were friendly. But at the same time, each of them had their own tricks. Each of them tried to kill him.

“We can’t stop Wily without you. Please wake up…” The pleading voice of Iceman. He heard it a few steps away, next to him but not as close as that initial voice. A voice that he assigned to Elecman. “Do you think he suffered from internal damages?” Cutman spoke beyond Rock’s closed eyelids. “I wouldn’t reckon tha’ to be the case. They seemed ta only be tryna intrude on his head. They didn’t make it in, ya see?” The tell tale accent of Fireman, he was right there.

He could open his eyes, but at the same time he didn’t want to. He didn’t want to wake up. He felt a gentle hand stroking his cheek. “I’ll let him rest... He did the same for me. It’s the least we can give to him.” Bombman, it was him who was stroking his cheek and trying to arouse him with such a careful touch.

Long eyelashes fluttered open to reveal deep blue irises. His vision was blurry and hard to focus, but he did recognize that he had two eyes once again. The pain that he had fallen into his deactivation with had long since evaporated, he had to have been restored. If the robot masters wanted to kill him, why would they do that?

“Well g’morning sleepy head!” He glanced over to the voice, Cutman’s face manifesting from the vague orange blur he had.

“Guts was worried about you!” Rock looked up to see Gutsman towering over mostly everyone effectively. Bombman, who was seated beside him laugh. “Yeah I think we all were, ya big lug.” Bomb said, nudging Gutsman with his elbow.

“Can you all just take a collaborative step back, I think you’re crowding him.” The voice of reason, Elec immediately took control of the situation, everyone followed his instructions politely. “Sorry
‘bout tha’ pardner. How are ya feelin’?” Fireman asked, a smile evident on his features. Rock blinked a few times as his eyes drifted to the electric bot. It came to his senses that the scene in the power plant was vaguely recreated, just reversed. Now it was his turn to be cradled.

His head was resting in Elecman’s lap, those fingers running through his dark hair, other hand holding his own. It was a loving familial image for which Rock was greeted with, everyone just wanted him to be okay. To which it seemed he was. “I… I’m not sure. I think I’m okay.” He explained, beginning to push himself into an upright seated position. The electric bot leaned back to give him room enough to move.

“What can you remember?” Iceman inquired, bending down just a bit to be closer to eye level with Rock-- the only time the tiny bot would tower over anyone. “I don’t think I really want to remember… I remember that beast, and then being dropped, that’s about it.” The little blue bomber explained, shaking his head. “That thing was terrifying, I can’t blame you.” Cut added, his hands placed firmly upon his hips.

“What are you guys doing here anyways?” Rock asked, looking around at all of them. “We came here to save you, Dr Light figured that something wasn’t right with you after you started this whole quest. He decided that if he finished reconstructing us before you reached Wily, we would be sent out to fight with you.” Elecman got to his feet as he spoke, he reached a hand out to the child, pulling him up to his feet.

He continued, inspecting Rock for any balance damages all the while. “Good thing too. That thing was terrifying…” Elecman sighed as he began to walk over to the remnants of Yellow Devil. It was a massive puddle of red and yellow, it made Rock think of Ketchup and Mustard in a way. There were bones scattered within, malformed and melded together in some cases. Fingernails, or what was once fingernails, floated in the goop that now coated the ground. Judging by the faint steam which rose from it, not unlike a hot bowl of soup, one can assume it is extremely hot, or highly reactive, perhaps an acid of sorts.

“Do you guys know what it is?” Rock asked, looking away not long after he saw the mess. “No clue. We’ve never seen that thing before now. Wily never showed us.” Bomb told him, biting his lip as he too got to his feet. “Man, I hate to say it Rock, but I have a feeling we’ve been played. You were right on that. Wily was keeping secrets from us.” Cutman added, referencing the conversation they had during their battle.

“So now what?” Iceman’s question perforated the silence that fell not long after Cutman’s comment. “I’d say we split up and converge back on Wily. There are bound to be enemies up ahead. A few of us will go with Rock, but the rest of us will be, en large, in a group on our own. Rock is strong enough to be somewhat on his own, so I doubt he needs much back-up.” Elecman’s leadership began to shine through again. It was obvious the electric bot didn’t think his brother’s triumphs, up until that last one, was merely luck. But then again could the last one be considered a victory at all?

“Gutsman, Bombman, Cutman, and Fireman,” The four stood at attention, stiff and ready to listen to what Elec was saying. “You four go ahead in a group. Cutman, I put you as leader of the team, Fireman you take charge if he falls. Work together and watch yourselves. Remember you all have a weakness of a robot in your team. Keep that in mind and no friendly fire.” Elec turned to Cutman as he added, “I mean it.”

The four responded with a simple ‘rodger’ as they began to go. However it seemed as Elec wasn’t done with them. He grabbed Gutsman’s arm, stopping the entire group in their advance. “One more thing.” Elec began. “Don’t save the body. If someone falls, get their IC chip. If, that is, it’s still
intact or if you can get to it. Don’t risk your own lives to save your brethren. It’s not worth it. Now go.” He released them and soon enough the team was gone, vanished in the depths of Wily’s fortress.

Elecman turned to Rockman and Iceman, the last two who remained from the robot masters. “That leaves us to be a team.” He said, turning to Rock and nodding. “What are you waiting for, lead the way.” The blue bomber was shocked at this sudden omission of power, but then again he supposed he should have expected it. He was considered the strongest of them all. He had the abilities, and he had won, as such he turned on his heels and they proceeded to follow in the same way as the others.

It became pretty obvious which path the other four took, and as such Rock, as well as Ice and Elec, took the second path, the other path. Everything felt so much lighter with the other two there with him. Enemies fell quickly, if someone missed one, another person would hop in to take charge. One after another they all died off.

It’s no surprise than that they managed to reach that all too familiar door, one that Rock dreaded, but now seemed so entirely normal. The menacing nature had dissipated with the introduction of allies. He turned back to his comrades, only to find that they seemed more than ready to take on this challenge.

They were greeted, on the other side of the door, to a short pitfall. When they dropped to the ground, the room they were greeted too was strange and bizarre. Screens and panels littered the walls, a faint glow emanated from them. Due to the different hues, however, the light was very much disorienting.

“Iceman! Look out!” Rock saw the trap when it was sprung. He jumped forward and pushed Ice out of the way, only to wind up getting trapped himself. The field around him was a faint blue color as light radiated about him. He didn’t know what was going on, was completely unsure of it in fact. He wasn’t being teleported, so then what? What was happening to him.

“We have to get him out of there!” Elec shouted, studying the field. Ice reached his hands out to try and freeze it, the electric bot noticed that the field was charged but by the time he could choke the words out, the tiny robot was already shocked. A small blast as the robot master’s body was launched back into the wall, now unconscious with a blown fuse-- nothing that some tinkering couldn’t fix. But that didn’t change the fact that they were already one down.

“Elec! Get me out of here!” Rock pleaded as he bashed on the inside in a panic. “I’m not sure how I can, Rock. Just stay calm, we can figure this out alright?” He smiled to him, trying to allay any fears. Almost as though he predicted the future, the field began to dissipate, leaving the blue bomber free, and yet their problems had yet to be resolved. Rock once again picked up the problem before his brother.

“It copied me!” It all made sense as soon as Elec saw it. It was a perfect copy in every way. The trap was a means to mimic one of them, supposedly Rock, but it most likely could have copied any one of them. “Well there are two of us, one of him, we can do this. Right, Rock?” He looked over to his brother and smiled at him, to which the blue bomber nodded, taking his hand.

“Thunderbeam?”

“There’s nothing else I can use, now is there?”

Rock noticed that as soon as he switched abilities, so did the copy. But that didn't matter much. Elec didn’t take damage from such things. His unique power was being able to absorb such
electrical charges and convert it to his own energy.

The child shot at it, only to find that it mimicked his shot. Elec quickly jumped in the way, wincing just a bit-- using himself as a robot shield for his brother. “Don’t worry Rock, I won’t let him hit you, just keep shocking him. It seems to be doing something.” This was their plan for a while. The child shooting, the robot master taking the shots thrown back. With all the extra electricity he was taking, it wasn’t a surprise that he was growing tired and overworked.

“I don’t know how much I can take of this absorption, Rock!” This exclamation was what concerned both of them the most. They needed to find his weak point. It seemed that not only was the child’s weapon energy beginning to run out, but Elec’s was beginning to overflow. Looking around the room as they dodged, an idea struck him.

“The scanners!” He shouted as he pointed. “Release all your energy, Elec, onto the scanners.” Rock told him, something that sounded like music to the thunder bot’s ears. “Sounds like a plan! Don’t get hit while I do this!” And on that note, all the energy that was being absorbed was released out in one, singular bolt. It glowed a faint blue light as it flew directly to one of the two scanners that hung around the room. It sizzled and hissed before it exploded.

Pieces of shrapnel launched all over the place, the Copy robot's shrill cries were muted as it began to melt away similarly to Yellow Devil. Unlike the Devil however, it became apparent that the components that made up the Copy weren’t some goo, but more akin to tiny robots which broke apart and separated on the ground. They looked not unlike legos. A collective sigh of relief as they realized the fight was over.

The room continued to collapse for a few moments, but it didn’t take long for the world to still again. A collective sigh of relief as the brothers looked to each other. Both with their own scratches and knicks from the shrapnel.

Other than that, however, the three of them were in good condition. Even Iceman, who was beginning to reboot and come back was unharmed save for a bit of disorientation.

“That was chaos…” Rock muttered as they moved over to Ice, helping him to his feet. “You’re telling me.” Elecman responded with a laugh. Despite the miniature nightmare that they dealt with, the duo were in relatively high spirits.
Chapter Summary

With the Copy Robot out of the way, the robot masters go against a water filtration bot, CWU-01P.

Chapter Notes

Rock has grown numb to war since his conflict with Yellow Devil.
It takes 120 volts to kill a full grown human -- an electric eel can produce 860 volts.

Chapter Eleven: CWU-01P

“I told you to meet us at Wily, not here!” Elec’s voice rang clear like a church bell, heard throughout the tiny tunnel that they found themselves in. “We… We thought we did. We followed the path, this entire place is linear after all.” Cutman argued back, his voice as sharp as his rolling cutter.

It became apparent that the fortress was a looping circle, the four that had left them, ended up coming back around in the end. It was also worth noting that Bombman, who was once with them, was now gone. When inquired about this, it turns out they too had encountered a copy robot, and Bomb had been deactivated by a copy version of Fireman. They salvaged his chip however, and it was safe within a hidden compartment in Cutman’s boot. Something Light added when they were rebuilt.

The group walked in silence for a while, unsure of what to say. The tunnel was dark, but not completely without light. Part of the visible light was coming from faint glowing panels in the walls, the rest came from Fireman as he followed behind them.

A gurgling noise. It came in a large distance away, faint and echoing. It sounded almost like a babbling brook in a way. It would have been tranquil, had it not been for their location. They were in Wily’s fortress, in a place that was stocked with traps.

Their fears were confirmed as, starting from the other end of the tunnel, the first signs of water began. “Pardners…” Fireman began. “I don’t think this is a good sign.” He gestured at the water which was flowing around their feet and beginning to get more forceful, despite only being to their ankles. They hadn’t much more time to ponder on the fact before a tidal wave flooded the tunnel all around them, submerging them, dragging them down the tunnel to whatever awaited them.

This wouldn’t have been too troublesome of an event had Fireman not been with them. Dragged by the currents, the robots didn’t necessarily need to breathe, but it was uncomfortable to be under the water. They had ‘lung’ systems, but they served only the purposes of cooling their systems down, all while making them appear more human. When they finally stopped, it was by passing through
that dreaded door that the little blue bomber knew all too well.

The room itself wasn’t necessarily large, three tunnels surrounded them. Each one going into some deep, dark location unknown to them. Just beneath one of these tunnels was the door out of here. A relief really, Rock didn’t want to split up, and he had more than just a small bad feeling about those tunnels. He was sure they were nothing but trouble just waiting to unfold.

The next thing Rock noticed was Fireman lying limp against some rocks in the center of the room, eyes closed, no doubt deactivated. The water currents were probably too much for him to handle. Iceman swam over timidly and just placed his hand on the body, there was no way they could get his IC Chip out in the water. It would short his whole system and possibly destroy the chip. Not to mention the robot masters may flood if the hidden compartment was opened.

A sound akin to popping echoed from one of the tunnels. The group of five glanced at each other before their eyes went to the dark abysses that lined the walls. Something was coming, they all knew it. Not long after this realization, quick as lightning, the robotic creature burst forth from the darkness.

It ran along the walls, quick and agile. Everyone was frozen in shock for the most part—everyone save for Gutsman. The strongman picked up one of the boulders that were on the floor and threw it at the machine.

The damage done to CWU-01P was immense, but not nearly enough to shut it down. It ran along the walls and retreated back into the chasm from whence it came, leaving them there dumbfounded.

The pattern repeated for a bit, the water filter popping back in slightly faster than before, Gutsman happily smashing it with another rock. Eventually the rock that Fireman was on had to be used, so the bot just wound up on the freshly cleared floor.

It came to Rock’s attention that, as the last rock was being thrown, this thing was not down yet. They had to come up with another plan. Yet beneath the water they couldn’t communicate, no speech was allotted unless they wanted to be submerged entirely in the water.

CWU-01P appeared again and, as it rounded the walls, Cutman tried to throw the rolling cutter at it. However hitting it with such an attack was easier said than done. As the filter began to come straight at them, Gutsman caught it, electrifying himself in the process, but stilling it nonetheless.

Iceman tried to freeze it to the ground, doing so successfully, but the fact of the matter was that such an attack did no damage to the thing. Cutman’s rolling cutter, now that the thing was stilled, didn’t seem very successful in popping the protective bubble which surrounded it.

They had to think fast, the ice at its base was cracking and it’d be free soon enough. A mistake was made in this moment. Elecman, seeing that nobody’s powers were working very effectively, decided it was his turn to take a shot at it.

An electric charge filled the water and, with it, not only was the water filter taken out, but so was everyone else. Like an electric eel, Elecman charged the impure water around them. When the charge dissipated, it seemed only Rockman and Cutman were standing.

Iceman had been overwhelmed by the power and deactivated nearly on the spot. Gutsman, who had already taken a considerable amount of damage in stopping the machine, was electrocuted into deactivation as well. Floating in the now lifeless water, they were all unsure what to do as they stared towards the corpse of the filter.
Answers fell upon them as they saw, with awe, that the room was beginning to drain. Gasp were wrenched out of the air as soon as they got access to it. The realization that they could take those IC chips filled them with an overwhelming calm.

“I sure hope this was the last line of defense…” Cutman groaned as he slipped those IC Chips into his boot compartment, something Rock was now envious of not having. “I’m starting to think Wily is being more trouble than he’s worth.” Elecman noted, as he began to walk towards the door. “Now hold on right there, Mr. Tough Guy!” The electric robot turned to look at Cut.

“What the hell was that?” Cutman’s voice was as annoying as it was angered. “What are you talking about?” Elec retorted, a solid frown on his face.

“You charged the water! Because of that we lost most of our brothers!”

“Did you have a better idea!? That thing was going to kill us! You saw how much damage Gutsman took just from stopping the thing!”

“I don’t care! There could have been a better way.”

“Your Rolling Cutter was doing jack shit, don’t tell me that there was a better way when not even Rock’s buster was doing anything.”

The two bickered on and on, bickering turned to shouting, shouting turned to shoving, all while Rock sat there watching it all unfold. He wasn’t sure whether or not he should intervene. He wanted to say it was normal siblings arguing, but at the same time it felt too hectic to just be placed upon siblings being siblings.

When Cutman drew his cutter, that’s when Rock knew that this was more than just a brotherly conflict. “I’ll cut down that ego of yours, Elec!” Cutman shouted, rolling cutter poised and ready to be used, Elec took a step back, hands raised in a submissive stance. “Cutman, let’s not get too hasty now.” He began tentatively.

“I don’t think I’m being hasty at all. In the few days we have been active I’ve noticed something about you, Elecman. You’re arrogant, you’re self centered, you act like you are the oldest and the leader, but you’re not. You’re the baby of the family, so act like it. You don’t know anything. You boss us around, you push us to the side, you act like you’re the only one who knows what’s best for us.” Cutman continued to advance towards him, backing Elec into a wall without much trouble. He knew the weakness, in all accounts Elecman was at a severe disadvantage here. With his back against the wall, he got flashes of how he was cut in half. How he lay sputtering, gasping, wheezing on the ground. Unable to move his legs for they were completely severed from him. A terrifying thought truly. One he didn’t want to see become a reality for a second time.

The cutter was mere centimeters from his face by this point. “I will make sure you never boss us around again!” Cutman’s voice was filled with that determination as he pulled his cutter back and moved to bury it in the other bot. Elec flinched away, jumping when he heard the loud bang. He assumed he was struck, but when no pain filled him he supposed that couldn’t have been the case. When he opened his eyes he saw Cutman in that same position, arm pulled back as though he was going to swing forward at any moment. His body was rigid, not unlike a statue. But that wasn’t what drew Elec’s attention in the end. A gaping maw of a hole had bloomed in Cutman’s face, right where his left eye would be. A look of shock surrounded that hole, dripping oil and wires.

Looking down on himself, the electric bot came to realized that he had been splattered with his
older brother’s insides. Cutman collapsed to the ground revealing Rock was standing behind him. The blue bomber had slipped behind the orange bot during the argument and as soon as it got to be detrimental, he shot the robot master in the head with his Rockbuster. It wasn’t the attack which unnerved Elec in the end.

It was Rock’s blank face as he stood there, staring at the body resting deactivated on the ground. This place has truly become a robot graveyard. Not just for the robot masters, but it seemed for Rock as well. He was standing here, alive and well, but part of him had died that day.
Husks

Chapter Summary

With all enemies defeated, Rockman and Elecman have to go against the husks of their brothers in hopes that they can make it to Wily in one piece.

Chapter Notes

The Seven Stages of Grief:
Shock > Denial > Anger > Bargaining > Depression > Testing > Acceptance

Chapter Twelve: Husks

The air was oppressive as the two brothers walked side by side in Wily’s fortress. Neither knew what to say or if anything was worth saying. Elecman was hung up on the thoughts as they came to him. Cutman was going to kill him, with how the trajectory of the Cutter was, if he was going to slice it would’ve completely destroyed his IC Chip. There was no doubt that he had murder on his mind. But at the same time…

Elec looked over to Rock, glancing with electric blue eyes. The child hardly looked like one anymore. He appeared as though he grew several years since they fought each other just a day or two ago. How many tragedies has he faced off with since then? It all started with Bombman. Now it ended with Cutman. It’s amazing how just one boy could change so much. How just one incident could lead to all of this.

“Rock?” Elec began, shocked to only get a soft ‘hm?’ in response. “Why did you shoot Cutman back then?” The dreaded question, not the worst one he wanted to ask, but one of the only ones that he knew he needed to ask. That is, if he wanted any peace of mind when this was all over. Rock didn’t look over at him when he spoke, just kept his serious stare focused on the path ahead of them.

“He was being violent. Honestly I would have been short handed either way. The question is, which behavior do I want in an ally? What you did was wrong, I will agree to that. But you were right to say that there was no other plan. It isn’t like you were just thinking of yourself. You saw that nobody’s weapons were doing good, so you acted, not realizing that the water would become electrified. I can’t blame you for something like that.” Rock paused, as though he was thinking about something. Perhaps he was.

“However Cutman lashing out was a bad sign, especially if I decided to just let him do whatever he was planning. That sign told me that if I did something wrong than he’d come at me too. I can’t have that, not when I need someone to have my back regardless of my shortcomings. Besides, he was going to kill you. Everyone else was just deactivated, even him, which means there is survival if we can bring back those IC Chips. If his swing was aimed where I thought it was then he would
have killed you without question.” Rock finally looked over to Elec and in those eyes he saw a warrior. He saw someone hardened by tragedy just trying to get through. Someone who threw their heart away deeming it to be more than just a hindrance.

“I will tolerate a lot of things in my teammates, those are their sins to carry. But murder is not one of those things.”

Elecman hadn’t noticed the door they were approaching until Rock pressed his hand against it. They stood there for a moment, sickening silence surrounding them. “Rock, before we go in, I have another thing to ask you.” That depressed air grew heavier as they stood there in the silence of the hallway. Not pressing on told Elec that he was given permission to continue. That Rock wanted him to continue.

“You are so much different now… What happened?” Shock when he never got the answer, the door hissed open and, for a moment, Elecman felt as though the ground was ripped from beneath him. Something told him that the question he asked was wrong and soon enough he would come to realize just how big of a mistake it was to ask it.

He was terrified to learn whether or not the Blue Bomber was as unstable as he believed him to be. Where did that loving child who cradled him go? That fighting spirit was there, and it burned with a flame that Elec’s never seen before, and yet at the same time it was so much more unstable and dangerous now that he couldn’t really see it.

The area on the other side of the door was bland, blank, not unlike the room that Rock fought Yellow Devil in. The two of them looked at the wall they came in from and saw that there was no giant yellow mass in wait, there weren’t any tunnels that led into oblivion, and there wasn’t any copy technology anywhere that they could see. The only thing that lay ahead of them was a single teleporter.

“Down the hatch I suppose…” Elec suggested, trying to make light of a rather dark situation. He was discouraged not by words, but by the lack thereof. Silence was met with this comment and he couldn’t help but wonder whether or not he was agitating the child before him. He doubted it, but even so the tense silence made him feel as such.

Rock stepped into the teleporter first, and when he disappeared, Elec followed suit. What they discovered upon materialization was unexpected to say the least. The room they wound up with was a jungle of sparking wires. Spitting out yellow fragments of light all around. It was the only light they had within the mysterious room as the wiring passed over their heads.

Rock moved to take a step in, but was stopped by Elec. “There’s something on the ground and someone in here.” He explained in a low whisper. As soon as he uttered a sound, pinpricks of red manifested in the room. Glowing eyes that focused upon them like demons in some religious fable. Six pairs of eyes trained upon them. A heavy banging step before gentle beeping.

“Shit there are mines!”

The world became awash in light as they watched what looked to be Gutsman explode in a beautiful display of metal and flammable oil. One of the fireballs landed on Elec’s shoulder, nearly catching him on fire if not for Rock quickly dousing it with the Ice Slasher.

Elecman turned to look at Rock with a terrified expression and managed to whisper out, “Oh we’re fucked.”

The other robot masters were not as clumsy. They maneuvered through the mines with expert
precision. Step after step, glowing eyes advancing closer, avoiding the tiny mounds that poked out of the ground like tiny hills. “What do we do!?” Rock asked, something almost able to be called panic filling his voice. Elec was at a loss.

They couldn’t step forward, not in this low lighting, but at the same time if the fake robot masters reached them than they were screwed. “The wires!” Elecman shouted pointing up at them. Rock glanced up before shaking his head. “I can’t grab onto those!” A twisted smile formed on the electric robot master’s face. “You won’t have to, princess!” Before Rock could even process what he said, the electric bot took the blue bomber under the arms and made a running start to the wires.

Jumping up he grabbed onto one and swung over the minefield. Holding Rock tightly to him he smiled down at the robot masters beneath. Copies of Fireman, Iceman, Cutman, Bombman, and Elecman watched after them as they swung, the corpse of what was a faux Gutsman was burning brightly just a little ways away.

“Rock how much force does your buster have?” Elec asked him. “Not a lot… Why?” He thought for a bit as he continued to brush through the air almost as though they were on a swing set. “Can you shoot their feet to try and get them to explode on the mines?” Rock’s eyes looked to him, as though he expected there to be some strange punchline. Nothing came of it and in that moment he knew there was next to no other options.

Pointing his buster, he started on Cutman. The fear was that the Rolling Cutter was one of the more troublesome weapons. If it hit Elec they’d both be dead. Ushering the small bot into a mine wasn’t all that difficult.

Cutman exploded in a dazzling fireworks display, shrapnel of his body traveled and embedded itself in Bombman, conveniently setting the numb robot master alight. Bombman didn’t seem to notice even as the orange robot master beside him was reduced to nothing but metal and burning oil. He walked onward trying to get them until he too exploded just like the bomb he was supposed to be.

Rock wasn’t quite sure if he exploded because of the fact that he was a bomb or because he misstepped on a mine, but regardless a small chain reaction began because of this. A few more mines detonated and the tiny blue bomber felt himself hiding in his brother’s hold, trying to mask his sensitive eyes to prevent himself from going blind. The heat came up again, a fire starting in the small room.

As soon as the dust settled, Rock knew he had to start up again. He took aim at Fireman, knowing that if the tall master used his power once he’d set the whole place ablaze. More so than it already was that is. Rock never thought that when he would tip him over that he’d set off an entire chain reaction.

The robot master did fall, but with him came his flame. The chain reaction was noisy, explosion after explosion, flash after flash. “Fuck!” The sparking wire that Elec held in his hand began to rip and tear, tried from the combine weight of the two. The entire room was ablaze now, the exact opposite of what the blue bomber was trying to accomplish. Fireballs spread far and wide, the oily blood that they both had grown so used to was the fuel of the massive fire that spread beneath them.

“Rock trust me okay?” He wasn’t sure what to say as the snapping sounds began. He couldn’t not trust him but at the same time how could he expect to trust him at all. “What are you planning to do, Elec?” Rock asked, furrowing his brow. “Something stupid probably.” Elec responded with a smile.
He watched as the flames which had now begun to spread all over the ground in oily patches were beginning to melt the other robot masters. Their faces twisted upwards in agony, screaming faces memorialized in pain. They tried to make desperate grabs at them, as if they hadn’t realized they were dying with every second that passed. “Rock…? Can you promise me something?” Rock looked up at him one more time, his hands clenched tightly onto his suit, praying that he wouldn’t slip off.

“What is it?” He asked, taking another glance down at the world of fire they found themselves in. The flames licked hungrily at their feet, as though hands were trying to pull them down to the oily conflagration below. “Make sure you eliminate Wily for all of us alright? Don’t lose okay?”

Rock had no ability to reply before he felt Elec beginning to drop him as he swung back. Now the blue bomber was dangling by his hand, nearly falling into the fire. On the final swing, the electric bot let go sending the screaming child forward and onto the far side of the arena by another teleporter. Free from the flames with nothing but a few scarce burns on his boots, Rock was mostly unharmed. Sitting up he managed to catch Elec just as he began to swing back.

The wire that he hung onto finally snapped with an audible popping noise. The world fell into slow motion as he fell, a visible smile on his face, disappearing into the flames below. They swallowed him up hungrily, and soon it was questionable whether he was there at all. Rock just sat and stared. The entire incident throwing off the numbness for just a bit. He thought that with how much he’s done by now that seeing something so final as this wouldn’t hurt.

All six of his brothers are dead. He was certain of it now. Elec had their IC chips, but at the same time he knew none of them would want it any other way. He sat there for a while, hoping beyond hope that the electric bot would poke his head up with some hidden trick. But he never did. The image before him remained still and unmoving. The world was all too bright, and yet completely dark.

Rising to his feet the child ran to the edge of the flames. “Elecman!?” He shouted, hoping to get some response. Cupping his hands over his mouth he shouted again. “Elecman!?” Nothing but the popping and cracking of the fire as it devoured the oil. “Elecman!?” Rock screamed, sharp and shrill, like a baby that has lost its mother. He wanted to run into the inferno, try and find him… But he made a promise.

The all too familiar sting of tears burned his eyes as he stood there, they trailed down his cheeks in thin lines, his hands positioned limply at his sides. He couldn’t control himself as he fell to his knees and sunk back onto his feet. This wasn’t like the other times he fought them. He knew, somewhere deep inside of him, that they were okay back then. They would be rebuilt and restored. But with this moment, right here, it was so slim.

And yet he could practically hear them whispering to him, ‘It’s okay we wouldn’t have wanted it any other way, go take out that bastard Wily’.

He sat staring in shock for a moment, just staring before a choked noise escaped him. His voice started as a low whisper. “No… No, no, please… Please don’t let this… Please don’t let them be…” As though to disprove his hopes, a mine that had escaped detonation on the other side of the arena exploded into flames, as though solidifying the reality.

In his head there was silence, he couldn’t hear the licking flames, couldn’t hear the popping or cracking. He couldn’t hear anything but the thoughts in his head buried amidst his ‘breaths’ and ‘heartbeat’. Rock let out a scream, one of pure pain and agony, to break the silence in his head. “Fuck you! Damn you to Hell, Wily!” He began to slam his fists against the ground, like a child throwing a tantrum. Continuing to punch and hit until he eventually tired himself out. “Please
God…” He whispered, sitting there with his head to the ground. Unsure of where to go now. Unsure of how he was going to go on with the knowledge that his brothers were probably dead.

“Please just bring them back… I’ll do anything…” He bargained weakly, praying to a God he was sure couldn’t hear him. A God he was positive didn’t want to listen to him anyways. With those words gone, Rock remaining in that position, bowed down, sobbing like the child he was. He made inhuman animal sounds, noises of dread and pain. He screamed until his voice was hoarse and his head hurt. Until his vision swam and he couldn’t bring himself to speak.

After a while he finally cried himself out. When his tears had turned to that sludge like oil that appeared when the ocular fluid has long since run out, and when his vocal systems have been worn out to the point he made an almost crackling sound instead of words, he managed to push himself to his feet. He tried to find solutions in the time he had, deciding that revenge is the only real ‘next step’ he had. It was the only way to go in his somewhat delusional mind.

In the end his brothers would have wanted this. And in the end he made a promise. He would win against Wily, and he would get his own revenge.

Some could say in that moment Rock became an Onryō.
Encounter

Chapter Summary

Rock has fought long and hard and now he goes against Dr. Wily.

Chapter Notes

An average human body takes from two to three hours to burn completely and will produce an average of 3 to 9 pounds of ash. The amount of ash depends usually on the bone structure of the person and not their weight.

Chapter Thirteen: Encounter

There were red, blood like stains on his face. Thin lines that marked out the path of his tears. That sludge had hardened on his eyelashes and began to fall away almost like dried mucus does after waking up. Flaking and falling to the ground, disappearing into the darkness for which he traveled in. Blue eyes, hateful and devoted, they watched ahead of him. Weapon ready, he wanted to kill--he would kill.

Asimov be damned, he didn’t care that the first law of robotics was to not hurt man, he would have Wily’s head if it was the last thing he ever did. Despite having known his brothers for such a short period of time, Rock felt as though he had lost a major part of himself as a person when he watched Elec fall into that fire. Maybe it was because he had thrown the blue bomber to save him, killing himself in the process. Or maybe it was because all the IC chips were with him.

Whatever the reason, it didn’t truly matter. His younger brothers were killed by the cruelty of a thief. He gritted his teeth as he stepped into that dark room, that seemingly endless room. He couldn’t feel the oppressive air, couldn’t feel the dread, all he could feel was the seething rage in his heart.

“Wily!” His voice was a crackle, fizzling in and out, but still a loud challenge nonetheless. “Come out so we can end this once and for all!” He had the Fire Storm weapon equipped, hell bent on making the loon feel the same pain Elecman had probably felt. He wanted to watch Dr Wily turn to ash.

He didn’t hear the deep hum at first. It was a low drum that quickly faded into the back of his mind. It stayed there until the hum began to get louder and louder. His head picked up and he chanced to glance around.

The machine before him was massive, and yet Rock was not intimidated in the slightest. The gun that was on its front was aimed directly at him, but he didn’t care. He wanted to destroy it. Wreck it. Make sure that it fell apart. He knew who was inside and the knowledge that by destroying it he’d crush Wily… It was a dream come true in the eyes of the child.
As per he waited for this massive machine to fire first. When it did, Rock allowed himself to jump back, dodging the bomb as it detonated on the ground, denting it in. It was a massive sphere, most likely filled with gunpowder or some other unstable substance. And once it hit the ground it exploded in a shower of shrapnel and fire.

Rock hardly noticed the shrapnel even as he fired towards the gun with his Fire Storm. The machine became alight rather quickly, but even as the gun began to fall apart, it still seemed to fire. “You damn brat! What do you think you’re doing!?” The voice was lost on him. This was his first encounter with the mad man, and yet all he could think of was all the ways he wanted to see him die.

He jumped out of the line of fire once again, rolling to land on his knee, taking aim once again. It felt so natural now. Rolling, ducking, jumping, it felt almost as though his body was acting of its own accord. In a way he supposed it was. “Stop it right now! You are only getting in my way!” He still didn’t hear, even as the gun burst into flames and crashed to the ground. He didn’t hear Wily’s enraged screams as said gun exploded outward. He didn’t notice that large pieces of metal were flying towards him until they had already sliced through his skin like massive razors.

All he saw in his mind was the fire on the floor below them. He didn’t notice the noxious smoke as it spilled forth from the machine, threatening to suffocate the both of them. He didn’t notice that visor lift to reveal the old man in his machine.

The bullets came next. From the sides of the machine, guns for which Rock noticed hadn’t been used by the now smoking behemoth. Perhaps because they were weaker. He hardly felt the bullets as he switched his power. The thunder beam. He had come to the realization that the Fire Storm hadn’t really have any energy, he wanted to save that sliver for Wily himself, that is if he could remember to use it when the time came. He also wanted to honor Elec in some way, shape, or form. Using the Thunder Beam was the best way to achieve something like that.

The bullets tore through his body, but he made no effort to dodge them. Even as he sent electrical charges all through the machine, he didn’t feel the bullets biting at every inch of his form. He didn’t notice his fleshy skin ripping off, he didn’t hear the metal tearing with the gunshots, he didn’t notice any of this. His cheek was ripped from his metallic skull revealing the jaw underneath. His arm looked as though some ravenous beast had bitten into it and taken a chunk out of it. His helmet was crumbling like slow bake clay as the bullets chipped more and more away.

Despite the damages he took, Rock managed to eventually cause the machine to shut down. It began its descent to the ground in a blaze. Wily was trapped inside, the metal curling around him like a twisted prison. Rock watched, his expression one of neutrality. He took a few steps forward, pondering whether he should leave him to die in there or not. The verdict came to him simply.

He had to watch him die right before his eyes.

Rock pushed forward and began to dig the man out, the fire licking his robotic body didn’t draw his attention at all. Even as his exposed hair began to singe, or the oil that dripped from his gaping wounds began to catch, he didn’t notice even as he picked Wily up by the neck and began to drag the wounded Doctor out of the wreckage. Bloody, broken, and seemingly on death’s doorstep already.

“You killed every single one of them.” Rock began, his voice a harsh cracking sound, he sounded not unlike a demon from the bowels of Hell. “I will make you pay for the pain you brought to them. All the suffering.” The child held tightly onto the old man’s neck, squeezing it. He felt the flesh bow beneath his iron grasp. His power had long switched to the Guts Arm.
The life in Wily’s eyes was fading quick, he watched as it began to evaporate and, for a moment, he was certain he had won. He had fulfilled his promise.

Pain-- White hot pain. He looked down to his abdomen. The feeling felt so familiar to him. He expected there to be an icicle through his midsection. What he found instead was a glowing purple dagger of sorts. Rock released Wily in an attempt to figure out what the Hell had happened. He stood in shock for a moment.

“I’m sorry, but your time is up.”

A hand pushed him to the ground and in that moment he caught the view of two unknown robot masters. They crowded around Wily, the one in darker clothes helping to support the gasping and sputtering old man. “You go ahead, Oilman. We are already running immensely behind schedule. The children will hatch at any moment now.”

“Got it, bro. See ya twerp.” Oilman finger gunned to Rock who was now sputtering and spitting ‘blood’ onto the ground. Panic filling him as his vision swam and the duo disappeared into oblivion on the other side of the arena.

“I don’t know if you can still hear me, or if you are even smart enough to know what’s happening but,” a crooked smile manifested on the face of the clock themed robot. Heels clicking upon tile floor as he neared, no doubt an attempt to make his small stature seem larger in comparison. “It really was a fun time, torturing you like that. I saw it all. You did so well against CWN-001. What did you call him? Yellow Devil? I quite like that... But you know, I really thought you were going to die to my baby boy.”

He bent down, gently stroking Rock’s exposed cheek. “And the copy robot! How magnificent it was to watch you two go against each other. Then to experience your brother take down most of your siblings when going against CWU-01P! Who knew a corrupted filtration system would cause such havoc for you! He was the one I expected to grant the least enjoyable show! If you made it that far, that is.” He pulled his hands away and manifested a few purple daggers. His fingers traced the tips of them, drawing blood from his own digits before looking to Rock once more.

“My favorite I think was watching your brothers die in an inferno! So sad that they wasted their lives for nothing.” Rising to his feet, he pressed his heeled boot into the dagger already embedded in Rock’s midsection, plunging it deeper, running it further through. He seemed undisturbed by the screams of agony as they fizzled in the air. “Oh shut the hell up!” A hard kick to the child’s face. Rock’s vision filled with stars and a large cracking and grating sound confirmed that his metal jaw had been broken and was now hanging half off once again, held to his skull only by the sliver of ‘skin’ which clung to it. His tongue dangled like a thick, pink worm out of his mouth. The robot seemed delighted in this. “You know, Rock was it? You really impressed me, but at the same time you have no idea what you are meddling in. I will not let you interfere with our schedule. One day, when we find out how, you’ll learn. Soon you will know the pleasure of a human soul and you’ll regret ever having gotten in our way. That is, if I don’t stop your heart long before then.”

He ran one of those daggers through Rock’s thigh, pinning him effectively to the ground. “I really would love to stay longer, but...” He laughed softly as another dagger was run through the blue bomber, this time piercing his chest right next to his IC Chip compartment. It became apparent that he wouldn’t kill the boy now, just scare him enough to run away with his tail between his legs.

“I have a strict schedule to abide by. One that doesn’t include you.” And on that note, he raised the dagger high above his head. “The name’s Timeman, by the way.” Next thing Rock saw was the dagger coming straight down on him. It penetrated through his head at the temples, severing the
connection to his eyes. They rolled out like marbles to which Timeman happily squished them beneath his heels, reveling in the sound of the sizzling wires. Rock could hear those damn heels clicking as they made their exit.

*Click. Click. Click.*
Chapter Summary

Rock goes home for some much needed rest.

Chapter Notes

Robot masters are very similar to humans-- extremely similar to Reploids. The only
difference is that Robot Masters are bound to a specific type of coding, or are legally
supposed to be.

Chapter Fourteen: Recharge

“He is still out there. We have to find him.” A familiar voice filtered in from the edge of Rock’s
perception. “Absolutely not! I will not have any of you go out there looking for that man again!”
Dr Light? That was him wasn’t it. Who was he arguing with? The voice was familiar, he knew it
well enough, but at the same time some part of his mind was telling him that the person he was
trying to pin it on wasn’t around anymore. That it was impossible for them to be talking.

He didn’t know why he believed this, but then again maybe it’d come with the clarity that
awakening brings. His eyes flicked open and he found himself staring up into the skylight of the
lab. The dark sky was overhead, lightning streaked across and rain pattered gently like little yellow
fingers.

Rock could feel his wheezing breaths, he could feel the wires that connected to him, he could feel
that he was being repaired from some damage... But what damage was it? And why wasn’t he in
pain. It was as though most of his pain receptors were shut down. Instead all he felt was pressure.

“They are planning something.” Wily? He was fighting Wily wasn’t he? He could have sworn that’s what he was doing. If that was what
happened then how did he get here?

“I have a strict schedule to abide by. One that doesn’t include you.”

The words rattled in his head like beads in a maraca. He tried to look over but found that wires in
his face were preventing him from doing so. Instead he was stuck staring up at the sky above. “I
can’t let my children, especially him, undergo anymore trauma. You saw what happened to him!”

Rock didn’t like to hear Dr Light shout, it frightened him, it made him want to hide. The few times
he heard his Papa shout like that were times of immense trouble. Immense pain. He only ever
heard it once before when his Papa got a call from his own Papa. The robot supposed it’d be a call
from his grandpapa in that case.
“I’m not asking you to send Rock back out there. But what about that thing he said he created. You saw the memory files. CWN-001, Yellow Devil we called it. What if there are more!” That voice belongs to a dead man, Rock knew it to be truth. Something in his stomach told him that. A fire, it had something to do with a fire of sorts. “I don’t care! I hate to say this, Elecman, but… My boy comes first. And after having seen all he’s gone through I… I can’t lose any of my other children.”

Rock swallowed hard, but found that there was a tube down his throat preventing him from actually doing so. How strange it felt to have a bit of plastic deep down his throat like that. He wondered if it distorted the outside at all. The heavy silence that followed Light’s retort gave the child more than enough time to piece together the facts.

Elecman, as well as the other robot masters, died in a fire. He was certain of it. But now they are back. Somehow they were recovered. Or perhaps Light backed them up somehow. He wasn’t sure. Regardless of what actually happened, the electric robot was there. He had returned and presumably so did the other bots.

A choked sound escaped him as his body tried to reject the tube down his throat. It didn’t take long for Light to come over and place a hand over his forehead. “Oh my boy… Don’t panic or move okay? I’ll take this out, alright?” He was soft spoken and gentle as he slowly removed the tube, not mentioning what he was using it for to begin with. It felt strange to the child to feel something like that being pulled out.

It reminded him of when a piece of mozzarella cheese gets lodged in your throat. Panic as you have to make a split decision of whether or not to pull it out and free your esophagus, or continuously swallow it down and hope you don’t choke on it. When it was finally out, the soreness that followed was enough to prevent him from wanting to cough or talk. It felt like the inside of his throat was rubbed raw. In a way he suppose it had been when that tube was put in.

“Achoo…” Rock uttered meekly through a scratchy voice, it hurt to talk and he felt coughs being forced out with the words. “Shh… Shh… It’s okay my boy, everything will be okay. It’s all over now, you don’t have to fight any longer, okay? I’m working hard to repair you. I’m so sorry this happened to you.” He felt Light’s fingers running through his hair. Rubbing tiny circles in his ‘scalp’ and breaking up knots as he combed through those dark locks of the robot.

“But… Time… Oil… Wily…” Rock tried to voice his concerns but found he couldn’t. It was hard and painful as he looked weakly to his father. He was fighting to keep those deep blue eyes of his open. He didn’t want to sleep. He didn’t want to shut down just moments after waking up. “Rock, they are not your concern anymore. The authorities will handle it okay?” Light’s voice began to crack and break as tears welled up in his eyes. “I’m so… So sorry Rock, for everything.”

Rock wasn’t sure what he meant by ‘everything’. “But… not… fault…” He voiced brokenly to which Light just shook his head. “If only you knew everything, my boy. Then you’d know why I should be apologizing to you. But for right now that’s none of your concern, you just rest. I’ll continue to repair you, and soon you’ll be your old self again. I promise.”

He tried to nod his head but found his couldn’t. Instead all he could manage was a tensing of his neck and a blink or two.

It didn’t take too terribly long after that for his eyes to slip closed, losing the fight against sleep in the end. Even damaged so, Rock looked so incredibly peaceful as he slept. When he woke up he was mostly better, but was confined to bed until his psychological wellness could be tested. It must have been so strange for a psychologist to be brought in to analyze a robot child, but Light didn’t know what else to do.
Slowly and steadily, Rock was reintroduced to his brothers. It started with Bombman and ended with Elecman. They were alive and as well as ever. Light explained that after Wily’s fortress was abandoned authorities were able to enter and retrieved the bodies of robots within. All of them were brought to the lab. Most were disposed of, but Elec’s and Rock’s were quickly identified and repaired.

The robot masters spent a lot of time with Rock during recovery, trying to engrave in his head that they weren’t dead, that they were here and alive and well. They remembered everything and were so incredibly grateful for his help. It wasn’t uncommon for Light to peak his head in and observe one of many scenarios.

Cutman and Rock playing a video game on one of the many game stations that he had in his bedroom, usually something akin to a co-op game. Light found it adorable when the two of them played Kirby specifically. Seeing his sons laughing at something as small as ‘gooey’ was a relief.

Rock and Iceman putting together a large 1000 piece puzzle and talking about random topics. Piece by piece, fun story by fun story. They talked about everything under the sun it felt like and it was obvious that despite everything that happened, Rock’s mental processes were not damaged.

Rock and Gutsman watching television together. Guts sitting in a large chair that had been moved into the little warrior’s room, it’d be pulled up beside the bed so that they could spend time together and watch without the boy having to get out of bed at all. He could watch from the comfort of his pillows and blankets.

Bombman and Rock reading comic books together, pointing at the pictures and trying to make light of situations. The comics, or manga in some cases, were often much lighter than anything that Rock used to read. Feel good stories that wouldn’t drag up too many memories of times that Light hoped were far behind them.

Rock and Fireman playing card games on the desk or on the tiny lap table that Light got. He wanted the boy to rest as much as possible during his recovery. Strict bed rest until he was certain he was okay. The slight of hand tricks, however, were the sweetest to watch. Rock’s expression every time was a miracle in of itself.

Rock and Elec had the most fun from what Light could see. Anything the boy wanted, Elec would give him. One time the father poked his head in and saw the two of them playing catch with a balloon that Light’s dear friend, Mikhail Cossack, gave to Rock as a ‘get well soon’ present. Cossack only faintly knew Rock and Roll, but all the same the two doctors were like brothers.

The most touching moments Light observed however, were with Roll. She would sleep beside her brother every night, terrified of the fact that she would lose him. She’d help him take care of his daily needs. Getting to the washroom, eating, drinking, sleeping, she practically regulated his every movement all while being a loving and tender sister. She loved her brother and wanted nothing but the best care for him.

To say that their entire lives went on hold would be a lie. Yes it was slowed down for a month or so, getting Rock to be anywhere close to the boy he once was wouldn’t be easy-- the psychologist said it may even be impossible, especially without medication which, until the far future, held no affects on robtos. But at the same time they wouldn’t let that stop them from doing things as a family.

During their television time, for example, they would all sit together on Rock’s bed and watch the tv in there. Dinner was held in Rock’s bedroom on little pull out tray tables where they would talk about all sorts of things. Hell, Dr Light even set up a calling system via two computers. A laptop
for Rock, a desktop for Light. If Rock needed anything he just had to press a button, if Light needed something he could do the same, and they’d be able to have a video call. This was used quite a bit when Light was in the lab and wanted to make sure his son was doing well.

Things were difficult, it was a slippery slope, but with enough time, everyone was certain of Rock’s recovery.

If he could just stay off of the front lines, he’d be okay.
Conflict

Chapter Summary

The start of a new arc, Timeman and Oilman strike and now must be stopped.

Chapter Notes

Roll, when Rock wakes up in the middle of the night, will often wake up not too long after. When things like that happens she goes to check on him and make sure he's asleep elsewhere and not off doing something he shouldn't be doing.

Chapter Fifteen: Conflict

“Please, Papa! I have to do this!” Rock shouted at his father as the news broadcast played in the background. Two more robot masters have appeared and have since begun to cause havoc. They were breaking into scientific institutions and stealing technology. The only thing known about them were that they were robots. Not even photographic evidence could be found. The perpetrators were too ‘fast’. Everyone in this house knew, however, that it wasn’t the case… What really was happening was that they were slowing down time for them only.

“I refuse! I will not let you get hurt like that ever again. I saw your memory logs, Rock. Why would you ever want to go back into that?” Light asked him, his hands firmly gripping the boy’s shoulders. “Because if I don’t than nobody else will! They’ll hurt people and that’s not fair! Not to mention… We’re the only people who know who they are other than Wily himself.”

There was silence, Roll watched on in the background. The lab was a mess and she was cleaning before the fight began. She didn’t want to see her brother and her father arguing like that. It was too painful. But at the same time she agreed with both sides. On the one hand, it was her brother. Rock shouldn’t have to go through all the pain and suffering he did, and he certainly shouldn’t go through it again. Seeing how ruthless Timeman was, and how willing to be underhanded he was, showed her that fighting with them again would just be trouble. They were planning something, and everyone knew it. But then there was Rock’s side of the argument. He was also correct to assume that humans were getting hurt, that there could be huge chaos if they succeeded in what they wanted to do. And then, to add insult to injury, it was known that ten people were dead from their attacks to begin with.

“Rock, you are just a child! This isn’t a fight for a child. Children don’t belong in war…” Light explained to him, his tone softening as he gently took the boy’s hands in his own. He held them there, his face somber and kind. “Please, it hurt me enough to repair you after what Timeman did. You aren’t fighting in trenches with machine guns, real war is much different than what you’re trying to do but… I don’t want my son to become an emotional train wreck either. I don’t want you becoming like those soldiers that have fought for us and come back hurting. You’re my son, my baby boy… I can’t lose you like that. Or at all for that matter. We just got you to resemble your old
Light didn’t expect Rock’s expression to shift so drastically. The look of anger in those eyes, it was sharp and cruel almost. The look of a warrior told that they were terrible at what they did. “No, my old self will never come back, Papa. I don’t think I could ever go back to ‘normal’ until Wily’s dead.” The gasp from Roll went unheard. She never knew that her brother wanted to kill that man. When it came to the memories, she only knew the events, not the emotions or thoughts surrounding them.

“Rock, please don’t say that, the therapist says--”

“The therapist is a damn liar! She doesn’t know anything!”

Light was taken aback at Rock’s sudden outburst. They were still, their world had frozen just like the roads and ponds outside. The snow drifted lazily despite the chaos within, the world continued on despite how hung up they were in the moment. “Rock… Please don’t say those things.” The child pulled away aggressively, taking a step back to distance himself from his father. “You would be willing to let people get hurt for the safety of one person!? I’m not even human! I’m less than human! I’m a robot master! I am DLN-001! Time and Oil are DLN-00A and DLN-00B! It’s my job as their predecessor to save them and bring them back! But not only that, it’s my job as a robot to save people!”

Rock stood there, tears beginning to well up in his eyes as he got more and more passionate about his cause. “Ten people are already dead! More people will die if Wily continues his plans! What happens if he succeeds in whatever he’s trying to do!? What happens then!?” Light was stunned into silence, Roll stood to the side, broom in hand. Her face was sorrowful. Her brother had been recovering so well, and now when war called him back, he answered quickly as if trained. Ready to stand at attention and go into the fight without question.

It was as noble as it was stupid.

“I made a sacrifice…” Rock began, his voice low, slowly taking steps back and away from his father. “I lost part of myself already, and it’ll never come back. Instead of letting me handle the burden I’ve already promised to take, you are throwing it upon someone else. You are damning another person to a Hell I already see when I close my eyes…” His voice cracked, everyone was certain that the child would cry.

Before he could, however, he made his departure. Pulling open the door to the lab, he pushed past Elec who was just about to enter. The electric robot had been coming to report to Light on himself and his brothers, to report that the reprogramming had been holding up. He was amazed at his brother’s upset face and how he didn’t even speak as he pushed past. Almost as though he was too upset to care that he was there.

Rock sat on his bed, weeping for a while. The world was falling apart and he didn’t have the ability to save it. He saved it once, he didn’t understand why he could do it again. As many times as it would take he would fight to protect people. He wanted his brothers back regardless. He wanted to save Timeman and Oilman… They didn’t deserve what they were probably getting. They needed to be with a loving family that won’t use them for something as cruel as making things like ‘CWN-001’.

“Rock?” The child hardly looked up as the door opened. He didn’t know what Elecman wanted, but at the same time he didn’t want to turn him away. The robot master entered quietly and closed the door behind him. The door clicked close with hardly enough noise to be heard anywhere else. Elecman had long since grown to loathe loud noises. Working in a power plant where the only
noise should be the low buzzing hum of the electricity, it would make sense that unneeded sound wasn’t much appreciated.

“Do you mind telling me what happened? Roll and Dad are really worried.” Elecman crouched down beside the bed, gently placing his hand on Rock’s shoulder. Rock didn’t turn to look at him. Just kept his face buried within the plush pillow. “People are dying and they won’t let me fight.” His voice was muffled in the fabric, but still able to be made out by the younger.

“I see… I’m not going to agree with either side, both of you have valid points I’m sure, but… You have to remember how you came back to us, Rock. Light was afraid you’d try and deactivate yourself or have flashbacks in the middle of watching television. Can you really blame him for something like that? You are eleven, or at least you were built to be that old and programmed with an eleven-year-old personality. I didn’t know you before, but now I hardly can recognize you from an adult. It’s… Scary. You should be a kid, having fun, playing with toys and video games. Reading books like Hunger Games, Harry Potter, or Percy Jackson. You should be having fun with those sorts of things. Not fighting a war.”

There was part of Rock that knew Elecman was right, but at the same time there was part of him that also knew it was selfish to expect someone else to take care of the burden he already promised to handle. “I know that,” he began, sitting up and turning to the electric bot. His face was tear stained and red. “But I promised to protect people. I promised to fight so nobody else had to. And yet…” His voice hitched just a bit.

“And yet, I can’t even do that. I feel like I failed. I want to save them from whatever pain they’re in. Time and Oil need to come home.” Elecman’s face dropped as Rock spoke. “Rock… Time and Oil were weaponized, they aren’t your brothers anymore.” It was then that the boy knew he would get nowhere with Elec. But at the same time, in those blue eyes, he saw what Elec truly wanted. Elecman wanted Wily dead just as much as him. If he had the opportunity to go out there and fight, he would. But sadly he had a job to uphold, and judging by the gauze wrap on his wrists just barely hidden beneath his sweat jacket, his own health as well. It was this look in his brothers eyes that gave him the idea. He was going to fight whether his father wanted him too or not.

