

***Harry[®]
Stier***

The saga of a new generation.

Harry Stier[®]
ONE

The Robocorpio's Attack

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For Perla, for being the love of my life and my constant supporter.

For Nina and Iker, for being the engine that motivates everything

For Mariana and Marily, who are always in my heart.

For my parents Enrique and Lilian, thanks to them everything has been possible.

The Invisible Backpack

Harry Stier walked alone, rushing down the right sidewalk of an empty street. It was about six in the afternoon and the sun was already setting.

The only sound as he walked came from his own footsteps, the muffled sound of his black runners. With every step he took, he felt the cool breeze of the wind on his face and ears, contrasted with the rushed breath that exited through his mouth like white smoke. It was just the month of May, but strangely, the temperature that day was lower than usual.

Stier was just seven years old and, though he did not know nor could even imagine it yet, his destiny was to change the world.

In a hurry to get home, he quickened his pace. Just before turning at the corner where his house was, he found a strange backpack on the ground that made him stop abruptly. It was big and stiff, and its colours were black, metallic gray, and white. He could see that it had several holes and ports to connect objects, or at least that is what he thought. He also noticed there was a transparent bubble on its center. But the oddest thing was that, inside this bubble, there was a scale model of the coolest rocket he had ever seen.

He did not know why, but for as long as he could remember, he had always found rockets interesting. This one was particularly so, as it was quite pretty and amazing.

Standing before the backpack, he looked all around him, thinking that its owner could be nearby and might have forgotten it. Still, he wondered: *Who could have forgotten such an incredible backpack?* He also considered that someone wanted to pull some prank on him, but there was nobody around. Suddenly, something on the backpack caught his attention, so he crouched down to see it up close. Upon doing that, he was so surprised that he took back a few steps back. Right above the bubble and the rocket, in bright-blue, modern font, there was his own name: ***“Harry Stier.”***

In that moment, he grew more suspicious. “Someone is pulling some sort of prank on me,” he reaffirmed out loud to himself.

For an instant, he considered leaving the backpack there and resuming his walk. It was late, anyway, and his parents were surely going to scold him for taking a little longer to get home. However, he was entrapped by curiosity: it was a truly unique backpack and he had never seen something like it before.

I'll pick it up and see what this is all about once and for all, he told himself with his usual determination.

Still glancing behind his back, prepared in case someone wanted to surprise him and popped out from somewhere, he lifted the backpack up to his chest. As soon as he touched it, the backpack extraordinarily lit up, making a soft laser sound. *Phewwwwwm!* A blue light traveled through it, illuminating it, and the small rocket's engine began to release bright blue fire.

Immediately, he heard the deep voice of an adult man. It was friendly, but a bit electronic, as if a sophisticated computer were speaking. “Identity confirmed... Hello, Stier!”

Startled, he opened both hands as he took a step back, dropping the backpack to the ground. But nothing else happened: no one popped out suddenly nor approached his location. The backpack did not say another word, either. It just remained lit up with the bright blue light that activated when he touched it.

Not knowing what was going on, Stier asked, “Who is there?”

“My name is Kimble,” the strange modern backpack answered. “I am your personal assistant. You just do not know me yet. You activated me through touch. It is a pleasure to finally meet you.”

“My assistant?”

“That is right. I am here to help you with whatever you need.”

He was bewildered. At this point, it was obvious that this was not a prank because no one had jumped out from behind a tree, nor come out of some hiding place to ambush him. The street was still completely empty.

He had always loved technology, which is why he was aware of the latest gadgets and devices in the market. But a backpack

that could speak seemed like the strangest thing. Besides, although virtual assistants were common in the year 2025, he had never heard of nor seen one that came inside a backpack, let alone one that would know his name and that could identify him simply through touch.

Stier approached the backpack again and picked it up cautiously and deliberately, as he was still amazed at it.

What should I do? he thought doubtfully, holding it right in front of his face and observing it closely without saying a word.

“You should take me with you,” answered Kimble’s electronic voice.

“What?” he asked in disbelief. “But... how can you know what I’m thinking?”

“I know because your brain emits electric impulses that travel all throughout your body. Your thoughts are simply electric charges that I can interpret when we are close, which happens thanks to the most advanced technology that exists within me, of course. I am here to help you, and we have many things to do, but I will explain everything later. Right now, we should go because your family is waiting for you, and I do not want you to get in trouble.”

