

Supernova

It was humid out in the streets of Chicago, causing Iso's windows to fog up because he kept his room at freezing temperatures. All the cyborgs weren't affected by the heat, but as a human, Iso would do anything to get away from the steaming hot air.

The alarm started to blare, causing Iso to grumble and groan as he stretched his long, tan, muscular arm out from under his gray cotton sheets to turn it off. The blue tint from the moonlight streaming through his windows matched the temperatures. Iso yawned as he rubbed the sleep away from his eyes. He sat up, making the blanket fall off his chest and settle in a pool around his hips. He grinned as he spotted his black kitten in the corner of the room. Sammy was her name—one of the only normal things left in this place, just like him.

His shaggy hair fell over his eyes, he brushed it softly to the side with his free hand while the other was busy petting Sammy after she glided over to his bed and hopped up to sit next to him. He turned on his lights, which lit up the room only slightly, like a candle on a birthday cake. Maps of the world stretched over his walls, giving life and color to the room. He had his bed in one corner with shelves covered in family pictures, trophies, inventions, and a shard of iron. Possibly the iron that killed his parents. He didn't know why he held onto it after all these years. Maybe it was the only thing keeping him connected to his parents. He stared at a poster next to his window of a band he had never listened to, until Sammy snapped him out of his head with a gentle brush of her head against his hand. She just wanted more scratches.

Iso swung his long legs off the bed and set his bare feet on the cool concrete floor. A shiver ran through him.

"I wonder what today will bring," he said aloud, sighing as he rolled his eyes.

“Keep rolling your eyes, maybe you’ll find a brain back there,” a familiar soft voice said. He loved that voice. It sounded like how buttery flower petals felt.

He lifted his gaze to see Plexy leaning on the door, her small slim outline seemed to be glowing as she rested her weight on one foot, causing her hips to sway. She had long, icy blonde hair that was pin straight. She was pale with bright blue, almost unearthly eyes, even though he knew she was human as well. He loved her eyes. They were so different from the darkness of his own chocolate brown eyes.

“How’d you sleep?” she asked with a smirk.

“Fine. What are you doing here?” Iso asked, although he wasn’t complaining that his crush was standing in his apartment. He lived alone—who else would he live with? His parents died in the explosion, and he never knew any of his relatives. His rent was paid for by the government since he was an orphan.

“Thought you could use some company. You haven’t been at school recently. Why?” Plexy asked kindly, the care written on her face. She didn’t hide her emotions well, or never tried to. Iso, on the other hand, pretended everything was fine... all the time.

“I thought it would be a good idea to stay in for a few days, with all the new commands and stuff,” he replied, walking towards her. She didn’t move out of his way, insistent on getting through the brick wall he had built around himself. He stopped walking.

“Don’t you think that makes you more suspicious? You know, because of the new law?” she asked as she brushed cat hair off of his black shirt. He moved slightly when her fingers touched his shirt. Her finger felt like it was humming and seemed almost... to vibrate? He stared at it as she quickly dropped her hand down and into her gray sweatpant pocket.

Meeting her gaze he said, “I don’t really care about looking suspicious. No one notices me, so why does it matter?”

“I noticed you were gone,” she said as she backed out of the doorway, heading for the kitchen. He moved in her wake, catching a scent of her vanilla perfume. “So did Disc.”

Disc was Iso’s best friend, even before the explosion. He was there that day, with Iso and his family. Disc only had his mom, but they never got along anyway. He didn’t know where she went or if she died in the blast. Iso and Disc had been fourteen when it happened, four years ago.

“You need groceries,” Plexy asked with the fridge door open.

“I was planning on going today. Do you want to come?” he replied, expecting her to say no. Every time he tried to make a move on her, she either ignored it or acted as if it was a joke.

“Sure, got nothing better to do. If you’re skipping school, so am I,” she said, causing his eyes to widen in surprise. She giggled as she tilted her head to one side.

She closed the fridge door and walked up to Iso, “Go change, I’ll grab the ration cards from under your sink.”

“How’d you know I hid them there?” he asked, surprised.