Rock waited until night, until everyone was asleep, until Elecman had since left to go to his own home. The snow was still fluttering outside, a sign of Christmas which was no more than four days away. Rock slipped out of bed, careful not to awaken his sister who was laying beside him. He carefully pulled the door open, having taught himself how not to wake anyone up after all the times he’s climbed into bed at night to seek comfort from his father. Nightmares were still terrifying to him, and yet here he was, entering the war that started them yet again.

He passed by the Christmas tree, little gift wrapped presents were scattered beneath. Those were Light’s gifts to them, there would be more on Christmas day when Santa came. Funny how Light still goes all out with this holiday despite that their birthday is just a week prior. Rock entered the lab quietly, the automatic lights flickering on. Carefully he made his way over to his body suit. It was scheduled to be destroyed, something that Rock was glad the weather prevented.

He slipped the clothes on without trouble, the hip guard, the boots, the helmet. He got ready for his upcoming battle with Oilman. That would be the first one he took down.

He punched in the coordinates on the computer for the teleporter before stepping inside. The faint blue glow encased him just as Light entered the room with Roll at his side. Before he could say or do anything, he was gone.

The first thing he did when he landed was turn off his recall. Make it impossible for Light to
teleport him back until he turned it back on. He ignored the words that rang in his ear piece, not responding as he approached the abandoned oil refinery plant that had long since been taken over.
**Chapter Sixteen: Oilman**

The room was dark and dank, it wreaked of oil and gasoline. It put Rock on edge, but at the same time he felt confident in the Fire Storm ability. He had a plan already, one that may involve near suicide. The room was a plain metal room with the dark, putrid stuff coating the ground. Metal jutted out at random locations, sharp spikes just waiting to impale. It reminded Rock of Iceman, but he didn’t care enough to remember why.

“Well if it isn’t the kid.” Oilman finger gunned at him. “I didn’t expect to see you here! Quite the coincidence wouldn’t you say?” No, of course it wasn’t. But the other sure thought it was fun to joke about. “I’m here to stop you, Oilman.” Rock began, his voice serious and sharp. “Stop me? Now why would ya wanna do that!? Wily is making excellent progress, ya dig? He’s doin’ something amazing. Something that’ll make us robot masters capable of taking over this world-- no humans required.”

“That’s insane!” Rock shouted, a look of shock on his face. Get rid of humans? That sounded so… So wrong. “Humans built us! They created us! Why would you want to get rid of them?” He asked, almost appalled at the idea. In a way, Rock found it taboo to think about things like that. “Well! I suppose you wouldn’t understand, would you? You’re too buddy with them. That’s fine… I guess I’ll just drown ya in oil! Kind of fucked up when you remember it’s our own blood isn’t it?”

He laughed, which put Rock even more on edge. He was right. Oil was their blood. But he wouldn’t let that intimidate him. It didn’t look like their blood, it looked more along the lines of natural oil. It only turned that red color when it was being tainted by the use that they got out of it. Thus leading to a waste product that was most unpleasant and all too close to human blood for comfort.

The blue bomber was so focused on the thought that he was caught off guard when Oilman came rushing at him. The other hit hard, a strong punch to the face, that sent the boy flying. His cheek stung but the pain soon dissipated as he got back to his feet. “Oh so you want to play dirty. Well two can play at that game.”
Fire! Oilman saw the fire and came rushing at him. “Kid! If you do that you’ll light this whole place on fire!” He shouted towards him. “It’s supposed to be abandoned anyways! Who cares?!” And on that note, Rock used his fire storm ability to set the room alight. The blaze was quick to start, the oil and gasoline on the ground bursting into flames almost instantaneously.

Rock was certain Oil was done by this point. The flames licked the sky like little hands and he took a step back and towards the door he came in, hoping that the ice slasher ability would put the flames out— knowing however that this entire room was ablaze. He’d have to come back later to retrieve the IC Chip, if it was still there.

Rock let out a scream as two hands grabbed hold of him. Oilman rushed from the flames in a fury, screaming and shouting. He was like a madman as he dug his fingernails into the child. His body was on fire all the while, something that terrified the blue bomber to near fainting. “If I’m going to die! You’re going to come with me, kid!”

Rock fought to push him off, but his clothes were catching. After a struggle, the boy managed to throw Oilman off of him. He felt his clothes burning him, but knew he wouldn’t be able to put it out if he doesn’t take out the other. He ran towards the wall, feeling the robot master grabbing at him like one of the zombies from the walking dead. Rock switched his ability and, with the Guts arm, ripped one of the metal fragments from the wall. He turned to face the other only to see he was right behind him.

Before Oil could grab hold of him, Rock buried the twisted metal piece into his eye.

It sunk in and Rock could hear the loud squelching noises as he buried it deeper and deeper. When he was certain that Oil was pinned to the ground by his head, his body contorted in an awkward position, the child began to get to work in putting himself out. He was burned, badly, but he was alright. Some of his skin began to fall off, but he didn’t care, he was alive.

Turning towards the robot master he stared in awe as how still he was. He was done now, still in flames, but finished off. Switching to the ice slasher, the boy put out enough of the flames to retrieve the IC chip, but not enough to stop him from burning altogether. His task was done, and now he was ready to go back home with at least one robot master finished. He hoped that Light would let him continue fighting after this.

“What were you thinking!? You could have gotten yourself killed!” Dr Light shouted at him, Roll’s face was pale and frightened as she looked at Rock. He wasn’t too badly damaged this go-around, but it was still enough to show he could have died. “I was thinking that I had to save people! I have a promise to keep and--”

A sharp smacking sound, one that shocked him and startled him into silence. Rock’s head swung to the left and he felt himself rocking back. He nearly lost his balance but found the ability to keep it not a second after. Rock felt a sharp sting in his cheek, a sting that he had never felt before. This wasn’t like Oilman’s punch— that had no emotion behind it… This was something different. Something more driven by the love of a father and the worry of a parent.

He looked back at Light and realized that his father had smacked him. Roll had let out a gasp but it was muffled under the slapping sound that was created. Rock stared at him with large doe-eyes, as though he was a deer caught in headlights. In a way one could say he was. He had never made his father so angry.

“You… Don’t understand do you? You’re only a year old, and you’re acting like you have the entire world on your shoulders. Rock, you don’t understand that there are people here who love you! Who would hurt if you died!” Light’s voice cracked, the boy knew that he was trying not to
break down, to not let his son see how much it stung him… But Rock knew, and it hurt him more than any of his fights.

He’d go through a thousand confrontations with Yellow Devil before it’d match the pain he felt in that moment, watching his father crumblings.

“Please… Papa… Let me go…” Rock whispered, still trying to stand his ground as his own tears began to flow. It stung his own cheek which now had a red mark blossoming on it. Light got down on one knee, pulling his son into an embrace. He felt bad for having hit him, but at the same time he knew that there was no other way to get the fact into his son’s head.

“It has come to my attention that I can’t stop you from fighting… You’ll go crazier if I don’t let you go and save this world…” Light whispered to him, before pulling away. He brushed Rock’s tears away, ignoring his own as they disappeared into his thick, white beard. “But please, promise me you’ll at least come back as my little boy…” Rock was shocked, was that the fear all along?

“Papa… I’ll always be your little boy… Fighting or peace, I’m always your little boy… I won’t just come back and… And be different. Yeah I may grow up a bit, but I’m always going to be Rock Light.”

Light smiled before embracing his son one more time, knowing full well it could be the last time.
Chapter Seventeen: Timeman

“Dr Light?”

“Yes, Rock?”

“I think I know what Timeman meant when he said the children were going to hatch.”

Rock found himself in a room filled with test tubes. The walls were lined with them, the faint glow beneath them helping to incubate the humans within. They were of all different shapes, sizes, ages, genders, and walks of life. They were curled up in little balls within, wires all over their naked bodies.

Rock had gone through that door expecting the arena to be ahead, but instead he found something worse. Something that came before. He pressed his hand against one of the glass tubes, fear in his eyes. “There are a bunch of test tubes filled with… with people… I’m not sure why they’re here or…” He felt panic as he walked around, investigating it all. “How many are in there?” Light inquired. “I don’t know… fifty at least.” He heard Light release a heavy sigh on the other side, as though he knew what this meant.

“Rock, I’m going to step away from the earpiece and call the authorities. Please be careful.” And with that, Light disconnected. He heard the faint hum of the static that showed the line was dead. He was alone here, among these encased bodies. He wondered what he should do. He had to free them somehow.

Taking his buster he took aim at one of the glass chambers, one eye closed, the other focusing. One shot of his buster created a huge crack in the glass of one. The specimen inside stirred slightly, a woman with long ebony hair and pale skin. Her eyes were a deep red, almost blood like. Rock knew that wasn’t natural. And yet all the while he felt that she could survive outside of confinement. He had no idea the response he’d get.

The chamber exploded open in a shower of reinforced glass and luminescent blue fluid. The girl rushed out in a tidal wave of liquid, the wires snapping from around her. Rock was shocked when no alarms went off. Her body cut upon the glass that lay scattered all over the floor. Little cuts and
wounds that lined her figure. She lay there unmoving for a while. Her hair splayed around her like a mat.

Rock couldn’t tell if she was breathing, so he approached. “Hey... Are you okay?” He asked, reaching a hand out to her. The naked woman’s head snapped up as he neared. She let out a screech as she made a grab for the child. He jerked back in alarm and saw her begin to work her way to her hands and knees. Soon she was on all fours like a demonic beast.

She hissed and screamed, the things in the other chambers began to stir at the noise but they never awoke and never attempted to break out. Her hair hung around her like the flowers of a weeping willow, she looked almost as though she was straight out of the Ring. The room was large, so when she started chasing after him, howling like a ravenous animal, the child didn’t know if he’d be able to make it. At the same time he didn’t know if he’d be able to bring himself to kill her.

She grabbed onto his leg at one point, dragging him to the ground with a solid ‘thunk’ noise. He kicked at her, once, twice, three times. She released, but when she looked back, half of her face had smashed inward. And yet, despite all the blood, she was still alive. She let out another scream of agony and rage as Rock pushed himself to his feet and began to run again. She came after him on all fours still, wobbling uneasily as her smashed in half of her face seemed to throw off her balance.

The door slid shut behind him, a clear reinforced door. When she reached it, she did something terrifying. She began to bang her head against it. Over and over and over again.

Rock watched in horror as the test-tube princess’ skull smashed inwards. Over and over again she bashed her head into the transparent door. Thin cracks slowly began to manifest, but the child knew she would be long dead before she made it through. It didn’t take long before the squelching sounds died down, the loud cracks of her skull finally dissipating. It was a mess of bone, muscle, skin, teeth, and blood. Her body lay naked and limp against the door, her one hand resting on her breast, the other across her midsection. Truly an uncomfortable looking position.

“Oh? Did she snap her neck already? Two minutes ahead of time I’d say.”

Rock looked over his shoulder wide eyed, it didn’t take long to see Timeman sitting there. The room was dark with a singular ray of light filtering from a flickering source up above. He sat on a mass that Rock couldn’t quite make out. It was a blackish color, he figured it might have been a rock but at the same time it seemed to be pulsating faintly.

Something moved around his hand and fingers, it reminded Rock of those little magic fuzzy worms that children so often get when they go to the beach. It was a viscous yellow slime with a giant red eye in the middle of what he assumed was its head. “So sad, I really liked her, she would have made an excellent Robot Master. Oh well, she was test tube grown so... I suppose I’ll just feed her to Kronos here.”

Robot Master? Was that what they were doing here? Taking humans grown in test tubes and turning them into Robot Masters. “That’s... Disgusting...” Rock mused aloud, to which Time just smiled. “I suppose so, but that’s none of your business. You don’t belong in the new world anyways. We don’t have any time for the likes of you regardless.” The purple robot master jumped from his perch, the click of his heels loud against the metallic floor. He landed on his toes before settling back against his heel.

That smile that was on his face melted to a frown, one Rock didn’t like at all.

“Anyways, we have to address the elephant in the room, don’t we? I gave you a warning at Wily’s fortress about six months ago. That hasn’t been a long time at all. Did you forget already? I told
you that my busy schedule didn’t include you, and that you would regret coming here. And yet here you are.” Red eyes glared menacingly ahead, he did not look happy in the slightest. “I keep to my promises… Now I’m afraid I must bar you from the new world I will single-handedly create, once I take out that pest Wily that is. Perhaps I shall turn him into a robot master too, a nice little cleaning robot, slave to me alone.”

Timeman turned his back to Rock and began walking around the undulating mass. “But I suppose that just sounds like lunacy to you. I can’t tell if it’s because you’re selfless or just stupid, but regardless, I don’t have time in my schedule for you anyways. Kronos?” He looked at the yellow thing which now sat in the palm of his hand. “Destroy this insolent fool, make him regret ever being built… For daddy.”

On that note he threw the ball of slime into the mass. There was a rippling effect as the entity was absorbed seamlessly. The black color began to fade and change into the yellow that Rock knew so well. Pulling itself from the ground, Rock immediately found that it was most certainly another Yellow Devil. This one was slightly different from the one he’s known. Arms still groped around it, out into the air looking for something to pull into it. It’s eye peered down at Rock, as though staring at him.

“Good boy! Have fun with him okay?! But make sure you leave the body for me to play with. I have great plans for someone as powerful as him.” The thing growled in response to Timeman’s comment. He watched the small purple bot begin to walk away, no doubt climbing to a place where he could watch the whole thing unfold.

Rock knew the weakness of the Yellow Devil, he remembered what made it mad, and he wasn’t going to let it rip him apart this time.

Rock switched his ability quickly to the Thunder Beam, jumping back as the creature tried to slam its arms down upon him. Its roaring voice was enough to terrify him in every way possible. He shot at its eye, successfully hitting it. The creature roared with anger as it began to launch its parts at him. Rock ran from it, attempting to escape the grasping hands. He managed but while doing so he watched the door that once held back the test tube princess shatter. CWN-003 began to devour the human, pulling the body and glass into its thick, yellow body.

It made a sick slurping sound as bones were crushed and snapped. It sounded like someone breaking multiple pencils one by one, snapping one every second, until the human was completely engulfed. There was a feminine howling, one that didn’t sound all too far off from the original one he heard. Yellow Devil reformed before turning to look at Rock, its red eye floating around its surface maddeningly, looking right, left, up, down, directly at him-- it was as though it had been empowered by the body.

It continued to swing at Rock, who shot at it once more with the thunder beam. This did not make the beast happy. Multiple snatches and once again Rock found himself taken by the grip of the monster. Instead of allow it to rip him apart however, the child began to bite at the hands that reached for him as he struggled to break free. He made it as difficult as possible for the thing to do the same amount of damage as before.

The flesh of the creature tasted disgusting and he found that he got a lot of the gross goo into his mouth, but the creature was relenting. Bite after bite, his sharp teeth dug into it. It didn’t take too terribly long for the beast to have enough and throw Rock hard into the ground. He heard something break inside of him, but that didn’t matter. He took aim one more time and sent a beam of lightning at the monster once again. It howled as its body began the same ritual as its predecessor. Slowly melting into a gooey, bloody mess.
Arms grasped wildly into the air, trying to grab onto something, some salvation. But there was nothing for it. Rock pushed himself to his feet, watching as the thing began to sink further and further down. Smoke and steam billowed from its body, yellow goo melted from the bones of arms that continued to try and reach up. Soon all that was left was a pile of bones, a yellow puddle, and a red eye.

Rock stepped closer and slammed his foot down on the eye, watching it explode everywhere before turning to look to a balcony. He noticed it as he was fighting, but didn’t see that Timeman was in fact standing there on the other side of the room. Face enraged, teeth clenched, gripping onto the railing as though he was watching something infuriating. How had the child gotten good enough to defeat the beast!?

“You fucking piece of shit!” His voice echoed out through the room as he jumped down. He landed on his feet expertly. “How dare you kill him!” His voice was a low growl as he began to rush towards Rock. He went to block only to be amazed when Timeman suddenly appeared before him.

“You’re life is worth nothing!” That sharp pain again as he felt the dagger run him through. Rock stared up in shock at Timeman, unable to help himself from falling backwards. The Robot Master fell on top of him, happy to be so close to watch the child die. ‘Blood’ poured from his mouth, gasping and coughing sounds. The dagger had gone through his stomach, right where his diaphragm would have been.

“I’m so sorry to do this to you, Rock, but your time is finally up!” Time rose his arm up, dagger clenched tightly, getting ready to sever the head of the boy. “I beg to differ!” The child screamed, startling him for just a second. He didn’t know the ability Rock had equipped, or what it would do to him and his inner workings.

Rock grabbed hold of him and began to release an electrical charge, a thunder beam.

Timeman let out a scream of pain, but Rock wouldn’t let up, even as his body repeatedly twitches and spasms. He wouldn’t stop until he ran out of weapon energy. For a solid minute or so he continued to shock the robot master. Smoke billowed out of his body and, when the power drained, the purple robot fell limp on top of the child. His daggers dissipating and fading with the deactivation of their master.

Rock coughed and wheezed where he lay beneath the body of Timeman. ‘Blood’ oozed from his lips as he tried to get his barring on things. His eyes were having trouble staying open. He raised one hand up to get to the IC compartment. He had to at least get that. He gasped and struggled to just get a grip. Eventually he managed to pull the chip out. A smile on his face as he let himself relax.

Gripping the chip tightly in his hand Rock allowed for his eyes to slip shut. Everything hurt and stung and he wasn’t sure if he was even alive anymore. Everything felt so wrong. The taste of the goop was still in his mouth, probably stuck in his teeth. He heard sounds of cracking glass and screaming women just at the edge of his consciousness. He heard Timeman’s voice mocking him and beckoning him for a challenge.

He heard the scream of this new Yellow Devil.

He heard his own mind breaking and chipping away every second he continued to fight this hellish war.
Chapter Summary

With Timeman (and by nature Kronos) and Oilman recovered, it's time for Rock to do some recovery of his own.

Chapter Notes

The CWNs have a remarkable ability to regenerate if they have enough energy to do so. For example, if someone kills them right after they eat, than they will regenerate most of themselves.

Chapter Eighteen: Reconstruction

“Rock, I don’t think you’re going to be able to complete your quest anytime soon.” The child looked up to his father, standing beside him freshly repaired. “Why do you say that?” He inquired curiously. “Well, I was looking through Timeman’s and Oilman’s memory files. I found some very frightening things. It seems Wily has been abducting people, families, and using them in his experiments. Not only that but he also has started something that I can only call a cult and has begun to create test tube children for his project.” Light began, seemingly shaken up by the fact.

“But that isn’t the worst thing. I’ve seen the experiments and how he does it… It’s cruel and wretched what he does to those people. Wily is most certainly a murderer.” Light looked to Rock and pulled him close to his side, rubbing his son’s arm as he spoke. “Timeman and Oilman were part of those experiments. They were the first of the experimental line. There are others, I’ve seen them, and they seem to be ready to kill anyone that gets in Wily’s way.” Rock looked up to his father, holding onto his lab coat. “What happened to Timeman and Oilman? How were they wrapped up in the experiments? What even are the experiments?” The child inquired in that same, senseless innocence.

“The experiments is a project that Wily seemed to have started in order to make Robot Masters that are better than humans. He took humans and began to change them, transferring their consciousness. He kidnaped them, sometimes tortures them, but will eventually kill them to become a robot. Timeman and Oilman were two children that went missing in a case back in 2000, long before you were born. The mother was Jasmine Williams. She had a pair of twins, Alice and Albert. While her husband was at work, an unknown man broke into the house and shot Jasmine to death. The twins were never found.”

Rock felt he knew where this was going and didn’t like it one bit. “Turns out Wily has had them for all this time and transformed them into Robot Masters. Alice was used for Timeman, Albert for Oilman. There was an error with Timeman that caused a distortion in his personality, leading to the unhinged type of character you saw. Oilman’s was correct, and displayed the same personality and behavior as his life before him.” Dr Light concluded as he held his son. There was a lengthy and
oppressive silence before Rock spoke up again, his curiosity continuing to manifest.

“Do Timeman and Oilman know?” Dr Light nodded sadly. “Indeed they do. I explained it to them after repairing them. They didn’t take the news well at all. But they are slowly coming to terms with it. That’s why they are staying here.” It was true, Time and Oil were sticking around for a while before being re-purposed for work, just like their brothers. Rock and Roll willingly offered their beds up for them in favor of sleeping with Light in the night. They wanted their brothers to recover.

Later that afternoon, Rock peeked in through the door into his bedroom. Timeman was in the bed, looking no different from a normal human. Something yellow was in his lap. It was tiny, with one big red eye. He recognized it to be Kronos. The blue bomber didn’t believe his father when he said that the creature survived and wouldn’t leave Time no matter what he did. He just held on as if his life depended on it. In a way, they all suppose it did.

Timeman created those things, those creature numbers. It was no surprise he held an affinity for them. “Hey, Time?” The younger’s head shot around to look at Rock, his eyes wide and face filled with a mild sense of terror. He pulled Kronos close, like a mother shielding her baby. “I know Christmas was a while ago, but you never got to experience it. So I got you and Kronos little gifts.”

He approached timidly before setting the presents on the bedside table.

He kept a friendly look on his face, hoping that he could put them down without spooking the time bot. After they were set down, Rock quickly retreated. It wasn’t unlike how a person handles a frightened and injured animal. Time looked over to the gifts, studied them, before reaching out and taking them up.

Kronos investigated his own gift, looking not unlike a snake as he explores the wrapping paper. Timeman watched him for a minute before reaching out and caressing his malleable body. The yellow creature made a happy gurgling sound in response, looking over to Time, seemingly happy with the attention, before returning to the task at hand. Rock watched this and couldn’t believe that this creature was the same one that tried to kill him. Having survived only due to the fact he had eaten recently.

Light was fascinated by the specimen that was Kronos, and has seen in those memory files that the creature can regenerate if it has enough energy to do so. It had and then latched onto its creator, its mother in a way, and refused to let go. He saw how much care Time had put into the creature and was not surprised when it latched on.

Time opened the gift for Kronos first, peeling off the wrapping paper. As soon as the white box underneath was revealed, the yellow creature began to go crazy. Letting out excited noises as it pushed into the box, pushing the lid off. It slipped over the edge and into the box, coming out with a chicken bone attached to its body. No wonder it was so happy! It had some food to munch on--nothing that would make it grow however.

The sound was disgusting as it absorbed one of the many chicken bones inside. Crunching and grating noises as the bone split inside the creature. Time didn’t seem bothered as he smiled towards the little guy. He must be so hungry, he hasn’t eaten since that girl has he? He stroked Kronos gently, not caring that he could feel the bones being broken apart and melted inside his creation.

“I think you should come closer and try to get familiar with Kronos.” Time spoke, almost timidly, questioning his own idea. “What?” Rock asked, looking shocked and almost mortified. “Well we are on the same side now, Rock. For all intents and purposes, Kronos is apart of the family. I don’t think it’d be easy for us to converse if he doesn’t like you.” Rock thought that made sense but at
the same time, how does he show the little beast that he meant no harm.

Time beckoned Rock over, to which he obeyed, before gesturing for the boy to hold his hand out to Kronos. The big red eye looked at his hand, then up at him, then back at his hand. It neared carefully before looking to Time. It gurgled something out to him, which the robot master simply replied, “He’s harmless. No buster here.”

Kronos seemed to understand and began to slip into the hand of the child. Rock thought that the beast felt so terrifying. He was paralyzed at the feeling of the yellow devil in his hand. It was as though he were made out of slime, it felt almost as though there was a residue left behind, but at the same time when the child looked he couldn’t find any leftovers whatsoever.

“Time, you haven’t even opened up your gift.” Rock suddenly stated as he looked up at the other. The robot master tensed up, unsure of what to say other than, “That’s because I was too busy caring of my baby.” He didn’t expect the smirk to appear on the boy’s face. “Well then you’ll love your gift.” He looked down upon his wrapping paper, taking a glance or two back at the blue bomber who was absentmindedly stroking the creature in his hand, as though it hadn’t tried to kill him no more than a month ago.

It was a rather large box, and awkwardly shaped-- rectangular in size. It made Timeman think of those boxes that oftentimes contain shirts. What was inside, however, was not a shirt at all. Dr Light had gone through the memories of Timeman, there were many and held multiple images of that Devil.

What was given to him was a simple scrapbook, nothing too fancy, with every memory memorialized within. A bunch of blank pages following for Time to continue to fill up. Each with dates and times. All of them for Kronos. A smile appeared on his face. “A little sappy but wonderful nonetheless.”

Kronos slipped off of Rock’s hand and approached his creator once again. Time picked him up before laying down and setting the tiny devil upon his chest. The baby curled up there before closing his singular eye and going to sleep. Seeing them together like that gave a sense of hope for Rock. They had new allies, and that was something always worth the happiness it brought.

Rock would continue to fight. For his brothers, for Kronos, for all of them. He would stop Wily’s plans. He would avenge Time’s and Oil’s lost lives. He knew he couldn’t solve all the problems that have arisen, but he could at least make them better and wasn’t that good enough?
Chapter Nineteen: Attack

"Wily has attacked!" Timeman shouted, bursting through the lab doors. He was damaged but not enough to be detrimental to his health. He cradled Kronos in his arms. "He tried to get Kronos!" The little yellow creature let out a soft growl of concern towards its creator but for the most part seemed calm where he sat.

"What!? That’s awful!" Iceman shouted, he had gone to the lab because he was having issues with his low power supply. He got short circuited far too frequently, which was a huge problem for him. Especially since he tended to work in somewhat dangerous situations. "Please tell me he’s alright.” The ice bot added, having developed a bond of his own with the creature. Him and Time were the only two people able to understand the thing after all. "Yeah, he’s okay but it’s not necessarily Kronos I’m worried about.” Time responded, stepping closer to the small ground.

"There are eight new robot masters. I thought Wily’s research was set back for years at least, I guess I was wrong. They’re finished, menacing, and ready to kill. I managed to escape them just well enough to get here. I don’t know if everyone in the research center was as lucky. They said that they wanted to retrieve Kronos because he was ‘imperative to Wily’s research’. " Timeman looked down on Kronos who was seemingly unawares to the danger of the situation. The little thing had, instead, taken a liking to his creator’s cuff and was playing with it.

"I don’t like the sound of that.” Roll commented, turning to Light. "Papa, does this mean Rock has to go back out and fight?" She didn’t like the idea of her brother once again returning to war, especially against things that seemed ready to kill at all costs. "I hate to admit it but I am terribly afraid so.”

Rock looked to Iceman before looking back up to his father. "It’s alright Papa! I’m fine with that. I think I’m getting pretty good at this fighting thing anyways.” That didn’t make anyone feel better, not even the blue bomber himself. It would be a lie to say he wanted to fight them. If anything he wished he could create a peaceful world, but that wasn’t possible right now. Or possibly ever. It was becoming painfully apparent that such things were so far out of reach that maybe it’d never become a reality.
“That doesn’t make me feel any better, Rock. Truly I don’t wish to see you suffer like this. You don’t deserve it. But at the same time…” He trailed off, to which the child finished for him. “At the same time I’m the only one who can.” Light nodded to him, it was the truth. A painful truth, but the truth nonetheless. Nobody liked the fact, they wanted to see him be a child, not a soldier.

“When are you planning on setting out?” Timeman finally asked, the question seeming more pressing than all of its predecessors. “As soon as possible!” Rock shot back, jumping up from where he sat. “Rock wait!” Light quickly interrupted taking his arm. The boy looked over to him, that same passionate flame in his eyes. What the doctor saw there wasn’t necessarily the want to do good, but the want to get revenge. Justified revenge, but still revenge nonetheless.

“I need you to realize something before you go out there and start fighting again… Wily knows about you now. You can’t take him by surprise like you have been. He knows your strengths, and Wily isn’t a stupid man. As much as I hate to admit it now, I knew him personally. I grew up with him. He’s extremely clever and won’t take a loss like what happened a few months ago so easily. You have to be careful. These robot masters are probably specifically designed to kill you. I need you to realize this right now before going out there and getting yourself killed.”

Rock looked up at him with somewhat terrified eyes before shaking his head and forcing a smile onto his face. “I know Papa. But I made a promise, I know you say I didn’t but in my heart I know I did. If I die on that battle field I’ll at least have died for a good cause. And besides, you can always rebuild me-- or build someone to stand in for me. I'll stop Wily, I’ll keep in mind that those robot masters will be extremely dangerous, but I will do my best to try and salvage them. And who knows? Maybe they'll be on our side after that!”

Everyone was in silence for a while, what Rock said was empowering but at the same time it hurt them all. None of them truly wanted to admit to themselves that death was such a real threat to him in these missions. Hearing the child himself, however, speak of it in such a fond way… It was almost sickening.

“So be it…” Light muttered, shaking his head. “We will get you ready as soon as possible… Speaking of which I do have a support unit that I have been developing for you. Hopefully I can finish it in time and it’ll serve you well.” Rock smiled at him and nodded his head. “Thank you Papa… You’re truly the best.” The doctor laughed. “Well I try… You’re my boy after all.”
Metalman

Chapter Summary

With Wily attacking once again, Rock begins his hunt of eight new robot masters, starting with Metalman.

Chapter Notes

The order of the robot masters is based on how I played Megaman 2. Metalman > Bubbleman > Heatman > Woodman > Airman > Crashman > Flashman > Quickman

Chapter Twenty: Metalman

Springers, Pierobots, Presses, Blockys, Moles, it felt so weird to be in an environment like this. It was so familiar and yet all too foreign. This robot master’s locale was an anxious mess of a place, with conveyor belts and spikes everywhere. It was a miracle he made it through as he had without falling into an endless pit or getting impaled on some sort of spiked press. Everywhere he looked there was a sharp object, and everywhere he looked he remembered Iceman.

The door was more of a relief this time than any of the other times. Slipping behind the protective barrier was so much kinder than having to face off with the dangers of the area he had just passed. Everything felt like a threat to his life and he didn’t quite enjoy it at all. Turning to face the upcoming door Rock took a deep breath. There were no calming words from Light, no cheers from Roll, they were too afraid to speak with him on this matter, and to be quite honest the child couldn’t blame them.

They were far too nervous for him, so they just prepared him and sent him on his way. Too scared of the fact that he’d lose his focus and die. Such events have almost happened in the past, but now he wished he could hear their voices. Tell them that he loved them. Although he was sure they already knew.

Rock found himself landing on another conveyor belt. He had enough of these already. He watched as the scene unraveled around him, gears ground together in the walls, curiosity compelled him to throw a used E-Tank into the cogs. A loud crunching sound as the can was promptly destroyed and vanished into the inner workings.

“Wily never told me I was fighting a child.” Rock looked forward suddenly to see the robot master standing before him.

Something was off with this man, his red eyes held so much more life within them. A trait that Rock has never seen within any other robot master. The taller’s long, red eyelashes sealed his eyes away as he pulled out one of his Metal Blades. “I don’t quite like fighting children, but at the same time you are here to destroy me. That’s something I cannot allow.” Slowly those eyes opened
again as they continue to progress together down the conveyor belt, as though this was all rehearsed.

“I’m Metalman, and your quest to murder me and my brothers ends here, before it even begins.” Rock was surprised when the robot master came rushing towards him. It was hard for him to dodge, not only that but as soon as he managed to jump over him, pressing off his back with his hand to get more air, he found that one of those blades was coming directly towards him. He managed to angle his body so it didn’t hit him directly in the face. Instead it sliced through his shoulder, creating a marginal gash in it.

He didn’t expect how strong the weapon was. If anything he thought that this weapon would just nick at him. But then again what did he expect? Wily was planning this out for a long time. There were no chances to this battle. The loon wanted him dead, no matter the cost, even if it meant making a robot master so powerful that he should be feared.

As soon as he landed upon the ground he was shocked to find that Metal was coming at him once again. Rock struggled to dodge but couldn’t. The bot’s frame was just too fast as he snatched the child up by the neck. Despite them being near the center of the belt, the younger managed to throw the child into the wall ahead of him, at least a good yard away. A cry of pain as some of the wall fell down upon him and a massive indent was created.

He looked over to his right as the conveyor belt tried to push him further into the brick wall. If only he could kick Metal into those cogs, then things would be easier. Looking up again he saw once more his pursuer was coming at him.

Rock scrambled to his feet before beginning to run towards the robot master as well. He made a move to slide under his legs but was stopped as he felt an arm snatch him up before he could. It hurt, his forearm being grasped tightly as he was held up like that. He struggled to try and break free, even shooting Metal at point blank range didn’t seem to do much but make him flinch.

“Please don’t make this harder than it has to be, Rockman.” Metal spoke, his voice somewhat sad. The child stopped and looked at him. He continued again. “I don’t want to kill you, but I have to protect my family. Wily has told me about what you have done to the robot masters before me, and for that I cannot forgive. You’re a murderer just like him, but at least he hasn’t hurt my family.”

Rock shook his head aggressively.

“No! You’ve got it wrong Metalman! I-I don’t kill! I haven’t killed anyone! All the previous robot masters were my brothers! My Papa built them and I brought them home! Yes I destroyed their bodies but I… I made sure their IC Chips were safe so we could rebuild them and give them a better life away from Wily!” That face didn’t change, Metal didn’t seem to believe or disbelieve his story. The only thing that was obvious was that he was contemplating it.

“Well if that’s the case then I must revise my strategy.” Rock didn’t like that tone, and to be quite honest he was correct to assume that it meant trouble. The slashing sound that filled his ears and vibrated through his body was enough to send him into shock. Looking down upon himself he was amazed to see an image all too familiar.

Robotic innards hung loosely from his chest as he watched his legs fall limp on the conveyor belt. Metal kicked them into the gears. Rock heard the sickening crunching and squelching as they were ground up. Twisted chunks of metal were spat out of the robotic maw of the beast, almost like some demented owl pellet.

He watched as oil seeped out from the gears as well as from his own torso. Tears welled up in his eyes as it finally began to register to him what the hell had just happened. It started as whimpering
before it grew louder and louder. Soon enough Rock was full blown screaming in agony. His one hand desperately tried to claw away from Metal, forgetting his buster in the panic. He sounded too much like a child being murdered brutally by some stranger.

“Not dead enough…” Metal’s words sent a new wave of panic through the child. “No please! Please don’t!” His plans, he wasn’t the only one that thought of them, and he knew this as such as they neared the gears. He screamed, cried, struggled, begged to be let go. He screamed until his voice was hoarse as tears ran down his face. The crunching silenced him as his one, clawing arm was forced into the machine. It tore away from his body in a grating, slow tear. The Metal Blade had already taken most of it off, but that didn’t change the amount of pain he felt.

He screamed like a ravenous animal as slowly and steadily the thing devoured his arm. Crunching and ripping it, wire by wire. Twisted metal and sputtering oil exiting it before promptly being kicked back in by Metal. Rock couldn’t mutter anything more than a weak static sound, more akin to a faint whistle, by the time it was over. He cried there, staring the robot master straight in the eyes with a look of pure agony.

“I’m sorry, but I had to get you as close to death as possible if I had any hope of returning you home.”

Rock was in survival mode, he didn’t understand anything of what Metal was saying. When his position was shifted to be cradled like a baby, he didn’t register that things were going to be okay. He twitched and spasmed in the younger’s grasp. His body jerking slightly in his arms. Shock had taken hold of him and refused to let him go.

“Hush… Hush… It’ll be okay…” He didn’t register Metalman’s voice at all, not the soothing whisper, not the gentle rocking. He didn’t register it at all as tears continued to flood down his face. As blood dripped out of his arm and stomach. He tasted that sickening oil, it reminded him of Oilman. He stared blankly up at him with big eyes as his chest rose and fall rapidly. His nostrils flaring all the while.

Metal didn’t know what to do as Rock’s ‘skin’ seemed to turn white and ashen. He didn’t know what to do when his body started to feel cold and almost clammy. He didn't know what to do as big pupils starred up at him, as though begging him for some form of salvation. He most certainly didn’t know what to do when the vomiting began. The child vomited all over himself, that blood-like oil escaped him with heaves before he returned to his rapid breathing and panicked state of mind.

“Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee…” Rock immediately recognized the gentle tone, he didn’t know where or how, but he recognized it from somewhere. “All through the night. Guardian angels God will send thee, All through the night.” It was the only thing Metal could think to do. His brothers were soothed immensely by lullabies, ‘All Through the Night’ being a favorite of theirs.

“Soft the drowsy hours are creeping, hill and dale in slumber sleeping. I my loved ones’ watch am keeping, all through the night.” Rock’s eyes fought to stay open to the tune, even as moonlight fell upon his face, bathing him in a gentle glow. He didn’t see the stars ahead or feel the soft February breeze. All he could feel was the panic and a voice of reason far away.

“Angels watching, e’er around thee, all through the night. Midnight slumber close surround thee, all through the night.” He didn’t feel Metalman set his body down in soft grass and carefully remove his helmet. Didn’t feel him running his fingers through his hair.

“Soft the drowsy hours are creeping, hill and dale in slumber sleeping. I my loved ones’ watch am keeping, all through the night.” Rock couldn’t keep his eyes open, his consciousness was fading as
the last lines of the lullaby were echoed in the chilly night air. His head swam but at the same time it was an infinite amount of comfort. He had lost, but at the same time… Was this truly a failure?

Metalman had beaten him but at the same time…

“Please save me and my brothers.” The last thing he heard before fading off into a dreamless, shock induced state of sleep-- of unconsciousness.
Bubbleman

Chapter Summary

With the Metal Blade in his possession, Rock goes to face off with Bubbleman.

Chapter Notes

Wily’s sharks are programmed to act like normal sharks, however they are drawn to robotic ‘blood’ over human blood.

Chapter Twenty-One: Bubbleman

He hated the feeling of the water all around him, encompassing him like this. It was suffocating and oppressive in a way. The Ankos, Claws, Kerogs, Shrinksh, Tanishis, Big Fish, and the M-445s didn’t make the situation any better as he fought to maneuver through it all. Not to mention he had nearly impaled himself more times than he’d like to admit. He has gone through that enough times, he didn’t want it happening again.

He couldn’t get Metalman’s words out of his head. ‘Please save my brothers’. What did he mean by that? Were they in danger somehow? He supposed it was possible. Perhaps they had somehow fallen to be on Wily’s bad side which led to a sense of danger. Perhaps there was some other reason, something to do with the experiments. He was certain this group of robot masters were definitely involved.

Rock wondered if they were victims or aids. Judging by Metalman’s behavior, he assumed it was the prior. He seemed almost… Motherly like. Caring, comforting, loving almost. As though he was nursing a baby of his own. But why? Why was he like that? Who was he when he was alive, and who was the person he was about to meet? Most importantly of all, however, was the idea of them being connected.

Time and Oil were connected, are these eight connected to each other somehow as well? Even loosely would be worse than not at all. He wanted answers but found they were elusive and impossible to reach, so instead he pushed against that familiar arena door. It gave with no problem and the child stepped through, sinking just a bit to the floor of the enlarged space.

Completely submerged, it made jumping so much easier, but in turn provided a great risk. Up on the ceiling were thousands of spikes, ready to impale just like Iceman’s fight.

Why did he always come back. Why were there so many spikes ready to run him through? Why was there so much to be uncovered?

“Wh-Who are you!?” The voice was a failed attempt at being menacing. The scuba-bot appeared, seemingly angry, albeit small as though he too were a child. “I’m Rockman.” Rock responded
quickly from beneath his breathing apparatus. “Who are you?” He thought that maybe a more friendly approach would help them get through this without a fight. He supposed they weren’t necessarily programmed to kill him if Metal was able to resist it so easily.

“Rockman!? I was t-t-told by Master Wily to d-d-destroy you!” The younger retorted, his face displaying that enraged look. The child didn’t like that at all, and felt a wave of shock come over him. “B-But I don’t even know your name!” He spoke trying to delay the inevitable conflict waiting for them.

“I’m Bubbleman.” He responded sharply before adding. “But that’s not the point. Here will be your watery grave! I’ll stop you before you hurt my family!” It was so similar to Metalman, Rock knew that they were all told the same lie. That the little blue bomber was coming to kill them all.

What the child expected was the other to begin attacking him, trying to kill him. What he was not expecting, and what he got, was Bubbleman swimming to a switch in the wall. He pressed down on the button, the walls opened up around them and it became apparent that they were in a shark cage of sorts. Spikes lined the edges of the cage as the walls of the room began to fall away. Rock hadn’t realized how far he had swum out into the ocean. Or at least what appeared to be the ocean as robotic sharks swam around them, waiting to go crazy. He didn’t know what their purpose was or what they were doing all the way out here, but it became apparent what Bubbleman’s plan was.

He wanted to make Rock shed as much oil before allowing the sharks to go loose on him. Something that the child would not allow. He didn’t want either of them to die like this, it wasn’t worth the suffering and the pain. “Bubbleman, there is a better alternative!” Rock shouted to him, watching the younger prep to attack. “And what would that be!?” He inquired, his voice much harsher now albeit somewhat altered by the breathing mask over his face. “Not fighting at all. I don’t want to hurt you or your brothers, I want to save you from Dr Wily.” He attempted to explain, but Bubble wasn’t having any of it.

“And why would I believe that!? Just so you can lure us away and kill us? I don’t think so. We are going to battle it out until one of us is deactivated for good, and I won’t let it be me.” Rock was shocked when one of those bubbles began heading straight for him. Unsure of what to do or make of it, he let it hit him, only to be surprised at how the acidic insides began to corrode. It didn’t corrode too much, just enough to release some blood.

One of the sharks caught whiff of this and wasn’t too happy. More began to get the scent. They all began to nudge at the cage, as if testing it and trying to find weak points. “Shit…” Rock mumbled, he didn’t want to hurt Bubbleman but at the same time if he didn’t than he’d be the one to swim with the fishes. Something he could not allow given all that was at stake. Instead, the blue bomber took aim and proceeded to shoot with his Rock Buster at the other robot master.

He was afraid of using the Metal Blade but knew it was probably much better than what he was trying to do. Upon seeing that his weapon did next to nothing, and conversely that Bubble’s did a whole lot of something, he decided to change up his tactic. By this point the sharks had grown more bold and were now pushing the cage, making it sway, and they had begun to also bump it from the bottom and top, as though looking for some way in for their next kill.

The Metal Blade was the next logical choice. The blade was sharp and it would undoubtedly drive the sharks crazy when it cut through the flesh of his opponent. “Is that my brother’s weapon?” Bubble asked in shock, as though he never expected his brother to loose. In a way he hadn’t, but at the same time he still shouldn’t. Metal had won the conflict, but had given Rock the ability without even realizing it. Something that the blue bomber was ever so grateful for.

“You did kill him!” Bubble seemed so entirely upset by this, rightfully so. Under normal
circumstances Rock could completely understand where this type of thought came from, but at the same time he wanted the other to take a second and think. When he came rushing at him, very similarly to Metal, he threw the blade towards him, hoping to halt the advance. Bubble reeled back in shock, eyes wide, as a gasp escaped him.

He didn’t notice Rock coming directly after him, too busy nursing his gushing chest with the metal blade still embedded within him. The child grabbed ahold of Bubbleman and began to reach back behind his head. The robot master tried to shake him off but his sudden amounts of blood loss were making it hard. He began to slice into the other, ignoring the screams of agony. Sometimes pain had to be suffered through in order to be saved. He cut the compartment out of the younger’s head, successfully removing the IC Chip without exposing it to the damaging properties of the water around them.

Bubble deactivated for an instant and Rock used this to end the conflict completely. He pushed the child into the spikes above him as hard as he could. The robot master was impaled and trapped upon the piercing hazard. He wasn’t going to get out anytime soon, that zombie like entity wouldn’t manifest. The piercing sound made Rock cringe as he saw the wired that were once inside the other’s body suddenly come peaking out, like little worms. But that wasn’t the child’s only problem.

Bubbleman was defeated, but there was more still here. The sharks nudged and prodded the cage with their noses and bodies. Rock looked back to the door he came in and he was shocked to see just how far away it was now, a pinprick in the distance. How had he gotten so far? How had he gotten this adrift in the great blue deep?

An aggressive shake of the cage. Rock let out a gasp as the sharks began slamming their bodies into the bars trying desperately to get in. Rock went to the bottom of the cage, suspecting where this was probably going to go. The sharks began to bite down on the bars, crushing them with an ease that he had never seen before. Ripping through it the mechanical beasts were wild with hunger and a desire to kill.

The blue bomber cradled the IC chip in his hands as the oil continued to spread out in a fan of paint all around him and the sharks. Bubbleman’s corpse was oozing that blood as he dangled there, impaled. It didn’t take too terribly long for the sharks to make it inside the cage, to bang it and bite it enough to gain access. Rock was terrified as he watched them go directly for the body. While they were distracted, however, he made his exit.

They were so enticed with the scent of the robot master, they didn’t notice the other meal that had escaped them. Rock’s head shot out of the water and he glanced around for the nearest landmass. He saw the building he came from and knew there was a beach near it. He began to swim towards his, fighting the currents and hoping that no riptide was present. When his feet touched the sand he was relieved.

Collapsing onto the sand he panted and gasped, throwing the breathing addition far away from him as he sat on the shoreline. Looking back over the ocean he could see the sun beginning to set, but that wasn’t all. He also could see the large stain of oil on the surface of the bobbing waves. Bubbleman was undoubtedly dead, but he could be rebuilt. As though to finalize that thought, Rock saw his head peak up above the surface.

A bobbing way finder until a shark came right up and swallowed it whole.
Heatman

Chapter Summary

Having taken down Bubbleman, Rock goes after his next target, Heatman.

Chapter Notes

The arena in this chapter needs a bit of explaining since there wasn't a lot of space to explain it without throwing off the feel of the chapter. There is a strip of metal flooring that runs through the middle of the room. Rows of grates are on either side and thin bars of that same metal flooring separate rows and rows of grates. Beneath the floor and grates is lava, or something akin to it. The metal grates haven't been used or stood on in a while and are quick to break, creating a hazard.

Chapter Twenty-Two: Heatman

Shotmans, Sniper Armors, Changkey Makers, Tellys, and Fly Boys. The enemies were easy to dodge, easy to kill. Rock had no trouble really, despite how hot this place was and just how agitating retreating blocks seemed to be. It got to the point where the blue bomber wondered just how long it took the robot master at the end of this maze to construct this death trap. Some of them must have been easy, Bubbleman’s and Metalman’s used what was already in their environments… But this robot master didn’t seem to do that at all. It seemed as though he, or she, went all out on making it hazardous.

Perhaps they had been planning this for longer than he initially thought. Or perhaps they had some help from others. Regardless of the reason, Rock didn’t truly care. It was just something to keep his mind off of the inevitability of fighting another fire themed robot master. Any fight that had fire in it, whether it be in a weakness, or as a strength, was a fight he didn’t want to go into. He had enough of burning flames and scorch marks.

“It’s rather hot in here don’t you think?” Rock was stunned into silence to see the lighter sitting there, out of all the themes for a fire typed robot master, a zippo was the last thing to come to his mind. The child-like robot seemed worn out, tired, and lethargic. Almost as though this was the last thing he wanted to be doing on a Saturday in February of 2006. Not like there was much for someone like him to be doing anyways.

“That makes two of us. It’s like a sauna.” Rock commented with a laugh, trying to make some form of small talk. He would continue to try and sway the robot masters into not fighting him. They weren’t reprogrammed to do anything bad, just forced down to fight for a man that wouldn’t let them go. Held hostage by a loon with their kill switch ready. It didn’t help that the other looked no older than ten or eleven years old, just like him.

“I wish I didn’t have to fight you, but at the same time…” He looked up to Rock with...
disapproving gaze. “I know what you’ll do to us, and family is family. We have to stick together. No offense, really. Just protecting my brothers.” On that note the blue bomber found himself struggling to jump out of the way of fireballs. Every jump made him feel hot and ready to overheat, the molten lava that flowed beneath grates on either side of the strip of ground they stood upon weren’t helping.

The entire room was a furnace, Rock worried that it would cook him without him even realizing. A slow and steady broil until he eventually couldn’t do anything but lay unmoving upon the metallic ground. “Watch out!” The child turned back to Heat, having just got to his feet, and was surprised to find a huge flaming mass charging towards him. It collided with his chest, sending him flying.

He hit the wall with a hard thunk before sliding down and landing rather roughly upon one of those grates. There was a weird metallic snapping sound and Rock had to struggle to jump off of the grate before it fell into the lava. The molten rock devoured the metal quickly, as though happy to have another meal.

“Oh that was close wasn’t it. I actually expected you to fall in. I guess I was wrong.” Rock turned to look at Heatman who seemed to be getting ready to charge at him once again. The blue bomber jumped out of the way just in time to avoid getting scorched and sent flying once more. He switched his attack to the Bubble Lead during the fraction of time he had before getting charged at again. As the fireball came soaring towards him, Rock used that water based weapon, praying it would work.

He was shocked to find that it actually did, part of him was expecting it not to. The fire was immediately drenched and the bot seemed to despise being wet like this. He was so distracted in trying to get himself dry that he didn’t even notice Rock coming for him. Like an expert soldier, the child grabbed hold of him, continuing to douse him in water.

He knew that if he was wet than he wouldn’t be able to ignite. A few moments of chaos and Rock managed to rip open that panel. Powering through Heat’s repeated attempts to get him off, the child managed to snatch the IC Chip out of his body. Heatman began to shut down, it was over. But knowing full well what he would become, Rock proceeded to push him down harshly onto one of those grates anyways. They snapped beneath him and the lighter bot fell into the lava.

The child watch the body sink slowly and steadily into the river of fire. It was almost surreal to see him sink like that. It was almost as though he was being eaten alive. The faint bubbling sound of the magma puffing out the air that got trapped within. As he sunk down the robot master recovered his consciousness.

Rock stepped back as the hollow husk began to scream and howl out. He didn’t sound human. He sounded like an animal being tortured to death. The hissing sounds of the fire catching the oil inside the robot master’s body was the most discomforting when laced with the screams. He watched as, almost like a jack-o-lantern on Halloween, the other burst into flames. Fire soaring out of his mouth, eyes, and nose. There was the possibility that the mindless zombie of a robot master could feel something, some sort of pain, that there was just the vague sense of a consciousness there… But at the same time, that idea was far more horrifying than throwing someone who was already dead into lava.

Looking down at the IC chip in his hold, Rock let out a sigh before pushing himself back up to his feet. It was over. The screaming had ceased, the body of the child was gone. His chest burned slightly, a visible mark had formed on him. His skin had peeled off and began to separate from his body as he walked. It fell away like the meat on a well-cooked pork rib.

Despite all that, the damage Rock took wasn’t all that much. He hated to admit it, but he truly was
getting better at this.
Woodman

Chapter Summary

After having defeated Heatman, Rock goes to fight his next opponent, Woodman.

Chapter Notes

Yes the fight does take place in the New Jersey Pine Barrens-- yes that does mean that this entire fanfic takes place on the East Coast of the United States of America unless a specific scene is stated otherwise. Yes I have been to the pine barrens and no this is not based on actual events.

Chapter Twenty-Three: Woodman

“Rock I made you a new support unit. It’s called Item 1.”

That was hours ago, and Rock hadn’t gotten the chance to use it, but he was grateful to have it nonetheless. The little helicopter pad was nice. It made things easier. He wondered if this was the support unit that Light was talking about before he left. He doubted so, his father was far too excited about the unit and he couldn’t see why he would be so happy about a tiny thing like this. Regardless, the child was happy with it.

He didn’t get the chance to use it against the Kukkus, Battons, Pipis, Friendiers, Monkings, and Robbits, but knew that somehow this item would come in handy. Somewhere, somehow, he could feel it in his ‘gut’.

The door to the arena gave way rather quickly. Rock was greeted by the scent of dead leaves and iron. Looking about he found he was in a forested area, trees surrounded him. They were spindly and thin, looking almost as though the wind could push them down at any moment. Their arms reached high into the sky, bare and naked, with the branches seemingly scratching at the endless abyss of cloudy space that reached on boundlessly above them. The floor beneath his feet was thick with dead leaves.

All were a sickish brownish black color, as though they have been blanketing the floor for a long time. It was strange to see this sight. It wasn’t so bizarre for the trees to appear this way within the cold February air, but the carpet of leaves should have at least been taken care of by now. Should have at least been carried away by some form of wind or rain. It was disconcerting to say the least.

Rock approached one of the trees, noticing a faint glow coming from it, something he couldn’t quite pinpoint. Upon closer inspection he found that he was correct.

Small, almost invisible, cracks covered the tree. From within a faint reddish glow could be seen. Something that could not be made out so easily by the naked eye. A human could probably just go
on walking by such a thing and not even notice that it was like this. That it was different.

“They’re cybernetic trees, used to purify the air since humanity is so intent on wiping out mother nature’s lush, green forests.” Rock whirled around to see the robot master standing there. His form not unlike a tree, something that the child found bizarre. He didn’t make a comment on it though. “Who… Who are you?” The blue bomber asked curiously. “Woodman.”

That was all he got for response. It took a moment for Rock to realize that the other was done talking and so he continued. “Well… Um… I’m Rockman.” He tried to introduce himself, he was doing a pretty good job at showing that he didn’t want to fight. He stepped away from the tree and turned to face the other. “I know… That’s why I’m going to be the one to kill you.” The child didn’t have enough time to process what was said before he felt something close around his ankles.