Stier was still a bit reluctant to take the backpack home. The idea that this was some prank, or that taking it home would be problematic if it belonged to someone else, persisted in his mind. He never took things that did not belong to him, as his mom had taught him since he was little.

“I know what you are thinking, Stier,” Kimble said, “and I can assure you that you have nothing to worry about. You can take me with you because I do not belong to anyone but you: you are my sole owner. I know everything seems very strange, but I will explain in detail later. Please trust me.”

Stier decided to trust in Kimble and take him home because he was curious to know more about such a cute and technologically advanced gadget, but mostly because he was currently in a hurry to get home and avoid getting scolded.

“Put me on your back, like a normal backpack,” Kimble instructed.

As soon as he put his arms through the shoulder straps, with some electronic mechanism, they automatically adjusted to the size of his back, which was quite comfy and ergonomic. But that was not all: exactly three seconds later, the backpack began to disappear little by little. In an instant, he could not see any light nor anything else. It had become completely invisible. The weirdest thing was that he still felt Kimble's weight on him.

"What was that?" he asked, intrigued, and hefting the backpack on his shoulders to make sure that it was still there.

"Do not worry. My automatic invisibility function just activated. It is a protection mechanism that will now help us ensure that no one sees me at home, and you are not asked about me. It would be rather complicated to try to explain them where I come from and, before anything, you and I should talk about important things."

Stier was quite familiar with technology and electronic artefacts. He knew there were many highly advanced inventions and devices. Nevertheless, he found the backpack's invisibility extraordinary. Although right now he did not understand how it could do that, in the end he did not care much about it anymore. He was a boy with a lot of imagination who always thought that impossible things could happen, and he was sure that this was one of them.

Hence, with the invisible backpack already on, he continued walking home. He was real near now: only a few more steps away.

206 Willows Street

Stier lived in the city of Victoria, in British Columbia, Canada.

It was a beautiful city with a great number of trees of many varieties and lots of bushes with colourful flowers. The place was picturesque and safe, and its inhabitants were quite educated and happy people because the air they breathed there was pure and fresh.

As there were various parks and gardens, one could always see people doing outdoor activities such as walking their pets, playing sports with friends, or resting on the thick green grass. Upon first impression, the city seemed to have been built amidst a great forest.

The houses and buildings had a Victorian style of architecture that was quite beautiful and remarkable. They looked like those in old movies, but nevertheless quite elegant. Moreover, the streets and sidewalks were rather broad and always spotless.

All of this contrasted sharply with its mind-blowing technology, as Victoria was the most modern city in the world, something of which not many people were aware yet. Due to its high quality of life and the progress of that era, all children grew up and developed correctly. They were even highly mature and intelligent despite their young age, almost as if they were a decade older, which undoubtedly surprised a few people.

Harry's house was located at 206 Willows Street, in Fairfield, a suburban neighbourhood. Almost all houses in the suburbs had the same design, but his was different because, right outside of it, at the corner, there was the biggest and lushest tree in all the city. Its species was *Enterolobium cyclocarpum*, better known as elephant-ear tree, and it was so gigantic that all the other trees looked small in comparison.

Stier had always liked that tree because, besides almost always being green and providing plenty of shade, it was the home of a small black squirrel that he had befriended, named Tony, and always fed peanuts or nuts. If Tony was not at his bedroom's window, Stier just had to whistle and, seconds later, the little

squirrel would crawl down the nearest branch and nervously enter the room to eat directly from his hand, while the boy delicately caressed his furry hair with a finger.

Almost sprinting, Stier reached his house. When he rang the bell, the porch instantly lit up. Rose, who was already waiting for him, opened the door. As soon as he came in, he realised it was not as late as he had thought, not because he had looked at his watch, but because his mom had welcomed him joyfully and without a trace of anger. It seemed like neither of his parents had the intention of scolding him this time, as it had happened other times that he had been late. Once, they had even stood outside their house to worriedly wait for him.

“Hi, Harry, I’m glad you’re here!” his mom said, as excited to see her son as always.

“Hey, Mom!” he replied, rushing towards the stairs. She did not get a chance to say another word because, without even having finished his greeting, he was already on his way up.