“I know you, Iso,” she said, walking out of sight. The way she said his name sent shivers down his spine. The softness of her voice was like a cool breeze over the ocean, making him feel warm and cool at the same time. The way she said it was just different from anyone else. It made him feel real. No one else seemed to notice him like she did.

He stood there for a moment, then made his way back to his room where he changed into a white sweatshirt and black sweatpants. He slipped his sneakers on and slid towards the door. Something shiny caught his eye.

The shard had fallen from his shelf onto his bed.

He stared at it as memories flashed through his head like pictures in a slideshow. Images of his parents smiling at dinner that night; Disc and him playing basketball outside. The sky lit up like a big flashlight had been turned on from space, making it the brightest blue he'd ever seen. That was the last time he'd seen the sky in the daylight. After, the star fell and its iron shattered when it hit the earth, sending shards across the city and killing two-thirds of the population.

It changed things.

The moon was always out—all day—and the sun never rose. It was a hot July summer day in Chicago when it happened, and the weather never seemed to change after that. It was almost like they were stuck in that moment of time. The iron from the blast had killed his parents, but somehow Disc and Iso survived, barely. They had been taken to the hospital and woken up to the world in chaos. They didn't know how long they had been asleep, but things had definitely changed when they woke up.

A knock on his bedroom door dragged him out of his thoughts. "Are you dead in there? Did you slip and fall while putting on your socks?" Plexy teased.

"Sorry, I'm coming." He swung open the door and Plexy jumped. She was so short and small compared to his tall, broad figure.

"We need to talk about what we're going to do about this new command. We need to be careful," Iso warned.

He was talking about the law that was passed two days previously, on the four year anniversary of the explosion. After the blast, whoever survived was seriously injured by the amount of iron, causing doctors to need more advanced technological treatment for those wounds. They usually ended up cutting the entire wound out of the body and filling it with a computer designed part made of metal. As usual, the richest people were first in line, and it

became a “trend” that the more metal you had, the better you were. The people called them cyborgs, and the government was composed completely out of them. Fully transformed humans. Iso and Plexy were somehow lucky enough to heal naturally from the iron, or so Iso thought. They were both fully human, and the law stated that all humans must be executed if they didn’t have some sort of alteration of their body. Chicago was getting too crowded, and they believed humans, without the advantages of indestructible metal, were too weak to be of any use.

“Stop worrying so much,” Plexy said, “We’ll be fine.” With a wink, she dragged him out the door into the streets of the city.

The sound of metal clanging like a middle school marching band hit their ears. The glare of the moon’s shiny surface caused the whole city to seem like it was glowing. Iso and Plexy made their way through the streets, trying not to be noticed. As they approached the store, something caught Plexy’s eye near the hospital on the street. A ribbon? A red ribbon was stuck underneath a white van’s wheel, the fire engine red contrasting their white world like snow on top of bright Christmas lights. She stopped in her tracks. Iso started to question her but she raised a fist, motioning for him to be quiet.

She recognized that ribbon. It belonged to a little girl she had seen when she visited the preschool a few months ago as a volunteer. She loved kids, and she felt especially connected to that little girl. She reminded Plexy of herself when she was younger. She was human, too...

Fear crept into Plexy, making it hard for her to breathe. She felt like she was drowning in waves and barely able to keep her head above the water.

“What, Plexy? What is it?” Iso asked with a concerned look on his face, his eyebrows scrunched together.

“They took her! Th- They took Ruby! Iso, what are they doing to her? She never did anything wrong!” Plexy panicked.

“Hey, hey, hey, we’ll figure it out, just stay—” Plexy took off in the middle of his sentence. She bolted down the street towards the door of the hospital with one goal in her mind: get inside and get answers.

At that moment, Iso had two choices. He could either go after Plexy, risking getting exposed... or worse. Or he could go get his groceries like he planned and head back home. He was torn, stuck to the concrete like a fly in a trap, until his feet started to move and he found himself running towards the entrance, just like Plexy had been. He threw open the heavy metal door, took a deep breath, and went headfirst inside.