Looking down he saw what he thought were snakes at first, it didn’t take long for him to truly process that they weren’t snakes at all but the roots of trees which had, somehow, taken hold of him. “Have you heard of the carnivorous tree of South Africa?” Wood asked as Rock struggled to try and get free. He hardly registered what the other was saying. “Well these purifier units have been modified to devour puny, weak robots like you.” The roots pulled him sharply. Rock fell to the ground with a hard thunk, he felt his teeth click shut as his head slammed down upon another root. The taste of oil filled his mouth and, if not for the feeling of the pain in the tip of his tongue, Rock would’ve believed that he’d bitten his tongue clean off.

Soon he felt himself being dragged along the ground. He cried out, clawing at the dirt, only finding that he was pulling up fistfuls of sticks and foliage. Eventually his legs were pulled upwards and Rock was suspended above the Earth by his ankles, dangling upside down. He felt his helmet slipping off and soon enough there was a gentle thunk. Without his headgear now, the child hung there, blue eyes watching the robot master before him. “Not so tough now when you’re suspended like that.”

Rock struggled to break free only to find that vines were fighting to restrict his movement, they wrapped around his legs and midsection before the child could begin shooting at them with his Rock Buster. He fought so hard to be free but found that the most he could do was scare the creature enough to not climb further down his body. “Why are you trying to fight?” Woodman asked him. “It’s futile, you cannot defeat nature. Nature is both your maker and destroyer. When you die you will return to the Earth, just as you should.” He didn’t know if he should answer, but at the same time it felt like a genuine question, not something simply rhetorical.

“I fight because I have people to protect. I have people to save, lives to protect, a family to go home to… But most importantly I have a promise to keep. I promised someone I would save you all and free you from Wily. None of you have to suf—” Rock was cut off as he felt his midsection being squeezed aggressively. It hurt and made him feel like he was being crushed to death. It took his breath right out of him. Soon the squeezing stopped, but his midsection and parts of his legs were already dented inward.

“Our safety is none of your concern… Why would any of us even believe you regardless. You murdered Bubble and Heat, Metal, who seemed to have survived, won’t even speak of you. That isn’t to begin on the eight before us. We don’t know where they have gone, what you have done to them.” Rock felt the squeezing begin again.

This time it was much shorter and just merely forced his breath out of him. “Never mind that, I have my own promise to keep. The promise to protect my brothers. Anyone who gets in the way of that goal will return to the Earth.” Woodman turned away and began walking to a stump that sat in the middle of the thinly packed forest. “So I suppose here will be your grave. I’ll make sure you
are left unmarked so that nature can reclaim you and not have to worry about precious tombstones.”

Rock looked down to the roots as he heard interesting sounds beginning to emerge from them. Little thorns began to force their way out. The child began to struggle, shooting at the vines wildly in an attempt to try and break free. “You don’t have to do this!” He shouted, trying to at least sway the other. “You can become a good guy still! We don’t have to fight but--”

He couldn’t finish his sentence as he was cut off once again. The pain radiated through his form as the spines upon the root systems began to dig into him. The bloody oil in his body proceeded to seep out, staining the roots with ease. The tree seemed to drink it up happily and glow brighter. Rock could see it, so close and yet so far. If only he could destroy it, kill it so it may release him. He would be hurt but it was worth a shot. He hated using fire abilities, but sometimes one has to light a match to survive a brutal winter.

The atomic fire was an intense weapon, one that he found he could charge up to create a larger blaze. It was within the weapon data that he found this out. He took aim and tried to charge the ability as much as he could. However time was of the essence so eventually he had to just let the fireball go and pray that he’d be strong enough to kill the damned thing. He released the ball of flame upon the metallic tree, to his surprise the ability he picked up was stronger than he imagined.

The tree exploded in a conflagration of wood and metal.

Bright yellow flames extended into the sky, running along the limbs of the tree. It seemed to howl into the night air almost as though it were alive. Something that Rock prayed was not the case as the root system which held him began to crumble. He fell to the ground harshly and found that it was extraordinarily difficult to force his body upright. It almost felt as though he was doing a sit up after doing a thousand already.

He pulled away the roots which had bound him, they came away with a wet suction like sound. The thorns pulled out to reveal punctures all over his abdomen and legs. Where the vines squeezed him were indents and blossoming welts. Blood oozed from the holes in his flesh, it looked almost like a thousand vampires had bitten into him. In a way he supposed it was the truth. That tree was a vampire tree by all means.

Turning to Wood he was shocked to see how angry the bot was. As though Rock had destroyed one of his children. As if the tree which had been obliterated had been made of actual wood and plant matter. Fire spread out in a fan and jumped from tree to tree. The scene was beginning to look more and more like the forest fire scene from Disney’s Bambi. Tree limbs fell around them as smoke obscured their feet in ghostly wisps.

“I wanted to give you a peaceful death among the roots of a beautiful tree, but I suppose that’s something you don’t want.” Woodman pounded on his chest almost like a gorilla. “I suppose I’ll just have to grind you into dust.” Rock got to his feet as fast as he could and took aim, charging up the atomic fire ability. He ignored the sharp feeling of leaves slicing through his skin. He was surprised that they were as sharp as they were, but then again what did he expect?

When Woodman was beginning to charge at him, intent on taking him down, Rock sent a fireball directly at him-- in the end using up the last of his weapon energy for that ability. He watched as the tree robot caught fire and began to panic.

He attempted to put it out but found that it just wouldn’t. Rock decided now was the time to end it while he still had a chance. The trees were spindly and ready to collapse by this point so, in the midst of his distraction, he ran to the back of one of those carnivorous trees. Ramming his shoulder
into it, he tried to block out the howls and screams of every tree as well as the robot master.

Eventually the tree made a loud crack sound before plummeting to the ground right on top of the robot master. The roots began to bind him. Rock watched as, in a desperate attempt to revitalize itself, the tree began to crush the wood bot. Cracks formed in the exterior of Woodman, slowly and steadily as he was crushed. The oil that leaked out of him continued to catch as a large puddle blossomed around him.

The wet shattering sounds, with moist popping and licking flames, it made Rock cringe back in terror. The trees were howling in pain. Woodman was howling in pain. The trees were making sick sounds as they fell all around him like some demented version of dominoes. The tree bot himself was cracking and grating as his insides were forced out through his mouth and eyes. The tree would crush him to death.

Rock was frozen, only to move to pat out the flames that brushed against him. He coughed every now and again but for the most part just breathed in the smoke all around him. He allowed it to suffocate him and drown him. He finally came to when he saw that the floor itself was beginning to catch, that the leaves and sticks were starting to ignite as well. Knowing full well he would perish here if he didn’t get a move on, he quickly made his way over to Woodman’s corpse.

He ignored the squelching as his knees landed in robotic innards that had been vomited out and burned free of their oil. He fished around to find the IC Chip, trying to power through what flames remained, relieved to find, once again, a miracle had preserved it.

Returning to his feet he began to make his departure, running through a blossoming forest fire as it attempted to kill him at every turn. He discovered, with shock, that the patch of robotic trees were in fact part of a larger nature preserve of ordinary trees. The fire began to catch onto them, and soon enough Rock found that he had started an entire forest fire. He escaped the brush, coughing and wheezing, welts and bloody puncture wounds lining his body. There were burns on his skin, but they weren’t as bad as the other wounds and the singed nature of his hair. His knees were bloodied with wires clinging loosely to them, but again it only took so much of his attention. A breath of wind pushed past him as he came out off the woodland.

His helmet was still back in the flames, but he didn’t care. He found a road and began to cross it. No cars were around as the night approached and engulfed him once again. He came to the guard rail of the road and leaned over it. He felt his stomach lurch as he began to gag and retch. His vomit was black and putrid, laden with pollution from the flames. Smudges of black lined his skin, ash which seemed to cling to him.

Looking back over his shoulder he saw the roaring flames had reached all the way out here and were now billowing outwards over the road. It was an entire forest fire, most likely to kill so many who were lurking within the Pine Barrens, a beautiful forest had been ignited to create a cremation chamber. Perhaps the individuals within were in search of a devil. One that Rock was certain was not nearly as terrifying as the one he faced tonight. What he faced tonight was in fact a true Jersey Devil.
Airman

Chapter Summary

After having defeated Woodman, Rock goes to fight his next opponent, Airman.

Chapter Notes

Rock travels all over when it comes to Wily's schemes-- although for the moment they are based on locations near the east coast.

Chapter Twenty-Four: Airman

The night sky looked so beautiful from up here. He could see the stars stretching out into the dark above him. An endless loneliness surrounded him, flowed within him, leading to him to acknowledge the fact that up here he was all alone. He was just a child isolated just below the Stratosphere. Up here, 10 kilometers up into the sky, the air was suffocating, oppressive, hardly able to really be considered air at all. A normal human would most likely suffocate so easily up here. When looking down he could see fields of clouds twisting and folding over themselves. Flashes in the distance revealed a storm was coming, little streaks of white flickered in thin lines across the distant meadow of clouds.

Rock stepped carefully, occasionally using the new item he was given by Dr Light. Item 2 was a simple jet board, one that he road every now and again to spare himself the terror of jumping across large gaps of empty space. He didn’t feel like dying due to a high drop. The Kaminari Goros, Goblins, Tellys, Pipis, and Matasaburo were all troublesome but not too difficult to avoid or destroy.

That door was both a terror and a relief. On the one hand he hoped to enter an indoor area, on the other he knew that his dreams would be dashed so quickly. Whoever this was enjoyed being up in the sky-- why wouldn’t they use that to their advantage if everyone is so entirely aware of Rock’s mission? Or at least the lie of a mission they have been told about. He didn’t want to kill them, never would, he just wanted to save them. It seemed Metalman was the only one who understood the fact.

The gentle pitter patter of rain drew him away from his thoughts. He had to hurry, there was a storm coming, and if he was caught out in it, the fight would be far more treacherous than it already was.

The arena he found himself in was a platform that led to a drop, a cliff that would undoubtedly be a hazard. There were no walls on either side, just the platform. Dark clouds swirled in the vast voids on either side of the platform, rain began to slick the ground in tiny droplets, no doubt giving it a slippery edge that Rock was not ready to handle. Streaks of lightning manifested in the far distance, little lines that were approaching with tiny roars of thunder. The storm seemed almost like
a hungry dragon. Up above the sound of an airplane flying by, unawares, created a dissonant background noise.

The fan based robot master stood there, seemingly unafraid of the sky he found himself in. Seemingly proud of the place he had claimed to be his home. The storm didn’t scare him, the drop beneath them didn’t scare him, the rain and wind seemed to just roll off him with ease. He was unaffected in all ways. “You’re a bold child, coming here and fighting me.” His voice was a deep, gravel like sound. The first thing that came to Rock’s mind was that one actor… Morgan Freeman, yes, that was it.

“You’re a bold robot master to station yourself all the way up here.” Rock replied in a much more playful and friendly tone. The stranger, however, didn’t seem all that amused by his antics. “I quite like the sky, it is dark, mysterious, and gives me an edge over my enemies.” The fan told him, his hands folded behind his back in a proud stance. “But you can admire the sky from the ground, can’t you?” The blue bomber only got a dirty look in response. “I guess not…”

“Regardless of what you say or may believe, here will become your grave. Your life will end within this storm. I’ll make sure that your remains are nothing but a splatter upon the ground.” The robot master told him, his hands falling from behind his back as he got in a position to attack. The winds were sharp and strong and picked up all around Rock as the fan within the other’s abdomen began to whirl to life.

Debris which littered the ground, hidden by the darkness, began to fly at him. Cutting into his body with a precision which Rock didn’t expect to ever know from just wind. He began to slide backwards on the platform that he rested upon, the air generated by the robot dragging him. It didn’t take long before the wind to stop, Rock heaved a sigh of relief, but that didn’t last as he felt the air grow electrically charged.

He knew what this meant, he knew that there was to be trouble as the wind around them picked up. At first he thought that his opponent was using his ability again, but upon closer inspection he found that he was indeed wrong. The rain poured down upon them in thick sheets, hitting them as it rushed to the surface below. Rock tried to find purchase as lighting streaked across the sky and began to strike the platform, only that the water was beginning to flood the platform.

He looked to the other who seemed to be suffering from the same problem. The problem of not being able to find any purchase upon the slippery construct. And yet, for some reason, that didn’t stop the fight. Airman turned towards him and blasted his fan once again. Rock wasn’t sure if this was a defensive or offensive measure as he saw it did clear a lot of the water around him, but in turn also drew the water into his body.

He knew that wasn’t good, water inside a robot master’s body was a recipe for disaster. Lightning cascaded around them, electrically charged fingertips touching the platform around them. It was a mess to try and avoid them all while trying to avoid slipping off altogether. Rock felt the water carry him to the edge and, in the darkness of the storm, didn’t notice the ledge that he had nearly slipped off of.

It was a steep drop to the Earth, he knew this to be true, but Airman seemed to not care. He continued to try and blow at him-- blowing and blowing, drawing more water into his body. Powering through it was all the child could think to do.

He could let the winds carry him away and then allow for him to drop far enough to get out of the base of the storm, before summoning item 2 to save him. But even then, that would be dangerous and there most likely wasn’t enough energy to lower him to the ground safely-- if there was enough time for him to even get out of the storm.
It seemed he would have no choice as the platform began to crumble around them. The lightning was doing a number on the platform and Rock had found out that the debris that had sliced across his body were actually valuable supports that had come loose. Screws, nuts, bolts, things of that nature. Airman didn’t let up however and the child found that he was falling. His foot slipped off and down he went.

He watched as he plummeted the platform get struck once more before it finally broke away. Rock’s eyes widened as he saw the entire structure begin to come down. It looked like something out of a science fiction movie. This could not be happening. Airman was falling just as he was, and soon both of them would reach terminal velocity.

The ground was approaching slowly, but the closer the got the faster it seemed to go. It took a while, but it was at least in view. Rock looked over to his right to see that the structure was now falling faster than him towards the Earth. Pain filled him, so many people would die from this-- Airman would die from this. With just a few kilometers left, Rock summoned item 2. The hover board manifested beneath his feet, and with it he managed to slow himself down to maintain a hover.

He watched as, beneath him in the rain, the mass fell to the ground. It made a heavy metallic screeching and loud booms as it landed. The ground kicked up around it. No doubt the sound was heard for miles. He watched as more of the land was obliterated with the rest of the falling structure as it fell in a snake like pattern all across the area. In the distance he saw the appearance of water splashing up into the sky.

He would find out later that this was in fact Lake Ontario. Rock didn’t expect his journey to take him into Canada, but then again did he expect his journey to take him anywhere? He lowered himself carefully to the ground and studied the wreckage. He dug through it, trying to find any remnant of Airman within.

Flashing lights of police cars caught his attention, they recognized him immediately from the news. It’s not as though this tiny robot child wasn’t recognized for being a hero of sorts. “A robot is trapped inside the wreckage, this particular pile, and we need to find him!” Rock had explained. They tried to ask if he was hurt, to which the answer was yes, but no matter what they tried to do the little blue bomber wouldn’t let them investigate. Not until they found the robot trapped inside.

It took hours of combing through the rubble but eventually, with many human and robotic onlookers now present to see what had happened, they found the robot buried within. He was crushed to death. A tangled mess of fan blades and blue metal. His insides were forced out-- it seemed he kept his fans rotating until the end as proof by his sliced up innards which lay scattered beneath him in the pile. He was in mostly one piece and the structure of his body protected the IC Chip inside. He salvaged copy data and the chip and finally allowed authorities to take him.

He explained the situation to the Canadian law enforcement, none of which seemed to happy about the situation at hand-- but at the same time they knew of the problems that had arose just a few months ago. Rock returned home soon after, quiet and numb after having watched such a beautiful area get destroyed in the rubble.
Crashman

Chapter Summary

With Airman defeated by sheer luck alone, Rock goes to confront Crashman-- things don't go entirely as planned.

Chapter Notes

Crashman has interchangeable hands. He can pick whether he wants his hands to be drills/crash bombs or actual hands. He would be impractical otherwise.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Five: Crashman

“I’m so sorry…”

The words fell upon deaf ears as Rock stared up at the sky. He could see his ‘blood’ all over the place. The gore as he was blown clean through with a crash bomb. He didn’t know where his legs were, or his hips, or his stomach, to be honest he didn’t really care. It was just a pulpy mess that dripped all around in a faint ‘plip plip’ melody. Blue eyes tried to focus on the white specs above him, but just couldn’t.

‘Distant planets… Distant life… A heaven far away from this hell…’

His brain worked in overtime to try and give him something to hope for. Something to reach for. He didn’t feel his blood gushing out of him, didn’t feel the blood coming up as he convulsed, vomited, and coughed. His entire front coated in gore and bile. All he knew was what he was seeing and hearing, even then the senses were coming in as a scattered cacophony of data. Stuff he couldn’t quite piece together.

The fight was over in an instant. Rock went in, he challenged Crashman, and before he could even launch one attack he was stabbed through by not just one bomb, but three separate crash bombs. He tried to rip them free from his stomach, left thigh, and right calf, but the timers were too short. He went out with a big bang.

The meaty explosion was deafening, he watched as his body blew apart into pieces of twisted metal and oil. He saw Crashman’s horrified face, unprepared for his first murder. Rock saw a face not unlike his own in the other. Wide green doe eyes, laced with terror and sorrow, recognizing the crime he committed.

They are both children being forced to fight each other to the death in a war neither of them really wanted.

Was that rain that fell on his face or…?
Rock’s eyes strained to focus on the figure that clouded his vision only slightly. It wasn’t rain but his tears as they fell on his face. Twin emeralds that flooded with water, some rushed down his cheeks in tidal waves, others just fell directly down as teardrops. Those became patterns on his skin and slipped down, creating lines in the blue bomber’s blood—trails of clarity.

“I’m so sorry…” Crashman tearfully repeated, his voice a hushed and pained whimper. “Please forgive me I… I didn’t want to fight you… I didn’t want to hurt you I just… I just didn’t know what else to do…” His voice broke with sobs as he cried over him. He pleaded for some form of salvation from the sins he knew he was guilty of.

The city lights in the distance seemed to fade away as Rock tried so hard to focus on the person that just moments before he classified as more of an enemy than a friend. They were very similar, the two of them. He wondered if once upon a time, Crashman was just a child. Did he play a sport? Did he watch Saturday morning cartoons? Did he enjoy sleeping in on the weekends and have nothing else on his mind but his family during the weekdays? Was he human once?

“It’s… Okay…” Rock whispered, not even knowing he was wheezing. He shakily raised his hand up to brush those tears away, unaware that he had instead coated Crashman’s face with blood. “I… understand… You fought… well…” He hardly noticed his own tears as they flooded his vision. He forced a smile on his face, one of those closed eyed smiles as tears ran down his cheeks and onto the ground around him.

“I didn’t want to fight though!” Crash shouted back, those tears came faster and Rock once more believed that it was a heavy February storm which was causing it. It was hard to believe, with the amount of those droplets, that it was something other than a storm.

“I’m not a fighter! I don’t want to hurt you… I don’t want to hurt anyone! I was told that if I didn’t kill you, then…” He trailed off, a whimper being choked out of him as he forcibly cut himself off. Crashman couldn’t hold down the sounds as they forced their way out of him. He sobbed openly, bawled even. He bawled like the child his personality spelled out he was.

“Don’t cry…” Rock told him, continuing to smile, still not noticing how he twitched in Crashman’s arms, or how the blue of his suit was hardly visible through the deep red. “You won… So now… You don’t have to worry… And not only that… But I can have peace…” He tried to pretend that the prospect of death didn’t terrify him, but then again the idea that perhaps he could close his eyes and never wake up was nice.

Living in eternal sleep, dreaming forever and ever, in an empty void of whatever his mind could conjure up. It sounded so much more peaceful than the world of fighting he found himself in.

“That’s not fair! You don’t have to die, or deactivate, or anything like that… Don’t… Don’t you have a family too?” It was almost as though Crash wanted to feel the pain of his actions, but then again Rock couldn’t blame him. He was guilty, it was a form of self punishment for a casualty nobody gives a damn about. No human will cry over a robot. No person will wish for his return. Dr Light and Roll may, but they were two isolated individuals in a sea of people that would prefer him dead in the end anyways.

“I do… But they’d be happier… I’m just a burden… I’m broken… I can’t sleep… I can’t eat… I can’t live anymore… I’m a monster… They’d be happier without me there… I know they love me… But I also know… I’m not the best… I’m selfish… I’m closed off… I’m depressed… And scared… And hurting… They would be better off without me there…” It was hard to speak, especially with all the blood in his mouth.

“Rockman, you don’t know that.” The truth was, neither of them did. Crashman knew nothing
about the child, it could be assumed that’s why this all hurt as much as it did. Rock, on the other hand, knew his family but at the same time the way he views the world has been distorted; not unlike a fun house mirror. His world has changed so much by now that it’s hard to discern if it’s even the same anymore. “Your family loves you! Just like mine loves me… I would die for my family but… You’re so young, you shouldn’t have to do this. You shouldn't have to fight us. I wish we could just run away, but Wily…” Crash drew in a shaky breath, trying poorly to keep his sobs down.

“Wily is a terrible man who has done terrible things. Metal… I’m afraid for my brother… I’m afraid for myself too. I don’t want to be found out… But at the same time I refuse to kill you. You’re just trying to help. Your objective is much kinder than mine.” A deep breath. “I suppose I’ll take the consequences of my actions. And besides, you may not believe it, but I do think your family would miss you very much.” Rock didn’t know what to say, didn’t think he would ever be able to find the words.

“Crashman… That’s your name right…?” Crash just nodded towards him. “I will do… Everything in my power… To save you all… I promise… Just… Please don’t cry… It’ll be okay… I promise…” There was silence. A long drawn out silence, before Rock felt his eyes drifting closed. “I… Have to… go now I think…” He couldn’t find the will to reopen his eyes, the lids were too heavy. “Wait! No, don’t!” Crashman was so frightened that the child would truly die, that he didn’t want him to fall into a deep sleep. However, by the time those words finished, he was already too far into unconsciousness.

Rock didn’t hear the robot begin to sob and howl like a dying animal. He didn’t feel him shaking his limp body as it lay on the ground. He didn’t know that Crash was in as much danger as he was. For sparing Rock in any way he would most certainly be spelling trouble for himself.

He didn’t know that after his deactivation, Crashman took one of his bombs and lodged it into his own skull. He didn’t know that the robot who was in fact a mere adolescent, blew his head clean off and deactivated instantaneously. He didn’t know that when the previous robot masters, now tamper proof, came to collect the bodies, they stumbled upon a gory sight and fought to salvage the IC Chips of the fallen robot masters.

He didn’t know that in Crashman’s mind, suicide was the only escape out of a situation like this.

Chapter End Notes

I know this chapter isn't what anyone was expecting-- I wanted to try something new and the fact of the matter is that Crashman's weapon would be much more deadly than most would expect. Almost everything of importance in this chapter would've taken place after the fight so I felt that it'd be better to just skip it. This will not be an extremely common occurrence in the story.
Chapter Summary

With Crashman out of the way, Rock goes up against Flashman.

Chapter Notes

Elisabeth - DWN-009
Jacob - DWN-010
Emily - DWN-011
Serena - DWN-012
Tyler - DWN-013
Thomas - DWN-014
Ethan - DWN-015
Rose - DWN-016

Chapter Twenty-Six: Flashman

“What the hell is all of this…”

Rock didn’t know what to think as he stared blankly at the screen in front of him. He had discovered the computer when he came to fight his next enemy… Through those doors he expected to come across an arena, instead what he found was a solitary supercomputer. The files on it were terrifying. Experiment after experiment, person after person, image after image. Men, Women, Children, all of them being murdered for the sake of these sick and twisted projects.

Timeman and Oilman were the first two he found, their files were ones he was already aware of. He saw the mistake of Time’s programming, he saw the success of Oil’s, he even saw the experiments he knew were already there. Experiments that he dreaded with all of his heart because he knew that it meant something terrible. He knew that these new robot masters had to have been some byproduct…

According to the files, a family of eight was abducted for these experiments. 40 year old Rose Miller and her younger brother and sister, 38 year old Jacob Miller and 35 year old Elisabeth Miller, were all abducted two years ago. In tandem with this, Rose’s 17 year old son Thomas Smith was also abducted, as well as Elisabeth’s four children, 19 year old Serena Williams, 15 year old Tyler Williams, and 6 year old twins Emily and Ethan Miller. The file following the abductions and who they were spelled out a clearer connection.

Elisabeth Miller soon became DWN-009, Metalman. Jacob Miller would eventually become DWN-010, Airman. DWN-011, Bubbleman, was original Emily Miller. Quickman, DWN-012, was once upon a time Serena Williams. Tyler Williams would become DWN-013, Crashman. DWN-014, or Flashman, started out as Thomas Smith.
Ethan Miller became DWN-015, or Heatman. And finally DWN-016, Woodman, started as Rose Miller. Seeing all the pictures, all the images, and how happy they all seemed before, it hurt Rocks heart to know that now they were stuck without any memory of who they once were. Knowing that there is something missing to them but not knowing what it was. However the knowledge of who they were, seeing their faces and whatnot, wasn’t the most upsetting thing on this computer.

He saw the ransom video of little Emily and Ethan as they were taken hostage as a ploy to lure the rest of the family into a trap. He saw Wily experiment on deaths to see which deaths would still permit consciousness transfer. He watched as Rose was buried alive, not even in a casket. Tied up at the bottom of a glass case as dirt and rocks were thrown down upon her. He supposed it fit her name but that wasn’t justification. He saw stones fall upon her face and could have sworn that her brains were knocked out with a loud ‘crunch’ sound long before the dirt filled her lungs.

He saw Jacob being forced to hang himself, the sound of his neck snapping as the rope pulled taught. Wily’s laughter echoing over the background as the rope creaked and man dangled lifelessly over the drop beneath him-- eventually he was cut down and his body hit the ground with a grotesque smacking sound.

He watched as Thomas was bludgeoned to death by an entire group of lunatic individuals as they dug their teeth into his flesh, cannibalising him until he was nothing but scattered entrails and a face. Rock watched as he took what seemed to be an eternity to actually die.

Ethan was lit on fire, put out only to preserve his brain within his skull for the transfer. Emily was dunked under water, submerged there as she kicked and screamed, suffocating beneath the water as Wily’s hands held firm around her neck.

That wasn’t the worst of it. Tyler was forced to drink paint thinner for days on end and slowly begin to wear away from disease and poisoning. His body deteriorating from a myriad of unknown illnesses. All the while, in the background, Rock saw Elisabeth being forced to observe. In the end she was made to shoot herself in the head, to kill herself by her own hand. And yet there was still one more. He couldn’t watch Serena’s file. It disgusted Rock to know that some people would do something like that to a woman.

Not only that but said woman would begin to develop a disorder like Stockholm Syndrome. Despite the fact that her family, her whole family, was being tortured. Yet out of all of them her death was the most peaceful. During her sleep she was given a lethal injection and died without any knowledge that she would be killed… Almost as though they wanted to keep her afterward.

How could someone do something like that? How could humans hurt one another like that!? It didn’t make sense. Nobody deserves that torture. Nobody deserves to suffer like that. Although now that he knew it made so much more sense now. Why Metalman cradled him like an infant. Why Wood was so dedicated to the Earth around them. Why Air wasn’t afraid of heights and attacked in a matter that brought them both down in the end. Why Crash was just a child trying to do what was right. Why Heat and Bubble seemed to be such polar opposites and yet all too close.

“You found the files.” Rock didn’t move when he heard Flashman’s voice. He knew it was him, he sounded just the same as he did in the video files-- when he was alive. “Yeah… I did.” The blue bomber responded. “It’s pretty fucked up what happened to us don’t you think?” Flash asked him, his voice was sharp, deep, and heavy. “Yeah… I would agree… It’s terrible. I don’t know why anyone would do this.” The child spoke, turning to face him, tears in his eyes.

There was a long drawn out silence, nobody knew what to say or do. It just seemed so vacant. The air was void of any words. Just empty space. “Hey kid…?” Flash began. “What are you going to do with us once you take us down? Are you just going to kill us, destroy us? Perhaps do the same
thing Wily did?" Rock shook his head in response, almost as though if he didn’t deny it he’d be committing an atrocious crime. “After I defeat you, I’m going to take your IC Chip back to my papa so he can rebuild you.”

There was another prolonged sense of silence. A long drawn out pause. Rock wasn’t sure what would happen when it was up, if Flash would believe him or if it would become a long fight. When the other raised his own buster up at him, Rock felt that he knew the answer. An explosion of metal and glass erupted from behind him, the child stared at the Wily bot before him with wide eyes. He hadn’t shot him-- he shot the computer behind him. “The walls have eyes, the walls have ears, and because of that I had to eliminate it.” Flashman told him, nearing ever so slowly.

“If what you’re saying is the truth than I want you to deactivate me right now.” Rock didn’t know what to say, he had entered into a state of shock, staring wide eyed at the robot master before him. “Wh-What?” The child asked. “I want you to deactivate me right now, I can’t do it to myself… After that incident with Crash, Wily instated a failsafe in us. I can’t commit suicide… But you can deactivate me yourself.”

Rock hated the idea, it was grotesque, almost inhumane. “Why can’t I just take you back?” He asked, furrowing his brow. “A tracking system in my core, it prevents any of us from running away.” Flash clarified, placing his one hand on his chest. As much as the blue bomber hated it, he supposed it’d make sense that he’d have to deactivate him and remove the IC Chip considering all the factors at hand.

“It’ll hurt…” Rock warned weakly, knowing full well something like that would hold no sway. “I know.” On that note the child switched to the Crash Bomb. It seemed nobody had yet to pick up on the fact that once the light bot came into physical contact with them, he picked up on their ability. He took aim, but found himself hesitating. Was he really going to do this? Was he really just going to shoot him point blank like this and hope for the best? He supposed he had no choice. And yet… He still couldn’t bring himself to do it.

A tight grip settled upon his wrist, he looked up and locked eyes with the other. They traded glances, a simple nod, before Flash simply stated, “It’s okay, don’t think of it as death. Think of it as putting me to sleep.” Sleep… That was the second time one of the Wily Bots said something like that to him. Although this time it wasn’t in relationship to his loss, but his victory.

The explosion was gory to say the least. The bomb buried itself in the other’s torso without a problem, Rock was so close that when the explosion went off he was splattered in blood and viscera. Little bits of metal left cuts all over him, but they were practically invisible under the oil which splattered all across his skin. There was a faint ringing sound as he tried to gain his bearings. He stared down blankly at the corpse on the floor by his feet, just laying there dead.

The eyes looked up to him vacantly, his entire midsection had been reduced to little more than metallic pulp. No better than an orange. A shaky sigh escaped Rock as he collapsed into the remnants. The body of the other squashed beneath him as he retrieved the chip from within him. All the while he copied an ability that he had no idea the function of, not even caring to research it.

“Thomas… Your name was Thomas.”
Quickman

Chapter Summary

With Flashman taken down, Rock goes up against Quickman.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is much different from the other ones. The locale is not inspired from the actual stage that Quickman is found in, mostly due to the fact that I wanted to experiment with this chapter and its setting. That and I'm not quite sure where exactly Quickman is in his stage. There is still a feeling of having no time in this chapter however; very similar to the actual stage. Warning however, this chapter contains extreme gore, read with caution.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: Quickman

“Papa… Where am I?” This didn’t look like everywhere else he’s been. This wasn’t some hidden away place that a robot master was staking out. No. This was the real world. This was a place that humans could pass through freely. There was no arena, there was no special location, this was an open world that he had no idea how to face off with. “You’re in the Okefenokee Swamp, a swamp on the Florida-Georgia border.” Light responded. “That explains why it’s so humid…”

The swamp was muddy, damp, and full of life. The sunlight filtered through the canopy above, dappling the ground with patches of warm light. The air was thick with moisture and heavy with the smell of animal life. Rock stepped cautiously, his eyes darting around as he saw movement in the distance. Animals no doubt. “So… What am I doing here exactly?” Rock’s voice asked, to others he probably sounded as though he was talking to nobody, just to the air.

“Thanks to the computer you intercepted and the data you collected, I was able to track the last robot master here. Quickman if I am not mistaken. From what I’ve seen there is a military convoy in the area. My idea is that he may be shadowing them, planning to strike the convoy. I’m not sure for what reason, but I’m going to assume it’s to get soldiers to test out in the experiments. I can only imagine the strength of a robot master who has already been trained and has combat experience.” Light’s explanation made sense, but it also terrified the child. The idea that a robot master could be experienced enough to kill him from day one wasn’t a notion that he wanted to get used to. He knew that if something like that became a reality, than he’d just have to hope and pray that perhaps he’d be able to just get lucky enough to win his next confrontation.

“So I suppose the mission is to find this military convoy and either take Quick down when he attacks, or protect them?” The question seemed obvious but at the same time he wasn’t so sure of the answer. “That’s correct, Rock. But it’s easier said than done. Stay sharp and listen out, convoys aren’t the quietest of things after all.” Light told him, and with that the conversation ended. He listened out for sound, any sort of noise, he also payed attention to any signs of technology.
Anything with the military was bound to be carrying some sort of military grade technology, things that send out a signal. He picked something up for a moment, it was just a faint signal, something as small as an attempted ping from a cell phone that was left on without anyone realizing. From here he was able to pinpoint the approximate location of either the convoy, or Quickman.

He went in that direction, knowing that he was close enough to catch up. From the foliage he was able to hear the sounds of movement. The heavy sounds of armored vehicles and people chattering. Mild conversation buried beneath the traveling artillery. It was unknown what the purpose of this convoy was, but at the same time whatever it was they didn’t deserve what was possibly coming to them.

From where he was hiding in the foliage he spotted a glint. On the other side of the convoy he could see glowing red. Eyes peering through the swampland. At first he thought they were staring directly at him, but upon closer inspection, he noticed that it just wasn’t the case. Instead they were trained on the convoy, and when it passed, the figure rose to his full height. He was tall, massive even, his red armor reflected the light in almost a painful way. His eyes were locked upon the convoy and, quiet as a mouse, he followed behind. He looked not unlike a predator stalking its prey. But if that metaphor held true, then it meant he was just about ready to strike.

Quickman stepped out into the barren strip of land that the convoy passed, his focus locked upon the moving chain of vehicles. Nobody noticed him as they disappeared around the bend, deep into the darkness of the swamp. Rock watched as he positioned himself, ready to charge forward and attack. Almost as though he was never there to begin with, the robot master was off, vanishing into nothingness.

Shock and panic. Rock got to his feet and ran forward, following the convoy. He hid in the brush and, as he neared the slow travelling group of men, he could hear the beginning of conflict. He saw Quickman grabbing hold of a soldier that was sitting comfortably in one of the cars, they tried to shoot at him, but the automatics that they had weren’t doing much against his armor.

He pulled one of the men from the convoy with ease, raising him up by his neck and slamming him down to the ground with a loud crunch sound. Rock was in shock that the entire thing happened so quickly. The soldier lay limp on the ground, unmoving with his head crooked--undoubtedly broken. The convoy rolled on, shooting aimlessly at the robot master, but it seemed he didn’t quite care. He was unaffected by the bullets, and if anything they ricocheted off of him. They were just too weak. The most that Rock could see was that they dented his armor just the slightest bit.

Rock was paralyzed as Quick began to get ready to move again. He charged forward, taking another man from the convoy and, without hesitation, sliced his head from his body execution style. It was so quick that the body didn’t even remove itself from the car as blood pooled out, his head abandoned somewhere. It was complete chaos as the robot master continued to execute them one after another.

Rock had to do something, innocent men were dying. As Quick was getting ready to take another man from the convoy, the blue bomber began to shoot at him.

At this point the moving cars had come to the realization that outrunning the robot master wasn’t the best option. That he was just too fast for them. The shots had ceased for a second as everyone saw the child there, the other robot, aiming at the enemy. The body count reached three as Quick slammed another man onto the ground and crushed his skull beneath his feet. It splattered like a cherry beneath his foot, outward and all over. Little white pieces of skull that could be mistaken for eggshells were stained in that putrid red.
The two stood still, eyes locked, the soldiers watched on in terror at the idea that perhaps another robot had come to take them down as well. However their fears were soon quelled when the initial robot spoke up. “So you’re the robot that’s been killing my brothers, I suppose you’re going to try and kill me now too?” No comment, no reply. Rock was tired of explaining himself, and the bloodshed that had manifested all over the convoy was enough to tell him that any answer would be the wrong one.

Before Rock could do anything, Quick was off again. He had to do something-- anything. He had to try and make sure that he could save these humans, but at the same time he knew he wasn’t fast enough.

**Time Stopper.**

The words came to him swiftly, like a moving train. Flashman had given him an ability, yes that was the truth of the matter. Perhaps he could still Quick in his tracks. He switched his ability and immediately proceeded to freeze time. With everything frozen as it were, he made his move to try and save as many people as he could. He’d approach individuals, and with his contact, they’d move again. He couldn’t switch his weapon, otherwise it’d reinstate time, but he was able to guide people away.

He’d guide them into the foliage, explaining what was going wrong, what had happened. He explained the story to one troop telling him to explain it to everyone else.

He couldn’t stand to waste anymore time. One after another he guided them into hiding. Telling them to leave their phones where they were as that was most likely how Quick was tracking them. He managed to save the majority of the men, guiding them with precision and expertise. They asked him, every single one, why it was a child that was saving them, but he just simply stated that he didn’t have time to explain-- he explained to one and that was all he could do. Four out of eight of the vehicles were evacuated safely.

Sadly the timer ran out before he could save anyone else. He figured this out as he went to save the man that Quick was holding onto in the moment, hoping that he could spare his life. At point blank he saw the robot master bury a sharp boomerang shaped dagger deep into the skull of the man. Blood splattered out and all over Rock’s face. It was sticky and warm and the crunching noises of the dagger persisted. Deeper and deeper it plunged. When he was done with him, the robot master through the soldier against the tree.

His body folded limply there. Once that task was completed, the lifeless glassy eye of the soldier staring weakly out into the abyss of the swampland, it was easy for Quick to realize that his other targets had vanished. It wasn’t hard for him to turn his focus on the child. “So you’re interfering, you brat…” His voice was sharp. Rock tried to get away and shoot at him with the Rockbuster, but it really was a slow weapon-- and it didn’t seem as though Quick was really affected.

It didn’t cross the child’s mind that perhaps he could use any other weapon, he was too busy trying to recuperate from the trauma he just witnessed with the soldier being slaughtered. “Nobody gets in the way of Wily!” Rock felt the intense pressure against his neck as he was lifted. It felt so familiar to him, being held like this. He couldn’t breathe but he wasn’t going to give up. He kicked at Quick, who didn’t seem to yield as he held him there, expression filled with annoyance.

“You’ve been a real pest, and while my brothers may have yielded to you far too easily, I won’t be dissuaded so simply.” Quick squeezed Rock’s throat as he held him there, making it more and more difficult for the blue bomber to have the energy to continue to struggle. He saw spots in his vision as the air which cooled his body began to be cut off. He was going to start overheating soon in the hot Florida heat.
A blade, he saw the glint of the boomerang shaped blade in Quick’s hand. It was coated in a rust colored fluid, undoubtedly the fluid that flooded so easily through the bodies of many people. “Nobody will get in my way of becoming Wily’s favorite… I will make sure of that.” In his eyes Rock could see an obsession, one that he was sure was also present in Quick’s life as a living, breathing human.

Serena was said to develop a form of Stockholm syndrome, would it be really all that surprising that now, as a free man, Quick would still try to attach himself to him. Unlike his siblings who knew they were being held captive, he wanted to stay close, afraid of what may come to him if he didn’t. Many humans are like that, afraid of breaking away from people that have hurt them because it was all they’ve ever known.

“S-Serena…” Rock uttered in broken words, breaths invading the syllables. “D-Don’t do this.” Quick hesitated for a moment, eyes widening before narrowing again. “I don’t know who the fuck Serena is.” His words were sharp as his gaze became harsh. He hoped it would make a dent in his actions, just long enough for more soldiers to get out and run, which, judging by what the child could see, was working.

“Y-Your family, Serena. They’re waiting for you. They can’t… Don’t you want to see them? E-Elisabeth, Jacob--” He coughed, trying to struggle for the space to speak. “Ethan, Emily--” He felt the force on his throat strengthen. “Shut up you fucking brat!” He had never seen such rage in the face of someone before as the robot master slammed him into the ground.

A loud cracking sound escaped from Rock’s metallic body as a cough was forced out of his oppressed throat. “Don’t. Ever. Say. Those. Names. Again!” With each word he slammed the child into the ground, finishing soon after, panting and sweating. The soft ground had an imprint in it, the mud and moss clung to the blue bomber’s form, hanging onto him as though little arms were trying to hold him down. The robot master lifted the child, his breath coming out heavy and thick.

Rock watched as that blade rose up, the look of anger in Quickman’s face was terrifying in of itself. Something akin to the anger of the Gods in ancient mythos. “Didn’t your no-good creator teach you to respect the dead?” He didn’t have chance to reply, or even process the rhetorical question, before there was a sharp stabbing in his chest. His eyes were large, saucer-like, as he stared at Quick.

Slowly and steadily, almost surgeon like, the robot master began to glide the blade down the front of the child, from the ‘collar bone’ to the ‘naval’. Rock’s kicking halted as he felt the oily fluid drip down his body, gushing streams. “Have you ever experienced a vivisection?” Quickman asked him, he couldn’t understand completely what he was trying to say, his vision was blacking out and his senses were numbed by the overwhelming pain. He glanced down and saw the incision.

He watched Quick’s fingers plunge into the wound, slow and steady. He could feel the tingling sensation of pressure within his body. His ‘organs’ were being squished gently by the other’s index finger and thumb almost as if he was massaging them. “Your insides are so squishy, almost like puddy.” He watched as his hand continued to plunge deeper and deeper into his body, rummaging around as though he was a child rummaging through an antique toy chest. Rock felt him firmly grasp something inside of him before beginning to yank it out. He was in so much shock that he couldn’t let out a scream.

He just hung there limp as he watched his ‘intestines’ and ‘stomach’ be removed. It hung from him in a gooey mess. Muscular rope that dangled loosely from his insides. Tears trailed down Rock’s face as he coughed and spat up ‘blood’ once again. The taste was so familiar to him that he no longer recognized it for what it was. He watched that hand grasp around his stomach, holding it as
though it were some toy. “I wonder,” Quick began. “Can I force you to throw up.”

Rock watched as his hand squeezed harshly around his stomach, almost as though it were a stress ball. The fluid inside rushed up and the child felt the bile exit his mouth aggressively. All over Quick’s arm and down his front. Blue eyes gazed up at the other, the life fading from them in rapid succession. There was a crooked grin on that face of his. “Aww… How adorable. I can’t wait to--”

**Bang!**

Quick’s eyes were wide as he looked down to his chest to see a hole blooming there. He looked over his shoulder to see who was shooting at him before.

**Ka-chk**

**Bang!**

Rock saw that same gaping maw open up in his face, his head exploding outwards. The fluid reminded him of when someone puts a mentos in cherry soda. The metallic husk wobbled for a moment as though struggling to hold, before collapsing and throwing the child away. He saw a rock grip onto his intestines, ripping them open, before he came to a stop, tangled up in his own insides.

He lay there, in a complete state of shock, as his body shook and trembled where he lay. A benevolent face manifested above him, gentle eyes which looked down upon him in a sorrowful way. The face was familiar to him somehow.

“You’re one of Thomas’ bots… You poor child…” He heard that voice, a faint Russian accent hanging on the words. “Don’t worry, I’ll take you home, and bring the IC chip of this robot master with us. You’ll be safe.” Rock’s eyes couldn’t stay open and as shock overcame his body, he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.
Chapter Twenty-Eight: Dragon

His stomach ached, he could feel the thin line of a scar that ran from his collarbone to his naval. It wasn’t visible to the naked eye, but when he ran his fingers over the once gaping wound, he could feel the ridge. It was like a mountain beneath his clothes. Why didn’t he do anything when Quick held him? He wasn’t sure… He could have shot at him and scratched at him, tried desperately to get away, fight for his life. Perhaps it was the shock, perhaps he had overheated, perhaps he just was too frightened of making things worse. The lingering pain was pestering the back of his mind. It was like a shadow reaching out for him, groping madly at him. Trying to pull him back into a memory he’d rather not relive. So many memories that he didn’t want to face. To think that this all started with a lost leg. To think that such events were the worst it would get. It seemed so… false now. He felt as though he whined far too much back then. Those months long since past. He regretted crying over the battle wounds he sustained, he regretted weeping those tears then when really he should be weeping those tears now.

‘A child shouldn’t have to deal with this sort of pain…’ A vague voice from the edge of the world. Who did it belong to? He wasn’t sure… It was only the other day that he heard it and yet it felt so different from now. ‘I’ve tried to pull him from the fight, but he just keeps going. I don’t know what to do.’ A conversation that played from a foggy dream, one that he was stumbling through with little control. ‘I wish… I wish I knew how to help you, Thomas.’ A gust of wind blew passed the child. ‘I wish too, Mikhail… I wish there was something we could do… But someone has to stop Albert.’ Those names, they all seemed so familiar and yet their origins were as distant to him as the nearest star. ‘That bastard… Let’s hope he’s captured this time and put on death row.’

‘If Rock doesn’t get to him first…’

Those voices were so far away. So distant as he made his way through the trails of this new dungeon. He didn’t think much as he fought, his mind elsewhere as he shot at enemies he couldn’t name. Rock was numb to everything, to the point where he wasn’t even sure of who he was. He was running on autopilot, just trying to process the hazy reality he found himself in.
It felt almost as though he was just ready to fall, just about to tumble over the edge and into an abyss far below. He was nearing the edge of the world where those voices were, but at the same time they were beyond that physical, tangible end. They were deep within the void, speaking in conversation that he could hardly hear. They were lost to him in an abyss that he could never reach. It felt like all joy, all comfort, had retreated to that far away place and as he reached out to try and grab them, he risked falling to his death in the endless fall before him… The fall that was the end of the world.

‘What did they say at the end of the world?’ Rock asked as he came to that darkened cavern, hanging above a new abyss. The end out of sight and the darkness swallowing him whole. ‘Beware: here there be dragons.’ Yes, wasn’t there a legend about that. Dragons that lurked on the edge of the world. Waiting to devour men that sailed too close. Serpents ready to bind themselves to ships and drag them beneath the waves. Beasts that flew in the sky, spitting fire and clamping down onto the bodies of the living as they tried to stay grounded. At a double disadvantage in every way.

Yes there was a dragon here, but not just in the mythical sense, but also the literal sense. It flew on massive wings, its green hyde shimmering in the dim light of its flame. Glowing red eyes that focused upon him. And yet despite this sight, which would have terrified him before, he was completely numb now.

He stood one one of those three platforms, staring into the eyes of the beast that should be at the edge of the world. ‘Here there be dragons… Here there be no return…’ He didn’t know where those words originated, perhaps a book or a movie from a life long since passed. A life that he no longer recognized to be his own. The beast’s claws attempted to swipe at him, to which he was quick to dodge. Completely on autopilot. Just another metal messenger predicting his doom almost like some macabre prophet.

‘Why… Why do we exist? He’s a robot just like me, and yet we’re trying to kill each other. Why? Why did humans build us? Was there really a purpose? Everything we can do they can do just as well, in fact they can probably do it better. Why did they give us feelings, emotions, desires? It feels almost as though they are mocking us. Once upon a time, people believed in boogey men and creatures that hide in the closets. While there is no ghost to suck the breath out of the living, there are robots that will steal it nonetheless.’

He jumped out of way of a fireball as it hissed passed, singing the air around him and giving him a sense of burning. Cold air swept in quickly to replace it however as the flames dissipated into the void far beyond. The air reeked of burning gasoline and the chemical reaction that is fire. He didn’t need to think about it to know how to defeat the monster. Quick boomerang in hand, he began to aim for it, ready to cut it open just as he had no more than forty-eight hours ago.

‘If this is all robots are fated to become, then why do we exist? Why do we feel? Why does anyone feel? This world is ugly, it’s awful, it’s not worth protecting. War after war, massacre after massacre, how many people have died so far? How many will continue to die? Not by the teeth and claws of animals but by the hands of man and their own selfish creations? Is this world even worth being alive for, being alive to see? Is it worth all the pain that we have endured?’

He felt as if he was drowning as he sliced open the dragon’s neck. He saw gasoline leak out and the spark within it. It flickered, flickered, so dangerously close to the volatile fluid. One more fireball and the beast’s exterior would catch, it would burst into flames and then what? Will it just go down? Rock wasn’t sure, he wasn’t thinking about that. He was just thinking about his promise. The fact that he can’t die because he was asked to come home-- that was his creator’s wishes.
‘Why does he want me to come home anyways? Why does he want to get attached anyways? I promised to fight out here, and I know that I will die out here as well. Not that it really matters, I’m a robot, not a person. My life doesn’t matter. Do I even have a life? Am I even worth that respect? I am a hunk of metal, turning gears that grate together, running on electricity and solar energy. I’m not anything special, I’m just… Existing. I don’t even know if I’m truly conscious or just programmed to believe I am.’

The spark lit the gasoline as the dragon spit another fireball at the child who was quick to move. It caught and became as bright as a star. All over the walls of the cavernous place he could see eyes staring at him. Or what he thought were eyes. Perhaps it’s just his imagination. Eyes as they glared at him, arms as they reached out to try and grab him, the torch light falling down into the void of grasping arms and staring eyes. The dragon falls to the Hell below, leaving behind no remains as the flames grow further and further. Just like the furthest star in space. Except this time it’s not beautiful.

‘What do I expect to accomplish by doing all of this? By fighting Wily? What do I hope to achieve? Once upon a time I would say that I want to protect people but I don’t know if that’s true anymore. It was people that brought me here in the first place and made me live through this after all. I don’t hate them, but I don’t think they deserve protecting anymore either.’

The darkness swallowed him up again, the endless night that he found himself in. He felt so cold, so alone, almost as though freezing rain was falling onto his skin. He turned to venture onwards, but wasn’t sure which way to go. Forward, or back… Of course the answer was simple, forward. That was the only way he could go. That was the only way that made sense. If he turned back now than all the pain he’s been through really would be for nothing, instead of only half of it being for nothing.

‘Why am I saving them? They’ll just continue to kill each other, continue to murder, rape, kill, and torture. What is the purpose of fighting for a species so self destructive? What’s the point of fighting for a species that won’t even fight for you? But if that’s the case, than what’s the point of living for a species like this one? To receive dirty sideways glances on the street, to be grouped together with the people I’m fighting, to watch as the world falls apart and you can do nothing to stop it because you can’t hurt a human? What’s the point of it all? What’s the point of being a slave?’

A choked sob escaped him, the first sob that he’s cried in a long while. Leaning against a closed door, with the void behind him, that shooting star of gasoline and metal long gone. He pressed his forehead to the door and wept. His hands pressed against the cool metal as tears trailed down his face. Why did this hurt so much? Why did this realization sting him so much? He wanted to be hopeful, once upon a time he had no problem being such, but now he’s seen what the world really is like. The world isn’t loving, it isn’t forgiving, it won’t reward him and it won’t cheer for him. He will fight onward with no hope of seeing the end. He has successfully signed a contract to work a job where his only salvation is the hope that things would get better. He gambled his soul to the devil, and he lost it. Now the only way for him to get it back is to kill that man who makes this job a possibility. That man who is abducting people and attacking the world.

‘One day I’ll be forgotten. Nobody will remember me. I’ll be another lost memory never to reach the history books. The only way anyone will remember me is through some memory, but what memory will that be? The memory of a murderer I’m sure. If that’s my legacy than aren’t I better off dead? Aren’t I better off being forgotten, whisked away by the sands of time? To rest in peace? But I suppose I wouldn’t ever know that. I won’t know because I gave my soul to the devil, and I won’t ever get it back.’
Walls

Chapter Summary

The dragon is taken care of, now it's time for the wall robots.

Chapter Notes

Rock would have his copy abilities, if they thought Wily was going to strike back before. Due to how Rock's copy system works, one can simply uninstall the ability chip to remove the weapon. It takes time to reinstall the weapons however, even if it takes seconds to uninstall, as such they didn't have time to reinstate his copy abilities.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Walls

The walls were moving. He was sure of it. This room was ugly and distorted, purple walls that pulsated and buzzed. To say he was terrified would be an over exaggeration. Once upon a time he would be scared, now he just accepted the fact that everything wanted to kill him. He didn’t know what to expect, wasn’t sure if he should be expecting anything. The faint buzzing sounds within the walls gave him a migraine, but he was sure he would get over it. He just needed to kill the damn thing to make it shut up. But how would he do that? How would he manage to take down a whole room.

As though answering his question, parts of the walls flew from their positions. The bricks joined together an it didn’t take long for an insectoid creature to manifest in the air. It’s buzzing was insatiably loud throughout the room as it sparked and gnashed. It was a disgusting, filthy thing. It had a fly’s eyes, pinsirs like a beetle, and legs like a scarab, with it’s ladybug like wings fluttering sporadically from its back in an attempt to stay aloft. It moved quickly towards him, not missing a beat, gnashing and biting at him as is to be expected from a beast like this.