Quickly, he walked down the narrow hallway and up the fifteen carpeted steps that divided the two floors. The reason for his urgency to reach the privacy of his bedroom was that he did not want anyone to know about the backpack he carried. If someone had asked him about it, he would not have known how to explain it. In fact, he himself was not certain of what was going on. He still could not understand how a backpack left on the street could have his name on it, know him, and especially do those things that, even now, continued to seem unbelievable.

After rushing down the hallway on the upper floor, he reached his bedroom’s door, which had a big, red, hexagonal poster with a white frame. It was quite like a road sign, such as those located on street corners to stop the traffic, but instead of saying STOP, the big white letters read NO TRESPASSING. Harry liked his privacy, and at seven years of age, he considered himself old enough to demand it. He did not want anyone to snoop around his bedroom without his permission.

He turned the doorknob and, as soon as he was inside, he closed the door after him, locking it with a silver bolt so that no one would interrupt him.

Panting due to his agitated walking, he turned on the light and looked at himself in the rectangular, vertical mirror that hung from one of the walls beside his bed. It was incredible, but the backpack behind him was truly invisible: its mechanism did work perfectly. Still amazed and still staring at his reflection, he grabbed the straps to take it off. In that moment, he felt that they automatically loosened, becoming quite easy to remove, after which he blindly put the backpack on his bed.

“I’m going to leave you here for a moment because I have to go downstairs for dinner,” he told Kimble quietly. “I don’t want them to suspect anything, so please stay here and don’t make any noise.”

“Do not worry,” he replied, his voice so low that it was barely audible. “We will talk later.”

A bit calmer now, the boy went back downstairs and crossed the living room until he reached the dining room, where all his family sat at the round, wooden table waiting for him. His family consisted of four members, including him. His dad, Gerard Stier, was a lawyer with a big mustache who always wore suits and who truly loved law, order, and equality. At forty-two years of age, he almost never lost a case, and he was normally busy solving some legal issue at the National Justice Courts. Rose Stier, Harry’s mom, was a housewife who was two years younger than Gerard, as well as a fantastic, affectionate, and intelligent woman who was always looking out for her children and her family with a big smile on her face. Finally, there was his sister, Mary Anne Stier. She was older than him, as she was twelve years old, and she liked wearing checkered overalls. She was a kind, charming girl with many friends. She was always caring for others and that is why she was someone trustworthy. The oddest thing about her was her strange ability to perceive people’s souls: she almost always knew with certainty whether they were good or not.

“Hi, Harry,” his dad greeted as soon as the boy walked in. “Where were you?”

“Hey, Dad! I was at the library doing research on a new programming language that was just released.”

“Oh... that sounds interesting.”

“Yeah, I know that it’s going to be the new coding standard, so it will be used a lot when someone wants to create a videogame, an app, or anything on the computer.”

Gerard was not surprised at all with that answer. He knew that his young son always wanted to learn all he could about computers, apps, or technology, and did not miss any chance to do so. For a long time now, he had been aware that Harry was a genius. When the boy was four years old, Gerard lent him his old work computer and Harry developed his first algorithm, which made the machine work thrice as fast as usual, an achievement that took him only a few minutes. Gerard thought that it was as if his son knew the language of machines and somehow could speak with them, although he constantly told himself that was absurd.

“You’re getting the results of your admission exam tomorrow, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I have to go get them early tomorrow. I hope they’ve admitted me... Rosemary-Robotics is a very difficult school.”

“Of course they have. You are very intelligent. There won’t be a problem.”

“Thanks. If they admit me and I get the scholarship, my classes will start in just a few more days.”

“Your meatballs with rice are ready,” his mom interrupted, placing the food on the table. “Wash your hands and sit down to eat.”

Stier complied and then hurriedly ate one of his favourite dishes. He barely enjoyed it because he had to return to his bedroom immediately to talk to Kimble. He could not wait to know how or why he knew his name, as well as how his technology worked. Besides, he was highly intrigued by the conversation that Kimble said they would have.

“You’re acting very weird today, Harry,” Mary Anne told him, concerned about his evident absent-mindedness. “Has something happened to you?”

“Huh? No, nothing, it’s all fine,” he answered, trying to conceal his nervousness as much as possible.

Six minutes later, he had finished his dinner, taken his dishes to the sink, and thanked for the food. At last, he was free to go see Kimble.

“I have to keep studying,” he told his parents as an excuse before rushing back upstairs, while the others remained in their seats, their food still unfinished.