“What the—”

A hand grabbed him and put another over his mouth. He fought and tried to get out of the grip until he recognized the white painted fingernails and the vanilla scented perfume. He turned around and saw Plexy, a terrified expression on her face.

“Why would you scare me like that! What did you see—”

He was interrupted by her hiss, “Shhh, they’ll hear you.”

“Who will hear, Plexy?” Iso whispered, keeping his voice low and his panic to a minimum. He hadn’t even looked around before now, and all he saw were long, white, cold looking hallways with big metal doors at the ends, just like the ones they’d come through. It was a hospital, but it felt like a prison.

“I ran in here and started to look around before I heard the door open behind me, thankfully it was you.” Plexy started to say, “I heard voices behind the far door, two males and one female... and a kid.”

Before Iso could process what this meant, Plexy grabbed his hand and dragged him along the wall, inching towards the far door.

“This is crazy, Plexy, I’m not a hero. We need to leave,” Iso pleaded.

“You’re seriously just going to let an innocent little girl get hurt? Or let the girl you’re in love with go alone into danger? What a gentleman.” Plexy rolled her eyes.

“Shut up,” Iso responded, trying to keep his face smooth. Was it really that obvious that he was in love with her, he wondered? *Great*. Plexy didn’t seem scared, but her hand was shaking in his. He squeezed it and she turned to meet his gaze, smiling a little.

As they made their way towards the door, the voices grew louder. They reached the door, which had a small window, and Plexy carefully peeked through on her tiptoes.

“It’s cute how short you are; you need to stand on your tiptoes to see.” Iso grinned, which earned him an annoyed look and a punch to the arm. He still smiled.

“What do you see?” Iso asked, trying to peek over Plexy to see the little girl she knew, Ruby..

“They are doing some kind of test on her, taking her blood or something. I can’t really see.” She tried to get a little higher, but ended up leaning against the door and pushing it open. She screamed as the door swung open and she fell to the floor. The doctors, wearing scrubs and holding needles and tools, jumped in surprise. A pair of scissors fell from one of their hands.

“What are you kids doing sneaking around?” one of the male doctors asked, taking a hold of Plexy’s arm.

“Don’t touch her!” Iso screamed as he launched forward, but he was caught by the second male doctor. His stomach dropped as if he was on a roller coaster. The doctor’s tight grip

around his arm caused him to wince in pain. He looked up to see the female doctor carrying the little girl out of the room. Had the little girl passed out?

Before Iso could react, both the doctors held up a big needle with blue serum in it. He tried to scream as he saw Plexy's face crack and crumble with fear and emotion. The mask of bravery he had worn crumbled too and he let out a terrified cry. Then everything went black.

Iso woke up to bright white lights. He tried to sit up, shaking away the grogginess of sleep and whatever serum they injected him with, but his hands and waist were strapped to a medical bed. Panic rose as he frantically looked around the room, trying to look for clues to where he was or what could help him get out, but there was nothing. Just a blank white room. His gaze stopped as he saw a shadow move outside the door.

"He's awake," someone whispered. The door handle twisted as a petite woman walked into the room, almost blending into the walls because of her pale, ghostlike, nearly transparent skin and snowy white lab coat. The only colorful thing about her was her hands, which were shiny, iron replacements he could never afford. They looked so intricate and delicate, with little red and blue lights along her thumb. "Hi, Iso, my name is Dr. Chip. You are a very valuable thing, Iso. You are different, and human. It's disgusting, but incredibly interesting," Dr. Chip barked.

"That— doesn't really make any sense," Iso replied, blinking back more fuzziness from his vision.

"Let me explain. Humans are weak, feeble, dependent creatures. Powerless against disease and wounds," she scoffed. "After the blast, you see, our society decided to make humans... only better! More advanced. The iron wounds killed many, or left them dying or disabled. Our technology helped save countless lives. But you, you cheated the system. You

healed your wounds naturally, which we've never seen before. That is why you're so valuable to us."

"I— but you ordered all humans to be killed," Iso said, confused. He started to get impatient, wanting to know where Plexy was and if she was ok. He knew if he asked, she wouldn't give him an answer. He'd been treated like this his entire life. Always below someone, being ordered around, or having to submit to someone else.