Rock, as it came towards him, didn’t hesitate to bury a metal blade into its body, straight through the abdomen. Green goop oozed from the opening as it fell to the ground beside him, twitching still. He approached and squashed its tiny head beneath his boot, there was a sickening crunching sound as the massive pink body went limp. He was relieved and appeased at this defeat, and yet it didn’t take long for another to manifest.

The brick that was beneath the deceased insect began to move and take the creature with it. This turned into a fatal mistake for the forming insect as now, fully formed, there was a body in the middle of it. The beast fizzled out, screeched before it too fell to the ground. Rock couldn’t help but think of how stupid the creature was-- or perhaps how smart to recognize the heavy weight on the ground.

Another one formed but instead of coming at him, who was obviously much lighter and had much less, it went for the corpse of its fallen brethren. It became obvious to Rock what the machine
wanted to do. It wanted to eat. It wanted to be able to survive just like he did. Just enough to be alive. He watched as it gorged itself on the carcass of the fallen insect. Swallowed down all that was there, green goop spilling from its mouth onto the floor. Ripping, tearing, devouring. Shame he couldn’t allow for it to live onward to finish its meal. He had to kill it, as is the job of a soldier.

A well placed metal blade between the eyes made it keel just as easy as its predecessors. The buzzing was significantly quieted, the movement had nulled just enough to give him back the clarity he had lost. The walls were peeling away, breaking apart, revealing the electrical wiring beneath. The room was the breeding ground for this insects as they lay in wait. How many more does he need to kill before this place shuts down.

Two more panels of the walls came rushing outwards and together. Rock continued to lure them to the corpses, allowed them to gorge for a bit before putting them out of their misery. He watched the bodies pile up. One, Two, Three, Six… More and more did those insects stack. Wily didn’t test them, but then again did he test any of his robots? Were they as foolproof as he thinks?

Most certainly not if this was what became of them. The walls revealed themselves, the wired panels beneath them as the monstrosity continued to devour what was there. Some had just barely enough time to finish one of their brethren before being taken down. A problem, however, began to come to the child’s mind. How long until all the bricks are gone? And what happens should one of the bricks try to move under the ten or so carcasses that lay there on the ground, oozing green slime and twitching just barely as their weight settled into the room’s natural ridges.

No… They weren’t twitching because they were settling, they were twitching because something was moving. Rock frowned, he was about to get his answer. One brick up above tried to join with the other, but it seemed to have issues locating its alternate. It was buried beneath the bodies. Blue eyes widened as he saw sparks. The thing was malfunctioning, it was most certainly going to--

Before he could finish the thought he saw the heavy metallic brick come crashing down. He tried to jump out of the way but instead felt his body being dragged to the ground. His jaw clicked shut as his chin slammed into the ground with force. There was immense pain, but he paid it no mind as he rested there on the ground, there was worse pains in this world, all of which he has felt before. There was a low sizzling, hissing sound, kind of like ice being settled on a hot plate. Cracking slowly and steadily, creaking with the change, with the pressure.

He pushed himself up and felt something pinning him down, it was preventing him from peeling up. He casted an annoyed glance down at his leg, more agitated and inconvenienced than anything. He has long since given up caring about his own health. It didn’t matter after all, he was expendable, one day he will die in the field and when that happens the world will celebrate one less robotic threat.

His leg had been pinned to the ground by the falling brick. It sparked and jolted, but he could see his leg crushed beneath it. ‘Blood’ oozed out from beneath it in a wide, sticky, crude puddle. Rock had no time for this, he needed to move onward. He couldn’t hesitate to free himself, and so he got to work. Knowing full well that the more time he wasted, the more likely it was that someone died.

The first thing he tried was pushing the brick off with his free leg. He pushed and pushed, tried to kick it off. But it wouldn’t budge. Not even a little. It stung whenever he did try, and he couldn’t find out how to wedge his toes underneath in order to get it up. He didn’t have the Guts Arm ability anymore, the would be helpful right now. All of his abilities were removed when he thought that maybe, just maybe, things would go back to the way they were… But that was far too much to ask.

With that attempt futile, he tried to look around for something to help him hoist the brick up. He
tried to reach for the bugs, hoping to rip one open to gain some mechanical piece, but found that was impossible. He couldn’t reach, his fingers just barely grazing over one of the bugs. If anything he was pushing them further away by reaching for them like this. He watched as his grazing made them slip just out of his grasp. Their lifeless eyes stared at him, as though teasing.

He wasn’t completely out of options however. He could always do the worst thing possible, the one nobody wants to do, but he knows he’d have to. Through the pain and trauma, Rock began to push away from the weight, turning his body so he was on his back instead of his stomach. It hurt to dislocate himself like that, but it had to be done. He pulled, and pulled, and pulled knowing full well that he wasn’t going to slip out from under the heavy object.

The force of the wall piece landing on him did enough of the breaking, now he just had to sever the damage. And sever he did. He watched as clothes, skin, muscles all ripped apart. ‘Blood’ spurted out like some strange sprinkler as slowly and steadily his body came apart. A sickening tearing sound, that wet aluminum foil sound, came to his mind again as he proceeded to push and push. His eyes were locked on the ever growing rift as wires snapped all about the metallic ‘bone’.

A sickening ‘krksh’ sound echoed as he finally pulled free from the stone. He watched as his kneecap was wrenched away from him, being pulled out like the meat inside of a crab shell, but at least he was free. He panted where he sat, staring at the pool of fluid that built up around the crushed leg, most likely just a splatter now.

His gaze fell upon the insects again—yes they had joints and they had something he was sure he could fashion into a makeshift leg until he could get home. A prosthetic. He dragged himself over to those carcasses, reaching into the pile, and pulling one of the most intact ones. He began to rip it apart, splattering himself with green slime. Rock wrenched out the guts and the insides, revealing the inner workings, the inner ‘bones’. They weren’t exactly like his, but they would work for his purposes.

One of the bones came loose rather quickly, he managed to pull it free and began to investigate the joint before moving over to his knee. Yes he needed the screws and bolts in there. With that he began to crudely fashion the leg onto the stub of his own. It became painfully clear, however, that he won’t be able to stand on the toothpick of a foot he fashioned himself, he needed to expand it.

Ah-- the skull should work just fine.

He worked to skin the beast, pulling it apart, before taking the skull. He began to smash it onto the ground, breaking off the chunks that wouldn’t work, before sticking his ‘leg’ into the holes. There was a wet squish sound as it settled into the ‘brain’ of the beast, but that was quite alright, it would only cement the leg in there further. He rose to his feet and found it wasn’t easier to move but he could move.

He didn’t appreciate the juices that seeped out with every step he took, but it had to be done. He had to move onward. He couldn’t sit still. He had to save this world before it fell apart on him, before anymore people were killed. It was his promise…

‘Rock!? Are you alright!? What happened!?’ Dr Light’s voice droned on in his ear piece.

“Nothing… Just some minor damages. Nothing to go back to the lab over”
**Guts Tank**

**Chapter Summary**

Onward the storming of Wily castle continues, Rock now faces off with a familiar face-- Gutsman?

**Chapter Notes**

It is worth noting that the Guts Tank/Dozer has zero personality and it doesn't at all actually act like Gutsman. It is a lesser bot and is not a robot master. As such it is completely neutral. The only thought process it has is to kill intruders.

**Chapter Thirty: Guts Tank**

What he didn’t expect to materialize out of the darkness of this new arena was a familiar face. It was a face that was familiar enough but not familiar to the point that it hurt his heart. No… It was just a mockery of someone he knew. A macabre joke that he was sure Wily was playing on him. The squelching sounds of his makeshift foot caused him to cringe, but he ignored it. There were cracks running through the bones but he would ignore it. He wanted to take down this new monstrosity before he went home.

The thing he was face to face with looked like Gutsman, but it wasn’t quite him. It was a mimicry, something from a semi-lucid fever dream. The thing was more like a bulldozer version of Gutsman than anything. It wasn’t quite him but at the same time it was uncannily close. He could see in those glowing red eyes, however, that there was no personality there. That there was just vacant soullessness lingering there in that mechanical body.

It rolled closer to him and Rock felt the entire floor sway. They were suspended on platforms which were supported by thick ropes attached to a ceiling he couldn’t see. It felt almost as though he was on a rocking boat. It was terrifying to think that perhaps they would rock and rock before plummeting into the darkness below. He didn’t know what was down there, and didn’t really plan to find out.

However, as he looked at the monstrosity which rolled along towards him on caterpillar treads, he couldn’t help but wonder how he was going to take the thing down. It was a behemoth, no doubt about the weak spot being the head but even if he could reach up to hit it, what attack would do the trick the best. To say he was familiar with the weapons that he’s gained would be a lie.

He saw those thin ropes as he backed away from the advancing tank, yes those could work. If the pit beneath them was as far as he thought it was than perhaps he could drop it into the chasm while still saving himself. It’d be a cheap win but with his handicap as it was it was better than no win at all.
He thought this would be relatively easy as he took aim and continuously backed up at a constant speed that rivaled the other, until, that is, the robot began to spit out little robots towards him. The mets were annoying enough when encountered randomly throughout the entrances to these arenas, to see them again was a kick in the stomach almost.

He jumped around, jumped over the things as they came rushing towards him, but by doing so the tank began to inch towards him. This would not do. He would have to take down the platforms ahead of him first. Yes that would have to be the case. He turned on his heel and began running from the thing, switching to the Quick Boomerang. It was sharp and it worked rather well in his opinion. It did miracles on the dragon and it could hit multiple targets while giving him enough time to clear the area.

He felt one fist come dangerously close to him, slamming on the ground and sending him rocketing into the air. He was without solid ground for a good minute, and from where he was he could see the entire platform shake and tremble beneath him before he landed on it with a hard thunk. It creaked, alarming the child as he looked up.

“Oh fuck…” The words fell out of his mouth as he saw the rope begin to snap, the reinforcement was fraying. The tank however didn’t seem to notice as it continued to roll on towards him. Rock turned to look back at it and scrambled to get to his feet. This thing was going down whether he liked it or not.

*BANG!*

He went soaring again but this time the image beneath him was less than promising.

He saw the fraying ropes finally snap and heard them break from where he was in the sky. The tank teetered on the edge of the previous platform before finally succumbing to its center of gravity and falling into the abyss below. Rock tried to grab onto the next platform but was just too far away. He had no chance to grab it as he went plummeting into the darkness below. He scrambled to change his abilities, tried to shift his powers and get access to Item-2. After a while he managed and yet…

“Come on! Spawn! Spawn you stupid thing!” He tried over and over again to get the thing to just manifest, but couldn't. It became painfully apparent as to why this happened. In order to optimize his ability to remain on these transport items, Light put more than a select few mechanisms into his legs. Some of them vital to conjuring up these items. However one of his legs wasn’t present anymore. As such it seems to be impossible to get the power to work.

He tried every item, only one spawned, Item-3. But that only worked when gripping onto walls. Something that Rock didn’t have. As such he plummeted further and further down into the abyss below. The darkness swallowed him and soon he found that he was falling down something akin to a tunnel. Lights rushed past, LEDs which gave only temporary solace from the shadows.

He closed his eyes and waiting for the eventual hard hit of the ground. He heard the clattering banging of the platform hitting… something. Something hard. Not long after an even louder bang as the tank slammed into it as well. Light poured in and Rock felt more terror over this than he did in the dark. Looking beneath him he saw that the Tank tore open the panels of what appeared to be some sort of waste disposal hatch.

Everything that was once laying atop it now came flooding out and Rock was quick to join the dumpage to the outside world. Splashing. He heard splashing.

Cold. The water was frigid, but it felt so nice as it embraced him. The sea was dark, and yet he
didn’t mind as he forced his way to the surface, coughing and gasping. The moon hung above him in a welcoming way, as though guiding him home. He saw the shoreline as the tide pushed wave upon wave over the sands. He pressed through the muck of the trash, using the rocky walls to his left to guide him to the shoreline.

He made it and hobbled onto the remote beach, panting and drenched. He removed his helmet and let himself collapse onto the sand. He was alive. He was okay. Rolling onto his back he stared up at the stars. They weren’t saying anything and yet he felt as though they were cheering him on. As though they were hoping that he would continue to fight. As though they saw him as Earth’s guardian. In a way he may just be.

“Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee, all through the night;” The words fell out of his mouth without him thinking about it. “Guardian angels God will send thee, all through the night;” A phantom melody from an encounter he hardly remembered and an occurrence he wasn’t sure was truth. “Soft the drowsy hours are creeping, hill and vale in slumber sleeping, I my loving vigil keeping, All through the night.”

Two voices faded in from the darkness as he stared fixated on the moon. “While the moon her watch is keeping, all through the night;” Metal’s voice, it’s motherly tones once so confusing but now making perfect sense. “While the weary world is sleeping, all through the night;” Light holding him close to his chest and kissing his head, softly humming the melody to him after the child woke up screaming due to night terrors relating to the horrors he’s experienced. “O'er thy spirit gently stealing, visions of delight revealing,” He sat up, peeling his body from the grainy ground beneath him. “Breathes a pure and holy feeling, all through the night.” The ocean just barely grazed his one foot, as though comforting him with its seafoam finger tips.

“Hark, a solemn bell is ringing, clear through the night;” He saw the moon continue to hover above the water, casting a reflection so heavenly that he was breathless. “You, my love, are heav’nward winging, home through the night.” He rose to his feet and approached tentatively, still shaken but calming significantly now. “Earthly dust from off thee shaken, by good angels art thou taken;” The water surrounded him and he could feel the tide coming in around his knees and stealing away all the troubles he had. “Soul immortal shalt though waken, home through the night.” The siren song dissipated on the wind as the final push of the tide came in, and with its eventual retreat something clicked in the child’s head.

He was fighting this battle because despite all the pain and the suffering, he truly did love this world.
Chapter Summary

With his miraculous survival from the Guts Tank, Rock goes up against the alleged 'security system' known as the Boobeam Trap.

Chapter Notes

I actually really hate this boss-- it is remarkably difficult to beat if you don't know how. And due to the fact that Rock wouldn't have any idea of how to beat it I decided to remove the walls that make this boss fight so overwhelmingly difficult. I apologize if this chapter is remarkably boring, writing a stationary enemy is harder than writing a moving enemy, at least for things that aren't sentient.

Chapter Thirty-One: Boobeam

He didn’t understand why they embraced him when he came home, he didn’t understand why they seemed so disgusted by his makeshift leg or why they were so hesitant to send him back out onto the field, but what he did understand now was why he was doing this. It wasn’t the answer to everything that he received contemplating upon that beach, but he received the answer to something and that was a step in the right direction no matter what it was the answer was for.

‘There’s a powerful security system coming up, please be careful.’

How long ago was it that Dr Light spoke to him like that over the radio waves? How long ago was it? He appreciated the voice more than ever now and definitely made it a point to play off of the advice he gave. It was a requirement for survival, he realized this now. He trusted his father, he decided that long ago, because Light loved him more than anything. A parent’s love knows no bounds afterall.

The room he came to was strange, walls were put up everywhere, hiding away something that he wasn’t sure of. He climbed up onto a ledge to try and get more of a vantage point, to see just a little bit better of what he was suppose to be fighting. The arena door sealed him in so he knew he was in the right place. After a moment or two, he heard the revving sound of… something.

The walls shattered as electricity was sent towards the small child. He didn’t expect it as his body was electrified. It lasted a few seconds, but a few seconds was all he needed. The things that were shooting at him were little gooey orbs that clung to the walls. They sparkled and glowed with pulsating pink light. They almost looked alive. What the hell kind of security system were these things!?

He wasn’t sure where to go with fighting them. They seemed to be immune to his Rockbuster, so that wasn’t an option. He first decided to try the Quick Boomerang but soon found that it too was
pointless. Down the line he went… Leaf Shield, Atomic Fire, Bubble Lead, Metal Blade, none of them seemed to work. All the while that awful revving would begin before it shot at him again.

Unsure of how to dodge the damn things, he kept being hit, electrified by the ‘security system’s blows. Could it even be classified as a security system!? He still didn’t know what it was. After much trial and error, he managed to figure out the thing’s weakness. The Crash Bomb. When the bomb clasped onto the system it not only removed it from the wall, but when it detonated it destroyed the whole thing. One less laser to go.

Using Item-1 he managed to climb up to higher platforms. That revving started up again and from where he was positioned, on the highest platform, he was a sitting duck. The blow nearly knocked him off, but he managed to keep some sort of grip. Aiming his buster, he fired another Crash Bomb at one of the exposed beams. Once more the bomb’s little ‘legs’ gripped onto it and wrenched it from the wall, exploding shortly thereafter.

Two down, three more to go— or at least three that he could see. He carefully jumped down from his vantage point to see two more rather clearly from where he was. Just barely separated by a thin floor. The lower one came free easily. As he watched the thing get wrenched from the wall he heard the other machines begin to rev up, including the beam now laying on the floor.

Detonation and then shot. Three were now down and two were left, but nevertheless he was suffering major damages here. He needed to take them down as soon as possible, before they could shoot any further. Rock climbed up onto the ledge above and shot the gun that rested up there.

It broke away and exploded just like the others. One more left. He turned and saw it. The final trap. This was one of the easiest fights he had to do, he was shocked. He got a running start and made a jump. Landing expertly on the middle platform again, he took aim at the final boobeam, before shooting. Once more the crash bomb gripped on, removed it from the wall, and then detonated.

It felt good to be able to beat an enemy so easily, without that ultimate feeling of dread of being defeated. Yes the system was intimidating, but for the most part he felt he was doing pretty well. Perhaps that wasn’t something that should be celebrated however. It meant he was getting better and better at this with each fight he faced. Something he held a deep concern for.

If they finally caught Wily this time, would he be able to return to the way he was. Would he be able to be a child again? He wasn’t sure about that. He pressed his hand to his chest. That ridge was still there. Protruding under his body suit, a mountain range of a ‘scar’ which marked some morbid dissection.

How does someone recover from that?

Gliding his fingers over his knee yielded the same result. Right beneath the newly installed armor he could feel that familiar ridge of a ‘scar’ from where he just completely tore his leg off. How does someone, anyone, recover from something like that? Could you recover from something like that? It didn’t seem like it.

While he has long since accepted that this is his destiny, his mission, he still didn’t like it. Rock is a pacifist, he always has been, he didn’t want to fight at first, he still doesn’t want to fight. But at the same time he knows that sometimes peace won’t solve anything. Especially with a mad-man. And while some may argue Wily isn’t mad, just misunderstood, Rock firmly believed the prior.

Anyone who could so happily rob an entire family of their lives and happiness, leaving them to inhabit metallic bodies without even the slightest sliver of a notion of who they were, is most certainly mad. But not only that, any man who is so willing to cause a child like himself death just
because of his bitterness, is most definitely mad. But on another note, say they contained the mad man and put him away, could Rock return to his life before regardless? Did it even matter?

He wanted to be able to watch television without expecting an eye to appear in the middle of it. He wanted to be able to go visit caverns without worrying about a cave-in. He wanted to be able to hug his brothers without worrying about getting blown up. He wanted to be able to play rock-paper-scissors again without being reminded of how he crushed his brother to death. He wanted to see icicles and think they were beautiful without the worry of getting impaled. He wanted to be able to watch a zombie movie without feeling so terrified that he just hid away. There are so many things he wished he could do, so many things that he wanted to do, but just couldn’t.

Not anymore at least.

But was now the time to be thinking about stupid things like that? Was now the time for him to ponder over ideas like that? Rock didn’t think so. And as such he pushed himself up onto his feet and began to proceed deeper into the depths of Wily’s castle. Relatively uninjured and relatively kept together.

He would cross that bridge of returning to normal life when he got to it.
Monstrosity

Chapter Summary

Rock expected a bunch of Husks, what he got was a monster instead-- the last stop before fighting Wily.

Chapter Notes

Metal never wanted to hurt Rock--
All of the memories shown are symbolic.

Chapter Thirty-Two: Monstrosity

This was a nightmare, it had to be a nightmare.

Rock stood there in complete shock of what he saw. A collection of pulsating wires that sparked and groaned. Twisted bits of metal which reached out in all different directions, jagged and sharp. And yet within that mass and mess there was a familiar face. Attached to this ugly machine by the waist, was Metalman. His armor was stripped of him, leaving only his black bodysuit which hugged his form so tightly. His ungloved hands, bare and pale, looked no different from Rock’s own. His head, now without a helmet, revealed even more features that he was surprised Wily included.

He had a face as well. He had deep crimson eyes which shined like ruby’s in the darkness. He had a nose, ears, dusty pink lips, red eyelashes and eyebrows-- he had everything. Soft, strawberry blond hair which fell around his face in artificial strands, mimicking Elisabeth no doubt. A ginger through and through. He looked at Rock from where he sat, eyes that were drained of all joy and all happiness, filled with pain and suffering. He was hurting, as if he didn’t hurt enough already…

“Metalman…? Is that you…?” Rock’s voice was a timid tone, as if he was worried that his volume would cause more pain to the other. “Yes, it is, as much as I hate to admit it. This is my punishment for sparing you… And yet I have no regrets. If what you told me at our first encounter was true than you saved my family. A family that I know for a fact now is more intimately connected with me than I originally thought. My children, my siblings, my nephew, such a beautiful family we once had…” A forced smile fell upon his face as he tried to give himself any form of tangible happiness.

This was his purgatory.

“I suppose in a way everything makes sense now… Why I couldn’t bring myself to kill you but could only believe you. Why I loathed Wily for what felt like no reason in particular. Why Bubble and Heat always asked to be picked up. Why I looked for advice and comfort from Wood and Air. Why Crash was so protective and why Quick was so aloof-- it makes a lot more sense now that I
know…” There was a strange clicking sound from within the darkness around them, Rock wasn’t sure what it was.

“Rockman, it is my punishment to fight you again as a monster… I don’t know how you would save me with how I am now. So if you could do me one last favor, please make sure my family never sees what I’ve become. If I can’t be saved, then kill me as I am now, they’ve been through enough already.” The entire monologue felt sickening, strange, and wrong. The other going on and on like this, believing that he couldn’t be saved from the purgatory he was trapped within.

It seemed that all he wanted was to be able to see his family again, to embrace them one final time. That dream was barred from him… He did his job well though, that is something that nobody could disagree on. He did well to protect his family from the pain that would become of them. In the end, Elisabeth truly was a good mother, sister, and aunt. In the end, they did the best they could.

Light, the room was bathed in light, but not in the traditional sense. Screens, television screens. Each with their own image, each with their own movie. Memories played upon them. He saw on one screen a mother wiping the face of a little girl who was eating ice cream, and orange creamsicle to be exact. ‘You got it all over yourself, Emily.’ She laughed softly. Another memory showed the mother with a little boy in her lap in front of a bonfire. ‘Mommy? Why does fire burn?’ The boy asked her. ‘I’m not sure Ethan, but you know what, it’s perfect for cooking hot dogs, don’t you think?’

Rock looked to another screen to see that same woman helping another girl put on a beautiful dress. ‘Do you really think this dress looks good on me, Mom?’ The teenager asked, looking back at her mother. ‘I wouldn’t worry about it, Serena. Those boys will be weak in their knees when they see you at the prom!’ Another screen played a memory of that woman with a teenage boy. He was in football gear and was covered in sweat despite the clothing of the woman showing that it was quite chilly out. ‘You did great out there, sweetie.’ She embraced him as the rest of the team passed them by saying things like ‘Good job, Tyler’. Another memory-- three little kids that, at first, took a moment for Rock to realize who was Elisabeth. They were playing tag when the little boy fell. The two girls rushed over to help him up as he cried. Rock soon realized this was Rose, Elisabeth, and Jacob.

A hospital room in another memory. A woman in a hospital bed cradling an infant that whined so loudly. ‘Do you have a name for him yet, Rose?’ That same woman asked. ‘I’m thinking… Thomas.’ She responded with a wide grin. ‘Naming him after dad, good choice. I bet he’d love to be able to be here right now.’

Each memory was more disorienting from the last, each one had their own bittersweet feeling to them. Rock wasn’t sure what to comprehend them with. There were so many, he couldn’t observe them all as they played out their visual and audio in unison. He had to tune in to one to be able to understand anything that was being said. He looked to Metalman, not surprised to see the most saddened look he’d ever seen on the face of anything. He sat there, bundled up in wires, looking utterly defeated.

Their lives were stolen from them, Rock realized what this all meant to Metal. These were all things that he wanted to experience again but knew he couldn’t, knew it was a brutal impossibility on behalf of their stolen lives. The lives they had lost in the mess that was Wily’s twisted experiments.

Rose, Jacob, and Elisabeth will never be able to hang out again. Thomas will never be able to experience his mother’s warmth. Ethan will never be able to feel the warmth of a fire. Emily will
never be able to enjoy ice cream the same way again. Tyler will never be able to play football again. Serena will never be able to experience her prom. There was more around the rooms of ‘I wish I could -- but know that I can’t’. Too many to count as they washed the room in a faint, disorienting glow.

“I’m going to save you…” Rock spoke to him, that pathetic form before him so weak and so incapable of experiencing the freedom that he desired. “I’ll destroy this body of yours and harvest your IC chip. I’ll save you.” Switching his ability to the Metal Blade, the child began to advance.

**THUNK!**

He was shocked when he hit a clear wall which he believed separated the room into two. It was so translucent that he didn’t notice it. “I wanted to tell you, but you were already walking forward… I don’t know how you could reach me from where I’m at now.” He lifted an arm and Rock was in shock to find that Metal was completely boxed in where he was. He had a ceiling and a wall. The room wasn’t separated-- Metal was just confined. Wily knew what Rock would plan on doing.

“It’s no use to try and pull up… It’s sealed into the ground. And as far as I know the Metal Blade won’t do anything-- I’ve tried.” Despite what Metalman said, Rock still tried. He used every weapon he could. None of them worked. Nothing seemed to crack the thing. How he wished he had the Guts Arm. “The computer.” He was surprised when Metal’s voice came back. Rock looked up and saw that there was a computer behind the box that he didn’t see at first. The computer that was hooked up to all the monitors. “It should have a program that could help free me.”

Rock tried to hack into it, tried to understand the coding, but just couldn’t. It seemed like a bunch of gibberish to him. There was one person, however, that he knew would be able to do this. “Dr Light, do you read me?” His voice echoed over the waves, reaching out to his father, to whom of which was quick to respond. “Yes, my boy. What’s the matter? You haven’t gotten rid of that energy signal. What happened?” Dr Light’s voice was as kind and concerned as usual.

“I’m going to stream a computer’s system to you, I need you to hack into it okay? Metalman is here, he’s not trying to hurt me, he just wants to be freed and taken home-- rebuilt. I need you to open up the box he’s contained within.” He tried to explain, aware that the words weren’t coming out all that well. “Rock, are you sure that’s a good idea?” Dr Light asked him in response. “It’s the only idea I have. Whether he’s telling the truth or not, I won’t be able to do anything if he’s in there.” It was the truth, if he didn’t get Metal out of there than he couldn’t advance regardless.

“So be it… Use the wire in the back of your neck to connect to the system and I’ll try to hack in.” Rock reached behind his head, right at the base of his helmet, and pulled the wire free, guiding it to the system. It plugged in seamlessly, giving Light all the access he needed in order to go through with what had to be done. The child observed as line after line of text was entered. “This code is pretty advanced…” Light mumbled on the other side of the line, but other than that there was nothing but silence.

“I think I’ve almost got it…” The older man said, typing in the last of the code. Rock turned to look at Metal, smiling to him even though he couldn't turn to see. “We're almost done, we're going to free you.” The child said, he didn’t expect what happened when that final line of code was set into place. The world felt like it was stopping, as though everything was in slow motion.

Fire… The interior of the box immediately caught fire. And yet it was suppose to release him. Rock was frozen stiff as he heard the screams of pain and agony as the fire spread within the box, engulfing the entity within. It contained it within its walls and slowly, and steadily, he watched as the other began to melt. There was a sting of tears before he even knew what was going on. The tears trailed down his face as his mouth hung agape. This couldn’t be happening.
“What did you do!?” Rock screamed at Light, not even thinking as he ran to the box. He began to bang and bang on it, trying to free him. “Nothing! What happened!? I just entered the code that was for opening the box!” But he couldn’t hear, he couldn’t hear the doctor’s voice-- it was distant in his head.

“You’re killing him! Make it stop!” He banged on the walls trying to break it, but it wouldn’t yield. Eventually he was reduced to pressing his hands against the super heated walls watching the other slowly melt. He became nothing but a robotic skeleton by the time the fire died away. There was no remnant of an IC Chip anywhere to be found.

“No…” Rock whispered, those tears pouring down his face. “No! No! This is fake! This is a lie!” He didn’t know how to cope with the idea of actually murdering someone. He turned back to the computer and saw every monitor beginning to go out one by one as the overhead lights turned on. One after another the room was bathed in light and it became obvious what really happened here, not that Rock could really understand.

The chamber he found himself in was a torture chamber to say the least. With bladed appendages which were clawing within the darkness, just waiting for the command to kill him. The position of Metal and his place in the glass casing was suppose to both protect him and hide the computer. He really didn’t want to kill the child however, he wanted to be freed or killed.

But at the same time, the other knew that if they tried to free him from the computer, he would burst into flames like this. Rock stood hunched over the computer sobbing. His cries loud and painful, howls of an animal that was being ripped to shreds. He clawed at his arms and ripped through his suit, trying to numb the emotional pain he felt with physical pain. Trying to just forget everything so quickly. It hurt! It hurt so much! And yet he didn’t know what to do.

He turned to the computer and began to bang on it. His bloody arms spraying everywhere as metal began to shoot up. The computer ripped through him. It ripped and ripped as he tore at it. All the systems shut down at that point as Rock tore it apart. How could this have happened!? How could he have killed him!? He tried to do everything right and yet in the end he wound up doing the worst anyways.

He froze once again, staring at his mangled arm. What was that? He dislodged it from the computer and lodged it directly into his own arm… He stared at it in shock, mouth agape. Could it be?

He collapsed onto the floor, crying tears of pain and joy. It was Metal’s IC Chip, stored in the computer for recovery from Wily at a later date. He was safe. He was saved… Saved by a miracle.
“Wily!” Rock’s voice was a booming force in the relatively empty arena. “I’ve come to bring you to justice!” More like get his revenge. He was tired of fighting already, and he hasn’t been doing it for all that long. He just wanted to bring Wily down, one way or another, and end it. He could already see the endless loop this was becoming, and he was terrified of that fact.

He stood in a defensive stance, buster out, hand upon it, ready to fire when he had to. This was a stance he’d become known for. A stance that so many depictions of him in media would show him. He was careful as he advanced through the tiny area, blue eyes scanning the barren surroundings. Where could he be!? He had to be here? There was no other place Wily could hide.

Light… A singular spotlight focused upon him. He knew who it was. Enraged, Rock whirled around to see exactly what he figured he’d see. Another giant machine once again piloted most likely by Wily. The child snarled, anger evident in his features as he stared up at the machine. He stared at the dome window which was at the center of the behemoth. He was not intimidated by this in the slightest. He would rip this machine apart just like he did the last one!

“Well Rockman! What a surprise!” The booming voice didn’t affect him as he switched to his chosen weapon for this fight… Atomic fire. He wanted Wily to feel the same burning that both Metal and Elec felt. He wanted him to feel himself get engulfed in the fire of his own failure. He didn’t care if that made him a murderer and then put him in the position of being dismantled, Wily needed to die after all that he’s seen. “I won’t let you get away this time, Wily!”

“You don’t have a choice! You’re a robot bound by the law of robotics! You can’t hurt me, and so long as I’m alive I’ll continue my work!” He paused for a second as the gun on his machine descended and took aim with a mechanical whirring sound. “You know Rockman… We don’t have to fight. You could join me if you’d like and you could become something so much greater than what you are. So much more powerful. Break away from the chains of humanity and become the master race you are meant to be.”

He would admit, the offer sounded tempted, but at the same time Rock knew that’s not how this is
supposed to go. “Fuck no! Why the hell would I do that!? That would invalidate everything I’ve
done up to this point! And even so, humans and robots should coexist! One shouldn’t be better than
the other!” Why was Rock even surprised? Wily was most likely envious of his abilities, his
perseverance. Granted this go around he wasn’t capable enough to defeat all the robot masters, but
he still came out of it and all of them were now in the possession of Dr Light. That was still enough
to cause a man like Wily to extend an offer to him.

He was a mad man, one that shouldn’t be reasoned with. One that should just be squashed under
the heel of a boot. “What a shame… You would have made an excellent subject for me. I would
have put a beautiful young girl in your body and turned you into something so much better than
what you are now. With the power of a human soul, you would have been able to do so many great
things.” Wily chimed back as that gun began to come to life. Rock, in retaliation, proceeded to
charge up his atomic fire.

The arching shot caught the child off guard, but he wasn’t deterred by it. He jumped out of the way
expertly. He studied each shot, they moved in the same general trajectory towards him, arching
upwards after him. No matter what it honed in on him when it shot, so all he had to do was move
slightly to avoid it.

He was excited to watch Wily burn to a crisp, burn into flames and be devoured by the purifying
arms of the fire. Destroy him with the same powers that he created. He felt the power grow and
grow more within him. Blue eyes focused as he continued to duck and dodge. Wily said some more
things, some things about how the child could have a soul, but Rock didn’t hear. He didn’t care
enough to listen to what he had to say. And why should he? How many people have trusted him,
only to get stabbed in the back?

He shot his fully charged fireball at the machine and watched it explode outwards in a beautiful
array of sparks. It was gorgeous albeit terrifying. Watching it all fall apart like that, crashing down
to the ground, kicking up dust and other debris. Rock watched it, not surprised when another form
manifested as the rest fell apart… He didn’t have enough energy for any more of the atomic fire, so
instead he just switched to the Crash Bomber. If he couldn’t catch Wily on fire, he’d blow him up
instead.

The shots were much larger now, but still not too difficult to avoid. He managed to avoid each one
expertly, taking very little damage. Getting a running start he jumped up into the air and took aim.
One bomb landed square on the ‘windshield’ of the machine. He watched it eclipse Wily’s face
from where he stood. When it exploded the force echoed throughout the machine-- a loud cracking
sound before a pop like sound as the glass bowed before giving way.

With the driver now taken down, it was easy to see the machine begin to fall. Rock switched to the
Metal Blade once again, approaching in a steady advance towards the rubble. Wily wasn’t going to
get away that easy. Quickly he pulled away the twisted metal to reveal the bloodied man inside.
Grabbing him by the throat, the child began to drag him out of his would-be tomb. The burning
carcass of the second Wily Machine set ablaze by Rock’s use of the Crash Bomb.

Wily looked terrible. Glass shards cut through his flesh in many places, blood oozed down his face
leaving stains all over. He saw metal piercing his leg, but honestly the child didn’t care. He threw
the man harshly on the ground. The old doctor let out a yelp of pain, but found no mercy in the
blue bomber.

“I don’t understand why you won’t let me make you perfect.” Wily sputtered. “I could have given
you an actual life to live. Made you perfect! Even given you a husband or wife to love. Would have
loved you myself. But you had to go and ruin it! I would have made you the perfect human that I
could make… Already have one in mind. Really a beauty too. Made just for you.” Rock’s face was mortified for just a moment, he felt sick. If he had anything in his robotic stomach, he may just start throwing up. But at the same time he was terrified of faltering, as he held the Metal Blade up to Wily’s throat.

“Sorry, but I quite like the soul I have. And besides, I know what you did to Serena. I don’t want any part of your ‘love’.” Rock wasn’t surprised when Wily laughed. “She was fun let me tell you—you’ll understand that when you’re older.” Something about that made him even more disgusted. It felt almost like a catcall, and left him feeling almost violated. “Fuck you, you disgusting old man.”

He lifted the blade up, ready to make the kill he so desperately wanted. Everything moved in slow motion it seemed, as though the world’s clock was moving at a snail’s pace just to preserve the moment.

“Stupid child… You’ll never have a soul.”

The slicing sound was disgusting as the head came clean off, Rock’s eyes were wide but not because he went through with it. It was because of the fact that this wasn’t Wily… Wires. There were wires there instead of tendons. This was another robot, not the Doctor he thought it was.

**CHUNK!**

The ground fell out from beneath him, a trap door, and Rock felt himself fall. The false blood all over him as he plummeted. What trap had he sprung? What mess did he get himself into? He heard Wily’s laughter as he fell into the darkness. He couldn’t see a thing as he neared the bottom of the pit.

A wet ‘shunk’ sound punctuated his landing, immediately knocking him into a state of deactivation.

Chapter End Notes

I don't normally put notes at the end but I feel like I have to. Yes, Wily was sexualizing Rock. No, it's not okay and it should never be viewed as okay. The way Wily is in this universe is irredeemable, he is a perverted and twisted old man who has done awful things. Do not take what happens in this story as glorification of his actions or the actions of anyone doing these things. Take this as a short PSA from the author. Thank you for your time-- feel free to be utterly disgusted with Wily. I know I am.
Chapter Summary

He thought he had Wily defeated, but now he's not so sure.

Chapter Notes

What is reality and what isn't, this is the question you should be asking.

Chapter Thirty-Four: Alien

He was floating, that’s what it felt like. It felt like he had no weight as he just floated through a dark place. He didn’t know where he was or what he was doing as his body just slipped through the oblivion. Everything hurt, but at the same time he felt nothing. There was a stabbing pain in his stomach, a throbbing in his chest, a burning in his thighs, so on so forth. Not an inch of his body was left unmarred by the pain he felt. Just some places were worse than others. And yet, it didn’t bother him… It was almost as if pain was good and pleasure was bad.

Little lights, he saw them. He swore he did. They blinked into existence, were these stars? He believed they were. Stars that seemed to mourn for him. Was he dead? He wasn’t sure but somehow in those stars he could see sadness. As he gazed around, just barely able to move, he could see other things. More light. Light which reached out to him from all over. He was in the cosmos. Somehow that’s where he came to.

This was a dream, this had to be a false reality. There was no other explanation for it. As he drifted in the endless abyss, he felt utterly alone. If he had gotten here through a dream than how did he fall asleep. He remembered fighting Wily, the violation he felt, and then darkness. He couldn’t remember anything after decapitating him. But was that him? He couldn’t remember.

“Why couldn’t you have just given up?”

Rock’s eyes widened, he let out a gasp as he turned to face the source of the sound. A creature was coming towards him, it seemed almost like… an alien? How fitting for this place, an alien in a star field. “Because I’ve been fighting too hard to let him take me… And besides I don’t want to feel what Serena, Elisabeth, and that whole family felt…”

A distorted laugh left the creature. “Stupid child, you wouldn’t remember any of this if you just went along with him. And you wouldn’t remember anything he would have done with you anyways. Serena certainly didn’t. They would have to be reintroduced to those memories, and he would never force that upon you.” Rock glared at the creature, was today just the day of disgusting him?

“Regardless, my answer remains the same. I will never join Wily!” He barked, his tone sharp and
aggressive. “If that’s the case, then I guess I just have to kill you right here, right now. We can’t have you interfering.” The Alien spoke, Rock was shocked. Why was this extraterrestrial entity trying so hard to recruit him to Wily’s side? Regardless, the thing reached out to try and grab at him, something that the blue bomber would not allow. He still had so many battles to fight.

A long time ago Rock saw a horror movie-- he didn’t think it was all that scary. It was about an alien invasion, but the aliens were weak to water. Something that the child thought was bizarre given that 71% of the Earth’s surface is covered in water and it was essential to the life forms on said planet. He wondered if that same logic worked here. As such he switched to the bubble lead, one of the few weapons that had a decent amount of energy left anyways, and began to shoot at the Alien point blank.

The creature hissed and wheeled back before making an attempt at him again. Rock continued to shoot and shoot, bubble after bubble. It was hard to move and do so, it hurt him to try and struggle, but he still did it. It felt almost as though his limbs were encased in Jello, making it even more difficult to attempt to beat the creature. He still couldn’t fathom why the beast was trying to get him to join the ranks of Dr Wily. But he worked too hard to just give up now. And besides, he missed going home. He wanted to see Dr Light again, he wanted to see Roll again… He wanted to go and eat a nice hot meal again. He missed them too much.

The Alien let out a guttural shriek after having been hit enough times. Steam bellowed from its open rib cage as it began to slowly and steadily melt. “You brat! You selfish brat! I will get my hands on you one day! And when I do, you will be my slave!” The voice was growing more and more distorted as the thing melted away and disappeared in the darkness of space.

That wasn’t the only thing that was melting away however. The beautiful stars that watched onward as spectators began to die away. First it was one, hardly noticeable, but it launched a quick chain of events and soon the entire night sky had disappeared.

Rock felt a sharp, stabbing pain in his neck as the pain of whatever had happened grew worse. He thought he heard voices screaming in his head, but it was hard to make out. As time passed on they came more clearly to him, they became easier to hear.

“Fuck! Rock!”

“Hang in there, we’ve got you!”

“Oh shit-- what happened to him?”

“We’ll murder that Wily ourselves!”

“We need to get him stable!”

“Hand me the battery, hurry.”

“He’s not breathing, he’s not breathing!”

“Where’s his pulse!? Is he deactivated!?”

“Hurry! Check the state of his IC Chip!”

“There’s a wire back here!”

As he strained to hear them the noise became louder. There was the sound of shifting metal, the movement of glass. The pain grew more and more as he felt pressure in various points of his body.
Again that sharp stabbing in his neck.

“I can’t get it out!”

“Keep pulling! We have to get him unhooked before Wily presses the kill switch on him.”

Rock let out a scream of pain as he felt something get ripped out of the base of his head. He wasn’t sure what it was, but it sure as hell hurt. He tried to make an instinctive grasp for his neck, but found he couldn’t move.

“I’ve got it out! I’ve got it out!”

“CASTLE SELF DESTRUCTION SEQUENCE ACTIVATED!”

“God dammit, Heat!”

“I’m sorry, Bubble!”

“Quick! Grab him, you’re carrying him out.”

“Got it, mom.”

“Ice, keep breathing into his lungs, we need to keep his systems cool!”

“Got it!”

“Elec, you’ve got a pathway out of here?”

“Yes, let’s hurry.”

“Keep an eye on the clock, Time.”

“Me and Kronos are already working on it.”

“Did you get those pictures of the machine, Flash.”

“Yep, fifty of them, I’m sure Light will be able to use them.”

“Excellent, then let’s get the hell out of here.”

Rock didn’t understand anything that was going on? He vaguely recognized the voices, but at the same time he felt they were strange to him. Almost as though they never existed to begin with. Just figments of his imagination.

“What happened to him?”

“I’m not sure…”

“It’s disgusting…”

“Wood, there’s a Big Eye, 4 o’clock!”

“Got it!”

“Don’t fall! We can’t lose anyone else!”

“That’s the exit! Air, blow it down!”
“Roger!”

Rock heard a heavy banging, there was quite the commotion going on in his mind. Was it in his mind? He wasn’t sure. It was a mess that he didn’t want to know. What were they talking about? What had become of him?

“Light, we got him. We’ve secured him. When we found him he wasn’t breathing, he had very little brain waves, he was practically dead… No, I don’t think Wily found out about the A.R.L.A.S. program. It’s still in one piece from what we’ve seen. Either way, he’s safe now, and he’s as stable as we can get him. We’re heading back to the lab now. Hopefully you can repair him…”
Chapter Summary

A set of memory files from deep within Rock's archives detailing some interesting experiments done by Light, Cossack, and Wily-- known as ARLAS.

Chapter Notes

Light's birthday: April 3rd, 1959
Cossack's birthday: October 30th, 1957
Wily's birthday: August 18th, 1956

These are worth noting for the overall timeline of the story.

Chapter Thirty-Five: ARLAS

SEARCHING SYSTEM MEMORY FOR ‘ARLAS’

5 RESULTS FOUND--

3 VIDEO FILES, 2 TEXT FILES--

ADMINISTRATIVE PASSWORD REQUIRED

PASSWORD APPROVED

PLAYBACK OF ARLAS_PRESENTATION.MOV IN 3… 2… 1…

The video was grainy, undoubtedly old. The timestamp in the corner dating the footage to April 15th, 1985. This put Light, who was born on April 3rd, 1959 at age 26. It put Cossack, who was born on October 30th, 1957, at age 27. And finally, it put Wily, who was born on August 18th, 1956, at age 28. Three geniuses fresh out of college, ready to take on the scientific community-- all of them having both jumped grade levels and advanced to the top of their classes almost instantaneously.

The room was brightly lit, no doubt a lab. The audio wasn’t the best, but it was what was expected of the time. Five test tubes were visible from the back of the lab, but whatever was inside was obscured by the bodies of the three young scientists that stood in the room. The three brunettes looked ecstatic to be presenting whatever it was they were going to be talking about. Someone off camera shouted ‘action’ to the three doctors, to which the one in the middle began.

“Hello world, I’m Doctor Thomas Light, and these are my partners Doctor Albert W. Wily and
Doctor Mikhail Sergeyevich Cossack. We’re here to talk to you today about ARLAS, the newest in artificial intelligence.

Light stopped speaking and that’s when what seemed to be Wily, judging by his hair, began speaking instead. Taking over the lines. “In recent years, my colleague Dr Light, has released a program known as a Net Navi. These are rather popular over in Japan, but they capitalize on the Ethernet and internet to help civilians in everyday life. However this is just on the digital scale, what about on the physical scale? That’s where ARLAS comes in.” Wily gestured over to the final Doctor, presumably Cossack, who picked up rather quickly-- his Russian accent lacing his words.

“ARLAS, or Artificial Robotic Life and Soul, aims to bring life to robots. You heard us right, giving complete autonomy to robots, and we don’t mean terminator. These entities will function in the roles that cannot be filled by just numb robots alone. Things like bodyguards, or children, or even medical robots. These robots will be programmed with ARLAS but also be programmed with what is known as the Code of Robotics. This will prevent any form of… Backlash so to speak. Making the robots completely safe. They will evolve, change, and behave just like people do. And arguably, even have a soul.” The three of them stepped to the side revealing the five test tubes that rose up behind them.

Faint lights gleamed within. The one in the test tube in the far left gleamed a faint magenta, the one next to it a deep red, then a faint blue, then a beautiful pink, and finally a deep purple. Cossack approached the magenta one and pointed at the light inside. “This is ARLAS-Kalinka. She will be the first ever artificial child. Her body will not be robotic necessarily, but her brain will be. Her body, on the other hand, will be birthed via test tube. Allowing for humanity to evolve and have children, even when they are physically unable to. If all goes well the medical field will evolve and perhaps one day we could grow organs for transplant as well using similar technology via an artificial womb.” Wily was next to pick up the speech, gesturing to the deep purple light in another of the test tubes.

“This is ARLAS-Bass. He will be the world’s first ever bodyguard robot with a soul. If all goes well then he will assigned to president Ronald Reagan as a personal protector preventing incidents of assassination far better than any regular human ever could. All while providing decent conversation and insight all the while. He will be the perfect protector as it won't be a loss of actual human life.” He fell silent and Light was quick to complete the thought.

“And finally, my three contributions to the ARLAS project. First is ARLAS-Blues,” he pointed to the deep red light. “He will be the world’s first ever military robot with a soul. He will, hopefully, be a General in the US Military, saving lives every day on the front lines.” Light moved over to the two other lights soon after. “Next up is the world’s first ever robotic children-- ARLAS-Rock and ARLAS-Roll. These two will be everything from home security to home helpers, and they are going to be the first of many children that will improve the lives of infertile or nervous parents. They will never grow up, unless you want them to, and they will always love you so long as you love them.”

It was then that the footage suddenly cut out and went to black. It wasn’t over, there had to be more, and yet it stopped suddenly. Nothing left other than just a ‘reel end’.

**PLAYBACK OF ARLAS_BLUES_EXPERIMENTS.MOV IN 3… 2… 1…**

“I have done it!”

The footage started with a much older Light and a much older Wily, most likely in their 30s, surrounding a robot who was just waking up, most likely for the first time. Light looked over to
Wily ecstatic, overjoyed at what he’s created. Wily, on the other hand, seemed less so. It was most likely that he was barred from the scientific community already, but didn’t enjoy the look of the creation which lay on the table.

“This is bad Light… Really, really bad.” Wily stated, obviously on edge. However the other didn't seem to listen to him. “Who… am I?” Spoke the robot suddenly, his voice weak and hoarse. “Why… You’re Blues, my boy. You’re Blues.” The robot seemed confused as he looked up at him. “Blues?” Something seemed off about him, just a bit off kilter. Light began talking again but a strange static was playing over his words. A strange film splice, something that obviously wasn't supposed to be there, revealing that part of the footage was filmed over. The cut faded in to reveal so many dead bodies and chaos unraveling as a rogue robot caused havoc. It wasn't easy to identify, but one could see fire and blood, they could hear the screams of terror and pain, it was obvious people were dying.

A laughing Wily could be heard in the background-- or at least someone that sounded remarkably like Wily, before the footage cut out again.

PLAYBACK OF ARLAS_SHUTDOWN.MOV IN 3… 2… 1…

“You can’t take them away!” Light shouted as men in black suits began securing all of his research. “After the incident with that ‘Blues’ fellow, and the hundreds that died, it’s the president’s orders. You're lucky that we don't throw you in jail for what you've done.” The men were ransacking the place, looking for anything they could find. “But that wasn’t out fault,” Cossack argued, looking over to Light with a tear stained face. “That was Wily who did it! He is the one who should be punished! Our research should not suffer because of him!” The men simply looked at him with an angry glare. “Tell that to the president.” They obviously tried to stop them, but they couldn't do much in the face of the law. Soon enough they were gone.

The two stood slumped and seemingly despairing. And yet, they began to laugh. When they were sure they were gone, they were chuckling to themselves. It was almost as if they played a major joke on the men who came and took their stuff. They made eye contact before nodding, smiling at each other. They approached the camera, knowing it was there, and snatched it up. The moved about the lab, revealing how tattered it was, and it soon became clear that they were looking to see if the lab was bugged or not. When they were certain that they weren't being observed, they approached an inconspicuous wall. Like children who had a secret hiding place, they laughed to themselves. “They think they took our research, truly they never thought to check the basement level.” Cossack's words rang true as they pushed the wall inward, it gave way with a quiet grating sound.

The two of them descended into the darkness revealing that three lights remained concealed deep within. ARLAS-Kalinka, ARLAS-Roll, and ARLAS-Rock. In a separate test tube was an embryo slowly growing larger and larger within the false womb created for her. These would be their creations. Their greatest scientific breakthroughs, and no government group was going to stop them.

This would be their legacy.
Chapter Summary

After being recovered from Wily's castle, Rock goes through intensive recovery processes.

Chapter Notes

A robot can develop ARLAS naturally, through AI improvement systems. Or they can be created with ARLAS.

Chapter Thirty-Six: Return

“What was ARLAS!?”

Rock hated that sound. The sound of rage, especially in the voice of his sister. His eyes opened to bright glaring light. There was a harsh pressure in his throat, he felt cold air being forced down it and into his body. It felt good, save for the pain of having a tube shoved down his throat. There were hands holding his own. Casting a glance over to his left he saw Elec, casting a glance over to his right he saw Fire.

Some form of monitor that showed what he assumed was brainwave activity was at the foot of where he lay. Time was standing there writing down something on a clipboard while Cut read off of it. He probably didn’t understand what the data was, but it was something he was more than willing to do probably. Rock looked around more to find where that tube in his throat was going. Ice was beside a machine, regulating air pressure and temperature. He caught a bit of the conversation Gutsman was having with him in hushed whispers. Wondering if there was any way he could make himself useful.

On the other side of the room, a ways away, Rock could also see Bomb and Oil with all the new additions. They were in front of a huge computer, one that he recognized to be the supercomputer in the lab, that had all the days of the year on it as well as the ability to change the year. They were marking off a timeline of events upon the calendar. Trying to piece together how everything happened. It was here through blurry vision that Rock found out he was unconscious for at least a month-- absent for a week as a hostage to Wily.

“Roll, you don’t need to concern yourself with that!”

“Papa! What was ARLAS!? Tell me right now!”

“It was a program! Simple as that! It’s a program that makes you who you are!”

They were fighting, Rock didn’t know exactly what about. Most likely tied to the memory he resurrected just moments prior. With a little listening he found out Roll was pissed off because
they weren’t told that they were illegal experiments. That they were no better than the DWNs. That Light could be thrown in prison for it. And while Light made completely artificial souls, the ARLAS Project was most likely the entire reason why Wily was doing this to begin with.

Rock didn’t quite understand how that added up, but he was too groggy to question it. Perhaps someone else could. He was too out of it to even think of it. He noticed that because he was trying to figure it out, that monitor that Time and Cut were staring at began going crazy. They turned towards him and made eye contact.

“Oh shit! Rock’s awake!” Cut shouted, causing everyone to jump back and move around rather frantically. Ice moved over and forced Rock’s mouth to open wide, beginning to gently remove the tube. As soon as it was out the child began to cough and hack aggressively, but it didn’t take long for it to settle. Before he even knew it, he was scooped up into the arms of his father, cradled there in his embrace, wrapped in a thick blanket.

“Oh my boy, my sweet boy…” Light spoke in almost a whine. “I’m so glad you’re okay… How do you feel? Are you alright?” Rock didn’t know how to respond, he had never seen his father cry like this before, curled up around him and embracing him so tightly. “I’m… okay…” He whispered, voice hoarse, almost like when he was first activated so long ago.