When Stier stealthily entered his bedroom, he locked his door again.

The Mission

“Hello, Stier,” Kimble murmured, still invisible.

“I have a lot of questions for you,” the boy said hastily.

“I know. I shall tell you all I can,” the backpack replied, and then deactivated his protection mechanism to instantly reappear on the bed.

Now that Stier could look at the backpack closely, no longer worried that someone would ambush him, he was amazed. The device’s beauty and quality were extraordinary, and its technology was indeed really unique, incomparable to anything he had seen before. Also, in that moment, he could calmly appreciate that the red and yellow flames coming out of the rocket in the bubble were moving slightly, as if they were a strange projection or special-effects animation. It was quite spectacular.

“As you know, my name is Kimble. I am a highly advanced Artificial Intelligence device. Because of my several integrated mechanisms and systems, I can perfectly hear, speak, and see. I was sent as your assistant to help you fulfill the mission assigned to you. Only you can activate me and give me orders, and I shall do everything you request. As you also already know, when you touch me or I am near you, I can read your mind. Besides, I possess various defense mechanisms, such as the invisibility that you have witnessed.”

“Who sent you? Where do you come from? What is that mission I’ve been assigned? And why was it assigned to me?” All those questions rushed out the boy’s mouth while many others accumulated in his mind. There was so much he did not understand and urgently needed to know.

Still speaking quietly so that no one would hear, Kimble began to explain that he had been sent by a man named Alext.

“Alext is a computer specialist from the future, who is an expert in technology and Artificial Intelligence systems. He is my creator. In our future, a tyrant who went by the name of Dahn subdued humankind. He controlled the entire planet through the power of technology, the internet, money, and an army of

extremely cruel and capable virtual followers called Kentaurs. The saddest thing is that many people suffered because of this.”

Kimble also explained that Alext was the leader of a group of rebels known as the Legion, who rose and fought ferociously against Dahn and the Kentaurs. However, they could not stop them: in the future, Dahn achieved his goal, the Legion was destroyed, and Alext was exiled and long forgotten. The only alternative that he had had in that moment of desperation was sending Kimble to the past to try to stop Dahn before he appeared in this timeline.

“Are you from the future?” the boy asked in surprise, although that perfectly explained why Kimble’s technology was so advanced and amazing.

“That is right. I am from eighteen years into the future, the year 2043.”

Kimble added that, precisely for such reason, there currently was no device like him, and that Stier’s assigned mission was finding and stopping Dahn to keep him from controlling the world and subduing humankind. Stier had to save everyone because, otherwise, people would suffer terribly.

“I am sorry,” Kimble said, his voice laced with nostalgia and sorrow. “I know that this is a lot of information to process. I am also sorry that such a difficult task has been assigned to you.”

“And why does it have to be me?” Stier asked confusedly.

“Because you’re special,” he answered with excitement. “You have been gifted with great intelligence, and you have a huge ability with technology, machines, and the internet, which will be a key factor for the struggle in the future in which information will be power and money. But despite all this, what really matters, and what makes you different from others, is your sense of justice, your kindness, your imagination, and your tenacity... And precisely with those qualities, you will be able to defeat Dahn and save people from the terrible fate that awaits.”

Stier did not feel special at all. It was true that he found things such as technology easy, but that was all, and he thought that it was just because he liked it. He did not feel prepared for the big dangerous task that Kimble had said he would have to fulfill.

Regarding his other qualities, he considered them to be common in other people, so he did not get why he had to be the one to confront Dahn.

“And what if I don’t want to do it?” he exclaimed in desperation, thinking that picking up this strange backpack on the street may have been a mistake. “I’m just a boy, it’s too much for me. I don’t want that responsibility, I’m not prepared. Someone else should do it.”

“I was sent eighteen years into the past precisely to prepare you,” Kimble answered deliberately, trying to calm him down. “If you focus and work hard, the knowledge and the ability with technology that you currently have shall increase exponentially, thus becoming the tools that shall allow you to fulfill your mission. It shall not be easy, but you can do it. Dahn does not exist yet, but we have to start preparing and working hard to be ready when the time to fight him arrives.”

“I don’t know if there will be enough time to prepare for something like that,” he replied, uneasy because he had a feeling that, despite having the knowledge and the ability, he would surely have to face gigantic obstacles.