"You're getting angry, I sense it," she said. In that moment, she leaned a little closer to Iso, causing his bed to shift and creak against her heavy iron hands. He inhaled the scent of lavender, but not soft sweet lavender. It smelled astringent, like soap. He met her eyes and they did something odd, something that made him draw back as far as he could into the firm mattress. They lit up from the inside out, her whole eye turned bright red for a split second.

"What are you?" Iso whispered. To that, she smiled, but it was cold and didn't reach her eyes.

"Evolved, " she whispered, her breath warm against his face. She backed away from him and got up to leave, then stopped.

"Your friend is stronger than you. We're going to need her the most. So be good. I don't want to kill you sooner than I have to." She winked and glided out of the room.

"Wait! Wait! Please, where is she!?" Iso shrieked, but no one answered.

After what seemed like hours, Dr. Chip finally opened the white door, but she wasn't alone this time. She came in with the two male doctors whom Iso and Plexy had seen with the little girl. As Iso looked closer, they both had metal on their necks going lower down their spines, causing them to walk stiffly.

They approached his bed, never breaking eye contact. They walked around the frame and started to push Iso out of the room. Iso was filled with panic and relief at the same time. He was hoping to be going to Plexy's room and not... somewhere else.

They entered the stark white hallway, where the fluorescent lights made Iso's eyes sting. They pushed him past some glass doors, and time almost stopped. The sight in front of him looked like it came out of a horror movie. Hundreds of humans were lined up against those same white walls, but they weren't so white anymore. Cyborgs were doing despicable things to these people, forcing Iso to turn his head and let out a ragged breath he didn't realize he was holding.

These cyborgs were evil. Anger began to swirl inside him like a raging storm. The doctors finally pushed him through two iron doors, and there he saw her. Strapped to a table like a wild animal. He'd never seen Plexy so terrified. His heart yearned to save her from this horror. He wanted to be *her* hero.

"Iso," she whimpered, staring at him with those icy blue eyes.

He wanted to scream. He thrashed around in his own prison of cotton sheets and metal bands, trying to muster up enough strength to somehow break the hold.

The next thing he knew, he was being pushed closer to Plexy. He tried to grab her hand, failing miserably.

"Now, isn't this a lovely reunion!" Dr. Chip said cheerfully. Iso and Plexy growled.

"Why are you doing this?" Iso screeched. Dr. Chip was unfazed by their struggles.

"That was a dumb question. You knew that all humans were supposed to turn themselves in but you chose to stay hidden. These are the consequences," Dr. Chip replied, not taking her eyes off Iso. "The only difference is, you are not a normal, pathetic, helpless little human." She was looking at Plexy now.

The room went silent. Iso whipped his head around to meet Plexy's gaze, but she was staring at the floor. She didn't seem surprised about what Dr. Chip just announced, meaning...

She already knew.

Plexy broke the silence. "You said I was valuable, so obviously you need both of us or you would have killed us earlier."

"Actually," Dr. Chip replied, "We don't need either of you. You aren't valuable to anyone but yourself, and even that is a stretch. I was foolish to think the energy you possess would help the cyborgs, when in reality it will only harm them. You're a weapon, Plexy. A weapon against cyborgs. I cannot have you or any pathetic human taking up space." She lifted her hands and motioned the two doctors to do something. Iso didn't know what until he felt metal hands against both sides of his head, pressing inward.

"Stop!" Plexy screamed as the pressure of the hands against Iso's head became unbearable.

Iso's vision started to blur as his head swam, begging for the pressure to release. He was moments from slipping into darkness, but caught sight of Plexy out of the corner of his eye. The doctor had a strong metal arm around her neck, but then something odd happened. Everything just... stopped. He didn't feel the pressure anymore, but his ears were ringing more than ever.

Then it hit.

A flash of electric blue light engulfed the room, making Iso's arm hair stand up. He was blinded momentarily, but after his vision cleared, they were the only two in the room. Nothing remained of the doctors other than their metal replacements.