“What did Wily do to you, do you remember?” Light asked him, running his fingers through his hair. “I… Don’t… Remember anything…” The child responded meekly. As though afraid to admit it. “That’s okay. That’s perfectly fine… Do you want to go to bed? Maybe lay down and rest?” Rock simply nodded in response.

“Alright… Gutsman, can you carry Rock to his room please. I’ll set up his bed… I think he needs actual sleep.” Rock didn’t want to go to sleep if he was being perfectly honest. He knew there were more dreams and memories about ARLAS that were hidden away, more things he still needed to know, but he didn’t want to remember. He didn’t want to know what happened to him-- what happened to those test tube monstrosities he saw in the archived video placed upon his hard-drive.

He was picked up and carried out of the lab to his bedroom. For the next couple of months, Rock hardly left bed. He stayed beneath those covers in a state of depression for a long time. Blue eyes staring out into oblivion, just thinking. He didn't talk much, almost as though he was afraid that his words would bring something back. The other robot masters tried to cheer him up but only found him worse off than before after their attempts.

All they got was the tearful hero just struggling to hold together. He wouldn’t eat, he wouldn’t open his curtains or windows, he hardly got up to move. And when he did get up to move, it caused nothing but alarm. It became apparent that things weren't going to get better on their own when Elecman walked in and found that Rock had slashed his own wrist with an old glass mason jar that fell onto the floor from one of his shelves. He was laying on his side in the pool of glass just watching as he bled out onto the floor, numb to the stains on his pajamas.

It was then that Light reached out to Dr. Noele Lalinde, a woman that he knew ever since he was a boy. She became a therapist in her later years. She was a good three years his superior, but they still talked from time to time. She agreed to give another evaluation to Rock, hoping that she would fair better than the original therapist that saw him. The results were less than comforting.

PTSD-- without a doubt he was struggling with it. And since he was a robot, there was no amount of medication that could help him cope with what he was going through. All they could do was hope that therapy could help. But there was one problem.

Rock wouldn’t leave his bed.
As such therapy sessions would be held in his bedroom, no departure required. Everyone else carried on except the child. The months came and passed. It wasn’t until the winter came along that Light finally couldn’t take it anymore. Entering his son’s room he embraced him and just held him, weeping and apologizing. He wanted to know where his son’s smile had gone. ARLAS, Wily, whatever it was that was causing this pain within him, he just wanted to help him.

He just wanted his little boy back.

A Christmas miracle came to them that snow filled night. In the middle of the night, Rock broke out of his semi-catatonic state and walked to his father’s room. For the first time in months he finally spoke to his father and tried to smile to him as he curled up beside him. It was almost like he was afraid to slip under the sheets and seek comfort and yet he still managed to ask in a choked voice,

“Papa, can I sleep with you tonight? To chase away the nightmares?”
Future

Chapter Summary

With Rock still being repaired a major question arises, ‘Should we continue?’

Chapter Notes

I haven’t picked where exactly I want to set this in terms of the X series, sometime relatively early on was my thought, but I’ll keep you all updated. It’s still undecided. It is worth noting that some robot masters have survived the years between Classic and X, including, but not limited to, Elecman, Iceman, Timeman, Oilman, Metalman, Quickman, Heatman, Bubbleman, Flashman, and Crashman-- however they have gone through many changed since their time.

Chapter Thirty-Seven: Future

“What the hell…” The words fell out of his mouth without him realization. The lab was a dark, quiet place. The body of the child lay motionless in a state of deactivation on the table. Much of his body has been successfully rebuilt, but there was still much that needed to be done. “X, I…” Zero tried to start a sentence, but couldn’t find the words to complete it. He wanted to comfort the other, but couldn’t figure out how. He wasn’t the emotional type, but at the same time…

The fact that made this all too real was that this was X’s older brother. They were watching a memory reel that encompassed the early 2000s instead of the early 2150s. They got a glimpse at what made this world what it was, and it terrified them. They didn’t know about the three major leaders in Robotics. They didn’t know about ARLAS, despite the fact that it was part of what made X, Zero, and all the rest of modern day robotic entities, now reploids, what they are. They didn’t know about Dr Wily, or the things he has done… It was sickening to see.

It kept coming back to them that this was a small child, this wasn’t any ordinary reploid or robot. This was a small child that went into war and came out changed. It begged the question of whether or not he was safe. “We have to pull the plug on this.” X stated suddenly, looking over to Zero with saddened eyes. His messy brown hair giving him an almost wild look to him. “I disagree with you there-- not necessarily on the pulling the part, but definitely on the fact that we should do it now.”

Zero looked over to the child, he looked so peaceful laying there. “We should at least see his memories through, and besides shouldn’t we give him a test run first anyways? If we’re going by the logic of him being violent well… I was violent once, and I’m still here.”

X stared at Zero with harsh green eyes, and a furrowed brow. They were this sort of standoff for a period, as though communicating without words. In a way they were. To say their bond put them to be close is an understatement, it got to the point where they could read each other’s movements and thoughts almost. Sensing what the other person wanted or needed. It made them great in
combat, but it made them even better in everyday life. It especially helped in crossroad situations like this.

In the end Zero was very much apart of the discovery of Rock’s body as X was. While X held much more precedence over the decisions dealing with the project, in the end he couldn’t do anything without Zero being on board too— at least, unless he wanted a huge fight to ensue. Besides, there were some things that they both could agree on. The memory files still had a lot to be discovered, and if this was really what the memory files entailed then the recruitment of Rockman to their side would be a huge benefit. He knew how to fight, and judging by his Copy System he had all the weapons data, nevermind the fact that during this point in history he’s a legendary hero lost to time. Believed to be a myth.

“Fine…” X let out a heavy sigh, turning to look to his brother. Zero was shocked that his argument worked, he thought he lost that round, but was internally pleased that he ended up coming out victorious. Although he should have known otherwise, in the end X was a big softie and it was a chance for him to have some sort of semblance of a family back. “I do have one question though.” The blond reploid perked up, looking to his partner with a curious face. “What is it?” Zero asked, his eyes drifting to that limp body.

“Do you think that the Elec, Ice, Time, Oil, Metal, Heat, Bubble, Quick, Flash, and Crash are the same now as the ones from back then? Or do you think that they’re completely different people?” They made eye contact for just a split second, it was all they needed before they knew the answer. Zero let out a pathetic laugh as his guise broke down just a bit.

“Fuck us… If that’s the case, then there’s a lot to our colleagues that we don’t know. And that’s the most terrifying of it all.” Zero spoke, pacing a bit as he said so. “They were robots before the grand transfer. We knew they were robot masters… Could they have been the same? They weren’t young by any means when they were transferred, and judging by my own memories they looked pretty similar in design save for a few upgrades. They have similar personalities, similar relationships, very similar powers and abilities. I can’t help but wonder…” X trailed off and once again they were locked in silence.

How does one come to terms with this fact. That the people they know were once upon a time criminals. That the people they know have seen a nightmare situation shape the world. There was only one way to prove this however. Having facilitated the robot-reploid transfer himself, X had data on all the robot masters-- which wasn’t a lot to begin with. Many of the robot masters either hadn’t survived the transfer or were long since deactivated. Scanning through the successes, X found more than he bargained for.

“For DLN, we’ve got six results. Elec, Ice, Time, Oil, Jewel, and Splash. For DWN, we’ve got quite a lot more, but I do see Metal, Heat, and all of them on here. I think it’s them… Originally I didn’t know what these serial codes were in their programming but… Now it makes perfect sense.” A sigh from X as he rested his face in his hands, leaning against the computer’s table. Zero, despite not being the type capable of showing emotion all that well, decided that it was his job to try and comfort him.

He approached carefully and placed a hand on the other’s back, crouching down beside him to be at more eye level. “Hey… I know it’s stressful, but we can get through this together, alright? Just like we get through everything else.” X looked up from his darkened place to look at the other, seeing that faint smile that was meant to soothe, it generated the other’s own smile as he turned in his spinning chair to face him.

X embraced the other tightly, burying his face in Zero’s shoulder, taking in his warmth and
comfort. Zero straightened a bit before returning the embrace. The other was so much smaller than him, having seen the other Light robots that survived, he wondered if it had something to do with Light as a creator. That wasn’t his place to ask though.

“Let’s bring your brother back. It’s been too long.”
Chapter Summary

A strange chip is removed from Rock, setting off a chain reaction that leads to the abduction of Roll.

Chapter Notes

The chip that was in Rock's neck is part of the reason why his recovery took so long. It was a chip that was built to interrupt signals in his body all while copying his data. When it was removed, it sent out signals giving away the Light Labs location.

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Strike

“Rock, don’t move.” Light said as he peeled away the skin on the back of his son’s neck, revealing wiring and workings that the normal mind couldn’t comprehend. A pair of tweezers settled upon a chip that was invisible just beneath the skin. They have attempted to remove it multiple times, but it only seemed that now would be the best time to try again. They made progress, very little progress, in removing the foreign object from the child’s body, but they had to be careful. If something went wrong, they could completely kill the boy instead of save him.

Rock winced as the doctor began to pull the chip out. It made a gross wet sound as it was pulled away from his body, being removed expertly from beneath his skin. It hurt, but at the same time it felt nice to have it removed. A few ’tendons’ were snipped to allow for complete removal, and once that was done, Light began to walk over to the computer unknowing that his child had tensed up.

There was a second of static peace, the calm before the storm, before Rock’s hands went to the back of his neck and he began to scream. He howled like a wild animal as he fell forward off the medical table and onto the ground. By all technicality he shouldn’t be moving, his systems were mostly paralyzed and frozen, and yet somehow there was a form of system reset when that chip was removed.

“Rock!” In his shock, he dropped the chip. Roll managed to catch it before it fell to the ground and was potentially lost. She got a good look at the chip, seeing the ‘W’ insignia so common with Wily’s creations, a frown growing on her face because of it. Of course it would be a Wily chip--most likely inserted when Rock was being held hostage last year around the same time.

It became obvious the amount of pain the child was in as he screamed and thrashed on the ground. He scratched at his face and exposed arms almost like an insane asylum patient. Roll noticed this and was quick to act. She placed the chip on the petri dish that rested on the table before rushing to Rock. She grabbed hold of his arms and pinned him down, sitting on his stomach as she did so. The boy beneath her still thrashed around in some unforeseen nightmare, but thankfully their
physical strength equally matched.

“Sedate him, Papa! Hurry!” She shouted to him, the struggles of someone in such a condition as Rock could easily overpower her attempts to subdue him. Just as Light was going to retrieve ASAR device to put Rock into a sort of ‘sleep mode’ the child fell still. His eyes were still wide like a deer caught in headlights, his chest heaving up and down in a panic, his skin was pale and ashen... But he looked better nonetheless. Mostly because those eyes in his skull could see. They were seeing.

“Rock?” Roll inquired, leaning back, careful not to put any pressure on her brother’s stomach. “Rock? Are you okay?” She asked again, pushing herself off of him. Gently she took his face in her hands and looked into those eyes with her own concerned ones. She didn’t know if he just didn’t want to speak or if he didn’t know how to. There was silence for a long, long while, until finally words fell out of his mouth.

“There are more…” Rock’s words were foreboding, uneasy. Roll cast a glance over to Light before asking, “More? More of what?” It took a moment but those terrifying words came back. “Robot masters… Experiments… There are more of them… They’re coming.” The doctor was quick to rush over and kneel down beside his son upon hearing this. This had to be an episode. Some form of flashback. But he couldn’t have been further from the truth. When Rock turned to face him, one hand with ‘blood’ and ‘skin’ beneath his ‘fingernails’ gripping onto his lab coat, he knew that there was some merit to his words.

“You removed the chip, I’m pretty sure it was something malicious. I don’t know what it does but it’s not good. Now that it’s gone I’m sure they’re coming for me.” Rock’s words were alarming as Light bandaged up the younger’s arms. The wounds weren’t bad enough to require any actual repairs, as such the most they could do was wait for the artificial flesh to heal on its own.

“Who is coming for you, Rock?” Light asked him after a long pause, looking him in the eye. “I’m... not completely sure.” The day went on as usual, if anything a little somber. They ate, they watched television, Rock stared out the window at the March rain that fell. It’s been a year since his last encounter with Wily, 2006 was so far away. 2007, however, seemed like a mirage. With his hands resting in his lap so proper like, he seemed almost like a doll just staring blankly like that.

Bedtime came and Roll was happy to sleep in her bed all alone. Rock, on the other hand, had begun just falling asleep next to Light instead of sneaking into his room every night. It wasn’t uncommon for the child to wake up screaming or sobbing, but those weren’t the worst nights. The worst nights were the nights where Rock wouldn’t wake up. Light would instead get up at his normal time of 3 AM to check on his son, only to see him trembling there beneath the covers, whimpering, and moaning out troubling things. Worst of all, whatever nightmare he was having, he was unable to be stirred from.

3 AM never came, the screaming never came, none of that came tonight as Rock was held in the tight embrace of his father. What did come was the sound of glass shattering. The two shot up from bed in fear, knowing full well that if they both woke up than it wasn’t a dream. They locked eyes and immediately knew what had happened.

“Roll…” Rock whispered, pushing himself off the bed. He was faster than his father and didn’t hesitate to figure out what was happening.

Light took a bit more time, pulling out his hand gun from his bedside table, before rushing out into the hall and into Roll’s room. Rock pushed passed him and it didn’t take long for the doctor to see why. Wind blew in through the smashed in window, light was outside filtering in, the girl was nowhere to be seen. The two of them ran out front, the sound of Rock’s buster came first but Light’s gun was soon followed.
Neither were very effective against the robot masters that ran into the forests beyond the property, carrying the limp Roll over their shoulder. Rock ran after them, Light attempted to grab him but wasn’t fast enough. It became obvious he needed to give chase though and as such he slipped on his shoes and tried to follow, gun still in hand, the rain of the March night pelting down upon them.

Mud splashed up around Rock’s feet as he launched through the forest, following behind the eight new robots that seemed to be fleeing from him. He was thrown off when a flash of white hot pain filled the side of his head. He fell to the ground on his side, his jaw was undoubtedly broken. He turned to look at who had just kicked him square in the face and saw a robot master that looked remarkably like a Sniper Joe.

He aimed his own buster directly down at the child, Rock was sure beneath that full covering helmet, there was a snarl. “Stay down! It’ll only make things easier on you.” The stranger said sharply. “Who… are you?” Rock managed out, cupping the side of his face. “Break Man, that’s all you need to know.” The two of them perked up as they heard someone else coming closer. “Rock! Rock!” Dr Light had followed them all the way out here, following his son in a desperate attempt to protect him.

“Figures… Light robot.” And with that Break Man disappeared into the darkness of the woodland around them. Light had no knowledge of who that was, only saw a red blur as he approached. He helped his son stand and supported him.

The two of them were both covered in dirt, mud, and grime but that was better than being covered in blood. “Let’s go home… I’ll repair you, we’ll take a bath, and…” He trailed off, unsure of what to say to his son. “And then I’ll go an save Roll.” Rock shot back, his voice sharp. Once again called to the battle field.
Chapter Thirty-Nine: Magnetman

‘Rock, that dog’s name is Rush. I was building him to give to you for Christmas this year but... I guess now is as good as any to give him to you. He’ll be your partner. He’s as strong as any robot master and hopefully he will keep you safe. His mannerisms and behavioral traits are based off of the German Shepherd breed, a notoriously aggressive breed, so keep that in mind.’

Rock looked at the dog that stood by his side. He didn’t seem like much, just stood there panting and looking excitedly up at him. He wondered if there was any reason why he was so happy, if he was happy. If only he knew that it was because Rush adored the ground he walked on. To the blue bomber, the dog didn’t seem all that threatening. Sure he took down a few enemies, but what about robot masters. Wouldn’t Rush be considered a lower class robot? Wouldn’t he just fall victim to the programming of the other robot master? He sure hoped not.

“Come on boy, let’s go get Roll back.” Rock muttered pressing up against the door, he was unsure of himself, but then again he hardly ever was actually sure of himself when it came to things like this. Rush barked softly in encouragement, something that pushed the child forward and into the arena. The place was covered in wiring, metallic walls which radiated some sort of… pull to them. It felt like the rest of the stage. Filled with magnetic forces that just made Rock feel sick and dizzy. How could any robot master thrive in here? It didn’t make sense. That was, until the robot of the hour dropped from the ceiling. Rush growled at the magnet themed master, sharp teeth bared. Of course, a robot that uses magnets to his advantage would be the final obstacle in a stage filled with magnets in general.

“Who are you?” Rock asked, sharply. “Magnetman, isn’t it obvious.” The other replied rather quickly. “Go figure… Should have expected that Wily wasn’t all that original with names.” Magnet shrugged. “It is what it is. Nothing I can help.” He sounded so nonchalant, as though he was completely neutral. Fitting for a magnet which is both positive and negative. “Where’s my sister?” The blue bomber began again, here it seemed that the robot master seemed to perk up.

“Oh!? That’s your sister!? You’re so lucky… She’s absolutely gorgeous I can tell you that. A beautiful young lady, although she wasn’t our target.” Magnet spoke with a hum, obviously smitten
with the girl. “That wasn’t related to my question-- my question was, where is my sister?” He tried again, as he grew more agitated so did the red dog beside him. Rock took aim with his buster, locked upon the enemy before him.

“You’re so rude… I was complimenting you and this is what you do? Regardless, your sister is with Wily. Hell if I know where that is though, I’m just following the orders to get the girl. That’s all.” He sighed as though this was the biggest inconvenience of his life. “Which includes deactivating you and dragging you to Wily myself. He has quite a lot he wants to do with you, kid. More than you’ll ever know.”

He didn’t like the sound of that, not one bit, and neither did Rush apparently. It was a relief to see that Rush remained loyal, so that was a perk. Magnetman took aim, jumping up into the air and beginning to shoot those missiles towards him. They looked like magnets, but as soon as they hit the ground it became painfully apparent that wasn’t what they were. They were actual missiles, with gunpowder, ready to blow.

Rock tried to get a clear shot, but found that each time he took aim, the other would jump around again. He was fast-- nowhere near the fastest robot master he has faced however, but he certainly was a nuisance.

When he would stop, Rock would find himself being dragged towards him as he used his magnetic powers, when that would happen none of his shots would do anything to him-- orbiting instead of actually hitting the other. It was troublesome. It was during one of these magnetic portions that Rush finally made himself useful.

The dog, exhausted from running away and around, decided to go right for Magnet. He noticed a little too late as the dog came rushing towards him teeth bared. Rush tackled the other robot master, biting into his body and pinning him to the ground with a yelp, effectively ending his jumpy behavior.

“H-Hey! G-Get off me, you stupid mutt!” Magnet hit the dog on the head several times with his free hand, but no matter was he did, Rush just wouldn’t let go. The other was about to release a magnet missile on the dog, but Rock was quick to intervene. He took aim and shot his free forearm clean off, happy to see that the shooter was completely unusable after that.

Magnetman howled in pain, a howl which only lasted for a few minutes before he fell into a panicked silence yet again. “I’ll give you one last chance,” Rock began, putting his foot firmly on the side of the other’s face, buster aimed directly at his head. “Tell me where you’ve taken my sister.” His words were sharp, cruel, and cold. He was undoubtedly ready to kill him.

“W-Wily’s fortress! She’s there! She’s with him! I-I’m not quite sure where that is! I have a very poor sense of direction so I can’t really tell you! I promise I’m telling the truth!” Rock could see there was no lie there, but at the same time he couldn’t let him go without being deactivated. He needed not only the copy ability but the other’s IC chip as well. As such, he took aim and, from point blank, shot Magnetman into deactivation. Happy to finally have him silenced.

Rock let out a sigh as he bent over and began to harvest the IC chip, copying the Magnet Missile ability along the way. “Good job Rush… Let’s head back to the lab.” Rush barked happily in response as they began to head home.
Chapter Summary

With Magnetman handled, Rock goes up against his next foe, Hardman.

Chapter Notes

The 'temple' and 'cavern' were merely themed areas for the attraction yet to come. Part of a queue that isn't to be realized for quite some time.

Chapter Forty: Hardman

There was a heavy pounding sound, almost like drums, just up ahead. It put Rock on edge. The cavern like place already unsettled him, he had enough of these types of places, but the steady beat of the drums really made him uneasy. He didn’t want to continue on, especially since the noise reminded him almost of those tribes deep in jungles. The ones that tend to be cannibals and tend to do blood sacrifices to their Gods.

The tribal noise pounded like an ethereal heartbeat, one that Rock struggled to keep track of as he pressed himself against the door. Looking over to Rush, the two made eye contact, looking anxiously at one another. They were both overly concerned about what they were about to face. It couldn’t have been worse than what the child has already seen, but that didn’t make it any easier to stomach.

The door slid open with an audible hissing sound, revealing the inner chamber. It was false, both Rush and Rock knew this. There is no way that an ancient temple would be here. But at the same time, the crumbling structure gave a feel that he didn’t enjoy. It wasn’t until the robot master materialized from the shadows, that the blue bomber understood where they were.

An amusement park. They were in a defunct ride in an abandoned amusement park. It became obvious when, with the attention drawn to the passageway that the robot master entered through, a faint que sign could be visible. Cracked pain illuminated by dying LED lights. No doubt running on the last bits of power before dying away for eternity. ‘10 minutes from this point’ it read in shades of black and browns, some words obviously chipped away unable to be read. Rock straightened to get a better look at the behemoth that stood before him, stomping his feet somewhat angrily.

“Who are you?” The same question that he asked Magnetman, a line of questioning that didn’t get very far, but perhaps would yield better results this time. “Hardman.” The response was quick, quiet, but not necessarily timid. More as though he didn’t find the words were worth being spoken, as if Rock wasn’t worth the time. “Where’s my sister?” The next question came tumbling without much thought. “With Wily.” Again that impersonal tone answered.
“Where’s Wily?” Rock pressed onward, seeing pretty easily that this wasn’t going to get him anywhere. “Somewhere far away.” Hardman responded, his voice never growing warmer or colder, remaining distant and impersonal. The child switched his ability to the Magnet Missile, noticing pretty quickly that the bulky body of the other probably wouldn’t be affected by the Rock Buster all that much.

He took aim, obviously annoyed. “Tell me where my sister is, or I’ll shoot.” Hardman just stared at him, unmoving for a second, before he raised his own fists. At first they were at a standstill, Rock worried that the other had malfunctioned, and Hard knowing that this was just the start of an interesting fight. When the fists launched, however, the child was unsure what to do. One snatched him by the neck and dragged him forward with impeccable force that the blue bomber couldn’t quite comprehend.

“Pathetic.” The only word spoken in the fight as Hard threw Rock against a wall. He broke through it, revealing that it was obviously a drywall mock up. The cart on the other side creaked as he fell within it. His ‘tail bone’ ached with the feeling of the metal carts. He rose to his feet, alarmed at the situation he found himself in.

He tried to peer through the hole, too nervous to move, when another slam came from the drywall. The entire thing came crumbling down as Rush slammed into the control system of the ride. The ride jerked forward, causing Rock to fall over and get his foot stuck within the ride’s restraints. He still had time to escape, and would have, had Hard not joined him in the train. His heavy body rattled the carts, effectively undoing all of the child’s work to free himself. They disappeared into the tunnel beyond moving forward up a steep wooden incline. It became obvious that the ride they were embarking on was not safe.

The sunlight blinded him, making Rock flinched before seeing the rest of the world as they climbed above the treetops. From the station, he could hear Rush howling and barking, manifesting on the platform out of the train’s reach with a gimp leg, effectively incapacitated. “Rush! Stay!” The child shouted the order loud enough for him to hear, making sure that the dog didn’t do anything rash. The whining from the station dissipated as they climbed higher and higher into the air.

The clicking grew more ominous as they climbed, all the while Rock noticed that Hardman was getting ready to strike again. He just barely ducked into the seat to avoid those fists as they came flying over him. When he peeked his head up again he noticed that they were getting to the top of the incline.

The ride ahead did not look promising. Not only was it in complete disarray, obviously about ready to collapse at any moment with breaking and splintering wood, but it also had some very dangerous additions that could definitely kill them. Corkscrews, helixes, there was one inversion that could be seen very shortly after the initial drop. All of which were very concerning--but only to Rock. The wind rushed by them and instead of fight, he tried to pull his leg from the supports, wanting to at least disembark before things got too dangerous.

Two more fists came launching at him, they missed him initially, but he poked his head up just a moment too quickly and he felt the fingertips digging into his back.

The burning of the bloody scratches was awful, but the blue bomber pushed through, looking up at Hardman with a pleading expression. “We have to get off! We can’t fight like this!” Hard didn’t respond, just took aim and prepared to fire. It was as if he didn’t know the dangers. Before he could shoot, the coaster reached the peak. The two froze, holding their breath, hoping that the coaster had stalled. But of course, according to Newton’s third law of motion, ‘for every action
there is an equal, and opposite, reaction’, or in this case, ‘what goes up, must come down’. And down they went.

Rock found himself holding on for dear life as they made a near straight drop down the hill. He watched Hardman’s body begin lifting out of the seat, his form too heavy to be able to remain in the train. It was terrifying to watch him fall faster than the train itself, only to land in a cart further up, shaking the loose structure of the ride as it was.

It felt like the entire wooden structure was about to collapse at any minute due to the disrepair that had befallen it, that had befallen this whole park in general. They rolled on, and Rock could see the damage that one blow did to Hard. It was terrifying as they crested another hill. This time the drop discarded the robot master from the train completely. He plummeted to the bottom of the hill, promptly being hit by the train when it reached its descent. His body was dragged along the track for a while later only to be thrown off finally when they reached the helix.

The loss of momentum wasn’t enough to carry the ride far enough to the end, and as such the hit slowed it down that by the time that there was any form of lull, the train stopped. Believing it to be over, the child began to rise. He looked out to the lake that surrounded him. It was filled with algae and bacteria. He could see Hardman from where he stood, lying limp at the bottom of the coaster. The wind being the only sound that filled his ears until… Terror, true terror.

Rock heard it before he saw it. Another train barreling right for him. Rush must have tried to stop the train but instead put the second one on a sort of timer. It was coming straight for him. He struggled to untangle himself, something he was in no rush of doing before since it was his only security from the fall, but found himself unable to.

There was a loud crash and a bunch of splintering wood as the crunching noise of the trains colliding filled his ears. The trains rocked forward just a bit, but in the end they remained combined in the low lull of the track. Rock looked down at himself to see that once again he had broken many of his ‘bones’ and tore his body up in the process. A mangled mess of metal and blood. Of course this would happen.

Rush, when concerned that any one of the two trains that had disembarked hadn’t returned, decided to explore the track on his own, without the trains. He found Hardman as he moved along, careful of his wounded leg as he climbed. It wasn’t long before he found Rock too. Howling and whining, the dog proceeded to ignore his own injuries in favor of his master, a master who was just teetering on consciousness.

The strength of the dog was immense as he managed to rip apart the trains and free the boy that was trapped inside, if only a little. With enough pulling he managed to get the hardly lucid child free from the death trap of a train. Clinging onto his dog, Rock was completely numb by pain as he dragged his body, now a ‘bag of bone fragments’ through the area. Rush knew that part of their mission was the recover an ability and an IC chip and as such he went over there first.

Rock, who has done this so many times now that it’s now an autopilot type of thing, managed to get the IC Chip from the destroyed body and the ability required for the next confrontation. The departure was solemn and quiet as they left the mangled and crushed body behind, in a graveyard of other metal behemoths.

A perfect resting place for a monolith of steel like Hardman.
Chapter Forty-One: Topman

“If a child is test-tube born, never is truly awake, and exists only in the artificial womb until repurposed for a body-- do you think it’s still inhumane to kill them? They’ve never experienced the joys of life, they don’t even know they are alive, as such, would it be cruel to just kill them or let them die?”

Rock didn’t know what to say as he stared at Topman. The faint glow around the room revealed the countless enclosed tubes each with an individual humanoid figure within. No doubt were they artificial, as they floated silently in the tubes, but at the same time they seemed all too alive. They were too human just to kill without any hesitation or feeling of remorse, ghosts that lingered in a state of eternal sleep.

“I don’t think doing something like that would be morally correct.” Rock spoke suddenly, looking over to Rush who was quietly standing beside him. He too looked unsettled to see all these humanoid figures. They were ghostly phantoms, waiting for the moment where they will be awakened from their endless slumber.

“Why do you believe that? They’re not human by all technicality. They weren’t naturally born. They don’t have mothers or anything of that sort. In the end, should they die, it’d be like ending a dream that was never lived. They wouldn’t know it, wouldn’t even realize the fact of the matter. Why is that considered so wrong? Would it not be considered a blessing almost?” Top pressed his hand against one of the tube’s walls. The thing inside shifted only a bit, as though repulsed by him, before settling down again.

The female within looked so peaceful, her long dark hair flowing around her curled body, bare breasts pressed against her thighs as her arms wrapped limply around her snug, ghostly form.

“If it was my choice, I’d burn this place to the ground.” Top continued, turning to look at Rock. His cobalt eyes focused on the child before him, harsh and cold but at the same time there was something else there. In the deep ocean of his eyes, there was the turbulent waves, a riptide was
forming there dragging one deep into the cold waters below. A depressing thought for a depressed gaze.

“Why would you want to do that? Wouldn't that be murder?” Rock inquired, his hand falling onto Rush’s head. He didn’t expect the sigh that came. The other more flamboyant robot master shrugged his shoulders before beginning once again, “How could I expect you to understand. You were a science experiment, but not the same kind of experiment. I guess you wouldn’t understand unless you were one of them.” It was in that moment that the child understood.

Wily had moved on from abducting and kidnapping to creating and transferring. It’s not murder if it never existed in the first place. You’re not stealing a loved one’s life unless they are loved by someone. If an unknown person is murdered with nobody to miss them and nobody to see them die, the body never discovered, than they weren’t murdered to begin with almost. Nobody would report it and therefore nobody would search.

They would be, effectively, forgotten.

A pain in his shoulder. Rock was so lost in thought that he hadn’t considered that maybe, just maybe, Top would attack. Peering over to his left he saw something… It was digging into his flesh. It became quickly apparent that it was a steel tipped top. It was rotating on its axis so fast that it was digging into his skin and muscle. Letting out a cry he swatted at it like a bug, sending the object flying and exploding into a wall.

The damage wasn’t too bad, but it was enough to leave a marginal gash where it once was. “Philosophy is something I enjoy, but not as much as I enjoy dancing.”

Rock looked up to the other, the grin on his face was alarming. “So, Rockman… Care to dance?” He didn’t get a chance to reply before the other came rushing at him. Alarm flooded Rock’s face as he moved out of the way of the twirling individual. Rush began to bark, as the tops were sent out the dog made quick work of them, tearing them apart. No foreign object would bury its way into his master, that was for sure.

Rock shot at Top, but it wouldn’t do much, especially when he charged at him. The Hard Knuckle did a little bit of damage, but that still wasn’t enough to truly put a stop to Topman. Just as the blue bomber thought he was going to be beaten, just when he thought that he would lose, he shot one more Hard Knuckle at Topman.

He was losing hope despite having not taken much damage, and the result of this ill placed shot would prove to be terrifying. The knuckle launched, but instead of hitting the rotating robot master, it soared through the air. A heavy cracking sound emanated as, slowly and steadily, the glass of the tube began to fracture.

Spiderwebs extended outwards, wrapping around the tube like some demented embrace. The thing within stirred as the fluid began to seep out. Eyes opened and, for an instance, Rock had a flashback to a time long since forgotten. When he had mistakenly released a monster, he remembered watching the woman shatter her head against a wall-- spilling her brains out all over the place.

Topman seemed to understand the trouble as well, for he took an instinctive step back, casting a glance to Rock as though terrified. He didn’t have the chance to say anything before the woman broke out of her liquid and glass tomb. She fell to the ground, limp, with the two robot masters frozen in a sense of silence. They awaited eagerly for her to move, for something to happen. An eternity passed by, the silence dragging on as though never ending, painful and unruly.
They both jumped when the girl suddenly pushed her naked body up. She let out a loud, aggressive hiss before charging at the two of them. She launched herself at Topman first, as he was the closest. Rock made a move to shoot at her, but Rush was throwing off his aim, preventing him from doing anything really conclusive to stop the woman from tearing him apart. “Rush! Knock it off!” But the dog wouldn’t stop pushing his feet, throwing him off balance.

Topman screamed and cried for help as he tried to get the woman off of him, due to his status of being pinned he couldn’t use any of his attacks. She clawed at his face, ripping off bits of flesh and parts of armor. Rock flinched back as he heard the pained scream of agony as she sank her teeth deep into the flesh of his neck, pulling away to reveal the inner workings of the robot master.

**BANG!**

Her head exploded in a shower of blood and gore, bone fragment splayed out like a beautiful fireworks show. The woman slumped over, without a head, on the robot master. She lay limp, motionless, completely dead. A familiar figure landed beside the panting body of Topman as he lay, with the corpse still on top of him.

“Break Man! I-It’s you…” Topman whispered, most likely expecting some form of help. But that couldn’t have been further from the truth. With his own arm buster, Break Man shot the poor robot master without hesitation. His body went limp as the entire upper half of his skull was blown clean off, revealing the cybernetic jaw to be the only thing still attached to his robotic neck.

Rock stared terrified at the other, wondering if maybe this was the reason why Rush was stopping him from shooting, perhaps he knew somehow that this robot master, hidden in the rafters, would do it for them.

“What a nuisance of a robot master, letting a perfectly good child go to waste. How pathetic. Some guardian…” Break Man slowly approached Rock, not at all intimidated by the dog that snarled at the boy’s feet. He stopped just out of the dog’s range, when he moved to get closer, Rush lunged at him. The teeth of the dog clamped down upon his arm, but it seemed almost as though the other was unphased.

He lifted his arm and, grabbing the dog by the neck, began to pull it off by brute force, in the process ripping up his own body. When the dog was free from him, he threw Rush as hard as he could towards the wall, effectively deactivating the dog with ease. The child stared vacantly towards his dog before he attempted to run over to him, only to be stopped by Break Man who quickly snatched the child up by the throat.

Rock struggled to get out of his grasp, kicking at him as the other did the same to him that he did to Rush, except this time towards the freshly shattered test tube. The glass dug into his form, cutting him apart and leaving him in a pool of blood and torn flesh. “Stop intervening, Rockman. Otherwise I won’t be so merciful with you.” Rock didn’t hear him as he lay in the sticky preservation fluid.

He watched as Break Man went, his eyes locked upon the lifeless form of Topman in a state of unconsciousness before him. Rush laying limp against the wall just a ways off. He couldn't help but wonder how he got himself into these messes.
Chapter Summary

With Topman now defeated, Rock takes on Shadowman, a rather formidable foe.

Chapter Notes

Shadowman's abilities need a bit of explanation. He is able to manipulate and manifest in shadows, due to his inability to see (blindness developed by something akin to cataracts) he uses the shadows to see for him. The more shadowy/dark the room the better he can 'see' it. On another note, he is also able to drag others into the shadows to manifest elsewhere, but it takes a lot of energy from him. He does have other weapons, but these are not manifestations of his power.

Chapter Forty-Two: Shadowman

He felt utterly alone in the darkness. He didn’t have Rush at his side, he didn’t have any eerie television eyes, no… He was just in the darkness. The room was a shadowy place with virtually no light save for what little seeped in during the split second that he had entered the place. It gave him horrific memories of Elecman and his confrontation.

The area that he ran through just moments before didn’t help any either. The place was oozing with what looked like oil. Bloody and used oil. It reeked of iron and Rock couldn’t help but wonder if it was the scent of a robot or a human. It was terrifying to think about, especially when applied to the fact that eventually he would face the orchestrator of it all. It crossed his mind that maybe this was a mere psychological trick to make him paranoid, but that didn’t make him feel all the much better.

Wandering in the dark, Rock’s steps were timid. He couldn’t see anything, he tried firing into the darkness but his buster shot was devoured by the shadows just as quickly as it appeared. The light was too bright to really reveal anything to him either, instead it just blinded him. Despite this vision, it became painfully apparent that something was coming towards him. He wasn’t sure how he knew but--

“Tell me, do you trust me.” The whisper was low, causing Rock to gasp in shock, he could feel the presence against him almost as hands grasped his shoulders. The other’s chest was almost pressed against his own. It was terrifying how intimately close he was as time seemed to be frozen. And yet it moved all too fast.

Rock didn’t have the chance to respond as he was quickly picked up and hurled towards the wall. He felt his body slam into it, a cracking sound audible as something broke behind him-- digging into his back.

He had no time to recover before that presence was against him again. He was pressed so close that
he could smell the faint Lavender scent that lingered on his clothes. He could feel the silken fabric of some form of robe which flowed about him. It was as terrifying as it was mysterious. That steel grip grabbed hold of him and once more a whisper echoed into his ear, causing a shiver to run through the child’s spine. “Don’t move a muscle when you come to a standstill-- trust me.”

Something in the other’s tone lulled him just a bit, told him that if he trusted the other than it would all be alright. As such he allowed the other to push him to the side, flinging him almost. Rock stood stiff and frozen when he came to a standstill, something about the others voice was hypnotizing, otherworldly almost. He felt something go whizzing past his head, and yet he still remained frozen. A cracking sound, not unlike the sound that resonated beneath his own body, echoed in the darkness.

That presence one more time, somehow he felt this would be the last. “One more time, that’s all we need to finish this. I must request you trust me just once more.” Rock did, unsure of what exactly was happening, but at the same time knowing fully well somewhere deep inside of him that it all would work out. Perhaps it was still the shock from Break Man’s attack just the day before, perhaps it was the deactivation of his dog, perhaps it was even watching both a woman and robot master be executed so cruelly at the same time. Somehow he was so willingly to just submit to the words of this enemy.

This time Rock wasn’t thrown, no… Nothing like that. The form of the other stayed pressed against him. He was much larger than him in every way, height, muscle, width, he was just a larger robot-- and yet nothing about him seemed mechanical. No signal he emitted was anything like a modern robot master. It was almost as though it was scrambled beyond belief, juxtapose upon something too advanced to comprehend.

He was effectively body slammed into a wall, pinned there for a second as that familiar crack came again. Third time’s a charm. It wasn’t within him, it was something attached to the walls, and yet this stranger was so willing to destroy it… What was it? What was so important to postpone killing him.

“No we are free to leave.” Rock felt his body being pushed into the wall, a bizarre feeling enveloped him as he felt his form slip through what he believed to be a solid wall. It felt almost as though he became a fluid, and yet that grip held fast. The darkness became more heavy and bleak than before, at least until the light came to him.

Rock was blinded as they emerged from what seemed to be a shadow. The moon was so bright in the sky, a dear friend to the blue bomber through all of his encounters. The worst or most jarring were always met with a gaze from the moon. Yet this seemed so… Different. The child sat on the ground in the tall grass and found himself terrified to look at the other, the person that he believed to be his enemy. Eventually the curiosity grew to be too much and so he chanced to look behind him.

The other appeared to be exhausted as he sat slumped down in the grass. The skill he used to slip through shadows must have been too much for him. As such he sat there, panting and worn out. He looked like a ninja, one of those stereotypical ones from movies, and yet at the same time he seemed entirely different. The other looked up to the moon, revealing his pale features and long, midnight coloured eyelashes. The hair beneath his helmet must be just as dark. The silken robes which embraced him were hanging open now, revealing the armor beneath, the weapons beneath. It became painfully obvious that the other could have killed him at any moment, should he have chosen to.

“Are… Are you okay?” Rock asked quietly as he approached, his timid personality manifesting,
Those eyes opened and Rock was startled to see something within them he never would have expected. The other had piercing red eyes which seemed so vacant and void, mostly due to the white coating which covered his pupils. He wondered if it was a design choice, up until he noticed that it wasn’t looking towards anything in particular. It struck him like a rushing train.

This robot master is blind!

“Y-Your eyes…” Rock whispered quietly, unsure of how to feel when a sort of smile graced the others features. “Yes… I suppose for humans it’d be called cataracts. I’m not sure what it would be called for someone like myself. I haven’t been able to truly see since the 16th century. The world has changed so much I’m sure, the shadows tell me that much, but I was never made to see it.” Despite the fact that he spoke of something so depressing, he didn’t seem sad. He seemed almost grateful.

“Who… are you?” Rock spoke after a long pause, unsure of what to say about his vision. He watched as the other rose to his feet slowly, standing at his full height of 168 centimeters. Truly he wasn’t that tall, but compared to Rock’s mere 132 centimeters, it was quite a bit of difference for the child. “I go by many names, the name Wily assigned to me was Shadow Man, based off of the name I gave him when he reactivated me. I gave myself the name Shadow a long time ago…”

“If Wily re-activated you, does that mean you’re loyal to him?” Shadowman burst into a fit of laughter, shaking his head. “Not in the slightest. No, I joined sides with him only to achieve my goal. My goal has been reached now, so I have no need to truly work for him anymore.” Somehow the explanation provided only made Rock more confused than he already was. “What was your goal?” He asked, trying to glean as much information as he possibly could.

“That is something I cannot tell you even if I wanted to. Now, we must get you to Light labs, there is no reason for us to linger here… Besides, knowing Wily as I so vaguely do, he will start searching for us when he realizes that I broke his cameras.” It clicked into place, a slight puzzle piece as they began walking, the other was trying to make it look like they were fighting to buy more time. In reality he was hitting the cameras. He was destroying them to make it seem as though they were destroyed in the battle in the dark.

“Hey Shadow?” Rock began again as they walked side by side, the moon to their back. “Yes, Rock?” He answered calmly, tying his open robes closed. “How is it that you’re able to see?” The boy continued, he didn’t receive a response, just a finger pointing down at the shadow which stretched on before Shadowman. He didn’t know what to say to that but just nodded his head and continued in silence.

It crossed his mind that this was a trap but at the same time what could be gained from a trap like this?
Chapter Forty-Three: Universe

“No… It couldn’t possibly be…” Light’s words were shaky as he stared at the other before him. “Could you be that mysterious robot that we found within the temple so long ago…?" Shadow nodded his head modestly. It was a simple answer to a simple question that he could easily provide. “Temple? What temple?" Rock inquired as Light worked on his repairs, he was somewhat lost on the tale, one that the doctor remembered all too fondly by this point.

“It was about twenty to thirty years ago, I can’t remember exactly when, but it was me, Wily, and Cossack… We were relatively fresh out of college, Wily had yet to be banished from the scientific community, and despite our age we were relatively well known. We were invited to investigate a mysterious piece of machinery discovered in an ancient Aztec Temple, archeologists couldn’t make heads or tails of the thing. Carbon dating put the machine to over thousands of years old, but the technology was far more advanced than even present day. We conducted extensive studies upon it, but couldn’t figure it out. We analyzed the programming and Wily was enraged to find that a code very similar to my own code for robotic programming was discovered within his mechanisms. I had no idea how something like that had gotten there, he was quick to boot me off the project. Cossack left soon after. We were both so sure that he wouldn’t be able to repair the robot, but I suppose I was wrong. It is also worth noting that this mysterious machine had what eventually became ARLAS within its programming!”

“Ah… So that’s what happened.” Shadow’s voice cut through the air so simply and smoothly, it was almost as though he came to some secret revelation of sorts. A hidden spark behind vacant eyes.

“He never explained to me such things, the backstory to my rediscovery. He merely booted me up, after figuring that out, and I explained to him how to repair my body. It wasn’t anything spectacular, in fact I wasn’t really damaged at all. I simply deactivated myself to rest until discovery. I suppose that was easier than I thought.” The robot moved over to a seat, happily sitting himself down, he blindly stared off in the general direction of Light. “Do you mind telling me about yourself, Shadowman?” Despite not having said it explicitly, Shadow knew exactly what the other wanted to know.
Where did he come from?

“That’s a tough question to answer. There’s a lot that I need to cover. To put it simply I’m from another universe, one very similar to this one, granted way further in its timeline. I guess you could say that I’m from an alternate future, one that isn’t very pretty. I can’t say specifics of characters, but I can say that humanity is dying. The world has fallen to war and catastrophe. I was sent here by the forces of Neo Arcadia, the last human civilization to remain on the face of the Earth, to try and save this Earth from the same fate. My master, who I will serve with my life even now, sent me here with one mission. To ensure the survival of Rockman, the legendary hero, into the future. The hope was that his strength, wisdom, and prowess would be able to protect human life and, in turn, reploid life. There isn’t too much I can reveal in terms of my home universe, lest something go wrong and it disrupt the natural time flow further than I want it to, but I can say that who I am now is much different than what I was back then.” There was a stiff silence, a sense of pause as the duo stared at the robot master before them. What Shadowman said was pure lunacy, but then again the data doesn’t lie. Everything about him was foreign, ancient, and advanced.

How could they possibly say he was wrong or delusional…? Could a robot even be delusional?

“Well… Pardon my asking, but what’s a reploid?” Rock uttered, his expression was sour, concerned, but most importantly, confused. “That’s something I can’t really disclose. To put it simply, in my time ARLAS has grown. In my universe, Doctor, your ARLAS program is the primary program for robotic life. Reploids each have an advanced version of this program. We each have artificial souls of our own. We are no different than humans outside of our mechanical parts. There is one other factor that makes a Reploid what we are, but that’s not something that I can’t go into right now. Once again the time I come from has yet to happen to you all and I’d hate to ruin my mission with one foul word such as that.” The reploid explained calmly, continuing to stare vacantly into nothingness.

“If you’re that old than how are you still functioning?” Rock’s question may have sounded calloused, but it was one that everyone was thinking. A bark from Rush, who was also receiving some needed repairs and updates, added to the feeling. “Reploids aren’t like robot masters. We run off of a different kind of energy. Yes we can utilize Solar Energy, but sometimes in Neo Arcadia we cannot even leave our homes due to the weather. We had plans for a dome like construct, but with our current crisis that’s looking more and more bleak… As such many reploids would just shut down if we ran solely on Solar Energy. We got some of our energy from foodstuffs. It was a supplement but not a true source. Our last, and primary energy source, one that I haven’t actually used yet due to the weather of this time period, is energy crystals. It’s not a viable source of power, and you eat right through it if you are relying solely on it, but if you use it sparingly it’s practically limitless. I have enough power from these crystals to last me about a year, but that’s about it. I haven’t had to use any of my stores really, something I’m grateful for.” The only time he’s had to drain from his energy crystal stores was when he couldn’t find food or sunlight.

“You mentioned you were someone else entirely before, mind telling us who that is?” Shadow leaned back in his chair as he thought over Light’s question. “I can tell you my name and my occupation. But other than that there’s not much more I can share. I can’t even share my design lest it impose upon the future. I can give a vague description but that’s all.” There was a period of silence before he proceeded to speak once again, the others eagerly awaiting the answer to come. “My name was, once upon a time, Phantom. I had the full title of Hidden General Phantom back in my prime, before I left. I served loyally under the king of Neo Arcadia. Something I found to be a ruse. I won’t explain how, that’s something I hope you will face off with on your own in the future, Rockman. I am one of four guardians that were built to protect and serve. When things got to a point where there was no possible way to turn back, we couldn’t save our world, that’s when they voted to send me here. I changed my design and name, feeling that having me looking the same
would make you lot privy to information you shouldn’t have. Keeping my name felt like an injustice to the possible entity that would manifest-- this universe’s version of myself.” Once again there was a stunned silence, but the question was answered, so they pressed onward.

“How did you come to be in that ancient temple?” Light again. “As I said before, my universe is further along in its time. As such I’m not surprised that when I was sent here I manifested during pre-biblical times. I lived my life wandering the world, saw things like Vikings, Ancient Egyptians, I watched the crucifixion of Jesus… There’s a lot I have seen. But none of that amounts to much of anything. I gleaned my design from feudal Japan, where I was stranded for quite a time. When I escaped off of the island I traveled through Europe. I ended up in that temple when discoverers of the new world didn’t realize I was a stowaway. Finding the Aztecs was the hard part, but I didn’t try. They were happy to worship me, something I didn’t really stop them from doing. I found that it would be easier to hide away in their temples, in safety, than to go out and continue traveling until the days finally caught up. I’ve been asleep for… 400 years it seems, give or take a hundred. Does that answer your question?” They nodded solemnly, that stunned silence returning, Shadow smiled on his voided eyes scanning over them.

“What’s wrong with your eyes?” Rock’s question seemed so insensitive but at the same time someone had to ask it. “Rock!” Light began in a scolding tone. “It’s quite alright, Doctor. I don’t mind. He’s only a child right now afterall. To put it simply I’m blind, I’ve developed something akin to cataracts. I haven’t been able to see since… Well since the 16th century.” Shadow explained, gesturing to his right eye. “Let me take a look.” The doctor started, approaching quietly. He lifted the others head up by the chin, beginning to investigate those eyes, only to find that the damage was already done. Without the technology needed to repair it, all of which was obviously in the far future, there would be no way for them to restore Shadow’s sight to him. “Nevermind… I suppose you are blind.”

Shadowman snorted at this, he was about to speak when something seemed to catch his attention. “What is it, Shadow?” Rock asked as the older rose to his feet. “Something is here-- or more like someone is here. Doctor, is Rock repaired enough to go out and investigate with me?” He asked and it became apparent that something was very wrong. “Ah… Y-Yes he should be fine. Rush is also ready for the most part. He has a new update that should function rather well-- the Rush Marine.” Light explained closing the hatch on Rush’s back. “Perfect.” On that note, Shadow was headed out. Rock hopped up to follow, Rush was quick to follow.

The forests were dark, perfect for someone like Shadowman. The moon hardly permeated through the canopy that reached above. It made Rock sick to be here, the same place where he lost Roll. He missed her terribly and wondered where she could be…

Shadow’s hand stopped him, he chanced a glance up at him to find that he was studying the area somehow. A tiny shuriken was pulled out of his robes as the other began to advance. The silence and stillness was tense, a terrible feeling filled the area, only to be broken by the sudden movement of the reploid. He launched the shuriken into the trees, a wet slicing sound echoing through the forest. Something fell from the branches and it was then that Rock knew who it was.

Break Man.

Shadow was on him before he could even rise up to his feet. A gun like weapon was soon trained on the other. To those who have faced off with the future would know it to be a Buster Shot-- but slightly different. A common weapon among troops of Neo Arcadia. One of many weapons that Shadow had left with upon his person. “You do not belong here…” Shadow spoke, his voice a low growl. “Neither do you.” Break Man shot back. “Why are you defending him anyways, aren’t you one of Wily’s creations?” The red robot master continued, gesturing to the child that stood just a
few paces away.

“I serve nobody’s orders other than those assigned to me when I left my home. I do not have allegiance to Dr Wily or Dr Light. My only mission is to protect Rockman. If that means killing you, than I will do it without hesitation.” He pulled back the top of the buster, it made a clicking sound as it became poised to fire. The weapon wasn’t too much for flash, but it definitely looked more advanced than the guns of modern day. “Now get the hell out of here before I blow that faulty core right out of your chest.” Break Man seemed paralyzed at the mention of a core.

It was almost as though some secret was spilled that Shadow shouldn’t have known. Technically he probably shouldn’t have known about the others faulty core, but he was smart. He did his research on his ‘allies’.

Break Man got to his feet, picked up his shield, and tentatively rushed back into the forest. He vanished into the darkness. A beam of red light which showed his teleportation showed that he was gone from the area for the meantime. Turning towards Rock, Shadow let out a heavy sigh before tucking his buster shot back in his belt. “Get ready for your next mission, Rockman, there’s much you have to do. Many people you have to save… Roll is waiting for you.”

His eyes widened, Rush yipped gently at the mention of Roll. “Do you know where she is?” He asked, somewhat excited. “Vaguely… I’ll tell you where, but first you have to defeat the others. They will kill you first if you don’t.”
Chapter Summary

With Shadowman now on their side, Rock goes against Sparkman.

Chapter Notes

There's a lot more to Break Man's story than what is explained here-- also the Shadow Blade is an extremely strong weapon due to Shadowman's origins. As such the Shadow Blade and Metal Blade both are top of the line powers at this time.

Chapter Forty-Four: Sparkman

“I don’t understand, why is Break Man so bent on taking me down?” Rock asked as he neared the door. Through his headset he could hear the voice of Shadow on the other side. He had begun to fill the role that Roll had left behind upon her kidnapping. Despite his blindness he was able to yield quite a bit of insight, since he was one of Wily’s lackeys just hours before happily deserting and serving his original mission. While this was happening Light could get to work repairing the fallen robot masters.

He managed to fully restore Magnetman and Hardman, both of which were explained the situation at hand and were more than happy to leave their less-than-loving master. Topman was still under reconstruction, having been postponed due to Shadow’s story time. With a few extra hands however, the repairs were going as smooth as ever.

“To put it simply,” Shadow started. “He’s enraged with Light just as much as Wily is. From what I know, he isn’t too happy with Wily either but he’s more willing to work with him than with Light. A sad prospect when you think about it but not necessarily unwarranted either.” His explanation was far from perfect, but at the same time Rock knew the position the other was in. He probably didn’t want to reveal the details of the other. There was something he was hiding and, from what he’s been told already, he couldn’t blame the reploid for wanting to keep it a secret.