Kimble spoke with complete confidence. “Of course yes... We have time and everything shall be okay. But there is one more thing... It is absolutely essential that your family knows nothing about this. You must keep it a secret, otherwise you would put us at great risk. That is why you should act normal and keep doing your everyday tasks and chores until the time to reveal everything comes.”

Suddenly, there was a knock on his door.

“Who are you talking to?” his sister asked quietly from outside. “Can I come in?”

Kimble instantly went silent and became invisible again. Then, Stier unlocked and opened the door.

“Hey, I was just thinking out loud,” he told her, feigning a carefree tone once more.

“Are you okay? You seem troubled.”

“Yeah, thanks, it’s all good. I’m thinking about... the admission exam. I hope I did well and got into Rosemary-Robotics.”

“Harry, an exam is not something that should worry you,” his sister replied with a warm smile as she caressed his hair, as if she knew that something else was bothering him and that a bit of comfort would make him feel better. “I’m sure you’ll do great. You’re very capable, anyway.”

“Thanks,” he answered, looking at her with love and tenderness. She always supported him in everything.

Immediately after that, Mary Anne left and went to sleep in her own bedroom. Despite how worried he was about his mission, he started to feel excited and glad he had Kimble. He wanted to keep talking with him to ask him about technology and the future, and to learn as much as he could. But it was quite late, and he had to wake up early to go to the school and get his results, so he decided that the best was to get ready for bed and to continue their conversation the next day, when no one could hear them.

“It’s late, Kimble, and I have a lot to think about,” he yawned, placing the backpack on a shelf in his closet. “It’s better if we keep talking tomorrow when we’re alone.”

“Sure, we shall continue tomorrow.”

Stier put on soft cotton pajamas, jumped onto his bed, covered himself with the fluffy plush blankets, and turned off the light to sleep.

“See you tomorrow, Kimble, sleep well,” he whispered before immediately falling asleep.

“See you tomorrow,” he replied, though Stier could not hear him anymore. “Rest because big adventures await.”

The Wormhole

At six AM sharp, the alarm rang with the same *beep beep beep* as always. Stier woke up instantly. It had never been difficult to get up early, even when he did not have to go to school, but that day it was even easier, both because he would see Kimble again and because he was thrilled to obtain the results of his exam.

He got dressed and hastily fixed his short black hair. In case he had been accepted into Rosemary-Robotics, he would start in the first grade and, fortunately, the school did not demand that students wear uniform: everyone could dress however they wanted. Nonetheless, he almost always preferred to wear the same outfit: a black polo shirt, blue jeans, and black runners with white soles. Sometimes, when it was cold, he would wear a dark gray hoodie. He noticed that his wearing the same outfit tended to weird people out, but he did not care. He liked having a lot of equal shirts, and it made his morning routine much simpler.

However, what caught people's attention the most was that Stier's left eye was brown, while the other was blue. He had had heterochromia since birth, and that was why, when he was younger, he disliked looking at himself in the mirror. His mom had always told him that it was something that made him unique. At this point, he had accepted himself as he was, and he tried not to give his condition much importance.

That day, he had considered taking only an old tablet, a notebook, and a pen to school, just in case. But, because of Kimble's appearance the day before, at the last moment he decided to take the backpack, too. That way, he could talk to Kimble on the way to and from the school. Of course, he would take him with his defense mechanism activated: he did not want anyone to know of the backpack's existence.

Rosemary-Robotics was adjacent to the port and located near the ferry in James Bay, one of the most beautiful, iconic, and exclusive neighbourhoods of the city. Stier had already visited the school during his admission process, including the time when he did his exam, so he knew that going by foot from his house would take about twenty-five minutes. Although his parents had told

him to use the modern and autonomous public transport, he preferred walking because he could use that time to order his thoughts, generate new ideas, or simply admire the city's beautiful landscapes.

Once dressed, he went down to the dining room, where he had a steaming ham-and-melted-cheese omelet for breakfast, along with an extra-crispy toast and a glass of cold milk. When he finished, he thanked his mom and went back upstairs to brush his teeth before leaving for the school.

Since it was early and there were not many pedestrians on the street, Stier could talk to Kimble without seeming suspicious. Still, he cautiously decided that it would be better to wear his wireless earphones. That way, if someone saw him speaking to himself, they would think that he was just using his hands-free cellphone.

"How are you today?" Kimble asked.