Iso stared at Plexy, his eyes full of wonder and questions... and fear.

"What-- who-- how--" He couldn't speak.

Plexy ran up to him. She had somehow managed to free herself from the metal that tied them both to the bed. She worked on getting him free, and once she succeeded, she hugged him.

He could feel her vibrating, sending off an electric pulse. It brought back the memory of her hand vibrating in his apartment that morning. It was calming, instead of scary. He sank into her hug as if he'd been waiting for one for years, because he had been. They stood there for a while, taking in what had just happened and what would happen next.

All he knew was that as safe as they felt right now in each other's arms, they weren't going to be safe forever. They needed a plan.

Iso pulled away and began to say, "What are we going to do?"

"Is that seriously the first question you ask me?" Plexy replied with the giggle he loved.

"Do you just want to talk about yourself?" Iso nudged her arm. "How did you do that electric lightning thingy? And how did everyone else disintegrate and not me?"

"When the star exploded, the metal that shattered was flung all over the city. The heart of the star wasn't made up of iron like everyone thought, but a different metal—it's called novulight. If you were hit by that, you were immediately killed due to its extremely high temperatures and electrical charge. I was hit, but obviously didn't die. I wasn't even hurt, I was just... changed. I started experiencing random outbursts of that blue light whenever I got angry. I learned to control it, considering how aggravating our school teachers are." She laughed. "I've never met anyone else who can do what I can, so I knew it was valuable."

There was a moment of silence between them. Then Plexy spoke again,

"I don't know how the electricity didn't kill you, though. I really don't. Maybe because I, um, like you. A little bit."

“Just a little?” Iso winked. He grabbed her hand and pulled her into him. He wrapped one arm around her shoulder and led her out of the room.

He knew, at that moment, they couldn't stay here, not after this. Just because a few people were killed didn't mean the law was gone. They would be looking for him and Plexy more than ever now.

They walked past the door through which they had seen Ruby, but she was gone. She must have escaped while the doctors were distracted.

“I'm going to call Disc and our friends from school. We need to get out of the city,” Iso said as he opened the door that led outside and stepped into the humid air. He had no idea what time it was. The world all looked the same, but he was different. Everything was going to be different.

They made their way back to his apartment in a rush, collecting the things valuable to him. As Iso was looking around his room, the shiny shard of metal caught his eye again. Slowly, he crossed the room and picked up the shard. It felt heavy to him, bearing the weight of death and his sadness. With one swipe of his thumb against the cool glassy surface, he set it down and walked out of the room, leaving it behind along with everything it stood for. He was done living in fear.

“Ready?” Iso asked heavily.

“Ready.” Plexy met his gaze. She could see the sadness in his eyes as she put her hand against his cheek. She jumped up slightly and kissed his forehead, signaling to him that everything would be okay. “As long as we're together,” she whispered.

He grabbed her hand and squeezed it tight as they crept out of his apartment. They met up with their friends and explained what happened, leaving out the part where Plexy did her decidedly un-human move.

“So, what are we going to do?” Torch asked. He was from their school, but unlike the rest, he was a cyborg. His parents were rich so they fixed him up, giving him a metal arm and left leg.

“We’re going to take Plexy’s car and get out of the city, Iso said quietly as they moved along a dark alleyway, making their way towards the city limits.

“Where do you expect us to go? Everything is destroyed beyond Chicago,” Disc said.

Plexy and Iso didn’t have an answer to that. They honestly didn’t have a plan at all. They arrived at the city limits, where Plexy had hidden an old car in case of emergencies like this. Technology was far more advanced, to the point where they didn’t use cars anymore, but she had found one a year ago and fixed it up. All four of them piled into the small vehicle and shut the doors tight.

Plexy sat there for a moment, taking in the scene of the city one last time. She turned the key, squeezed Iso’s hand, and started driving. There were still a couple of old roads that led out of the city, although none of them had been used in forever.

As they drove in silence away from the city, they started to realize something. Chicago wasn’t the only city still inhabited. They had been wrong about that. Very, very wrong.

The End.