He was an anomaly, as such he had to be careful not to disturb the timeline any further than he intended, at least not until that dreadful era of apocalypticism arrived to test everyone on the face of the Earth. He probably was already endangering his mission by disclosing where he came from to begin with and his identity as Phantom. At the same time though… Rock wanted to know why. He wanted to understand Break Man.

“Do you have any recommendations for this fight Shadowman?” Rock inquired softly, waiting on opening the door until he got a response. “My weapon, the one that you copied, would be the best bet at defeating Sparkman I would think. Be wary of your location however, there are bound to be traps in that arena and the electrifying nature of the powerplant could cause you problems if he decided to charge something up. Also remember that Sparkman isn’t the most focused individual,
you can capitalize on his scatterbrained personality.” Shadow’s explanation seemed so cold and calloused, but then again he was a seasoned general. In the face of war it was his job to be that way, to turn his back on emotions and think about things logically and rationally, no matter how cold that ended up making him become.

“Understood…” Rock gave in response, pressing against the door. It yielded just as simply as those before and he found himself in a room filled with a static feeling. It’s been awhile since he’s been in a powerplant setting. Now that he was here, it felt almost familiar. He didn’t feel that same sense of fear now. It was almost as though he had seen the worst in a way. Some would say he really had. As for traps in the arena, however, the most he saw were the electrified surroundings. That provided a hazard if he let himself get caught off guard, but it wasn’t nearly enough to really be too much of a concern.

“Well hello there!” A sing song voice resonated, Rock directed his gaze to the direction of the sound. He was unsurprised to find Sparkman there. “It’s been a while, Rockman. How’s your precious girl-- oh wait! You don’t have her!” A nasal sounded cackle resonated from the robot master, he was mocking him. But then again the blue bomber wasn’t that surprised. They were programmed, as of right now, to cause chaos to justice faring individuals like him. If they wanted to laugh now, he would let them. They wouldn’t be too happy later however.

“Where is she, Sparkman. Tell me now and I won’t have to turn you into scrap metal.” Rock threatened. He had gotten rather good at being intimidating, for a moment the other seemed to actually take notice of what he said, almost as though he didn’t have a doubt in his mind that he would attempt something like that. Well, at least he wasn’t completely underestimating him. That was a step in the right direction of Wily’s experimental robot masters. “Sorry can’t tell ya! I’m not really privy to that information. Even if I was though, I don’t think I’d want to tell you.”

A Shadow Blade whizzed past the other robot master’s head, sharp and ready to cut through him. Sparkman froze for an instant, stuck in a position of terror. There was a stiff silence, one that neither one of them could truly grasp. It was tense, almost as though the other person was waiting for their enemy to strike. “You have five seconds to disclose either the location of Roll or the location of Wily.” Rock stated, his voice cold and cruel, an edge was present that worried Light as he listened in from the lab.

“Five…” The countdown began. “Wait-- what happens if you reach zero?” Spark asked, still frozen as the other held the shuriken like weapon in his hand. “Four…” The blue bomber continued, beginning to advance now. “What will you do with me if I do tell you?” The others questions were promptly ignored, furthering the suspense. “Three…” The child’s voice was an unsettling tone that only made the entire situation more eerie and detrimental. “Roll may not make it out if you kill me!” This was a lie and both of them knew it. “Two…” He pressed on, unflinching, unwavering, a steady countdown to the end of the others current life. “What about my brothers? What did you do with them!?” Spark tried to press on but all the questions remained unanswered, decaying in the air as the timer pushed their corpses to the side. “One…” He was panicking, unable to truly fathom the finality of the situation but at the same time being unable to go against his coding.

“What will you do to Wily when you do find him!?” Spark asked suddenly, the only question to get an answer. “I’ll execute him, just like I’m going to execute you.” The blades went flying and the battle began. It was the first time that Rock had displayed such aggressive behavior. A drastic shift in his character reflective of the strain put upon him by the abduction of his sister and best friend. Not only that but a shift in character that came from the crumbling support of his consciousness. He didn’t know if what he was doing was wrong or not, all he knew was that he wanted it to end… The only way to achieve that is to get rid of Wily. This could only be done through murder.
The shuriken objects went flying. Spark tried to flee but found that they buried into him quickly. His left leg and left arm were quickly severed, falling to the ground with heavy thunks as oil spilled out. The remaining two that were launched happily found their homes in his shoulder and chest respectively. He stumbled before losing his balance and falling to the ground. Whimpers and whines escaped the cowardly robot as he sat on the ground, staring at the child that approached him.

It was a blur, so fast and so smooth that it almost seemed professional and rehearsed. The head came clean off with the shadow blade slicing the neck clean through. Rock watched as the body slumped to the ground, he made quick work of retrieving the IC Chip and copying the ability, hoping that in the others next life he could do better. He made his way out when a familiar tune played.

“He’s there, Rock… Break Man is back, again.” Shadow’s voice came through the transmitter. It sounded more tired than concerned, as though he was fed up with the others repeated interruptions. Break Man manifested almost on cue, he looked so similar to a Sniper Joe to the point where Rock couldn’t help but wonder why they looked so similar. Perhaps it was intentional? Perhaps it wasn’t.

“What do you want this time?” Rock asked sharply, readying his weapons. “I want an honest fight. I want to see who is overall a better fighter out of the two of us. If I win, I’ll deactivate you and bring you to Wily for his experiments. But if you win…” He trailed off, giving the child space to interject. “You stop interfering, if anything you help me get Roll back. I don’t give a damn if you help me after that, but so long as you stop fighting me at every stop I reach than I don’t care.” Break Man nodded, agreeing to his terms. “En guarde, Rockman.”

The fight didn’t last long, to be quite frank they both were surprised at the ruthlessness that ensued. Break Man made a charge at Rock, buster firing, shield standing. Rock jumped up and landed on top of the shield, effectively kicking it out of his hand. With that out of the way it was just a matter of who could hit more. The reflexes of the seasoned fighter were far faster than that of the faulty masked opposition. It wasn’t long before the blue bomber nailed Break Man with a buster shot to the head.

The helmet took most of the blow, shattering into many parts and revealing the robot master beneath the mask. He reeled back, one magnificent blue eye staring out from the crevice of the helmet, a look of shock plastered on his face. He didn’t have time to shoot before Rock had him pinned against a wall. “I could kill you right now if I really wanted to, but in the end I’m a pacifist. I don’t want to see people die or get hurt, but in the end human life is worth more than any robot’s. As such, if you keep going against me, I won’t hesitate to deactivate you for good.”

Rock threw the other onto the ground, effectively knocking the wind out of him, before beginning to walk away, leaving Break Man sputtering and coughing in his wake. It was over, at least that much was done with. He could feel that eye still trained on him but he didn’t care as he walked away.

“Light’s going to get rid of you, you know? When he finds out.” Rock paused, he didn’t turn to look at the other even as he heard him shifting. “I don’t know, actually. Care to explain?” His voice was still just as distant as before, almost as though he viewed Break Man as an enemy. “When he finds out you want to kill Wily, he’s going to deactivate you without any question or hesitation.” The other shot back, the sounds of his helmet cracking and being ripped apart were easily heard in the quiet of the now still arena. “He’s known for quite some time I believe… But where’s your proof.” Rock chanced a glance over his shoulder, the others face was revealed now and to be quite honest the blue bomber was surprised at how close to his own that face appeared.
“That’s what he did to me.” Break Man spoke, his words laced with a knowing tone that made it so hard to disprove just by word alone. “And who exactly are you?” Rock spun around to face him. “I’m DLN-000, the first of Dr Thomas Light’s creations; Blues, or Protoman as some would say.”

Rock watched on in silence, his eyes trained on the other, not moving and not leaving. He didn’t trust him and he would make sure that he knew that. But at the same time what he was saying did add up. The ARLAS files did mention an ARLAS-Blues, and there was obvious testing for someone like that. But the project fell through. They all believed Blues was dead, deactivated, until now at least.

“I was the first of the ARLAS subjects. I was activated with the knowledge of this. I was asked to be a military robot. I didn’t want to. To put it simply, I valued my life. I was built with a core malfunction, this wasn’t known. We didn’t test strenuous activity before my official testing day. I performed, not well, but I did. This core malfunction limited my abilities exponentially. As such it’s not a surprise that I fell apart afterwards. I begged Light to allow me the graces of pursuing a different occupation, but he said there was nothing he could do. I wouldn’t tolerate for that. I wanted to survive. And besides, the core of a being is where their life is right? I knew there was a risk that if my core was replaced than I would be too… I know that was a stupid thought now, but the damage has already been done. I’ve got blood on my hands now, and to be quite frank if Light got his hands on me I’m certain he’d kill me without a second thought.” Blues was so certain of this fact, his words were critical, harsh, and without emotion as though any regret he may have had has long since been worn away.

“I don’t care about your sob story.” Rock was surprised at his own harsh tone. “You gave me a promise, and I’ll hold you to it. Although I suppose if your story holds, than that’ll make you my older brother. You’re Roll’s older brother too…” He didn’t say anything more, it was as though he was going to but didn’t want to extend the conversation further. With the silence still remaining, Rock turned away once again and proceeded to leave. This time he wasn’t stopped.
Snakeman

Chapter Summary

With Sparkman successfully defeated, Rock challenges Snakeman.

Chapter Notes

Snakeman and his Search Snakes are so dangerous mostly due to the venom they have. Snakeman produces this venom naturally and so he doesn't have to worry about running out. The Search Snakes however have very little of this venom and when they bite and inject somebody, they tend to run and camp out in a shadowy place, where they die.

Chapter Forty-Five: Snakeman

“What is this stuff anyways?” Rock finally spoke, glancing down at the ground. He didn’t like the look or feel of it. How it squished under his weight, how the area seemed to ungulate almost. It felt strange and unrealistic. “It’s snake skin.” The reply was simple almost as though it wasn’t strange to say it. “P-Pardon me?” The child quickly added as he pressed his body against the door. “Snake skin-- to explain it simply you are literally within a building where the platforms are constructed by giant mechanical snakes. It’s bizarre as it is weird.” Shadow explained on the other side, he had been within Snakeman’s territory before and he knew immediately what was going on.

“No… I don’t have anything to tell you. Out of all the robot masters that I share ‘a line’ with, Snakeman is the one I know the least. As far as I know he’s a little crazy. One moment he could be soft and gentle, the next he can be vicious and cynical. I’d say exercise caution and try to move fast.” He took Shadow’s words into consideration but wasn’t sure how much it helped or how much he’d actually consider in the moment.

The door opened with that same familiar hissing sound he has since grown so used to. He expected some sort of sudden attack but that’s not what happened. From what it sounded like, Snakeman was unhinged. Perhaps he was still, but one thing was for sure, he didn’t seem to be necessarily underhanded given the fact that he was sitting in the center of the room, almost as though waiting for Rock to appear. His tongue flicked in and out of his mouth, forked just like the serpents he was based off of. Red eyes focused on the child but they seemed almost as vacant as Shadow.

In the robot master’s hand was a tiny, green thing. It didn’t take long for Rock to realize it was a robotic snake. It almost seemed happy there as Snakeman caressed it gently. “Why do you have to fight usssssss?” The voice was something unexpected. It was soft, gentle, melodic almost. The extended ‘s’ fit him as a character, the child couldn’t help but wonder if perhaps the forked tongue had anything to do with it. “Are we doing ssssssssssomething wrong?” The innocence that laced
his voice was as truthful as it was sickening. It was as if he wasn’t at all knowledgeable of the wrongdoings of his siblings, but then again Rock didn’t recognize the other to be part of the abduction party of Roll. Perhaps he wasn’t present.

If that’s the case than to him it must seem as though Rock is the bad guy in all of this. “You kidnapped my sister.” Rock began, his words a calm, informative tone. “Did we?” Snake asked, tilting his head not unlike a puppy. “Yes, yes you did.” Rock’s voice was teetering on annoyed. To be quite frank he didn’t have the patience for all of this. He wanted to get this fight over as soon as he possibly could. He just wanted his sister back. Snake tilted his head again in the other direction, seemingly even more confused. “I don’t recall that.” He spoke innocently, rising to his feet.

What looked to be tens of snakes rushed out from the corners of the room, shifting and moving around Rock’s feet. The child was frozen in shock and terror as everything shifted and rushed by. It looked almost as though the ground was moving all around him, an ocean of snakes hissing and whining. Artificial sure, but snakes nonetheless. Something told Rock that if he stayed still, they wouldn’t be poised to attack. They would just keep going, almost as though believing he was nothing more than a lifeless statue frozen in time, last thing he wanted was an ill-placed snake bite to take him down. Snakeman didn’t seem bothered by this rush all that much, if anything he seemed happy.

“Sssssssso… How are you trying to get her back?” The ill fated question, Rock knew that this would set that innocent demeanor off kilter. Already the other felt somewhat troubled, unstable even. Almost as though just the slightest thing was getting ready to completely set him off, to transform him into some kind of monster. “I’ve been hunting down each and every one of you, asking each of you where you took her.” Snake picked up one of those serpents from off the ground. “And what happensssssssssssssssssssssss when they don’t tell you?” He asked, his voice held a venomous edge that dug into Rock’s heart. But he wasn’t going to back down. At the same time, however, he didn’t have an answer to give.

Any answer he did give wouldn’t be satisfactory or would set the other off. It would be easy to spot a lie within his falsified tale. As such he just bit his tongue. This, arguably, was still a mistake. It set Snake off regardless and within an instant Rock found himself up close and personal with the snake robot, so close that when his tongue flicked out it nearly graced Rock’s face. “You kill them don’t you? Without remorsesssssssssssssssssssssss. You kill them…” He wasn’t wrong, in fact if he wasn’t so intimidated Rock would agree. Instead he just held his silence and stood still, ready to defend himself if need be.

A glint caught his eye, upon Snakeman’s fangs. There was a clear shine on those teeth, like some fluid was coating them. It didn’t take long for Rock to realize what it was. He jerked back, but not fast enough. The robot was soon upon him, snapping his teeth at him, a strange hissing sound echoing from his throat. All the while that squirming floor seemed all too alarmed at his sudden step, and eventual tumble to the ground. They swarmed around Rock baring their own clear coated teeth.

Venom, they were poisonous. Rock fought to keep Snakeman at bay but found that the behemoth of a serpent was going to be all he could stop for the rest of the tiny snakes were quick to bury their fangs into him.

The venom was numbing, the bites were painful and excruciating. If it was just one snake he probably would have been fine without any form of treatment, but this was hundreds of snakes just snapping their jaws on him. As soon as they bit him, the robotic creatures slithered away to hide somewhere else, disappearing into the oblivion beyond. Snakeman continued to snap and bite at him, teeth bared and growling all the while.
Rock’s breathing was growing heavier and heavier, his vision was blurring, and a state of delirium was quick to take form. Eventually he was unable to combat the beast much longer, blood dribbled and dripped onto the ground around him. That oily substance that was so closely connected to Rock’s nightmares.

Rock’s arms gave out on him, he couldn’t hold Snakeman back. His limbs were numb and he could see the bite areas beginning to swell up. He wondered if they were bruising… Most likely not. The majority, if not all, of the search snakes have fled to the darkness to seek their deaths. Their deactivations. They went and disappeared clearing the floor. They had deposited their venom, they had no purpose here any longer.

Snakeman’s bite was the worst by far. His fangs were long, vampirish in fashion. They dug deep into the flesh of his shoulder and he could feel so much venom flood his system. A lethal dose without a doubt. The robot master pulled away, Rock could see the joyous smile on his face. “That wasssssssssssssss fun! I can’t wait to eat you up!” In the moment he couldn’t make heads or tails of the words. They didn’t make much sense to him, however he was delirious.

His eyes were slipping closed as his life proceeded to leave him. He felt himself burning up, his head was pounding and throbbing. It has only been a minute or two but the amount of venom that was pumped into him, as well as his struggling, did little to prevent the spread. He didn’t know he was twitching, sweating, or dry heaving.

He was too far out of the state of consciousness to really think about that. He also didn’t know that Blues was laying in wait for the right moment to strike. Rock heard the shot, but he didn’t register it. He felt needle enter his skin, but he didn’t recognize it. When his symptoms didn’t improve it became apparent the sheer amount of damage done. That’s when the vomiting began.
**Geminiman**

Chapter Summary

With Snakeman defeated, Rock goes up against Geminiman.

Chapter Notes

Geminiman has 11 clones, all named after Zodiacs. There is Gemini, Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. Each are described to be very similar of the stereotypical zodiac signs they represent, however it's not very obvious in this chapter itself.

Shadowman, or Phantom, calls Rock young master because of the fact that his true master is X from his universe. Rock looks younger, acts younger, and at this point in time is significantly younger than him. This will spark the term that Shadow will use towards Rock for the rest of the story.

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**Chapter Forty-Six: Geminiman**

“Why did you save me?”

Blues stood there, it was hard to tell where he was looking through those glasses, but it was obvious that his focus was on Rock. The mountains which reached into the starry sky, the crystalline waters that filled up the caverns below, everything was so surreal and delusional. Protoman helping Rockman was just as bizarre. “Why aren’t you answering me?” Rock asked sharply, his tone venomous and almost aggressive. “Is it because you don’t know? Is it because you want to make sure you’re the one that killed me and not someone else entirely!” He felt the pressure of his nails through the thick gloves, pressing deep into his palms.

He was being irrational, and he knew it. There was no reason he should have been saying these things. The other saved his life and spared him against Snakeman, but at the same time it was him who prevented him from saving Roll in the first place. That’s all he wanted in the end, to get his sister back…

“No… Not necessarily.” Blues’ tone was quiet, much softer than Rock expected, but at the same time it wasn’t tender. It wasn’t kind to him. “I know what Wily will do to you… I’ve seen it. In the end the fact of the matter remains that you are not Light. What Light did to me doesn’t justify letting you become Wily’s plaything. And it doesn’t justify him holding your sister hostage. And besides, you’re part of the same experiment I was.” ARLAS-Blues, he wasn’t lying there. That was his code name. Just like Rock was ARLAS-Rock and Roll was ARLAS-Roll. The blue bomber couldn’t help but wonder what became of the other experiments, he’s never met a Kalinka or Bass before…
“Why do we have to do this?” Rock finally asked after a long pause.

He didn’t understand, he just wanted to be a kid and live a life that was peaceful and kind. Instead he was fighting so many people, killing so many more. The cracks in Blues’ helmet reminded him of that, how hard had he pummeled him into the ground? If only he could see the damage beneath the helmet. The blue bomber turned and pressed himself against the door, looking doubtfully to the ground.

“I’m not sure why you’re fighting, or what drives you, but I can say so long as you continue to want to stop Wily, your war will be endless and unwavering. An Endless War.” Blues explained to him, keeping his distance as he spoke. Rock nodded in agreement, still keeping his gaze fixated on the ground between his feet. “I suppose you’re right… I’m not surprised somehow.” Rock knew even from the beginning that this would be the case. Somehow his personal purgatory has only just begun.

There was nothing left to say, no more words that were shared between them as Rock got ready to advance. “Poison.” Blues spoke up one last time. “What?” Those beautiful blue hues cast a glance back at him. “Poison, the same stuff that you were infected with. You managed to get the IC chip and copy ability of Snakeman. That poison and that ability should do wonders against Geminiman. But be warned, the snakes may not be the kindest to you if they don’t have any other target.” On that note, the older turned and headed in the opposite direction, effectively leaving the conflict behind.

Rock wasn’t sure what exactly he meant by that, how would the Search Snakes be cruel to him? Were they aware? Regardless he’d just summon what he needed instead of going crazy with it. They only have one hit before they slither away and die in the cold darkness somewhere.

Walking into the room gave him an immediate headache. Bright lights, all varying colors, shined all about the room.

Sitting atop a rock, far out of reach of the cave water upon the ground, in the middle of the room, surrounded by pillars of weathered stone, were about twelve figures. Crystals were all over the room, giving a disorienting mirror maze type of feel. One of the figures raised his hand and snapped his fingers, bringing all the others to attention, the lights flashed before settling once again upon them.

“Well aren’t you a cutie! I could just eat you up!” His voice was a falsetto tone, one that Rock recognized to be more feminine than he was used to for his encounters. For a second there, he firmly believed Gemini to be a masculine woman, only to discover that was most definitely not the case. “I think that goes for all twelve of us actually.” He seemed almost like an actor on a stage as he unfolded his crossed legs and stood up nice and tall. “I’m Gemini, and these are my clones, truly the only company worth keeping. You have Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.” He spoke it almost as though speaking a song, each clone rising with their names, revealing that in the middle of their breast plates were the zodiac signs relating to their names.

“Now who are you, baby cakes?” The amount of discomfort Rock felt as he watched the clones stare at him, their reflections seeming to focus on him through refracted images through crystals. It was ghostly almost. “Rockman.” He responded sharply. “I came here to find my sister.” The words fell out of his mouth without second thought. He has said this so many times now, it felt fake.

Was he looking for his sister at this point? Or was he just trying to find an excuse to find Wily and finally kill him? Both seemed plausible in this very moment. “We don’t know what you mean!” One of the clones piped up, Virgo it seemed. “We have no idea who that is.” Libra added, a hint of
edge to his voice. “Wait are we talking about the bitch in the red dress.” Sagittarius piped up, to which everyone shushed him aggressively.

“I can’t do anything with you all!” Gemini shouted, obviously frustrated. They were so busy fighting among themselves that they hardly noticed Rock advancing until it was too late. “Oh shit! Look out!” Aries cried just as the blue bomber released a good ten or so snakes upon them. A handful of them managed to scatter pretty quickly, however Rock managed to observe Taurus, Leo, Libra, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces all collapse to the snakes that pursued them. They lay on the ground, spasming for a second, before their bodies began to seemingly melt within the jaws of the now dead snakes.

It became obvious that these clones were made out of components just barely holding together. It looked almost like liquid mercury as it scattered all over the floor, flooding into the snakes and shutting them down before they could really do anything more. Aries, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Gemini were all that remained as they ran about the room. Before Rock knew it, lazers began to find their way reflecting through the maze of mirrors. One landed in the young robot’s leg, a severe burning sensation ensued.

Looking down to the wound, it was pretty obvious that it burned through just enough to reveal the inner workings. This was not good. And yet he still had the upper hand. Hiding behind pillars, he tried to escape their gaze. Finding this to be rather difficult as crystals reflected his visage at random locations. Upon pinpointing their locations, scouting around the arena for him, Rock managed to unleash snake after snake after snake upon individuals.

A sudden cry and fall of one of the clones resulted in quite the wonderful turn of events. Cancer, Virgo, and Scorpio fell to this trick like a charm. Their bodies melted away quickly, leaving Aries, Sagittarius, and Gemini none the wiser to the sudden depletion of their comrades. “I found him!” Sagittarius exclaimed before a snake was launched directly into his face, filling his veins with venom and, once again, causing him to melt into that rather bizarre silver fluid.

After watching the one melt away, Rock was surprised to find yet another clone standing right before him. Aries stood tall and proud, his gaze cruel and menacing. One focused beam went right towards the blue bomber. The stinging in his eye was unbearable, an audible popping sound accompanying a massive splash of color, as he made a move to grip it. He felt ‘blood’ oozing from the socket which was filled with eye remnant. The crude oil flooded from between closed fingers, gushing and pushing outwards, dripping down his face in rivers. Aries approached slowly.

“Children are so stupid.” Aries began, just like his namesake he proved his aggression. Rock watched, clasping his damaged eye, as the other punched into one of the many crystals in the room. It shattered and he was quick to pick up a shard from the floor. He held it like a knife before charging forward with it. The boy scrambled back, but soon found that the shard made its home anyways.

His side lit up in a burst of pain, filtering up through his entire form. Despite the pain, however, he knew he had a fight to finish. With one blood soaked hand he grasped onto the other. He saw Aries’ disgusted face, until he realized what was happening. Two Search Snakes were quick to bury their fangs into him. The liquid mercury like substance splashed all over Rock, but for the most part it pooled onto the ground with the deactivated snakes trapped within.

All that was left now was Gemini. Rock stumbled about trying to locate the remaining. Unsure of where to look or what to do. His eye socket continued to gush, his side was mostly plugged up thanks to the sliver of crystal, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t continue to ooze from around it. He limped and stumbled around the entire cavern, just looking with his one good eye. A flash of
movement caught his eye. He made a move to approach it only to find that he was correct in the worst way possible.

Gemini launched at him, grabbing him by the throat and slamming him into one of the pillars of rock. The cavern shook faintly as cracks formed on the pillar, something that the robot master didn’t seem to notice. “You’re so cute! I can’t wait to take you back to Wily and see what he does with you! Maybe I can have the leftovers…” Rock was silent as the other spoke, just trying to get his ground, just some grip on reality. “Tell me, Rock, how does that crystal in your side feel?”

A wince as the other grabbed hold of the crystal. Instead of pull it out, however, the other began to twist it. Clockwise, counterclockwise, one way and then the other, widening the hole and the blood that poured from it. “I heard Quickman did amazing work on you… I wonder if I could do the same.” Ripping the crystal from his side, causing Rock to cry out in pain, Gemini raised the fragment up to his face. The bloody edge pressed against the others cheek, causing a bit of pain and panic to flood through the blue bomber.

“Anything you want to say to me before I cut your face up and deactivate you?” Gemini asked finally, that falsetto still going strong. “Yes…” A grin spread across the boy’s face. “Tell me, have you ever been in a cave in?…” One strong kick to the wall behind him sent the whole thing crashing down. The world shook around them and before long the entire cave began to fall. If he hadn’t dropped him, then Gemini would have seen the massive grin on the boy’s face. Had he survived, he would have seen Rock pull himself out of the rubble terribly wounded and seek him out.

Had he just seen, he would have seen the unchecked rage of the child as he raised one boulder high above his head and repeatedly brought it down upon the skull of Gemini. Again, and again, and again, down and down it went. Until the head of the robot master was nothing more than a crushed skittle made of metal. Panting and bleeding out, Rock sat there by the corpse of Geminiman.

He didn’t expect everything to hurt as much as it did. A gentle embrace brought him to reality, as he was lifted up he came to recognize the hold. It was Shadowman. He wanted to ask why, but before he could, the ninja robot master answered for him. “My former Master used to get like this too after a long fight… I couldn’t sit by and watch you fall apart like him… War causes nothing but suffering, you gave yourself willingly to it, fighting for the greater good of everyone… Considering that I will continue to protect you as was assigned to me.” Shadow squeezed him tight to his chest, holding him in a comforting manner.

Shadow, even as Phantom, was never good with children, but he was assigned this one to protect, and that’s just what he was planning to do. “I will protect you, as I promised… I suppose that makes you my little master.”
Needleman

Chapter Summary

With Geminiman defeated, Rock now faces off with Needleman.

Chapter Notes

Rock has developed quite the fan base since he became Rockman. However not all of it is necessarily positive-- a note: none of his reputation was tainted by this incident.

Chapter Forty-Seven: Needleman

This place was a nightmare. The wind howled through the vacant shipyard, brushing against hollowed hulls and empty skeletons of what used to be vessels for voyaging, thus setting a tone that was altogether surreal and terrifying. Rock hated this place, filled with demons of a time long since passed. Twisted metal reached up into the sky, hulls left abandoned in the disarray and damage that was innately connected to man’s irresponsibility. Nobody has been on this land in quite some time. Since the last human has stepped foot upon these grounds, the place has begun to decay.

The remains of the hulls were scattered all about him. Some ships were resting on the ground, held upright by rusted metallic rungs, others were suspended above him using fraying industrial steel cables as though waiting to be lifted further into the sky. Little droplets of water fell from the suspended metallic deadweights, showing just how ready they were to just break through. A few droplets of rain caressed his face, fingertips which danced against his flesh. He wondered how waterlogged these ships were, and if the rain would cause them to fall apart.

As he walked through the graveyard, he realized that he would find much more solace in this situation if Rush was here. He was given an update for Rush, the Rush Jet, but Rock felt too frightened to use it. He hasn’t been taking Rush with him on his missions mostly because of the fact that Rush has gotten in the way in the past. He didn’t want another Robot Master to suffer because of his dog running around his legs, causing him to never get a good shot. That sort of excitement was not for the field. As such Rush was on a ‘call-to-summon’ status. Light was working on a voice activated system that would summon Rush whenever the time came for him to need his puppy companion.

Still it would be nice if he was here... Working around the steel corpses, Rock navigated through the labyrinth of human constructs. The rain fell across his face and dampened his suit to his body. It didn’t take too terribly long before he found himself faced to face with a horrific sight. A beach. Light told him there was a beach here, one that he would probably have to travel across and into whatever platform this new robot master found himself upon to start a fight, what he wasn’t told was that there was quite the bit of death on this beach.
There was a thick scent of cyanide in the air, as well as iron and rotting flesh. Rock had to cover his mouth to prevent himself from vomiting as he saw all the people. They were bloating, decaying, looking almost like beached whales. They couldn’t have been older than a few days at the most. Their bowels have already been emptied as evident by all the extra smells which wafted up into the air around their corpses. Sand clung to them loosely, evident as Rock approached. He walked by one person and was terrified to find that a crab had made its home in their mouth. It scuttled out, snapped at him a few times, and then retreated back into its saliva infested cavern.

The calming sound of the waves gently caressing the sand only set an air of discomfort to the situation. Rock passed a man in robes, dressed completely in clerical clothing, a pastor of sorts no doubt. He was different however. This man didn’t have the stench of poison. Upon closer inspection, the blue bomber found that he wasn’t poisoned, but impaled. He died due to a singular sharp object running his chest through. The question was, now, was this robot master involved-- as well as was it willing that this all had occurred. A book in the man’s hand gave all the answers needed, all the answers he realized he didn’t want to know. Glancing around at the people, it hurt his heart to realize just what had happened here.

Notes in the book detailed that this was a Christian based cult, one that went completely off the rails. They began to worship him, Rockman, as the rebirthed version of Jesus Christ. They admired him for being a ‘superhero’, and believed that he would save them if they just gave him enough power to do so. A lie no doubt, one probably set up to smudge his image in the media, or to frighten away from the life style he chose. It never crossed his mind that he would get media coverage, a press, or a fanbase for his actions… It never crossed his mind that there would be fanatics and zealots. Out of all the things he expected, he expected people to hate him, not love him.

As he kept reading the leather bound bible and all the notes within, it became clear to him why Needleman was here. A sunken ship out in the bay was where the cult was stationed for most of his life. It was a dangerous place no doubt, but they held worship there regardless. They believed that all the Robot Masters, in any form, were messengers. Needleman hopped onto the bandwagon last minute, just as they were detailing their mass suicide. The suicide that would give Rock all the power he needed to save the world. However by doing this it gave people no way out. It was either drink the poison… or be killed.

The pastor probably had second thoughts.

Rock placed the book back down beside the body and began to investigate the area a little more. His boot caught hold of a stone slab and he felt himself fall down upon it. The stone broke-- something that was very peculiar in the child’s mind. If it was a step or natural rock, it shouldn’t have broken especially so cleanly. Brushing away the sand the child saw a familiar image. It was him no doubt, carved into a stone slab. He looked almost… holy. The image was beautiful, but nonetheless unsettling. Created with the same dedication that one would put into an image of the Virgin Mary or of Jesus Christ himself. Rock couldn’t help but be curious to what his father would think of something like this.

He was depicted in beautiful robes which flowed about him like a ghostly wisp, his face staring upwards in a sorrowful gaze, big round eyes immortalized in pure white stone just barely worn from the rain. His hands were clasped tightly before him, pressed against his chest, lips pursed in a perpetual frown. The rain made it look like the image was beginning to cry as the water cluttered in the indentations in the stone. The creepiest part was that Rock was without a helmet, meaning that these loons got pictures of him out of uniform, something that, as far as he was concerned, wasn’t very common.
He took a step back, turning to the ship, realizing what he had to do. This was too far, this was too much, why would anyone do this and worst of all why would any robot allow it to happen. He wished he knew the answers, he wished he knew about it sooner, perhaps he would have been able to stop them but the bottom line was that they were obsessed. They wanted to make him into a God-- but that’s not what he was. He was just a kid fighting as a soldier for those who couldn’t.

The salt water embraced him happily with the coming waves. Rock made quick work of swimming out into slate colored ocean. He was worried, for a moment, about whether or not there were sharks in here, but dismissed it to be illogical. Especially this close to vessels like this. He was unaware of the undersea mines which have been placed just out of his reach. He didn’t recognize his feet just barely brushing against the structure, he didn’t notice their rounded silhouettes, but most of all he got through the ocean of mines without a problem. Pulling himself aboard the sunken ship with no issue.

The ship wasn’t any better. It was used once, unlike the majority of the ships that probably lay to rest in the shipyard, but it became obvious that it was marooned here on purpose. It also became obvious that it was being used as a cult compound for quite some time-- at least a few years.

Dead bodies, suffering just the same as those on the beach, were strewn all about. Some more bloated than others, some skewered instead of poisoned. However it wasn’t the body count, which had skyrocketed past thirty by this point, it was the memorabilia which really put him on edge. Statues, carvings, paintings, photographs, so on so forth all of him were scattered about the room. A sacrificial ‘box’ was made, labeled as such. When Rock opened it, he was disgusted to find that inside were dead babies and animals. Some had their skeletons carved. He chanced to glance at the work done on a baby’s skull.

‘He who shall save us from the torment of deformity. He will rescue us and bring us peace. His messenger, Needle, has told us as such. We will worship him for all of eternity, the Rapture is near.’

Rock quietly placed the skull back into the box before shutting the entire thing once again, choking down his own vomit. He was used to robot death, but the death of humans was still new to him. Something he was sure he would never get used to. Now, he believed, was time to move on. He explored the ship in full, found all the places that one would expect in any sort of living grounds. Everything felt slightly off due to the natural tilt of the ship, but other than that… It was just like any other cult compound.

He wanted to go lower down into the ship but only found water. He discovered a flashlight in one of the above rooms and made quick work to fetch it. He was mortified to see that in the water were dead bodies nailed to boards. This was undoubtedly how they got rid of individuals that weren’t necessarily lining up with what the cult wanted. Once more in this room there were many items that used his image. But not just his image. No… he saw Roll’s image, Light’s image, hell even Blues’ image… All littering the pool of water like some creepy scrapbook collage.

Needless to say, he slammed that door shut pretty quickly after retreating once again.

The only way to go now was up, and so to the deck was where he went. He was not surprised to find Needle standing there. He stood at the forward, staring out into sea, but that didn’t mean he had no idea Rock was there at all. “So you came… Did you like the gift?” The robot master asked, standing proudly, his body ridged. “Like it? What the hell was all of that!?” Rock shot back, his voice coming out more shaky than he had anticipated. “Did you not enjoy it?” The robot turned to face him, dark eyes glaring him down. “No of course I didn’t! Why would I?” Rock shook his head, the weapon for the Gemini Laser quickly being selected. “Because they are honoring you.”
They stood in silence for a while, Rock didn’t know what to say, Needle had too much he wanted to say—neither of them wanted to move. It was Needle, in the end, who decided that he would take the risk. He aimed at the blue bomber and shot. With practiced ease, he jumped out of the way. The weapon of choice was quick to be deployed. For a long time this pattern went on, with neither of them taking any damage. That was, until the rain grew a bit heavier. The hull of the ship began to fill, as such the thing began to list just a bit.

The creaking of the hull distracted Rock, giving Needle a perfect opportunity to strike. The wall he was standing in front of soon became closer than ever to him as a long needle pinned him to it. Rock let out a cry of agony, unsure of what just happened, as he found himself stuck where he was. He struggled, but no matter what he did, the needle continued to hold him through his shoulder.

“Truly not worth all those lives I would say…” Needle spoke with a sigh, his expression seemingly sorrowful. “They truly believed you would be their salvation, and yet here you are, trapped and unable to do anything.” He stepped closer as Rock continued to struggle. It was then that it hit him. Yes, that may just work if he had just the right amount of coin flips.

When Needle got too close for comfort, but not close enough to mean certain death, Rock was quick to make his move. “Rush!” His voice echoed. The system wasn’t finished, it was questionable whether or not it would work. For a while there was nothing but silence, just still and terrifying silence. Until a red beam of light was quick to manifest. The dog appeared, and, upon seeing the state his master was in, was quick to act.

Needle made a move to try and kill Rock then, but was ultimately foiled by the dog. Rush bit down tightly on the robot master’s arm, pulling and tugging on him, unaltering as the other punched him and tried to shoot at him. This gave Rock more than enough time to free himself and charge. He rammed his shoulder into Needle, successfully knocking the robot onto the ground. With him dazed, he was quick to place a good shot of the Gemini Laser right at his head. He ignored the pain as the buster fired, the recoil causing most of the agony, but with that out of the way he could relax altogether.

Needle was knocked out. He reached in and grabbed ahold of the compartment and removed the IC chip. It felt relieving to have it. He opened a compartment inside Rush and happily stored it there—it would be safe and Light could retrieve it. From here the boy lifted the robot master up and made quick work of throwing him overboard… Just in case he was a husk by this point. What he didn’t expect would be what happened.

A massive explosion set fire to the sea, the mines detonated drawing attention to the area. Rock felt burning on his skin, it stung and hurt. Rush, sensing the danger, was quick to shift to Jet form. The air stung him even more as he fled, disappearing. He saw a few people peer up at him from around vacant ships—survivors that didn’t die in the massacre. They were hiding, spectres that now believed the coast was clear. He was relieved to watch as they rushed away and out of the shipyard, right to believe they were spared.
Chapter Summary

Strange signals are being omitted from the previously defeated robot master's hideouts. Rock, along with Quickman, Metalman, and Sparkman go to investigate.

Chapter Notes

Originally I was going to put two doc robots in one chapter-- but there was so much with one doc robot that I didn't see the logic in that. However this means doc robot chapters that aren't going to have a lot of character development or purpose to the story will probably be cut. (but that may not be any)

Chapter Forty-Eight: Mimic

“You four are coming up upon the strange signal. Be careful alright?” Shadowman’s voice was a calming tone, almost like a parent trying to guide a child through a difficult situation. It was as soothing as it was bizarre. Not that it was unwelcome, but to the four of them they didn't expect this type of kindness. Especially in this situation. To say it was a shock when a familiar signal resonated from what used to be Sparkman’s hideaway was an understatement. Had it not been for Quickman being in the lab at that time, it would have been assumed that they joined Wily once again.

Sparkman, freshly repaired, joined Rock, Quick, and Metal in investigating the bizarre signals. The idea was that Spark would be able to lead them through his hideout, making it safer and easier, while Quick and Metal would search for what was stealing their signal. Last thing they wanted was for their reputation to get damaged especially when they were just recently beginning to get on their feet. They were finding jobs, repairing their family, they were healing

“No, wh-what do you think will be on the other side of that d-door?” Spark asked curiously, he seemed so much more hesitant now that tables have turned. Rock couldn’t blame him, he went through quite a lot before. He would never be able to find peace so long as the blue bomber was in the same room as him. An understandable feeling really, although one Rock didn’t care for. “I’m not sure…” Quick’s voice gave a sense of discomfort to the soldier, one that the Wily bot noticed. They all had baggage it seemed.

“’Theorizing isn’t the best idea, if you look at it objectively.” Metal piped up, his gaze focused ahead. “What do you mean, mom?” Quick’s use of the name wasn’t unprecedented, after learning everything reverting back to old habits wasn’t hard.

However it gave a sickening feeling to everyone present. The reminder that they had been changed, striped of their lives, and were currently grasping at straws to bring any amount of it back… It didn’t sit well. “What I mean is that if we start theorizing on what may happen, we may
underestimate or overestimate the enemy we are going against. Both of which could get us killed or make us fail.” The thought was reasonable enough, but at the same time it didn’t stop anyone. Rock still wondered, but he has seen the ingenuity of Wily, he wasn’t all that concerned. He was sure everyone else was wondering too, but just wasn’t able to tell what they were wondering about.

Now wasn’t the time to think on those things. The door was here, they just had to step through. The hissing sound as the door opened was still just as unsettling as ever, the reveal of the room was not unnatural. It was very reminiscent of the second time Rock came into contact with Metal. Dark room, with the edges blotched out almost, a singular ray of light shining upon a lone figure. Wires were everywhere, sparking and sizzling just out of view, the only difference being that there was no computer.

A deformed figure stood hunched over in the center. Rock wasn’t sure what he was, or who he was, but what he could do is state what it reminded him of. Frankenstein's monster came to his mind, made out of bits and parts, hardly looking whole but at the same time being too real to refute. “Who are you?” Metal’s voice broke through the thick silence, one that Rock was shock to find had him, and most likely everyone else, spell bound in some way. What they got was more than they bargained for.

“Elisabeth… is that you?” The voice brought them all back, they exchanged glances, and Rock was surprised to see how pale Metal had gotten. Even through his face mask, he could see so clearly all the color leave him. Quick didn’t look to good either, shock had taken hold of him and was keeping him entranced.

“It is you, isn’t it. You fucking bitch.” The deep, masculine voice began again, turning to face them. Red eyes glowed from the mechanical monster before them. To say he seemed pissed was an understatement. They were frozen in the tense situation, unsure of what to do or where to go. It wasn’t until the thing charged at them, that they got the ability to move again. They scattered like mice, running in all different directions, however it became apparent who the figure was after.

It was quick to follow Metal, almost as though trying to catch him. All hope of him staying out of reach and fighting how he normally does was shattered when that malformed hand grasped onto his arm, wrenching him back and off his feet. “Fuck you! Let go of me you bastard!” He cried, struggling to break free of the grasp. “Is that any way to talk to your husband?” It all clicked into place now. Whether it truly was him or not didn’t matter, it sounded and acted like him… He was masquerading to be the man that ruined the majority of Elisabeth’s adult life. “You’re not my husband!” His voice was shrill, his movements just as quick and sharp as he launched his elbow back into the groin of the robot.

There was a thunk sound, heavy, loud, and reverberating as the robot stumbled back. It was unclear whether the blow had the same amount of pain it did in a human, in any of them, but it was enough to give Metal a grip on the situation. Rock wanted to jump into the fight, feeling that the other needed help, but Quick stopped him. They made eye contact and it became obvious why. This was burying a dead body, this was killing the last thing that was holding him back. If things got too bad they’d intervene, but this was a fight between Elisabeth and her husband.

“How could you say that to me? Especially when we have had so many kids…” He stumbled forward towards Metal, there was a blade in his hand. The red robot master drew his own, they’re weapons were eerily similar.

“You mean you forced me to have so many kids-- is that what you mean? Cause last time I checked I didn’t want to marry you, have kids with you, I wanted to leave you after what you did to me at the Diner.” Rock felt Quick recoil next to him, almost as though struck by something. “It’s
not my fault those guys kept looking at you like that, I had to show them who was boss.” The robot stated once again. “Doesn’t mean you had to beat the shit out of them! They were looking at me because I was their waitress. They were trying to call me over! And you had to step in and--” He cut himself off, almost as though aware of where he was and who he was talking to.

“So are you saying you didn’t like the sex?” Rock felt that same recoil again, he looked over to Quick to see tears in his eyes, his hand hovering over his mouth. His body was here but his eyes showed he was in a far away place. “Answer me, bitch!” The robot charged at Metal again, to which the robot master simply jumped out of the way just enough to land a hard kick to the other’s back. “No! I didn’t like the sex. You knew I didn’t want to, you knew I wanted to leave!” Once upon a time, Elisabeth would have never said these things, but now as Metalman-- it was much easier.

“You forced children upon me! Forced me to get a job that I didn’t like! You beat me, hurt me, insulted me, and abused me! It was all your fault that Mary didn’t survive! What kind of piece of shit kills his own daughter while she’s still in the womb of her mother!? The mood shifted drastically in that moment, almost as though there was something there with them. Some demon from another place. “You didn’t want her so I killed her, you obviously didn’t mind it as much since you didn’t go to the cops.” The husband forced himself up to his feet as he spoke, chuckling.

“How could you possibly know that!? You’re a fucking lunatic! How could you possibly know anything about how anyone feels other than yourself!?”

Metal didn’t expect the charge when it happened. The robot tackled him to the ground, pinning him there. It was all he could do to avoid the blows as they came. The mockery of his own weapon was the hardest as he had to swivel and take the blow with another body part. He struggled to get his own blade, which was just a bit away.

“You know what, you cheating whore!? Is this the thanks I get!? I fucked you real good, and you enjoyed it! I gave you children! I married you! I gave you a house! You never respected me! You never did what you were suppose to! Instead all you did was ask questions, test my authority! If I wanted to share the reigns in this relationship I would have married a man! And yet now, even as you’ve changed so much, you’re still fighting me! You’re still the same fucking bitch that I knew back then!” A metal blade buried itself in Metal’s arm. That was enough to give him leverage.

He pulled the blade out, gushing blood all the while, before making a quick move to slice the robot’s chest open. He reared back, howling in pain. Metal freed himself, pulling away and getting to his feet. The tables were turned almost instantly as he launched himself on top of the other and began hacking and slashing away. It was finally ready to bury the hatchet-- to get revenge.

“Fuck you! I hope you rot in hell you piece of shit! I’m glad I left you! I hope that’s actually you in that metal suit because if it is, I’m going to have so much fun killing you like you did my daughter!” He wasn’t making much sense, he sounded insane almost as he sliced downwards. Burying the blade into the others body over and over again. Blood splayed upwards in showers and it came to Rock’s attention just how lucky he was to be spared. If metal had truly seen him as a threat, he wouldn’t be here in the end.

Metal’s screams turned to sobs which turned to laughter, looping back around until the entity that was impersonating Elisabeth’s husband was nothing but stray parts.

Panting as he sat on his heels, huffing with tears streaming down his face. There was a moment of silence as they all stood there, unsure of what to say or do. It was Quick that moved first, approaching Metal tentatively. Once reaching him an embrace was expected. In that moment they weren’t robots, they weren’t horrific experiments with a tragic past, they were Elisabeth and
Serena. A mother and a daughter who love each other as much as their roles would allow. They were best friends while still keeping the necessary dynamic of a mother and her child.

Quick held Metal as he sobbed, squeezed him gently as he wept there in his arms. “Mom I… I’m so sorry this happened to you… I didn’t know…” He didn’t have anything more to say, not like Metal wanted him to keep talking in the first place. Pulling away, the blood covered robot pulled down his mask and smiled, tears staining his face as he cupped the cheek of his child.

“It’s okay baby girl… I wouldn’t have wanted you to know…” A kiss to the younger’s forehead. “I love you so much, Serena…”
Chapter Forty-Nine: Reminder

“Would you like me to explain what happened?” Quickman’s voice was welcomed after all that happened. After the fight, Metal was sent back to the lab for some repairs and hopefully a check of his mental processes—see if anything fizzled due to the intense emotions. “If you wouldn’t mind.” Rock replied. “My mother was an amazing woman. Her husband wasn’t. He would beat her, abuse her, call her names— it would get so bad to the point where she was so covered in bruises and cuts that her work would send her to the hospital as soon as she walked in. Her phrase was always ‘if it’s not life threatening or a broken bone, then I can fix it on my own’. She was strong, but also incredibly stupid. She was terrified of my dad and everything he did. I didn’t realize the extent of it until now. I didn’t know that he… you know…” Rock could understand why that word would make Quick uncomfortable and didn’t press it.

“My mom was loving, sweet, and caring despite everything. She took the blows so that we didn’t have to—I’m pretty sure. None of us knew that however. She may not have wanted us, but she was against the idea of getting an abortion, for no other reason then she felt she was killing someone that she was responsible for. She was also against the idea of putting us in foster care… She’s expressed to me in private during our life that when her parents died she had to spend a bit of time in foster care herself before her aunts and uncles heard of the situation and intervened. It wasn’t long, but that was long enough to make her hate the idea of doing that to anyone else.” Quick hugged himself, trying to rationalize what happened. It must be hard to come to terms with the fact of everything. Rock could only imagine. He was so incredibly lucky to have been created by a father who loved him more than anything— with no extra baggage like an abusive partner.

“Mom left him on one particular night. She was pregnant with Ethan and Emily and was starting to really show it. She came home to find the house in ruin, everything was fucked up. I wasn’t home, I was with a friend, but I wish I was. She walked in and knew something was wrong. The first thing she saw was the dog. It was dead in the living room. Suffocated to death from what I was told. She ran around the house looking for both me and Tyler. I wasn’t anywhere to be found, but Tyler…” His voice came out shaky, she was no doubt going to cry. “We was covered in burns from head to toe. It wasn’t hard to deduce what dad had done. He probably got pissed with Tyler and poured alcohol on him, he was always a dunkard, before throwing a match on him. He was smart to drop and roll— it saved his life and bought him time. The doctor’s said that if mom hadn’t come home
and took him straight to the hospital, then he would have died.”

Rock was in shock at the whole story. How could anyone do that? It seemed too cruel to be true. But at the same time, seemed all too plausible to not be. “Mom… She said that when Tyler woke up, he didn’t remember anything that had happened. He was so confused when he was told that he’d never see dad again. He wanted to see dad again. When mom asked him how he got the burns, he said that he stepped into the fire pit we had… He genuinely seemed to believe it.” Quick finally finished, pressing himself up against the door. Sparkman put one of his hands onto the others shoulder, hoping that would help.

It was strange, remembering that Sparkman was here the entire time. He heard all of it, but he had nothing to say. He was the outsider in this situation. A cowardly stranger just showing them around pretty much. He didn’t know what to do or what to say, or if there was anything he could do. Instead all he could do was provide his support to them as they went through all of this. A silent spectator in the messed up game that they all found themselves within.

“Thanks…” Quick spoke almost dismissively, looking to Rock with a smile on his face. It was sorrowful, and in his eyes the blue bomber could see guilt there. Guilt for what he wasn’t quite sure. “Well kid, you ready?” Rock nodded in reply, slipping his helmet back on his head, having taken it off to get a breather. The sound of the door opening was just as disquieting as the last. The room they found themselves in, once again, was very similar to the one they had just come from. Once again a figure almost exactly the same as the last was standing there.

“Well looks like we’re doing this again…” Quick grumbled as they stepped into the room, he felt that he knew the trend here. “S-Serena?” A terrified voice, one that he didn’t expect, came from the robot. He took a step back as the creature turned to face them. Rock knew then that this would be a fight very similar to the one that had just transpired. Where it would be a fight with the past, a face that had hurt them or depressed them in some way. A face that Quick would have to come to terms with.

But… that’s not what happened.

Instead Quick just smiled, he was shocked, no doubt, but a grin spread across his face. Sadistic and enraged, a complete change from the terrified expression that Metal sported. “Well if it isn’t Joseph. Been a while huh? How’s that bitch ya left me for?” Rock was shocked by the sudden aggression that the other had. No doubt unbothered by the concept of ripping apart this mimicry of a man.

“Says the girl who slept around school like a whore.” The robot chimed back. “Oh so you do it and you’re suddenly some big top dog, but I want to have a little fun and I’m a whore . Real hypocritical of you isn’t it? I mean you’re the one who decided to fuck me while being drunk off our asses and almost got me pregnant and then proceeded, the next day, to fuck a bunch of other girls in the same fashion. Oh but no, I’m the whore.”

Rock and Spark exchanged looks, both very evidently uncomfortable by hearing about such private information. Neither wanted to hear about some fucked up drama that happened during High School. Even if it did explain a lot of things. “That wasn’t my fault.” The robot spoke, his voice depressive almost. “Oh don’t give me that bullshit ‘boo-hoo’ shtick. I don’t give a shit. Go back to little-miss-too-good-for-school bitch Amy. You always liked the girls that were drugged up ninety-nine percent of the time better anyways. Made them more likely to say yes right? And less likely to care in the morning.” It wasn’t long after this that one of the boomerangs came out.

Rock shivered at the sight of it, the scarring on the front of his body tingled as he remembered when he was dissected. He knew how sadistic Quick was, and knew that he wouldn’t be bothered
too much by it afterwards, two traits that were even more terrifying together than they ever would be apart. “How do you know I wasn’t going to care?” The robot asked. “You don’t remember anything about me,” The red robot master didn’t seem all too happy with this response. A sharp frown appeared on his face before that grin returned and he chanted happily, “Oh well… It is what it is, you’re workin’ for Wily now, so I guess I’ll just have to kill ya!”

Quick was as fast as ever, charging forward and happily slicing the head of the robot off. It fell to the ground with ease with a heavy thunking sound. The robot teetered before collapsing. With one glance down, the robot that used to be Serena happily ran up to the head and kicked it as hard as she could. It launched into the air like a soccer ball and made a wet ‘shlunk’ sound as it slammed into the wall.

Rock and Spark stared in awe at the sheer ruthlessness of Quickman’s blow, almost as though he was trained to do just this. Perhaps he was. Perhaps this was all a last test that Wily wanted for his prized robot master.

“Man-- when will guys like him ever learn.” He grinned and looked back at the two. “If ya wanna fuck a chick, be smart about it.” There was silence, he was humored, but they were not. “Was… W-Was what he said true?” Sparkman inquired, more curious than anything. “Well, I mean yeah! Why wouldn’t it be? I have no shame about that though. People will say it’s gross but ya know what, you really only got so much time ya know? Everything dies eventually, if I’m gonna die, Imma die happy. Well… I’ve seen death once now. It sucks to be a robot, but hey-- on the bright side, I can’t get pregnant.” He laughed, but to be honest it wasn’t all that humoring.

“Oh stop with the long faces… They’re not worth it. I’m not upset, really. And you guys shouldn’t be either. Now let’s go, I have a date tonight.” They both knew that wasn’t the truth. Quick was upset, but he wouldn’t admit it. Never in a million years. “Who are you going out with?” Rock asked softly, his words a quiet tone.

“Your brother.”

“What!? Which one!?”

“Timeman.”

“WHAT!?”

Another laugh from Quickman as they left the eerie gravesite of many forgotten memories best left buried beneath the Earth.
Chapter Summary

Another memory drudged up-- this time for Airman back on the beaches of the cult's mass suicide.

Chapter Notes

This sounds like it came straight out of left field-- I know. But it does explain quite a bit of character traits for Airman as an entity.

Chapter Fifty: Collision

Needleman didn’t speak at all, neither did Airman or Crashman for that matter. It was silent here. Rock felt a pit in his stomach as they maneuvered through that shipyard once again. Something moved from the corner of his eye but Rock couldn’t turn fast enough to see what it was. He hated this place. It was ghostly and gruesome, something that he’d rather just be forgotten. Nothing would ever turn the graveyard into something beautiful, nothing would ever be able to fix the pain that was inflicted here.

“This is the place where you found that cult, right?” Crash asked innocently, turning to look at both Needle and Rock who were standing proudly to his left. “Y-Yeah… It wasn’t pretty.” He responded quietly, his eyes focused on the darkness ahead. The night sky, which used to be so welcoming to him before, now seemed so vast and endless. An abyss which loomed above them ready to swallow them whole.

“Needle, you knew about the cult, you were involved with it for a little while, do tell us what that was all about.” Airman’s voice was simple, older, more mature, but yet at the same time all too calm. They were talking about a doomsday cult, a small one sure, but one that undoubtedly could do a lot of harm if they really put their minds too it. Nevermind the people that survived.

“To explain it simply, the cult has been operating since the mid to late 2000s, originally believing that christ would be reborn sometime within the next ten years. Wily, who needed test subjects, took an interest in a cult that was interested in self sacrifice, prostitution, arranged marriages, undying dedication, and a rather distorted look on christian beliefs. He entered the cult, not really believing it, but it didn’t take long for the cult to begin to see him for what they wanted. A prophet.”

Chills ran down Rock’s spine, he wasn’t sure how he felt about this whole thing. It seemed terrible, wretched, unbelievable. “When you were activated, Rockman, and took down Wily, he claimed that you were the one they were looking for. The cult was falling apart at this time and needed something to reinvigorate what they hoped would come to fruition. They didn’t believe it at first, until news hit a year later that you had done it again. This time with higher stakes, and made it out
alive. They believed you to be their savior, their warrior, and the one that will free the world from suffering. It was lunacy, we all knew this, Wily even knew this, but it served its purpose.”

Rock paused as he spotted an image painted on one of the hulls of the ship. It was recent with paint still waiting to dry completely. Painted onto the hull of a ship tucked away just barely in view, was an image of... him. It was stunningly beautiful and detailed. He was surrounded by angels above him and dead bodies below him. In big words above the image it read ‘I saw the face of God today-- it was beautiful’. “To say they’re obsessed,” Airman began. “would be an understatement.”

Rock wondered why in the world anyone would worship him of all people. He was just a robot after all. A robot with nifty armor and the ability to fight-- an ability he developed through the countless fights he’s gone through. Nobody worshipped soldiers who went to war. Nobody worshipped police officers. Nobody worshipped armed forces or special units. So why would they worship him? He was not only a circumstantial hero, but to himself he didn’t even consider himself that much of a hero. He’s still killing things, granted most of them can be brought back, but it’s still murder. Temporary murder.

A noise caught their attention. It was a bizarre ‘whooshing’ like sound, before screams rang out. The screams were distinct humans, they weren’t robots, they weren’t spirits, they were living, breathing, humans.

It became apparent to all of them that despite all the time that had past, humans were still lingering here. The cultist hadn’t gone away completely. Most likely to mourn the failure of their sacrifice. Bursting back into the open they saw one of those ‘skull robots’ again. They were cornering a woman who was gripping onto her baby, holding the child close to her chest. It shambled closer and closer to her, as though broken in some way. It reached out to the woman, its hand tightening around her throat.

“You left me… Mama…” A child’s voice echoed from the depths of the robot’s body. Their stupor was broken by this, mostly by Air, who rushed towards the robot and body slammed him out of the way. The robot released the woman who was coughing and sobbing by this point. She tried to get to her feet, but her legs were jello. Other members of the cult, who were hiding from the monstrosity, were quick to rush to her aid. They helped her up and tried to usher her away from the scene. No doubt trying to hide.

“Airmam! Are you alright!?” Rock asked as the fan robot master got back to his feet, soon to be entangled by the other robot who continued to chant ‘mama’ over and over again. “Yes I’m fine! Go and help those people! They may be loons, but they don’t deserve to die!” The blue bomber was quick to do as he was instructed, turning to the other robot masters. “Needle, you search for any one that’s injured and tend to them. Crash, find a secure way out of here. I’ll handle the people themselves.” The boy explained to them, his features looked less like a child’s and more like an adult’s every second that passed by. “Are you sure you can handle that?” Needle inquired. “They worship me, how hard can it be?” Rock replied simply, feigning a light hearted mood-- however it was obvious in his eyes that their obsession terrified him.

They ran off in separate directions, moving quick to get everything done, the main goal was to protect them.

Rock managed to find a few people at first, and they were more than happy to start following him. After a while the remaining survivors noticed their brethren with the ‘Messiah’ and were quick to start following suit. Soon enough the blue bomber had a sizable group of people following him closely behind. “Now I need you all to listen to me.” he began speaking in a voice quiet enough not to draw outside attention, but loud enough for all of them to hear him. “We are getting you all out
of here. This place isn’t safe. I’ll protect you, but only if you can keep up.” He knew it sounded harsh but it was the best he could do… It was all he could do not to denounce their ‘religious beliefs’.

He gestured for them all to follow, noticing Crash had succeeded in finding a path. “I’ll go help Needle with the wounded.” He stated, happy that a clear escape route had been found. “Do that, notify me if you find anymore people.” One after another the people in robes poured out into the outside world. They seemed lost for a second before they vanished into the misty world beyond, vanishing into the fog like spirits. Almost as though they were never there. As they passed they thanked him, bowed to him, some requested to be embraced to which he obliged, but not happily. He had to stop a few from dropping to their knees and kissing his feet or hands. Women and children especially had to be ushered through and onward-- they would hold up themselves and crowd otherwise.

When the group was gone, Rock decided that it’d be best to take out the threat now. They couldn’t leave it here. Coming back to the scene of the fight, he was baffled by what he saw. The skull robot was dead, but Air wasn’t moving. He was just standing there staring at the child as though in mourning. Approaching his side, the fog from the water providing an eerie feeling, he stood beside him. The humid air was suffocating, but so was the smell of the ‘cult compound’. It reeked of death and oil, of blood and suffering, there wasn’t much more that could be said about the place.

“Who was he?” Rock asked, knowing full well the pattern that had formed. “A kid I used to know. A friend of mine from childhood. We used to tease him because he wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed and still called his mother ‘mama’ when we had all started calling our mothers ‘mom’. We figured there was always something… not right. But we were never told what that could be. We were only seven so, it’s not surprising. We would play soccer in the front yard in front of the house. Rose would usually be helping mom with the garden and Elisabeth would probably be napping or learning inside. One day, when we were playing, the ball rolled into the street.”

Rock knew immediately where this was going as he stared down at the corpse. “The kid was killed on impact… Driver was going sixty miles per hour in a fifteen miles per hour zone. The kid went flying. His last words were ‘Mama, where are you going?’ His mother was sitting on the front porch at the time, and had gotten up to go inside. She was going to say that she was going inside to make dinner but-- Then the car hit. He didn’t deserve that. I don’t know if this was actually the kid, I doubt it. I think it was just a recreation-- there’s no way Wily would have been able to pull off the transfer on a death so old. But that doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt…”

Rock understood that, and from the sound of it, the kid was close to him. They were good friends. They played together every day. Reaching a small, dainty hand up, the blue bomber held the older robot’s hand. It was more for comfort then anything as they stood in the mist, staring down at the body of a boy before them.

Life was hard, this was something that Rock learned long ago, but today he learned something else about this hard life. That things happen without explanation and without reason. The universe isn’t necessarily out to get you, in fact it most certainly isn’t, but sometimes it sure feels like it.
With the victory against the Airman copy, now it is time to delve into what drives Crash a little off.

Yes all the duplicates of people are fake, they are not real, they are just very convincing copies.

“Hey, Rock?” The voice was uncertain, quiet, childish almost in how it spoke. The blue bomber didn’t say anything, he didn’t have to. The other would get the message that he was alright to continue just fine. “What do you think stole my weapon data?” The trend is ugly, some memories need to remain forgotten. And yet as they walked along the sandy beaches that once held so many deceased cult members, it became obvious that it was inescapable. In the end each of them would come across their worst fears. Rock’s fears were gone, he didn’t fear them much anymore… But for Crash and his family, that’s a completely different statement.

He wasn’t sure why Wily was doing this, in the end he wasn’t sure why Wily did a lot of things. He was pretty sure it was because of the fact that the old man wanted to get back at his creations, or that he wished to kill Rock in some way, shape, or form. In the end, however, it had the opposite effect. It made these robot masters move on to their new life, fully capable of letting go, as well as sparing Rock the need to fight. It was nice to be able to sit on the sidelines and be a support over a primary soldier on the frontlines. Not only that but it was almost a perfect ending to see them break the chains that held them to their old lives, pulling away and making a new name for themselves.

“I’m not sure… Do you think you can handle whatever it is?” Rock inquired softly as they moved. Their party decreased by one once more as Air was sent home, in no mental state to keep going. “I’m going to have to aren’t I?” Crash’s words were simplistic, just a calm tone that seemed to fade into the distant sound of waves as they crashed against the shoreline. They walked along the sand quietly, ignoring the obvious signs of the cult’s activities over the past couple days.

“We’re almost to the site of the copycat.” Needle spoke up as they rounded around a rock face that had begun to rise beside them. The beach, once sandy, became rocky with this shift. The fine grain turned into pebbles and stones as they moved onward. It took a bit of investigation but soon enough they discovered something akin to an alcove of sorts. They had to submerge themselves for a moment to get into it, but when they did they found themselves in what looked to be a small cave, created by the rise of high tide and the fall of low tide. Somewhat spacious inside, it still was much too small to be considered part of a cavern system. No pathways reached out and the entire structure seemed to contain only this somewhat large room.
In the center of the naturally created room, on the land which reached up slightly out of the water, was a figure. In the glowing luminescence of the robot, his form was depicted. Crash swallowed hard seeing him, unsure of what to do or what to say. There was a thick, spicy odor that wasn’t altogether unpleasant. It burned their nostrils slightly, but wasn’t necessarily despised despite the discomfort. *It smells like gasoline in here.* Rock thought as they waded through the water, all the while the robot stared at them. The trio stopped just short of the land and stared at the figure.

“Tyler, it’s been so long.” The voice sounded familiar to both Rock and Crash, both frozen in place unable to move. “I’ve missed you…” The deep tone added, seemingly humored that he was here. The child attempted to grab onto the demolition bot’s hand but found himself too slow as the other made a rush towards him. “D-Dad!?” The word sounded so pathetic, so weak-- and yet in the end he couldn’t close the gap regardless. He was too frightened too. Despite what happened to him, Crash still hadn’t connected the dots of his encounter with his father to the man himself. To him he never understood why his father just up and left him during his recovery.

To the child, he firmly believed that the man just abandoned him. With the water now only up to his knees and that smell growing more dizzying by the second in the darkness, Crash struggled to even make himself look at the robot before him. He was certain that it was a duplicate and not his actual dad but… He still wished it was and had so much to say because of it. “Why? Why did you leave, dad?” Crash managed to squeak out weakly, his words already showing signs of his tearfulness.

“Tell me, Tyler…” Rock knew what that tone entailed, especially when he saw the light of a match stick filter into the room. “Do you still like fire?” As the match fell both Rock and Needle knew the danger they were in as they scrambled for the shoreline before everything went to hell. The water caught fire as a thin layer of gasoline ignited from atop the water bathing the room in a bright orange glow. The flames revealed that this place also was a base for the cult’s activities.

The blue bomber was shocked as his foot caught fire, he didn’t move fast enough, and he made quick work to put out the flames on his legs with the rocks and dirt, suffocating it, before relaxing and watching the fire reach up with thin arms. Needle was in much worse condition as he rolled on the ground trying to put himself out. Crash, meanwhile, stood wading in the water still-- his particular section not tainted by the gasoline they had smelled earlier. That didn’t mean, however, he wasn’t in trouble.

His face was pale as he looked all around him. Looking up to his ‘father’ he whimpered out, “Why? Why would you do that?” A look of recognition filtered in slowly and steadily. The memories he tried so hard to block out, now as a robot master, came rushing back. He didn’t know what he was trying to hide away and as such when the memory was brought up it came back full swing. He remembered it all. The flames, the alcohol, everything that had happened.

“Ask the cheating whore you call a mother, and maybe then you’ll know.” The voice told him. “She doesn’t cheat!” Crash shouted in return leaping onto the robot. Rock turned to look at the duo as he dressed Needle’s wounds. The two rolled and toppled over each other. Minor explosions were set off all around them, making the cavern shake and tremble with the force of the blasts. This was not a good idea.

“Crash! You’re going to kill us!” Needle cried out to him in hopes of making him see what he was doing. But the demolition bot wouldn’t listen. No, he was too involved in the execution of his father. The two made quick work of scratching each other up, blowing up things around them, but in the end the Skull Robots were no match for the robot masters themselves.

“You never loved us! You hated us for one reason or another! You just wanted mom!” Crash
shouted as he forced a crash bomber down the throat of his victim. “I won’t let you hurt her! I know you have, I know you hurt momma!” In those eyes Rock knew what Crash was probably thinking about. He has seen it in person.

The former mother cradling their son. ‘You’re my little man, so brave and strong. You’ll protect us right?’ In the end Metal didn’t need protecting, but Crash died as a kid who still needed that extra push to tell him he was valid. ‘Of course momma! I won’t let anything hurt any of us!’

The detonation shook the entire cavern with such force that Rock was certain it’d come down. “We have to swim through the gasoline! There’s no other way!” The blue bomber stated. Crash, covered in ‘blood’, looked to them and then the gasoline. They gave him no choice. They would be buried alive regardless. As such the blue bomber got to his feet as fast as possible and ran directly towards the other robot master all the while Needle moved to get back onto his feet.

Pulling the other against his will into the water wasn’t difficult, dragging him underneath the flames wasn’t either, and Needle was quick to follow behind. They weren’t in peak condition because of how hot the water was due to the flames, but at least they were better now. Climbing onto shore the three of them collapsed and just lay there for a little while staring up into the stars.

The cavern collapsed as they lay there, falling apart and burying away the beast that lay inside. Just as they thought it was all over a faint beeping noise came over the radio waves. They were getting a connection.

“Are you guys okay!?” It was Metal, sounding as concerned as ever. “Y-Yes Momma… We’re fine… Just fine.” Crash told him with a smile. “Thank god! What a relief. You all head home as soon as possible.”

“Yes momma…”
Addiction

Chapter Summary

The next signature they are hunting down is Flashman's, a signal which is hiding in a mirror maze.

Chapter Notes

When a clone of Gemini's dies, there is a cool down before they can be summoned again (about 24 hours) but after that cool down is reached they come back with only minor emotional and mental scarring.

Chapter Fifty-Two: Addiction

It was a mirror maze in here, only made worse by their massive party. If it weren’t for the fact that a small river ran to their right, it would be all the more confusing. It seemed even the twelve Geminimen were confused as to where they were going. They were uncertain as they maneuvered through the caverns beneath the stage. Seeing their reflections scattered all over the place was unsettling, disorienting, if they strayed from the river than no doubt would they get lost in the endless maze.

“Bubble, how do you feel?” Rock asked, looking over to the robot that seemed to be more than happy swimming in the river. “I’m alright… There’s really pretty crystals on the river bed, they seem to glow almost.” They responded with a hum. “Is that what that faint light is?” Flash’s voice was unexpected as they marched onward. “I think so… In the water it’s really bright, but the water is too murky to see all of that.”

Rock looked into the rippling water, curious to see if he could glimpse the lakebed himself, but found it was extremely difficult. The light was there, but it was so faint and fractured in the water that he couldn’t find where it was coming from. If someone told him it was crystals without being in the water themselves, he wouldn’t believe them. “Hey look! It’s the door!” The blue bomber snapped his head up just in time to avoid slamming into a mirror himself. He looked so strange in the reflection.

Rock turned to see it was Libra who had caught his attention. The clone was correct in saying there was a door there. “There’s a door down here too! I wonder if it goes into the same room.” Bubble mused quietly as he approached the wall. “I would suppose it has to.” Flash stated crossing his arms. They approached their door, investigating them for a moment as though they were any different from doors they had already seen in the past.

Flashman was the first one to break the tension and enter his door. “There’s a river in here.” He stated simply, much to the relief of Bubble who made quick work of getting inside. The room was all mirrors, not unlike where they had come. A maze of mirrors, hard to distinguish from each
other. A path was not made innately obvious.

The room wasn’t just disorienting via the mirrors however, there was also very little light within the cavernous area. Crystals which were embedded in the wall, floor, and ceiling were the only sources of light, making it all the harder to navigate. A faint pounding echoed in the room, almost like some tribal beat. All in all it was a rather negative and eerie feeling which manifested itself within the space.

“I don’t like this place…” Bubble whimpered as he sunk deeper into the water. He was visibly uncomfortable and it showed. “I’m not too fond of it either… It seems pretty… negative in here.” Pisces seemed to hang upon Capricorn as they said this, seemingly not enjoying their powers of empathy at all. “Do you think anyone is in here at all?” Capricorn suggested, to which all they got was a shrug in response. “Regardless of if anyone is in here or not, I think we should start making our way to the exit. Perhaps they’re further in.” Aquarius suggested, approaching the river to peer into the murky depths.

“I don’t think so, Light did say that they were here, at the first clearing.” Virgo stated thoughtfully. “I doubt this could be called a clearing, Virgo.” Leo chimed in, crossing his arms. “I swear if you two start fighting again I will throw you both into the river.” Scorpio hissed, their tone malicious and sharp like a blade. “I don’t think that’s fair at all, Scorpio.” Cancer mused, turning to the rest of the group as he spoke.

“Shush!” Sagittarius caught their attention quickly and everyone in the room fell quiet. “Do you all hear what I’m hearing?” Taurus inquired. It was true, there was a faint scratching sound intermingled with the sound of the shifting river.

It sounded almost as though someone was scratching up the walls and whatnot. It was a terrible noise that echoed in the room, now that they were quiet it was painstakingly loud. Their echoing voices must have masked it. “What is that?” Aries inquired, turning to Gemini who quickly responded, “Our target I would assume.”

Flash and Rock exchanged glances, this would be his test as far as they were aware. A test that the taller didn’t think he’d be able to pass, especially when the screaming began. If it weren’t for the fact that Pisces was hanging onto one of his ‘brothers’, he wouldn’t have been noticed. The mirror maze made it hard to see what had took the clone and where it had gone. “Oh shit! Pisces!” They scrambled to find where the beast went all while listening to the screams of the clone.

Without warning the voice went quiet, dying off suddenly. It became apparent that they were too late. Pisces was most likely dead. “Oh what do you do?” Bubble asked, slinking as low as he could go in the water. “You hide, stay away from any conflict.” Flash told him, to which the tiny water robot simply nodded and proceeded to dive beneath the waves. They wandered around in silence for a moment, trying to locate the creature. It was silent for a while as people moved cautiously around, hands on the mirrors to guide them. The entire situation was a surreal nightmare.

“Hey guys!” A voice called. “I found Pisces… And the beast!” Sagittarius spoke, frozen in place. They all were vaguely aware of his location and as such it wasn’t hard to find him. They found Pisces hanging limp from the ceiling, hardly recognizable. That silver fluid dripping from him. His body was decaying rapidly and was deteriorating into the goo that dripped so quickly from his body. At first they couldn’t see the beast, but after a moment of staring, it became apparent.

He was looking right at them.

“Time to pay up on your debt!” A voice hissed before it began to seemingly glitch. It teleported
quickly onto Sagittarius, digging his claws and teeth into him. The clone screamed as everyone else, but Flash scattered. The robot began to punch and kick at the beast as it ripped him apart. When the screaming stopped it told the monster that the clone had enough and he turned to face Flash, rage burning in his eyes.

The beast was upon him in moments and it didn’t take long for the two to begin wrestling. “Oh fuck! What the hell!?” Aries cried seemingly in complete terror, the clones trembled behind Rock and Gemini, hoping that the duo would protect them. It became obvious, however, that such a thing wouldn’t be the case as the two rolled all around the room, shattering mirrors in the process.

A storm of glass and mirror fragments poured onto the ground, slicing into the both of them. Occasionally the two would glitch out of reality, just for a split second, before appearing elsewhere and slamming into another mirror. It became apparent that there was no clear person on the winning side as both of them fought somewhat evenly matched. Flash, using both of his legs and quite a lot of momentum, threw the monster against the wall. A crystal that was jutting out impaled the creature.

For a second they all believed it was over until the beast began to pull itself off of the wall, oozing oily blood. “You think that’s all you have to do to kill me? No… I won’t let you get off that easy with your debt.” The thing growled as it forced itself off of it’s spike. Flash would have been quicker, he would have dodged, had he expected the thing to survive. The skull robot was soon upon him, pinning him to the ground and scratching at him not unlike what he did to the clones.

Everyone stood in shock, staring at the thing, knowing full well that if they didn’t do anything than Flash would die.

This entity had no mercy, they weren’t like other robot masters who were kind enough to spare the IC chip of their enemies, this thing wanted to fully execute him. All were frozen stiff, unsure of where to go or what to do, hoping that someone would step forward. As such they were all in shock when it was Leo who took the figurative bullet. He charged towards the duo and was quick to shoot at the skull robot, buying Flash time.

The creature growled and turned to look at the clone, charging towards him and beginning to rip him to shreds like his brother. Claw after claw, bite after bite, Flash wouldn’t let this opportunity go to waste as he got to his feet, ignoring all the screams. He aimed his buster, now having a clear shot, and aimed it for the head. With the damage the robot already took, it was no surprise that this was the blow that did him in. His head exploded outwards in a fan of metal and gore. The doc robot teetered for a second before collapsing to the side, revealing the lifeless body of Leo.

His eyes stared emptily up at the ceiling, his body steadily oozing and being reduced to silver goo. Flash, covered in blood, stood there and panted, almost as though he was unsure of what he did. “Who was that?” Rock whispered, fully aware of the trend. He simply looked up to him and replied, “I think it was my drug dealer if I’m going to have to be honest.” He almost seemed humored, albeit terrified, of the fact.

It turned out that Flash, when he died, had been addicted to LSD. He spent most of his money on the drugs and, unfortunately, wasn’t able to pay off his debts. It wouldn't be hard for Wily to gain this information as it can be assumed the gangs that employed these dealers were most likely helping him kidnap the family. To say that he was terrified of his dealer was an understatement, but this was the last thing he expected to get out of it.

“One more bit of evidence to prove that those days of addiction are over I suppose.” Flash smiled up to the group.
There was hope in his eyes.
Chapter Summary

They did well against Flash's copy, but now in the murky waters lies another Mimic.

Chapter Notes

Bubbleman's bubble is filled with acid, it will either pop upon impact or, if done correctly, envelop its target-- slowly eating them away.

Chapter Fifty-Three: Fallout

It was so difficult to see down here. The crystals beneath their feet were glowing faintly giving them some semblance of light. The clones were cluttered together, Rock walked along the lake bed on his own, Bubble was swimming above them seemingly peering out at all that was ahead of them. They had nothing to say after that incident with Flash, but not only that they couldn’t say anything. Not in the water. Lest they invite fluid into their ‘lungs’ and ‘stomachs’ via force.

Bubble followed the tide without problem, leading them towards the eventual fight that would ensue. They all knew there was a problem here. The water robot wasn’t the best at combat, he tried once but after that he fell to disarray. Unsure of what he was doing or how to go about doing it. His failure revealed the true anxiety within. But this was a fight he had to win. He was sure that his siblings didn’t want to fight their nightmares either, and yet they still managed to do it.

Rock cast a glance up towards Bubble, swimming solemnly up above him, only illuminated faintly by the crystals that glowed beneath their feet. He looked almost as though he’d rather drown than face off with whatever horror awaited him just beyond the door that stood before them. “Well here it is…” Bubble mused, being the only one that could talk thanks to his gear, it seemed strange to hear a voice beneath the water.

He didn’t wait for a response or a reaction, simply pressed through the door. He was quick to enter, seemingly not surprised by the spikes that littered the room. Others, however, were not so quick to catch on. Virgo was the victim that had to fall to reveal the danger to the rest of them. Impaled so quickly that if one blinked they would have missed it, their heavy bodies sinking so quickly in the water.

The rest of them, now aware of the spikes, were quick to move in order to prevent the contact. Not desiring to fall to the same fate as Virgo. The room was filled with water, with crystals making up the majority of the open walls, ceiling, and flooring. The glow was much brighter, allowing for one to see in the murky water. While visibility was still greatly reduced in the center, it was better than nothing.

A figure was sitting on the floor in the middle of the room, curled up and seemingly crying. They
all suspected they would see tears if the water was cleaner but the visibility was far too low to distinguish. The character was not unlike the other doc robots which they have gone up against in appearance, but one could probably assume with the trend as it was, that this was expected.

Rock and Bubble exchanged glances, the fear in the eyes of the child really did resonate like a storm. But what could the child fear? He’s not that old, what has he dealt with that could be put onto the same scale as everyone else.

“You left me…” The voice was quiet, timid just like his own. It was a female voice, not unlike a child’s. “I missed you so much, I don’t know where you went, I thought you just left me behind like everyone else.” The robot rose to its feet, turning to face them, eyes glowing in the murky water. “I thought I was your best friend, Emily. I really, really did. But then you…”

There was silence, nobody spoke as the figure began to advance. Something was wrong, something was terribly wrong and they all knew it. Retreating as they advanced. And yet spikes made it impossible to go as far they wanted. There was no wall to press themselves up against, no spot of relief to have. They were trapped within a death trap of a room. It became obvious that the mimic knew it.

“You died!”

The doc robot’s scream was ear piercing as spikes fell from the ceiling. Most of them managed to avoid it but a few of the clones, Cancer, Scorpio, and Libra, fell victim to the piercing attack. Instant death as they were run through in some way or another. The group cluttered together on the other side of the room, looking around for anything they could do, fearful that Bubble wouldn’t fight.

The robot screamed as they charged forward. The mimic barely missed Rock and instead grabbed hold of Taurus, pushing the clone into another set of spikes. “Oh god… What do I do?” Bubble looked to Rock, hoping for some guidance. The child gestured to his arm, motioning for them to fight. By doing so, however, he didn’t realize he was leaving himself vulnerable.

A bubble, massive in size, was quick to engulf him. There was immediate burning as he realized what this was. It was an acid bubble and it was corroding his body. He wanted to scream as he watched his body begin to slowly be eaten away. He struggled from inside, but that only made it more difficult. Gemini and Aries moved to attempt to free him, and while they were making progress, it became painfully obvious that they were out of commission, trying to prevent Rock from being eaten away by acid.

Bubble decided then that he would have to fight-- and fight he did. He shot a bubble at the other, hoping to encase them, only to be foiled when the mimic used Aquarius as a human shield, trapping the clone in the bubble instead. Unlike Rock, who was deteriorating slowly due to his solid form, the clone became goo within the bubble almost immediately. An idea just then.

“Sorry guys! But I’m going to have to kill you.” Capricorn looked shocked but had no time to react before also being encased in that acidic bubble. As one got trapped inside, another was free, a faint pop seemed to save Rock from his acidic prison.

Now with two bubbles filled with that silvery goo, which was so obviously heavier than the water they floated within, Bubble had enough to act out his plan. The mimic rushed towards him to which he simply kicked them back with his flippered feet. Using one bubble he kicked it towards the dazzled mimic. It bumped them back against the spikes but not only that, the sharpness of the body it was colliding with caused it to pop, sending goo all over the doc robot.
With them in the range of spikes it was easy to act out the second part of the plan. Kick the second bubble into the spikes right above them. The bubble bursted, the goo was quick to descend upon the skull robot and sink them. They fought to keep themselves from being pierced via the weight of the clone, but that wasn’t necessary.

A single press from Bubble was enough to skewer them upon the spikes. The thing screamed, to which the robot’s only response was to shove its head against the spikes, silencing it forever. “Man, that was a really shitty impression of my best friend… I’m pretty sure she wouldn’t say that. And I’m also pretty sure she forgot about me.” Looking over to the small party they now had it became apparent that they really should get going.

Rock looked exhausted as he was held in the arms of Gemini. His body covered in acid burns, his armor and bodysuit eaten away in some places. “Let’s get out of here, I think I know where to go.”

And with that they were off again, to home hopefully.
Chapter Summary

Wood's signal was replicated within Shadowman's stage, they go to hunt it, only to find a field of flowers.

Chapter Notes

Woodman is immune to all plant based attacks, all 'plant' robots are like this.

Chapter Fifty-Four: Lily

“Watch your step.” Shadow spoke as they maneuvered through the eerie stage. The place had an ethereal feeling to it, almost ghostly. “Funny how he says that when he can’t see a thing.” Heat mumbled. Rock jumped a bit when he heard the heavy slap of the lighter robot being hit in the back of the head. “Ow! Why did you do that!” He whined, rubbing his aching head as they walked.

“Because you were being rude. What do you think Metal would do if he heard you saying things like that.” Wood explained, looking over to Shadow who seemed not to care in the slightest that something so rude was said. “Mommy wouldn’t care!” Heat whined back, his voice childish as he spoke. “I doubt that.” The tree robot scoffed.

They continued in silence, the faint glow of the bloody water which flowed around them seemed to put them all on edge. It smelled so similarly to oil... Regardless of what it was, they pushed on without much problem, not sure what to expect in the world they were coming to, the fight they would endure.

The door that towered over them felt so sorrowful for some reason. There was always a feeling that accompanied a fight, this one had an air of sadness that they couldn’t quite pinpoint. It was Wood’s signal that they were tracking and yet somehow the sadness that approached seemed so juxtaposed against the normal joy of the nature bot. A lone Lily bloomed beside the door, something that Rock believed was as most certainly an omen to what was coming. Inside the arena was much different from what they were used to in this place. The room had changed from a metallic wasteland of beasts from nightmares, to a room filled with silken drapes and ambient light. The ground was blooming with artificial flowers creating a field that although beautiful, had its danger.

As much as many would assume the field smelt pleasant-- it did not.

This was a distorted surreal world and while the scent was alluring it was not pleasant in the slightest. It made all but Wood feel a slight sense of dizziness. They searched for the figure but they were having trouble pinpointing the location. “I think I need to sit down…” Heat mumbled, much to Wood’s concern.
He sounded groggy, sleepy, and dreary. Without any confirmation from anyone else, he simply sat down and, soon enough, was asleep. Rocked into a dream state by the scent of the flowers. “I think these flowers… their scent is something akin to chloroform.” Shadow tried to state, leaning against the wall. Rock could feel his head pounding in his skull and he sought his ‘guardian’ for protection.

Shadow was quick to support him, pulling part of his outfit away and holding it over the boy’s mouth. “This should stifle the effects of the flowers.” They fought to urge to sit down, knowing full well that by getting closer to the flowers they would fall asleep much faster. Wood, on the other hand, while concerned, was more focused on their target. This target that only they could seemingly focus upon.

The figure in the center of the room was laying upon a table, still as stone. It became immediate the recognition in the feature of Wood. This was symbolic of an event from a long time ago. The drowsiness, the lilies, the still as stone entity that lay, arms folded over their chest, almost as if they were already dead.

Wood, believing that the problem lay in the robot themselves, was quick to execute them. Their body falling apart before they could even awaken. And yet as their pieces fell into the flowers, scattering the ‘petals’, nothing happened. They were trapped… It was most certainly a ploy.

There was no fight here. There was only bad memories and emanate danger.

A cough from Shadow brought Wood back to reality as he turned to see that he was beginning to collapse. Rock was gripping onto him, his eyes half lidded and nearing their closure. It wasn’t long before the duo themselves were amongst the flowers, close to sleeping among the blooms.

He ran over in shock, knowing full well that if Rock fell than there was going to be an issue. “Rock, stay with me. Come on, we need you in case something happens.” The sleepy soldier simply smiled, a wide and delirious smile. “But… It smells so nice… And I’m so tired… The flowers… They’ll give us nice dreams…” He stated weakly, his body beginning to grow more and more relaxed.

“No, no! I don’t think that’s the case at all Rock!” Wood shouted, looking around to try and find something, anything that’d wake him up. Then it sparked into his mind. An adrenaline rush may do the trick. Lifting the boy up out of the flowers, he shook him aggressively, awakening him just enough to be present and aware during the stunt. Throwing him as hard as he could up into the air above them immediately sparked a survival instinct within the boy.

His eyes widened as the sensation of falling filled him and he let out a cry. Nobody but Wood heard this, Shadow and Heat were deep in their Sleeping Beauty like slumbers, curled up within the flora which carpeted the ground. Rock was filled with fear as he was caught, trembling as he was filled with that ‘adrenaline’ which brought him to alertness. He looked to the other robot with those wide blue eyes.

“You need to help me find a way out of here. I can’t keep you awake forever.” Wood explained to him, to which Rock simply nodded. He felt himself lowered back into the blooms, his legs jello and his body trembling. A few tentative steps brought him fully back to reality, his ‘heart’ still beating against his ‘ribcage’.

Their first instinct was to run to the edge of the field, running their hands along the walls of the room. It was hard to remember they were indoors when these beautiful flowers were here. Flowers which, for some reason, put people to sleep. Rock could feel the nagging of sleep as he searched, but tried to push it away as best he could. His fingers searching and searching for any kind of exit.
“I found something!” Rock turned to see Wood pointing to what looked to be a door, blended seamlessly into the wall. There was no handle so the fact of the matter was that they would have to break through it if they couldn’t find a different way out. The tree robot began smashing at it, hitting and punching and attempting to destroy the door. The wall bowed before each impact, one after the other, further and further.

Rock, seeing the damage, moved over to the bodies of the others that lay on the ground just a ways away. He held his hand over his mouth, trying to stifle the fragrant of the lilies all about them. Heat was easy enough to move to Wood, he was light and small, granted a little larger than the blue bomber himself, but still no challenge to move. He lay the lighter bot down by the door, but still out of the way, before he ran to Shadow’s side.

Getting him to lean against him wasn’t hard, but moving him back to the door was going to be difficult. Shadow was light for a robot his size, but that didn’t mean he weighed any less than Light. In the end the other was made of metal, regardless of if he’s a reploid or not. His weight wasn’t even the primary problem that he dealt with, keeping him up was also a challenge. Both of these factors together made the task both tricky and insanely challenging.

They moved one step at a time, slowly passing through the somewhat large room. He watched as Wood managed to bash the door in. The extra energy Rock was exhibiting was beginning to take his toll. The flowers, the blooms, were intoxicating him yet again.

He felt himself grow more dizzy as he carried Shadow. Wood, panting and cut up from the destruction of the door, moved quick to their side, nearly tripping on the body parts of the fallen copy robot. A copy robot which was later disclosed to be an eerie reflection upon Rose’s deceased husband.

He was buried in lilies, and now that Wily had this information at his fingertips he was going to use it in the worst way possible. Trapping them all in here, asleep, without any means of escape, he was most likely going to steal Wood and Heat back for combat, and do what he pleased with the rebellious Shadow. Worst of all he was going to do what he wanted with the unawares Rock.

Wood, turning to see that Rock was struggling to move and stay awake, was quick to run over to them. He lifted Shadow, only to be dismayed when the blue bomber collapsed with no energy left in him to press on. The tree robot moved to literally throw Shadow and Heat out of the room. The blue bomber heard the heavy thunks of their bodies, but couldn’t force himself to be awake enough to follow.

His body being lifted became muted in the background as his mind grew hazy. He remembered jostling just a bit as they ran out of the room, before darkness was grasping ahold of him. Sleep. Heavy sleep.

They were somewhere bad, and yet his body was forcing him to sleep.
Blaze

Chapter Summary

After the incident with the flowers, Rock goes missing, and Heat has to track down both his signal and his role model.

Chapter Notes

Consent, Noun, permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. synonyms: agreement, assent, concurrence, accord

Warning: This chapter contains the opposite of this. If you're not okay with that than I apologize.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Fifty-Five: Blaze

Rock knew something was wrong immediately when he awoke. For starters he came quickly to the realization that he couldn’t move, even though he felt completely fine. He couldn’t move his arms or his legs, couldn’t even shift his head or speak. The most he could do was move his eyes, blink, and breathe. He was certain the ‘heart’ in his chest was still pounding, but that was a given.

The next thing that came to his attention was the feeling of something inside of his neck. That port, which was malformed and extremely sensitive, ached and throbbed just enough to inform him that there was a chord there. One that didn’t have cushioning enough to make it comfortable in his neck. That must have been what was keeping him still. Whatever processes that chord was forcing upon him.

The final thing that came to his attention was the feel of the hand resting upon his thigh. It was a light touch, a rubbing touch as a thumb caressed the ‘flesh’ through a small hole in his body suit, one that had been made during his time fighting lesser enemies. That face, he could see it in the reflection of the glass before him. A glass that made itself known to be a window which overlooked a massive hellish arena.

There was a robot in the center, one that Rock recognized to be the doc robot. He was surrounded by a clear fluid which was easy to see with the lighting as it were and his vantage point so high above the arena. Oil, crude and red, ran in a fast river beneath the arena, revealed by grates coated in that clear substance. Torches and other flame based objects were placed all about the room haphazardly, as though meant to be dangerous over safe. He wondered why that could be, what dangers could that flames pose that Heat wasn’t already threatening.

In the reflection Rock saw Wily lean closer to him, his hand not leaving his thigh. His breath reeked of cigarette smoke and nicotine, his voice was a low whispery rasp. “That’s gasoline on the
floor.” The old man’s lips brushed against the shell of his ear. “One spark and the entire arena catches. But don’t worry, little doll, we’re safe here.” He felt Wily’s hand trail up his thigh and to his hip, resting there for a moment.

“You look terrified, don’t be afraid, I’m not going to do anything until they’re dead. And when I do get a chance to take you to your special room, I’ll be sure to be gentle.” Rock felt the band of his hip guard raise just slightly as one finger ran along his suit, he wanted to scream and cry, especially as that hand moved up his back and along his spine, coming to a rest right between his shoulder blades.

“I’m so happy you can’t move. It’ll make it all the easier to have my way with you… You know, I’ve been wanting you for a very long time. For both your program and your beauty. Serena and Quick were cute, but not as cute as you.” Rock closed his eyes, praying that someone would come save him. He heard Wily continue to go on and on, saying how he would have his way, how eventually the blue bomber would grow to like it, things that the soldier had only ever considered vaguely.

Tears pricked his eyes as he felt lips upon his own, the taste of those cigarettes and the faint flavor of alcohol didn’t make it anymore pleasant. A hand cupped his cheek, cold and clammy, and brushed one of his trailing tears off of his face. “Now now, don’t cry. You won’t want Light being reminded that you’re hurting.” Wily aggressively grasped his head and forced it to turn, since the younger couldn’t do it himself, showing that his helmet was resting on the table beside him. The red light inside it flashing showing that whoever was listening from Light Labs could hear everything that was going on.

“And besides, one day you’ll be begging for more.” Wily finished, turning his head back, causing more tears to trail down his face.

Rock could see through his tears in that room below that the fight had already begun. Heat was pissed, seemingly enraged, screaming something he couldn’t hear from within that room. Shadow was trying to calm him down, pointing at the ground, but it wasn’t any use. Flames and fire erupted from that room, engulfing it.

Tears, so many tears created waterfalls down his face, he wanted to scream for help but couldn’t. His breath hitched but nobody could hear it, there was no vocalisation to match it. Wily’s laughter at the inferno didn’t help him at all, and glancing over in the reflection he could see that the older was doing some less than savory things. It disgusted Rock to think that this was how he was seen by his worst enemy. Nothing more than a sex doll in a way, nothing more than an experiment and toy.

‘I want to go home…’ He thought to himself. ‘I miss papa… I wonder what’s happening to Roll if this is what’s happening to me…’ More tears as the fires receded revealed the scorched bodies of Heat and Shadow laying on the ground. The lighter robot was no doubt deactivated along with the skull robot but his guardian, his protector, was fighting to his feet. He screamed a few things, but he wouldn’t be able to find him.

No that much was certain.

“Well they’re done with… No need to worry about them.” Terror filled him as he felt Wily rise from where he sat, standing before him, towering over him. There was a knife in one hand as the older began to cut a large hole in the shoulder section of his body suit. More tears as the suit began to be ripped apart, revealing his chest and stomach. Fingers upon his skin struck the worst darkness into him.
‘Please! Please someone save me!’

Those fingers were beginning to get closer and closer, encroaching on his hip guard. He was struggling to free him from his armor. Painful seconds that Rock hoped would frustrate him enough to stop him. “I can hardly contain myself, maybe our first time will be here, in view of where the corpses of your friends lay.” He watched as his hip guard was lifted and for a moment the blue bomber was certain it was over until--

There was a heavy thunk sound as Wily was knocked back and into the window. A large crack was made in the glass, but it held as the old man slumped to the ground. Looking at it Rock saw that what was thrown was a rock. Not a large one by any means, but one that wouldn’t be seen during the old man’s distracted stupor.

Rock felt the chord in his neck get severed, he gasped in shock, surging forward before sitting there paralyzed. Tears fell down his face and, as everything began to come back, he let out a scream. He screamed and screeched and cried, kicking out of his chair and crawling away on the floor. He didn’t stop until his back was against a wall.

He felt Blues’ arms on his shoulders, holding him there. “Rock! Rock! Are you okay? Did he touch you? Did he do anything to you?” Rock was paralyzed, unsure of how to respond, and simply embraced his brother. He sobbed all the while in those arms. It must have been him who had saved him, who had rescued him from Wily.

“It’ll be okay… He won’t touch you, I won’t let him… Just like I didn’t let him touch your sister…” He lifted Rock up bridal style, cradling him in his arms like a child. The boy continued to sob in his embrace, trembling there, terrified.

Rock was returned home first, Blues didn’t consider the other robots which were still there. Wily wouldn’t really want them anyways, not if he couldn’t have the blue bomber. When he came home, helmet in his hands, tears staining his cheeks, and his bodysuit revealing more of his body than he was comfortable with, everyone knew that what they had heard was truth.

“I thought you were dead.” Light told Blues as he took Rock from him. “You thought wrong…” The robot responded sharply. “Why were you working with Wily?” The blue bomber didn’t like where this conversation was going. “Because you were planning to kill me.” Blues’ words were sharp and cruel. “I would never do that!” The defensive tone made the younger robot cringe. “That’s not important now, what’s important is that you have robots to save…” And with that Blues was off.

Rock, still recovering from his near rape, was comforted, distracted, and welcomed home. If not for the fact that Roll could be in the same situation they would have given up. When other robots returned to retrieve Shadow and Heat, with guidance from Blues, they found that Wily was gone and his potential arrest was postponed once again.

Chapter End Notes

I don't condone anything that occurs in this chapter. What Wily does is entirely wrong. Do not mix up the events as they play out and the actions of characters to fall in line with my beliefs. Any type of sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual conduct, any type of child-adult relation, or other such criminal actions should be reported to the police and other law enforcement for what they are.
DO NOT ASSUME THAT I AGREE WITH ALL THAT MY CHARACTERS DO!
THIS IS FICTION! NOT FACT!
Breakman

Chapter Summary

A test of power between Rock and Blues-- or should we call him Breakman.

Chapter Notes

Breakman, Blues, and Protoman are all different names for the same person. Blues Light is his actual name. Breakman is the name that Wily gives him. Protoman is the name given to him by Light for when he's in combat. He abandoned the name, but eventually he comes around and assumes it later on after deciding that he definitely wants to fight alongside Rock.

Chapter Fifty-Six: Breakman

“You saved me…” Rock looked up to Blues, his stance firm once again, almost as though the events of the previous days had never happened. “Are you going to lose your temper over that fact this time?” The younger shook his head quickly, effectively leaving them in silence. “But that doesn’t mean I won’t ask the same question. Why did you save me?” His question wasn’t all too unexpected, but it nevertheless caused a sigh to escape the lips of the older.

“To put it simply you were right. Wily is awful. I’ve seen a lot of things that he’s done. I didn’t know what ARLAS was until I looked into it myself. I knew vaguely what it entailed but I never knew that we were actual souls. Artificial, sure, but definitely souls. We are neither human or robot. Really none of the robot masters are… To make matters worse I’ve also noticed that there are a few other things that weren’t quite right. He abducted a pair of infants as well as a whole family and killed them just to turn them into robots, using Light’s robots as a smokescreen for these experiments. He has an entire entourage of test tube children that are just waiting to be transformed into robot masters as well. Don’t even get me started on that insane cult that worships you. One that he’s fueling, by the way. One of his goals for that cult is to take whoever wants to ‘sacrifice their lives’ for you and turn them into robot masters that do exactly the opposite. Hunt you down.”

There was silence, Rock knew most of those details, if not all of them, and hearing it again truly didn’t make him feel any better. He looked down to his feet and drew in a deep breath. The air felt cold when locked within the heated metal of his body. He wasn’t sure what this feeling was inside of him. He supposed a part of him was happy that he had an older brother he could at least partially count on.

“What about Roll? Is she okay? Did Wily hurt her?” Rock’s questions came forth as soon as the blonde robot came to his mind. He missed her, wanted her back home so badly. She was his sister, his best friend, the only person who understood why he liked pokemon more than digimon. The only person who understood why he always slept with a stuffed animal. The only person who
understood why he felt the need to tuck his feet underneath himself when the vacuum was turned on. The only person who understood that he liked only chicken noodle soup, and not tomato soup, but that he’d eat Spaghetti-Os if given the chance. The only person who understood that he liked his hot dogs with both ketchup and mustard; ‘more ketchup than mustard please’. They were stupid, childish things, things that in the long run didn’t matter. But all things that continued to remind him that she was missing and, in the end, he didn’t know how he could continue without his counterbalance.

“She’s safe, I wouldn’t let Wily touch her. He wanted to do the same things to her that he wanted to do to you. I couldn’t let that happen. So I did everything in my power to chase him off… Up until I had to save you that is. Now I’m just praying that Wily is so preoccupied with Gamma or the Cult to notice that she’s unguarded…” Blues paused, looking up into the night sky up above. It was cool despite the humidity and the blazing sun of the midday which had just recently passed. ‘He wants to take you both and turn you into his own personal test subjects… He wants ‘successful’ ARLAS project contestants. Not an ‘Error child’ like myself.”

“Does that mean… I’m an ‘Error Child’?”

“It’s a robot, regardless of ARLAS, who won’t follow their guideline coding. To put it simpler, it’s a rebellious robot. I am an ‘Error Child’. Elecman is an ‘Error Child’, Crashman is an ‘Error Child’, and Snakeman is as well. If we knew where Shadowman came from we could pinpoint him as one too but…” Blues fell quiet, he wasn’t sure how to expand on that idea. “Does that mean… I’m an ‘Error Child’?”

“What makes you think you would be?” The wind blew a few dandelion seeds into the wind around them. Little puffs that traveled about them, one clung to Blues’ shield before being carried away. “I don’t follow instructions, I go against Light and the ‘human moral code’ constantly. But most prominently I want to kill Wily. But not only kill him… I want to make him suffer. Just like he made me and my siblings suffer.” Despite this disclosure, the older’s face seemed to keep its neutral appearance. “I would say, with the description you’ve given me, it’s most likely you are… That changes things quite a bit.”

“Does this mean you’re coming home?” Rock asked, hoping that perhaps because they were the same it’d mean that the older would be willing to make amends with their father. “Never in a million years.” The tone was sharp, making the Blue bomber shrink back. “We are errors, in the end we are just mistakes. I will bet that after this entire thing with Wily is over, Light will execute you just like he wants to execute me… I’ve killed many people, Rock, and despite the fact I didn’t mean to or want to, I know that I’ve become a wanted man because of it. I’m sure that he will be more than happy to put his biggest failure to rest and finally forget about me.”

“I don’t think that’s true, Blues.” Rock wanted to reach out to him but couldn’t. “And what do you know exactly, kid? You don’t know about anything prior to your activation date. Last time I checked you don’t know who your ‘papa’ truly is. Considering that fact, you can’t make proper judgements.” Blues gripped onto his shield tighter, smiling faintly before assuming a battle stance. Something that caught the blue bomber off guard. “Enough chatter. I need to make sure I don’t need to save your ass again when you go up against Wily. Show me your power, Rockman.”

The mouth guard on his helmet slipped over his mouth, that fully covering helmet was back, the one Rock encountered the first time they fought.

The fight was over seemingly before it began. Whether it was because it was Blues who was challenging Rock, a robot who is old and way past due for an upgrade, or because of Rock himself. How the blue bomber has changed since the first day he set out on his quest to defeat Doctor Wily. When the older rushed at him with that shield, the soldier jumped up above it and took aim. One
point blank shot was all that was needed.

The shield slid across the ground, Breakman collapsed onto the ground, his helmet once again shattered. An image that seemed all too familiar to him, Rock approached and bent down beside him. In the end their fight wasn’t much different. He pulled the helmet off of the face of his brother, revealing that damaged face. He wondered if he did that to him just now, and yet pieces were missing from that eye of his, from that face of his. Shards had fallen out leaving crevices of darkness.

“I underestimated you, Rock… Even when I challenge you to an even match, no tricks, you are able to best me. Maybe I should start tripping you up. I have to make sure you’re right for the job,” Blues told him with a smile, pushing himself up. “Blues! Don’t sit up, you’re hurt!” No, he wasn’t hurt, not anymore than he’s been, just dazed. “What are you talking about, I took hardly any damage from that blow. It knocked off just my armor this time.” He explained simply, rising to his feet.

“What are you talking about?” He asked, watching the other retrieve his shield once again. “I’m assuming that you think you just damaged my eye… Well you’d be wrong. Do you remember when you slammed my head and shattered my helmet? You damaged my face when you did that. Talk about a wake up call.” Moving quickly to pick up his helmet, shield now on his back, he turned to face Rock.

Looking at them now, both with their helmets off, it was easy to see the resemblance. Blues looked like an older, slightly taller, and tamer version of Rock.

“I’m so sorry--” Rock began but he couldn’t get anymore out before Blues interjected. “Look! You don’t need to apologize, you hear? I was wrong, I’ll admit it. I did something stupid and let my pride and hatred get in my way. That’s my own crime which you made me see, granted not in the best way, but hey what can you expect from someone who has been the oldest for as long as he can remember? You haven’t had anyone to look up to other than Light. Hardly the role model in my opinion… Too soft and rash, too many skeletons in his closet…” He fell quiet, the wind whispering to them hymns they couldn’t hear, a melody that felt all too familiar.

“I know I’m not making much sense, but I’m ready to be as good of an older brother as I can. Maybe one day I will come back, I don’t know… Not for a long while. I’m not planning on it anytime soon but at the same time I’ve been neglecting a job I didn’t know I had. I have a little brother and a little sister to take care of.” He smiled to Rock, ruffling his hair slightly. “One day you’ll grow up enough to know all that’s happened in the past, one day you’ll learn about everything, and one day you’ll see what’s in store for you. I know you want this fight to be over but you have a lot still to come, I can feel it in my gut. I want to make sure that when those things are shared with you and those conflicts come your way, that you’re ready for them. If that means coming in and roughing you up every now and again, or perhaps you beating the shit out of me, than so be it.”

He began stepping away, something Rock picked up on. “So long as you don’t die before the end of this war, I’d say I’m pretty happy.” The blue bomber got to his feet and began to run towards his brother. “No wait!” Before he could even get a good solid step in, the other was already gone. Bounding into the field of flowers that surrounded their tiny clearing. He vanished into the tall vegetation that surrounded them, vanishing into the forests which framed the horizon. Rock knew he could never catch up to him.

Upon the wind, from the hills so far away, he could have sworn he heard a gentle melody carried upon the wind. A hymn that nobody else could hear. A song from his brother. Someone he knew
he would see again in the very near future.

A brother he already missed terribly.
Chapter Fifty-Seven: Turtle

‘Hey Rock, come over here, quickly!’

The sound of the crashing waves surrounded him. **Whoosh! Whoosh!** The water bubbled and gurgled as it flooded around his ankles. Cool and refreshing in the mid summer heat. Scars from his first confrontation with Wily mostly forgotten as he stood in the warmth of the setting sun upon the sandy beach. The boardwalk, from what he could see, was mostly deserted. Faint light glowing from the few shops that remained open. There was only one giant LED sign that he could read however from where he was.

‘Ripley’s Believe It or Not’... It flashed and illuminated its patch of boardwalk. Truly the most lively section that he could see. The faint scent of funnel cake and french fries drifted from small stands that have begun to close down shop as the sun sunk deeper and deeper into the ocean. Rock chanced to look back and was shocked at just how quickly the ocean swallowed the big ball of light in the sky. He wondered what the fish saw in the ocean as the sun dipped below the waves.

“Rock! Come look! Hurry!”

Roll’s voice brought him back to attention just as Light’s did before, but unlike that first sentence, he could understand what was being told to him instead of losing himself in the crashing waves all over again. He was slow to start moving as the muddy sand held onto his bare feet for a second, but when he began it wasn’t hard to keep going. He walked briskly towards his father and sister, leaving footprints in the warm sand.

Roll’s hair fell back over her back as she looked up to Rock, revealing her cute one piece bathing suit. He found it funny how her green sandals didn’t really match her bright red one piece, but it worked nonetheless.
Definitely better than his own blue swim trunks and swim shirt at least. He was far too nervous about his own body, and the scars upon them, to really wear anything less than what he was wearing now. Light had to convince him to wear swimwear at all.

“Look at what we found in the sand! It’s what we’ve been looking for!”

“Now don’t touch them, Roll. Remember turtles are an endangered species.”

Rock looked down into the sand to see what they were talking about and thought that, at first, he was looking at stones. Perfectly white stones just half buried in the sand. Peeking out almost as though saying hello. “What... are they?” Rock asked, feeling somewhat foolish for not knowing exactly. “Why, they’re eggs. Baby turtles are inside and one day they’ll hatch and return to the sea.” Dr Light explained with a smile.

He was wearing a red-to-orange tropical tee-shirt with palm trees on it, swim trunks which were a vibrant eggshell color, and sandals that were just a plain black-- he looked like the stereotypical ‘dad on vacation’. Rock bent down to look closer at the eggs before Light began to rebury them a bit more into the sand. “So what was the point of you guys looking for these eggs?” He asked curiously.

“Well I wanted to teach you something through it. You see the species of turtle which came up here and laid these eggs are going extinct, they are very much endangered. And yet they still fight to survive. Really, truly powerful animals. And through the efforts of humans their populations are on the rise. It’s amazing how strong nature is, in the end life will find a way to survive. Countless other species aren’t as lucky as the sea turtle, being protected by so many humans, but at the same time nature quickly fills the open space left behind by the one species. It truly is incredible.”

Rock stared at the mound where the eggs once were so clearly visible, Light was correct, nature is powerful and so is life as a whole.

He looked over his shoulder back to the waves, he saw the sun was no longer visible although its light still spread out across the sky. Outwards and upwards in a multitude of different rays. The stars were beginning to show and a bright full moon was beginning to take form in the sky. “The turtles will soon begin laying their eggs again, we really should get off the beach to give them some space.” Light told the children, standing up.

“Papa! Can we get ice cream or some curly fries before we go!?!” Roll exclaimed as she jumped up, careful not to disturb the eggs. “I’m up for it, how about you Rock?” Light turned to look at his son, holding out a hand to him. The boy took it carefully and nodded his head, soon getting to his own two feet. “That sounds delicious.” He said as they began to walk up the beach, huddled closely together like families do.

They found a pier on the boardwalk, one that allowed for them to stare out into the ocean and onto the beach now that the son was absent. Roll was happily eating her chocolate-vanilla swirl ice cream cone with rainbow sprinkles as she giddily waited for the turtles to peek their little green heads out of the ocean. Rock was less enthusiastic as he stared further out into the ocean. His own ice cream cone in his hand, solid chocolate with a chocolate shell around it. Looking over to his family, the boy also noticed that his father had already finished his own straight vanilla ice cream cone.

“Be careful of the seagulls as you eat, everyone.” Light warned. “Don’t want them stealing your fries.” Rock looked over to his basket of fries and pulled them closer to his body. Looking over at Roll, he wasn’t’ surprised when she did the same.
“Look! Papa! A turtle!” Roll shouted, pointing out to the beach on their left. Rock leaned forward to look, seeing the little creatures peek out of the waves. They looked so funny crawling up the beach. They were slow, but not as slow as cartoons made them out to be. They could move if they wanted to it seemed.

Rock finished off his ice cream as he watched, unsure if he wanted to keep turtle watching. They were cute, and they certainly were fascinating, but they didn’t hold his attention. As such he just continued to stare out into the sea. He watched the waves roll over and out in the water, they doubled over themselves as they came further and further into shore. The water embracing the pier’s legs as it came into the sand.

He wondered what was out there in the sea, so far away and so distant. He wondered what could be lurking beneath the ocean’s surface. As though answering his question, Rock could have sworn he saw something in the water. Something strange and massive. It poked its head out of the waves just barely enough for him, who had been staring at the waves, to see it. He wasn’t sure what to think, or if it was even actually there.

He leaned forward on the pier, but soon found that he had lost his balance. A scream escaped him as he fell off the wooden platform. “Rock!”

**SPLASH!**

It was dark beneath the waves, so dark underneath of the sea. He wasn’t sure what to think as he sunk further and further down into the water like a dead weight. The surface falling further and further away. A marooned child lost at sea as the tide dragged him further and further out.

Rock coughed as he came back to reality, the water escaping his lungs quickly as he pushed himself up. His suit clung to his soaked body as he rolled over to get onto his hands and knees. That was a heavy blow to the head he took once that machine began to fall apart all around him. Looking over to his left he saw the corpse of a faux turtle. Truly he wasn’t surprised by the fact, he remembered his enemy almost immediately after waking up, but at the same time it seemed so interesting that a memory like that would strike during a time like this. A time of unconsciousness.

He picked up the corpse of the turtle and threw it back into the artificial pond within Wily’s new fortress. It sunk in the blackened water with ease, disappearing into the lapping pool. That memory was from so long ago, back when he felt close to Roll and Light, back when he still considered himself a child and innocent. Back when things were much, much different. He missed those times, but only vaguely.

His life has changed. He’s said it once and he’ll say it as many times as he has to. At this point he’s no longer Rock Light… He’s Rockman.
Chapter Summary

After a long period of time, a familiar face enters the fight.

Chapter Notes

All CWNs are innately linked and are also able to use each other to their advantage. The more recent and young a CWN is, the more powerful it is. This makes it easy to put out of commission old CWNs that may not work as well as before-- all while being able to reuse old bodies.

Chapter Fifty-Eight: CWN-002

Seeing that massive red eye staring at him felt like a bad nightmare. He thought he'd never have to see it again, but he supposed he was wrong. Their hunches were unfortunately proven correct. There were other CWNs. There were other Yellow Devils and other Kronos in this world. Memories of those grasping hands came back as sharp nails dug into his flesh and ripped it open. Just like old times. New scars to line his petite frame. More proof that he was no longer just a child, but a soldier destined for war.

He didn’t know what ability to use here. Most things would just get swallowed up by the beast, no doubt about it. He had to shatter that eye somehow before it gets to him, before it kills him. The parts came soaring at him and he found himself surprised at how hard they looked. Gone was the solid goop, now replaced with the solid texture of lava just fresh out of a volcano.

The Hard Knuckle, perhaps that would help him just a little bit. It was a strong attack, albeit slow. He had to time it just right. Changing to such a power he took aim. He managed to avoid the beast’s attacks as best as possible as the fist charged forward and slammed into the eye of the creature. It stumbled for a bit but overall seemed unphased.

That arm grabbed hold of him, just as it did countless times before, only now it was so much harsher. Everything was being crushed out of him, his breath came in gasps as the monster gripped onto him. He struggled against it, those hands no longer attempting to rip him apart. Instead they caressed him and stroked his body through his suit. As though trying to study him in some way.

His first instinct was that these were the bodies of cult members. Perhaps they are. It’s not an impossibility that’s for sure.

That grip tightened, those hands continued to caress him as his breath was forced out of him. Stars danced in his vision, and for a second he was pretty sure he was going to pass out. With no air to cool off his systems, he was quickly overheating and suffocating there. Underwater it was different, but now… now he was being crushed to death. His ‘bones’ cracked in his body and for
an instant, he believed this was it.

How many times has he figured it was the end just to be sorely disappointed.

Air filled his lungs in one gasp as the arm of the devil was sliced clean off. “Oh c’mon Rock! You’ve fought these guys before, how can you let yourself be beaten down by it yet again?” That voice was so familiar, that body which caught him from his fall was as well, and for an instant he found himself in pure shock over it all.

“Now now, Quick! Don’t tease my brother. He doesn’t know how to handle a CWN without his old power set. The Thunder Beam was really useful when facing off with them. Now there’s no electricity to surge it out.” Rock was astonished to see both Time and Quick present, seemingly happy together. Low and behold on the floor right beside him was none other than Kronos.

“Kronos, sweetheart,” Time began, a twisted grin on his face. “You’re the alpha out of the two of you… you know what to do.” There was an odd gurgling sound from the tiny creature before it ran towards the massive creature. Rock was certain that the tiny monster would die here. There was no question. He would be absorbed into CWN-002. But he couldn’t have been more wrong, for it seemed the exact opposite happened.

While it is true to describe what happened as Kronos getting absorbed into the older CWN, it wasn’t 002 which got control. The more recent the model, the more powerful, and as such the internal fight was quickly gauged. Very soon the monster began to split in half as one part of it fought for 002 and the rest for Kronos.

“We may want to take a step back.” Quick muttered, grabbing the smaller robots and pulling them to the farthest side of the room. The one CWN picked up the missing arm for which was severed from it and reabsorbed it with ease. Now with all the parts together, the fight could truly begin between the two slightly smaller behemoths.

They wrestled with each other like two titans, changing their shapes to mimic animals and monsters of all kinds. Demons, beasts, creatures that only appear in nightmares. They bit at each other with sharp ‘teeth’. Clawed at each other with razor ‘talons’. Ripped each other apart with massive arms. The yellow goop flew everywhere, melting together, and in the end the one who was winning gained more and more mass as it absorbed the parts of its opponent. In the end it was as disgusting as it was incredible.

It didn’t take long for the victor to be named as one eye was smashed so simply with an electronic ‘crunch’ sound. Time grinned and ran forward. “That’s my baby boy! You did so good!” He shouted enthusiastically as the monster rushed towards him, letting parts of his body simply melt away.

The little monster has since grown so happy with his small stature that allowing for the extra weight to just sizzle away was a relief and a joy. Time was happy with this as the extra was simply shed away, creating a massive puddle in its wake. “I love you so much, Kronos!” The robot hummed, pressing a kiss to the creature’s face.

The monster let out a happy chirping sound, nuzzling into the hand of his creator, someone he thought of as a mother. Quick approached, wrapping one arm around his newfound partner. “You know what, we’ve only been dating for a few days, but I’m pretty fond of the little guy.” Rock watched as the taller stroked the little slime snake. More chirping and purring sounds escaped its little body.

“Rock!” Time shouted whirling around. “Would you like to pet him?”
Rock was taken aback by this offer, he was pretty damn certain that Kronos wasn’t very fond of him. But nevertheless he simply nodded his head and reached out a single hand. He was careful, but soon enough he found himself stroking the little guy just the same. He didn’t seem to mind, although he didn’t purr or chirp. This is something that’s expected. It was almost as if Kronos was putting up with him just because Time really wanted them to bond. They were enemies, that part was obvious, but enemies with a common interest. The happiness of Time.

“How did you three find me?” Rock asked. “You can thank Kronos for that. We were part of the search team for Roll, there’s quite a bit of us lingering about, but when CWN-002 was activated, he didn’t want us to go any other way. We followed him and came right in time too. He seemed more than happy to take down his predecessor. The CWNs can get pretty jealous of each other sometimes.” Time explained, if anyone was to be trusted on information regarding the Yellow Devils it would be the robot that created them himself.

“So what are you guys going to do now?” Quick answered simply with a, “We’re going to report this back to Light of course! He’d love to hear about what he found.” Kronos let out a chirp at the excitement of the Wily Robot. “What did you find?” Rock inquired, to which Time was swift to inform Quick that he shouldn’t share. “Erm… I think it’s best you don’t know until you get back okay? For right now focus on Wily.”

“Wait but why? What did you find?”

There was no actual answer as they were quick to depart. “Well that’s it for us, glad to see you’re okay, see you back at the lab!” Quick shouted. “Bye! Love ya!” Time added before they disappeared into the darkness where they came. Rock didn’t even get a wave or farewell in before they were completely gone.

How strange.
Chapter Summary

Rock continues his fight through Wily castle, discovering something shocking, an exact replica of himself.

Chapter Notes

The search snakes are quick to double back on their master if they aren't able to find their prey. They are quick to grow confused and believe their master is their target. The only exception to this is Snakeman for a variety of reasons. However even if those snakes bit Snakeman it wouldn't matter much, he would just absorb their venom into his own stores.

Chapter Fifty-Nine: ???

‘What did Wily do!’

The question was harder to answer than it was to ask. Rock’s fingers tentatively touched that deformed port in the back of his neck, the one that had become so distorted due to whatever that machine was which held him down what felt like so long ago. They were perfect copies-- or at least one of them was a perfect copy. They stood there staring at him with glaring, red eyes. The holograms which surrounded the one seemed to take a moment to solidify within their flickering light before they ran off in separate directions.

The idea of being perfectly copied for whatever reason seemed so… terrifying. The first time he encountered a copy it was easy to tell that they were just a physical copy of him. Here it seemed that everything about him was copied save for the program that made him who he was-- his personality program. ARLAS as it was so fondly known as by those who worked on it.

It didn’t take long of their running around for the copies to mix together, to blur into one entity. They were swift to move and it was all Rock could do to avoid them let alone figure out who was the real copy robot. He’d take a shot only to find that it went right through the hologram. He’s jump to another level to shoot at that only, only to watch it switch. He didn’t want to shoot at a hologram that he already shot at… That would be just a waste of time and a further risk of his life.

Especially when considering that Roll was in danger now that Blues most likely wasn’t keeping Wily in check.

The Search Snake weapon was one that he figured would work rather well, they knew how to find their target, and so the hope was that they’d locate the real one.

That didn’t necessarily work out as planned. The snakes were cold blooded, they were cruel, they
would do anything to sink their teeth into something. Even if that meant their own master. Summoning them, they were quick to just go right through the holograms, but in turn they simply went around the room until they came full circle.

Rock noticed this when he felt a burning pain in his leg from one search snake which had gone straight through a hologram much earlier. He looked down at it and saw that it was happily releasing its venom into his leg as though there was nothing wrong. The soldier was quick to stomp down on it, destroying the snake in the process. But the damage was already done. He would have to be much more careful.

He just had to aim one snake, just one snake right, and then it’d be easy to figure out who was the real and who was the fake. The holograms, hopefully, wouldn’t swell up like the original. Hopefully they would remain as they are.

Bite after bite, Rock was getting dizzy as he released these snakes onto the platforms. He had totaled up somewhere around four bites and was now starting to become delirious. He was ready to just give up, pin his bad luck on this loss, when he finally landed a hit. Watched the robot let out a cry, so similar to his own, as a snake bit down on it… that was a relief. He watched as that copy of himself ripped the venom-injecting snake off of himself and threw it as far away as he could.

The snake was lifeless after that, Rock watched the spot of the bite and watched it swell just a bit. Just enough to be noticiable if one knew what they were looking for. It would be easier from here on out. He just had to find the replica with the slightly swollen thigh. Jumping from platform to platform, whenever Rock saw that slightly swollen thigh, he launched another snake at the copy. The snake would always be quick to bite down upon the robot, teeth bared and venom pouring.

Both Rock and the Copy were becoming obviously delirious and weary from the venom which coursed through their systems. With each artificial breath and heartbeat it became harder and harder to remain upright. While it was true that the original blue bomber was intoxicated with much less of the snake’s venom, he also had it in his system for much longer. Like any good poison, the symptoms get worse over time regardless.

Watching the Copy fall was nice, it stared at him and muttered something he couldn’t make out, before collapsing. Rock was soon to follow. His body collapsing onto the ground and resting there in the bizarre room. The multi-colored LEDs flashed all around the room, blurry colors which only made whatever poisonous effect grow more and more intense. At least this wasn’t as bad as when he fought Snakeman.

“Hey! Wake up!”

He must have blacked out when he heard the voice echo in his brain. There was a throbbing pain in his side, as though someone had injected him with something. “Are you going to sleep forever?” He felt something… nuzzling him? He wasn’t sure what it was as he opened his eyes and was shocked to find that it was… Snakeman? Of all people he was the one that decided to appear.

Perhaps it was God sending him a protector, or a weird coincidence, regardless of what it was, it was good he was here. “You really don’t know how to use snakes do you?” He hissed out, his forked tongue flicking out of his mouth more than once. He was ‘smelling’ the air with it, just as snakes do, no doubt about it.

“How do you use them?” Rock asked, trying to force himself up. His head was pounding, but slowly and steadily the feeling was beginning to evaporate. “You don’t let them bite you, that way you’re supposed to use them.”
“What are you doing here anyways?” He asked, somewhat agitated. “Oh that’s so simple. You know what ‘error children’ are?” Rock nodded, he remembered when Blues told him what that was. He didn’t expect it to be as universal as it was, for Snake to know the term. “Well I fit into that category. Light wants to find out what makes us detrimental to humanity. What’s wrong with us? So he sent me here. I sensed my snakes were being used so I came to investigate.”

Rock never knew how many times ‘s’ could be used in a sentence until he met Snakeman. The sheer amount of times he had to make that hissing ‘s’ sound was ridiculous, but at the same time the soldier supposed he couldn’t blame him.

“So you just decided to help me out?” Snakeman happily nodded his head, seemingly excited at the prospect. It was so strange. The other was definitely a killer, he was dangerous, and yet here he seemed no more harmful than a small child. Smiling with that puppy dog smile, eyes bright and filled with hope, his demeanor meaning for the best. Yet it was obvious that he was only doing this because he probably didn’t want to do what he was doing. Perhaps he was lonely…

“So are you going to help me find Wily?” Rock asked him. “That’s the plan! I probably won’t get very far… But I want to try.” Snake replied playfully, helping the shorter up to his feet. “You do know what this entails right? I’m planning on killing Wily, you know this right?” He wasn’t expecting the serpent robot to grin even wider at that revelation, showing his venom tipped fangs in his mouth. Those teeth were terrifying to look at, almost vampirish in nature. They would put Count Dracula to shame.

“I’m hoping that was hoping that was hoping that was.”
Snake and Rock go to find out more about Error Children. Problem is, however, that they find more than they could ever wish to know.

Chapter Notes

This chapter takes the place of the boss rush chapter, the next chapter will be the Wily fight.

Chapter Sixty: Virus

“I wassssssssssss never good enough...”

The sadness in his voice, it hurt his heart. It almost made him regret asking why Snake was okay with the prospect of killing Wily. To hear that in the end the most effective killing machine created from this line, from those experiments, was nothing more than a mistake was a little disheartening. It wasn’t hard to see that Snake was the most ferocious of his line, and had it not been for Shadow it would have been easy to see that the small green robot would have been the most powerful of them.

To hear that just one small mistake, which gave Snake a personality glitch, would be enough to make Wily look at him as anything less than what he was... It made some twisted form of sense in terms of behavior. Line 3 never got the chance to live. They aren’t like Line 2, Metalman and Quickman, that whole family, they know what life was like. They were able to experience the joys of life. But Topman, Hardman, and of course Snakeman, never got that chance. Test tube born and immediately shoved into a body that wasn’t their own. It was terrifying and heartbreaking to say the least.

Snake lamented, as they walked through the small building, how he remembered times where he wouldn’t be fed. How when he’d get violent he’d be locked in a room like some animal. He supposed it’s because of the fact he’s a snake-based robot. “I don’t know if I wassssssssssssss treated the worssssssssssssst out of my brothersssssssssssssssssssss. But I know I wassssssssssssssn’t treated the besssssssssssssst.” He expressed how he worried about what they went through, something that Rock found to be very interesting.

In the end he wasn’t concerned about himself, or what he went through. He knows what happened to him... But what about everyone else?

In his mind if he went through a lot, then his siblings probably went through three times as much. He expressed how he would bury himself in blankets on his bed and not get up, too satisfied with the warmth, and wouldn’t listen to anyone except Shadow or Top-- unless bribed by food. He
expressed how he had mood switches and couldn’t understand why. It felt almost like he was two different people at times. He never understood it, and to this day is still trying to figure it out.

He expressed his simplistic desires. At the moment he wanted revenge, but that’s about as complex as it got. Really all he wanted in life was a nice warm place to sleep, some nice food in his belly, and a quiet environment. Snake felt all his problems could be solved if he could just find a place to call home.

“Don’t worry,” Rock began, warmly. “We’ll find you guys a home. A nice big home for all of you- or at least most of you. We did it for the previous line, we can do it for you guys too. I’m sure there’s a purpose you can fulfil out there.” Snake didn’t look at him as he began to speak. “If it’ssssssssssssssss military than I don’t want to. I think I’ve had enough fighting in my short life.”

Short life… no more than a year he meant.

It was sad to think of that, only in a year there’s been so much fighting for him. “Well then you don’t have to find a purpose in combat. I’m sure there’s something else that you can do.” Rock offered, if asked examples of this purpose he wouldn’t be able to give any. There was no possible way, in his mind, that Snake could really find a place outside of combat… He hoped something could be reached soon.

“There’sssssssssssssssssssss the door!” The blue bomber jumped at Snake’s sudden exclamation. The room they were looking for, they had finally found it. The room that had all the data on the Error Children. It was in here wasn’t it. “There’ssssssss a vent! I’ll open the door from the inssssssssssssssssssside.”

He didn’t have any chance to speak before the serpent robot was already up and inside the vent, crawling his way around. Rock knew he was in there but at the same time couldn’t hear a sound. It was eerie how quiet he was able to sneak around. Almost as though he was experienced in this. Since he was based off of a snake, an ambush predator, it’s very possible that his abilities derive from that.

It took a few minutes of anxious waiting for the door to slide open. It revealed a rather barren room inside, somewhat dark but not too dark to see within, with technology all over the place. A large mainframe computer rested against the far wall. “I think the information about Error Children isssssssssss in thisssssssssss computer.” Snake explained excitedly, a smile spreading across his face.

Before Rock could ask him why he believed such a thing, Snake was already working on the computer’s code. He seemed to have no issue booting the thing up, even more so he had no issue getting into the secret files. It was almost as if he had discovered this information long ago, extracting it from Wily in some way without his knowledge. It didn’t take too much digging to discover what they were looking for.

‘Video Log number 2935. I have found something very interesting indeed in the data of Doctor Thomas Light’s robot master, Elecman.’ Dr Wily began on screen. His words were bitter in a way, shadowed with cruelty and coldness. ‘When I altered his coding something occurred, something very strange. In his personality files, a strange string of code appeared. One I hadn’t anticipated. It changed him into someone that is very different from his original state. I wonder if forcing the ARLAS program to develop within certain robots caused this. Free will and a soul could be the source of robotic malfunctions as a whole. I must investigate this in depth. Perhaps injecting this code into my experiments will change something in them as well.’

‘Video Log 2964. The twins were activated not too long ago, very shortly after Light’s bots were sent out to wreak havoc. But, something strange has happened with Timeman. I did not enter the
code into his system and yet there was an error, a mistransfer if you will, of the child’s soul into his body. It became corrupted almost. Because of this he became violent and aggressive. He grew distant from living beings and chose to befriend the CWNs instead. I fear for what this means for future experiments.’

‘Video Log 4003. That pathetic family was recently transferred over. They are working splendidly, Crashman was given the code alteration. I noticed very bizarre behavior past this point. I expected him to become violent, aggressive, and cruel like Timeman and Elecman but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Instead he became depressive, distant, and borderline suicidal. I suppose that this glitch is almost like a mental illness among the minds of robots. Just like a mental malady affects the brain of the human mind in ways that we don’t wish to have, perhaps a digital malady affects the ‘brain’ of robots in much the same way. It only makes sense since we have observed mental illness in animals just as much as humans. Does this mean that robot masters with ARLAS, than, are living entities?’

‘Video Log 5289. The test tube line is doing mighty fine. We do have an outsider among our ranks in this line however. Shadowman. I checked his coding to see if he had the strange addition but the most bizarre detail of his existence became apparent. He has no IC Chip. If his body dies, if he is murdered, than that’s the end of it. He dies there like a human. He claims he is from the future of an alternate reality, if that’s the case than could robots truly become as close to living as humans? I have decided I will start a new project known simply as project ZERO to test this hypothesis. To see if I can make a machine that’s almost completely human. Perhaps even put them on the edge of humanity’s own limits… Give them the brain of a madman. Just to see how ‘human’ robots can be.’

‘Video Log 5304. Snakeman was our Error for this line. He is showing very aggressive behavior. I wonder why that is. What makes Elecman, Timeman, and Snakeman react violently, whereas Crashman reacted so depressively. Are there other types of Errors out there? It has also come to my attention that mine, Cossack’s, and Light’s old project, Blues, also manifested this coding after his… ‘Incident’. This caused a sudden collapse in mental processes that led to the deaths of everyone at that facility save for us. It all happened after he stumbled into that room… I wonder what he saw in there. Truly it’s no wonder they decided to claim the facility doesn’t exist anymore. Truly I would too. And no wonder they decided to try and confiscate ARLAS. We struggled to figure out what caused this Error only to find out it was an inevitability of the program. It was a deterioration in mental processes. It makes me fear the other ARLAS contenders.’

‘Video Log 5506. Blues is in my custody. I was able to verify that he does have the Error code. I tried to see if I could remove it from his processes, but it seemed imperative to his structure as an entity. Just like Crashman his code affects him strangely. It seems to have deteriorated the coding of Asimov’s Law of Robotics as a whole. Perhaps the code starts as some sort of mental disease but in reality it’s just the pre-code and post-code versions of the robot master fighting against itself to try and either preserve the Law or to destroy it. It sounds crazy speaking it out loud… But then again, what doesn’t with Robot Masters as advanced as this?’

‘Video Log 6443. I have discovered something incredible! The data from Rock’s capture has finally been developed! He has the code, or some crazy variant of it! No wonder he tried to kill me and no wonder he is as powerful as he is. Out of every robot master I have seen, he seems to be on a new level. He is an anomaly… He has to be killed, it could spell the end to humanity as we know it, a new dawn of robots. Robots that are free thinking and free living. Robots that don’t need humans! If Rockman gains the knowledge he needs he could be free living. His code blocks interference from outside parties, he cannot be tampered with. This code, it must have manifested back in his ARLAS state, there’s no possible way this could have been the result of trauma. Whatever Light created with Rock is something that I truly fear. I must have it for myself.’
‘Video Log 6532. I attempted to mimic the code that appeared in Rock’s data, but it did something terrible instead. I inserted the code into the pretest version of Gamma, a broken down robot that can no longer function. It became self-aware almost instantly, began self-improving itself, and as soon as it discovered the cruelty of humanity attempted to hack into military and other resources. When I began researching robotics I never thought that something like Skynet from ‘Terminator’ would ever be anything more than science fiction… I deactivated the pretest version of Gamma… I hope it did not infect the true Gamma, otherwise it’ll spark catastrophe.’

‘Video Log 6890. I am… In shock. The next line has begun construction however I found a naturally occurring Error. I have enlisted him into our ranks. Him and a few of his ‘siblings’ have joined, and while they have all developed ARLAS, not a single one of them save for him has gained the code. I didn’t know this code was naturally occurring like that. He is neither depressive or violent however he is… It’s almost as though he is detached from reality as a whole. No wonder he was slated to be destroyed.’

The videos shut off with an audible clicking and hissing sound. Rock looked down to his feet in shock. What was he? He knew there was something wrong with him, there was something different that he could do that other robots couldn’t… But how did that make him so dangerous?

“So you found out another piece of the puzzle?”

Rock and Snake spun around to see none other than Blues there, hand on his hip, seemingly non-threatening. “I suppose I did.” Rock answered timidly, his voice quiet and doubtful. “Well I was hoping you wouldn’t find out about that for some time… But it’s not the worst thing he could have found out I’m sure.” There was quiet between them as Snake returned to his work, saving the files onto a flashdrive he had stashed away in the hidden compartment of his boot. He seemed rather pleased that the flashdrive was as green as his armor.

“Are you going to continue to fight Wily?” Blues inquired. “I’m going to have to. I’ve already made my sacrifice. I’m not going to let that go to waste.” Rock answered, his voice firm despite its quiet tone. “Even if it means killing him?” He pressed. “Yes, even if it means killing him.” He shot back, surprised to see the smile which formed on his brother’s face. “Then you better head up to the roof soon… He’s waiting for you. There’s a teleporter in the other room… The one in the back right corner. If you go through the other teleporters you will waste precious time by being sent to fight husks of this past line.”

Rock smiled, nodding his head. “Thank you Blues… Make sure everyone is safe okay?” The older simply nodded. “Watch out for Gamma.” He warned.
Chapter Summary

With Wily's main machine defeated, it is time to search for Roll.

Chapter Notes

Shadowman is notorious for hiding in the shadows of people, objects, and places. He can also drag others into the shadows with him if he needs to.

Chapter Sixty-One: Shadow

The flames reached their red, burning arms up into the air. Sparks fluttered like fae in the suffocating atmosphere. Not a soul could breathe comfortably in the inferno. Not a soul could allow themselves the peace in the flames. That machine went down rather easy. Shadow Blade and Hard Knuckle doing the job without much of an issue. And yet something was wrong.

There was no way this was the end. This was far too easy for him. Wily would never go down without at least causing some form of chaos. Something was awaiting him in the darkness. Some mysterious entity that wished death upon him. It didn’t help that this ‘Wily’ didn’t speak. Not a single word came from his mouth.

No… Wily was the chatterbox type. He would talk and talk as he ‘stomped’ his enemy. Only to lose to someone like Rock. A robot so small and relatively frail, a robot that exists to do anything but this. Cruel, uncaring blue eyes focused upon the begging man before him. And yet as he approached it became all too clear what was really happening. The ruse became more and more obvious.

This wasn’t Wily. A shot from his Rockbuster proved that. The body exploded outwards in an array of springs and screws, another trick. An obstacle that has been avoided so perfectly. Minimal damages to his system. He stared at the head which rolled to his feet and rested there limp. One foot was brought up above it before being brought down just as fast. The head was destroyed.

“Rock? Are you alright?” The concerned tone of Dr Light on the other end of the telecommunicator was hardly enough to snap him out of his state. He felt hollow, almost vacant as the knowledge he was given began to sink in.

“I’m fine.” He replied simply, his skin crawling. He recalled that touch, how perverted Wily truly was. He recalled the torture of those he loved, from his brothers to those he picked up along the way. He thought of those heinous experiments and how they effectively destroyed families and lives without any trouble. He thought about himself. How because of Wily, he was now just as disillusioned as those he fought. There was something wrong with him. He was a super weapon of sorts.
“You don’t sound fine my boy. What happened? What did you see? I know when you’re not feeling alright.” Dr Light insisted, his words loving and tender. “I saw a lot of things during this entire thing… But I’m fine. Really, I am. Just annoyed that Wily wasn’t here this time.” Rock explained, that was partly a lie. He truly wasn’t okay. Things were falling apart it seemed and his brain was scrambling.

“What would you have done if he was there?” There was a curiosity to Light’s voice, a knowing curiosity, one that showed just how much he knew. He was well aware that his son wanted to kill his former best friend. Something that he could not condone in any way. “I’m not sure Papa… I would have done something, that’s for sure.” There was silence for a moment before that voice came back.

“Would you kill him?”

Somehow asking it outright like that was worse than beating around the bush. It was almost like ripping off a band-aid but the sting never went away. It was almost as though a beast ripped up his arm, left, and then returned to begin anew. Never letting it heal, but at the same time never truly making it worse. Just making sure that it continued to sting. “What would you do if I wanted to?”

That silence was suffocating, neither party spoke as the soldier stood over the body of Dr Albert Wily. A mimicry that never truly existed.

“I’m not sure, Rock… I truly am not sure.” Light began again, his voice heavy with a sense of dread. “We can’t have peace unless he’s dead.” Rock’s tone was sharper than he had planned for it to be. “That’s not true Rock and you know that.” The doctor lashed back. “Than how can we stop this from ever happening again?” There was silence for a moment, tense and eager silence. The silence of an animal awaiting for its prey to make the next move. “I’m not sure, but murder is never the answer.” There the argument began again. “It may not be the best answer but it’s the only answer we have.”

“I will not condone this!” Light shouted, his voice a sharp and bitter tone. “And what will you do to stop me exactly?” There was no response. “You can’t shut me down! You can’t go into my program and mess with me! You can’t do anything! The only thing separating me from Blues is that I don’t want to see people die. But sometimes you have to put your pacifist nature to the side and you have to execute. In war there are always casualties.”

“This is not war!”

“Than what is it!”?

Neither side said anything more for a long time. Rock stood there, staring at the mangled mess of parts and metal. How he wished it was the true Wily, but of course it wasn’t. Of course he would never be. Finally, through a crackle of static, Dr Light’s voice finally came back to him. “Don’t worry about killing Wily… That’s not our goal right now. Our goal is to find Roll. Remember that. The mission is to rescue Roll. She should be in your vicinity somewhere.”

That was true. They came to find Roll, not necessarily to stop Wily. As such the area needed to be searched. If the signal was coming from this area than she had to be somewhere around here. Rock studied the area, he looked in the floor, felt along the walls, and yet still had issues finding any sign of Roll.

It was almost as though she wasn’t here to begin with. As though the signal was manufactured by a fake.
“Rock?” The blue bomber whirled around, shocked to see that Roll was standing there in the middle of the room. She was beaten up pretty badly. ‘Blood’ oozed from scraps and gashes that lined her legs and arms. Her dress was torn in many places, exposing patches of skin and undergarments, but for the most part she was alright and mostly clothed. Her hair was singed, messy, and knotted and yet she was still pretty-- especially for a hostage. He ran towards Rock, a grin on her face and a limp in her stride.

She collapsed into her brother’s arms, laughing and smiling, holding onto him as if he was her lifeline. In a way one could suppose he was. “You saved me! I knew you would!” Roll shouted happily, squeezing her brother as much as her malnourished and malcharged body could. “Why would I? You’re my sister after all… Did Wily hurt you at all? Did he do anything to you?” He asked, concern lacing his voice.

“No! He got really close… B-But… But I’m okay. He didn’t do anything to me. Breakman he kept me safe I think. He wouldn’t leave me unsupervised, especially with Wily. It was very strange but I wasn’t complaining.” A sigh of relief, almost without thinking. It was so nice to know that Blues was telling the truth, that he actually was protecting Roll the entire time. “How did you get up here anyways?” The blue bomber finally asked after a long period of silence.

“Oh… about that.” The female pulled away just enough to gesture to her shadow, she still held onto her brother for support, especially with her wounded leg. Rock was surprised to see the shadow begin to morph and change shape. It was almost as if it was alive. A figure began to manifest from the darkness. “Shadowman!” Rock exclaimed, overjoyed to see his guardian there.

“I saw you fighting here, little master, so I brought your sister. That’s why you couldn’t find her. We were hiding in the shadows of this place. Originally I was going to bring her straight back to Light Labs but I figured you’d like to know that she was alright.” He was correct to assume that. In fact it felt almost as though a weight had been lifted off of Rock’s shoulders. He could fight freely now.

“Thank you for that Shadow. You two should head back to Light Labs now though. Wily is still on the loose and I have to take him down.” Shadowman bowed slightly and simply muttered, “Understood.” After that he scooped Roll up and began walking towards a shadowy corner where they once again disappeared into the abyss. Leaving Rock just as alone as when this entire thing started.
Gamma

Chapter Summary

With Wily's machine destroyed, Rock goes against 'Gamma'.

Chapter Notes

Because I'm not planning on going into this detail further-- Gamma was a military robot originally built by Wily and Light in college. However the robot never worked right and as such needed to be shut down. Wily, seeing the potential and what caused the problem to begin with, recovered the robot and rebuilt it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Sixty-Two: Gamma

The robot was massive, it towered over the little blue bomber without problem. It’s massive size was intimidating on it’s own. But it’s fists… It’s fists were a different story. With spikes lining them, ready to deliver a powerful blow, it only aided in the overwhelming sense of dread this robot brought along with them.

Rock wasn’t sure what to do as it swung down at him, all he could think to do was jump onto the fist itself, avoiding getting punched. Perched atop the appendage he looked up at the behemoth. He was surprised at just how big it was. But that wasn’t going to stop him. Hopping up onto a ledge, he took aim. Being careful to dodge the projectiles it launched at him. The Shadow Blade seemed to do the most damage, so that’s what he used.

He cut into the behemoth’s large head, gash after gash, eventually severing the entire cranium of the robot. The mechanical monstrosity roared in anger at the damage for which he took and proceeded to pound on the stone flooring. Pound after pound after pound. He stuck the ground causing the entire building to tremble under the impact. It was almost as though he was trying to bring it down.

The thing had lost its mind it seemed. “Shit!” Rock shouted underneath his breath as he saw Wily descend upon the conscious-less robot. It lost itself completely, whatever it had vanished as the UFO like object nestled itself into the giant’s head. It was snug in there and in a moment it became apparent who was in control. This was the real mad scientist, there was no doubt about it. If that was the case than he had to move faster if he wanted to avoid being turned into a pulp.

Jumping onto that fist again, he launched a few snakes at it, hoping that their venom could at least make a dent.

“I’m glad you’ll kill Wily…” He could hear Snakeman in his head, that smile which showed prominent fangs laced with poison. It was him that wanted to kill Wily, and as such he was going
to use his weapon. The snakes worked like a charm, however it became apparent that the blue bomber would have to repeatedly climb up to reach an altitude where he could fire them and make a dent.

Snake after snake, they injected their poison before simply dropping dead. It seemed to do massive amounts of damage to Gamma. The robot was beginning to fall apart. Piece after piece it crumbled to the ground. The thing began to explode. It knocked out many of the supports in the process.

Just like the story of David and Goliath, the giant fell. It fell with a heavy thunking sound as Wily was sent sprawling. He was cut up, wounded from his own robot, scrapes and burns littered his flesh. And yet he had no issue rising to his feet and trying to run. A search snake was quick to pursue.

Wily let out a scream of pain as the snake latched onto his leg, it bit down upon it, poison oozing out of the fangs of the serpent and beginning the paralysis. It would be temporary, nonfatal, at least on its own. However, with Rock here, it would be the last feeling he ever felt.

Or at least he firmly believed it would be.

In his desire to kill Wily, completely deaf to his pleas for help, he didn’t notice the fortress falling all around them. Massive stones coming down and separating them. No! He couldn’t let himself lose sight of him. As such Rock proceeded to try and break through the stone only to find himself trapped in a corner.

Everything went black as the roof came down atop him, burying him in what seemed to be a shallow grave.

They were buried alive among the stone. The destruction of Gamma being apparent. Rock lay there in the pile of rubble, questioning whether or not Wily was alive. Questioning if he was going to die here. He didn’t care if he did. He didn’t care if he was a murder or not. So long as Wily was gone, he was happy to die here.

He was happy to accept the fate lined up for him.

Besides, it’s not like Light would want him back after this anyways. He is, after all, just another mistake.

Chapter End Notes

The Endless War now has an official discord server! New members always welcome! https://discord.gg/7YudaY2
The Endless War also has an official tumblr blog! https://arlasproject.tumblr.com/
Chapter Summary

After being recovered from the wreckage, Rock goes through the consequences of a war so long.

Chapter Notes

Rock caught a glimpse of a Phantom in the moonlight.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Sixty-Three: Metallic

Why was metal always so cold?

It was a question he asked himself frequently, now it was the only thing on his mind. As he stood there, holding the barrel of Dr Light’s handgun to his temple, it felt so strange. There was no news of Wily’s body-- there was no news on whether or not he was dead. The worst news to hear upon awakening.

The moon shone above him, singular wide eye watching him from the heavens. He wondered just who could see him standing there. For most robots this wouldn’t do anything, shooting oneself in the head would just be a waste of a bullet and precious metal. But Rock… he didn’t necessarily have the same type of memory as the other robot masters. The ARLAS process requires a bit more extra technology to work as planned. To generate the artificial soul that one is looking for.

It was so quiet in the late night, and yet so warm. The humidity was suffocating and he could only wonder how the people in the town were feeling. As he stared down upon the lights below, he couldn’t help but ponder what was there. Who was there. Who of them would hear the gunshot.

Ghost fingers traced over his skin, hands gripped at his flesh and it felt almost as though they were trying to rip him apart. The spirits of broken memories were haunting him as they always did. The ghosts of a past he wished to forget, but due to being a soldier he never would. He didn’t know if Wily was alive or not, but at this point he didn’t care about his wasted sacrifice. It wasn’t worth keeping.

Maybe it would prompt a different soul to take his place. It sounded selfish, but he was willing to take that selfishness for once.

The tall grass of the forest’s edge tickled his bare legs, exposed by his shorts. In the moonlight pale lined scars were painfully visible, only hidden by the grass itself. Grass which tickled his ‘skin’. The gun barrel pressed so closely to his temple. There was no way that this would fail. He pressed down on the trigger and for an instance time stopped.
The explosion was deafening, a shout from someone that he knew, someone he swore he was close to. Red eyes with white overlaying them, a hand gripping onto his own as the figure manifested from the darkness. He felt the pain of something metal passing through his skull, breaking it apart, but at the same time it didn’t kill him. He was alive. It should have destroyed his circuitry and yet. That firm grip on his forearm. He was thwarted, for a moment he didn’t understand why but with a bit of deliberation it became obvious. This was Shadowman’s mission. To come to this world and to put a halt to this sort of behavior. To prevent Rock from drying before the age when the world truly needed him. Yet he was already so tired. How did they expect him to live for another two-hundred years?

Despite surviving the initial gunshot, he felt his entire body fall apart. Everything going limp and numb as everything failed to respond. His ‘nervous system’, his ‘muscular system’, it all began to shut down. He didn’t know what else to do as he collapsed into the arms of the guardian. He was paralyzed laying there, brown hair and pale face turning a sickening red color.

He couldn’t hear Shadow’s voice, was that even Shadow? For an instance he saw someone else there. A stranger before him, melted away by the moon to reveal the person he knew to be Shadowman. Blue eyes drifted about wildly, he could see a chunk of head taken off, matted hair clinging to the ripped apart metal and ‘scalp’. It was so interesting to see the sparking remains of what used to be apart of his cranium.

He wondered what the exposed part of his sparking head looked like. It must be rather terrible damage if he couldn’t tell he was twitching or holding his breath. Must be rather terrible if he can’t hear or see or even feel the burning pain. It didn’t even register that there was ‘blood’ pouring down his face in waterfalls. The solitary moon was dyed red as the fluid entered his frozen open eyes.

He was trapped in his own body, unable to move or sense. Unable to truly do anything. Imprisoned in his body. Another voice… It sounded garbled as another figure manifested in his vision. Light… It was Light in his pajamas. Roll’s voice, he could make out the tones but not the words, she picked up the gun out of view and seemed to rush away. She wasn’t hurt anymore. Stitches and bandages were holding her wounds together, her hair no longer matted and burned, just as beautiful as when she was abducted.

He was lucid for all of this, all of the panic, all of the concern. It wasn’t until they began to move him that the damage became truly apparent. Forced shut down fell upon him and with that he was completely engulfed in darkness. Eternal sleep until rebooted. Eternal sleep until he awoke.

When he did awaken, when his body was repaired enough to function, he found himself in that familiar lab, still unable to move, with bodies all about him. Most were asleep, but one figure that looked vaguely like Santa Clause remained upright. His hands together in prayer for his broken son.

As if God would care for an abomination like a robot with a soul.

Chapter End Notes

I apologize for all the short chapters as of late-- this isn't normal but I feel like these more recent chapters are better as a heavy short punch over a long drawn out period.
Chapter Sixty-Four: Signal

“That…” Zero watched as X pulled himself away from the body of his brother, swallowing hard. “That scar… There’s a scar on his scalp. It’s the scar of the gunshot…” The older stated shakily. “Jesus fuck…” The blond reploid stated, putting his hands on his head out of pure stress. What had they stumbled upon? There was no way that this child went through all of that.

“Well we got answers to some of our biggest questions through all of this.” X began. “Oh really? Like what?” Zero didn’t intend his words to come out so aggressive, they just sort of did. “Who is that Shadow character-- why is he a reploid older than us? What made Rock Light so special? Why is he Rockman? There was a lot here that we learned… Now I can say we can probably let Shadow out of custody.”

“He’s been in there for a while, how do you know he won’t be violent?” Zero inquired, more than a little concerned. “I wouldn’t worry about that too much, since his incarceration he’s been pretty peaceful, if anything cooperative. The only thing that we haven’t been able to get out of him is the stuff we acquired through this footage.” X rose from where he sat and began to pace around. “Do you think we should tell him Rock is alive?” The blond questioned.

“I think we should ask him if we should keep him alive, so the answer would be yes.” X knew what the answer would end up being. They would have to keep Rock alive through some means. If the world is unraveling like it did in Shadow’s original universe, than he was a requirement for the future. For the survival of it at least. If they had any plans of seeing the end of days than they could deactivate the tiny robot. But for now it seemed like they were backed into a corner.

“I’ll make the call for his release.” X stated, picking up what seemed to be a phone for the day and age-- or what replaced it. Zero didn’t pay much mind to what X was saying, he was too enveloped with the child that lay on the medical table. He looked so peaceful and young, hard to believe that he was the one living through these memories. He was the one that experienced it.

A flashing light caught Zero’s attention, he turned to face the screen, eyes wide. He was in shock at what he was seeing. A new memory was being written. “Um! X! We have a bit of a problem here!” The younger stated, his breath catching in his throat. “Yeah… I-I see that…” He didn’t even
Something was trying to communicate with Rock. Something was trying to access his consciousness. The fact that it could, the fact that the robot was giving them permission to, was what kept them from taking action. As the files said, the child was incapable of being hacked, he was self aware and as such was quick to push back any outside interference. It was his own body in the end.

“Rock? Is that you?” The voice spoke.

“Y-Yes it’s me…”

“What happened to you?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Where did you go?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you going to come back?”

“I hope so.”

“Do you know when?”

“No I don’t.”

“Do you know what happened to this world?”

“No I don’t.”

“It’s falling apart, and it’s all Wily’s fault.”

“But Wily is dead.”

“No he’s not… He’s manifested himself in the form of a navi.”

“Why didn’t you take him down yet? Aren’t you a navi?”

“I lost my operator… I lost Netto.”

“What happened to Netto?”

“He died… From old age.”

“But-- he’s not that old.”

“Uncle Rock… You’ve been asleep for a really long time you know.”

“How long is a ‘long time’?”

“There are no more robots or net navis.”

“What do you mean?”
“Net navis are gone-- our support was ended ages ago. Now there are only reploids, no robots.”

“Like what Shadowman is?”

“Yes...”

“His future is becoming a reality I suppose.”

“Definitely. And it seems the ARLAS project... We’re the last ones who lived through it. There’s nobody else left.”

“What about Blues?”

“He disappeared looking for you?”

“Roll?”

“Haven’t gotten a ping from her since the funeral.”

“Funeral?”

“Yes... Grandpa Light’s funeral... He... He passed away from pneumonia.”

“......”

“I’m so sorry.”

“What about Bass?”

“Him and Treble disappeared off the map. I don’t know what happened to him.”

“Rush?”

“I’m not sure... Probably deceased by now.”

To say the conversation, as they listened in, was incredible would be an understatement. Rock and a foreign entity, a ‘netnavi’ who also lived through the ARLAS project, were communicating in some way. Despite the fact that Rock was technically marked as offline, they were able to connect. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that they are both victims of that project. That they are both sentient in their own ways.

“Rock I have to go.”

“Why?”

“I have a sneaking suspicion I’ve been found out.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I don’t know... I feel like I’m being watched. I’ll stay in contact with you... Please come back online soon.”

“I will try... If the world is as bad as it is than I have to keep fighting.”

“You don’t have to.”
“I want to. I gave my entire life to this planet and I’m going to see my journey until the end.”

“Glad we agree on that.”

And just like that the entity was gone, without a trace. Without a single hint as to what it was. A ghost hovering just above the body and vanishing. They tried tracing it but could only find a spirit of what was left behind. A remnant that something was there. They would have to ask Rock when it came down to it.

X and Zero exchanged glances, still unsure of what to say or do. “I suppose that’s it… We have to just bide our time and trap that mysterious program when we can. For now let’s focus on Shadow.” The blue reploid nodded in agreement, proceeding to try and make the call once again.

This time there were no disturbances.
Shopping

Chapter Summary

Trying to acclimate to normal life may be harder than it seems, and perhaps may even be unnecessary by the final word.

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the huge gap between this chapter and the last one-- I will get caught back up to schedule as soon as possible, thank you for the patience.

Chapter Sixty-Five: Shopping

“Rock, can you push the cart for me?”

Everything felt so surreal, the sound of the shopping cart wheeling down the aisle, the people talking all around him as if nothing was wrong. It felt fake. It was a mirage created by something that wasn’t supposed to be here. The scent of plastic bags, produce, and refrigerated goods wafted in the air. The shopping bag smell which was almost suffocating. Rock pushed the car quietly behind Roll and Light, both with their own shopping list, both going up and down every aisle to see what they needed for the week.

The music overhead, it was a happy song, but in the end it was quiet. He could hardly make out the drone of it, couldn’t even identify the song over the chitter chatter and ambient noise of the grocery store. “Papa, do you think this would be good, it’s expiring soon.” Roll asked, turning to her father, to which he simply replied, “No Roll, that’s cheese, we don’t want it going bad on us especially since we won’t be using it all up by the 20th.” He told her, his voice loving and kind. She nodded her head and put it back, grabbing a different block instead. One with a longer lifespan.

Rock checked his phone, hard to believe it was 2009 already… It felt like just yesterday that he fought Wily last. Who knew it was a whole year? He surely didn’t feel it in his bones. Time felt fake to him now. He was getting on, but only barely. He was worried, he felt a pit in his stomach, somehow he knew that so long as Wily was out there the scheming wouldn’t stop.

Beep… Beep...

Checkout, the faint sounds of the barcodes being scanned, the crinkling of bags, the overall sounds of departure. He wasn’t sure what exactly to think. What to do. He felt useless.

He helped Light and Roll put the groceries in the trunk, he wheeled the cart back to where it was supposed to go, he climbed into the passenger seat without thought. Roll didn’t like the passenger seat, she felt it was unsafe, Rock did once upon a time… But now nothing felt unsafe. They drove as the radio played ‘I Kissed a Girl’, turned down to be just barely audible. There was
conversation, but the soldier didn’t listen to it.

Rock watched as blurry shapes passed him by, he watched as they were little blurs in the distance. One after another. Blur after blur after blur. They flew past as though on a track. He got used to the sounds around him, so used to it in fact that when it all changed on a dime he knew it spelled trouble.

“Hush Roll.” Light spoke suddenly, worry obvious in his voice. He turned up the radio to a well-mannered and urgent newscaster. Rock turned to look at the gadget embedded in the car’s dashboard, his blue eyes focused upon it. At first he didn’t understand what was being said, as the words hung in the air however, it all began to make sense. It began to make sense and he hated it.

“Robot masters known to belong to a Doctor Mikhail Cossack have gone rogue and begun attacking at random places all over the United States. We have gotten reports from California, Florida, Kansas, Texas, New York, and even here in Maine. We are unsure what is happening. An investigation into Cossack reveals that he and his daughter, Kalinka, have been labeled as missing persons for about a week now. Their last known whereabouts was at Lakeview Park in Arcadia, Maine where the two of them were caught on CCT Footage looking visibly distressed. Police are looking into a potential kidnapping and...”

Nobody was listening anymore as Light turned down the radio, his breath was shallow and his face was pale. “Papa... Was that...?” Roll began, unsure of what to say. “Yes Roll, that’s your uncle Cossack.” He wasn’t their real uncle, they both knew this.

He is Light’s best friend, as such it’s not a surprise that he’d be labeled an ‘uncle’ for the two robotic children. “We’re going to stop by their house up here... See if they’re okay.” Light explained, casting a split second glance at the boy beside him, before his eyes were glued to the road once again.

None of them noticed the car that was trailing behind them as they drove. None of them noticed the car which kept a solid pace behind them for a good thirty minutes. None of them noticed until they felt a slight bump at the back of their car. “Papa! There’s someone following us!” Roll shouted to him, concern obvious in her voice. “Stay in your seat, okay? We’ll be okay, I promise.” Light tried to reassure her, but Rock could see everything from where he sat.

There was fear there.

They drove fast, and rather dangerously, to try and get away from the pursuing car. They swerved and dodged through traffic, not like there was much to begin with as everyone was at the beach, but nothing seemed to work. The car continued to tail them. Was it a surprise then that a crash would occur? Was it truly a surprise when that car rammed into them and ran them off the road? Was it a surprise when they rolled and rolled and rolled, coming to a stop at the bottom of a hill? Was it truly a surprise when ambulances arrived they had to pull three bloodied bodies out of the wreckage? Was it any sort of surprise to anyone who bore witness to the event?

Broken bones, blood and gore, lacerations and bruising, but for the most part they all were okay. Rock suffered the least amount of injuries, having been buckled in and fully back in his seat. Light, thanks to being human, took the brunt of the crash. But even he would be alright it seemed.

This was Wily’s doing, no doubt about it...