"I'm fine, thanks," he answered, walking under the shade of the trees on a broad sidewalk that led to Rosemary-Robotics. "I'm still trying to understand what happened yesterday, though."

"Do not worry. In a short while, things shall become clearer. You shall see that Alext had a reason for having chosen you for this task. As for me, I assure you that I shall help you in everything I can."

"Thanks... How did Alext send you from the future?"

"You see, in the year 2043, Alext could create a time machine using the advanced technology and his great intelligence. It is a highly complex and unique device which, through sophisticated Artificial Intelligence, reached a greater potential with recently discovered particles of atomic energy. This allowed it to bend time-space, thus creating an Einstein-Rosen bridge from the future to the past."

"Oh! Like a wormhole?"

"Indeed! However, Alext could use the time machine only once because, when he sent me here, the energy created a big electromagnetic field, and then an explosion destroyed the machine, which probably damaged him a little."

"But is he okay?" he questioned worriedly.

“Most likely he is... I believe his injuries were not serious, although I am not entirely certain because, right in that moment, I lost all contact with him and that reality, and I got here, to the year 2025, right when you found me on the sidewalk. Alext knew about the risk he was taking by sending me to you, but he still chose to do it, as you are the best chance that we have to stop Dahn, and I am the most suitable tool to help you reach success.”

“Wow, I hope he’s alright... But why didn’t he time-travel to come here himself, instead of sending you?”

“Because the time machine cannot work with living organisms. Cells do not resist time-travel, they suffer big damage that degrades them, which concludes with an imminent disintegration. Since I am a machine, I could do it without sustaining any failure or flaw.”

Stier sighed as he briefly went through all that Kimble had told him, also remembering what he had said the day before, especially the part about the immense danger in which people were. He immediately thought about his family and how they might also be at risk of suffering because of Dahn. That was what worried him the most.

After a couple minutes of silence, he exclaimed, “Alright, Kimble. I don’t want anyone—let alone my family, those I love most in the world—to suffer in any way. I’ll do all you’ve asked for. I promise I’ll do whatever I can do to stop Dahn and the Kentaurians,” he added, completely solemn and committed. “So, tell me: what do we do now?”

“Right now, the first step is contacting Alext.”

Dumbfounded, he echoed, “Contacting him? I thought you would guide the mission to stop Dahn. How are we going to talk to Alext if he’s in the future?”

“Well, I have some answers, but the plan and the strategy to carry it out depend on Alext, that is why we need to talk to him. Furthermore, I want to make sure nothing happened to him in the explosion... Fortunately, talking to someone from the future is easier than materially sending them from one temporal dimension to another. We shall do it by using some special glasses, similar to the virtual reality ones, that shall let us talk to him, even

being eighteen years apart. The problem is that these glasses were connected to me, but while time-traveling, they detached and fell into a different time-space from the one for which they were destined. Hence, we must recover them. According to my calculations, they shall arrive at the Beehive in approximately ten days.”

Stier had never heard of that place. “Beehive? What’s that?”

“It is an industrial and technological zone that was abandoned in the year 2000. It is in Sidney, just north of here. It is known as the Beehive because it was built with hexagonal shapes. It was a place of great inventions and technological advances for its time, and right there, we shall find the glasses we need.”

As he walked, Stier had not checked his phone at all, nor paid much attention to his surroundings. He had been focused on his conversation with Kimble, listening closely to every word he said. Thus, he was surprised the moment he saw the big gardens of the school and, over the grass, some shinny golden techno letters that read *Rosemary-Robotics*. The walk was over.

Rosemary-Robotics

Rosemary-Robotics was the best technology school in the world. It offered primary and secondary education, and its name was inspired on one of the most prominent women in science and technology, Doctor Joan Katherine Rosemary, who had been a pioneer in the field of Robotics.

Just like the surrounding buildings, the school had a classical Victorian style, but it was much bigger and imposing than any other construction. Since the first time he saw it, Stier thought it looked like a majestic, fancy castle taken from a fairytale. The most interesting thing was that there were all kinds of amazing, ultra-modern technological devices inside.

In the hallways and everywhere in the school, one could see sophisticated machines of all shapes and sizes, such as robotic insects, quadcopters, androids, mechatronic dinosaurs, autonomous vehicles, Artificial Intelligence pets, and any other thing that the students thought of inventing with the help of their teachers. Besides, there were robots who worked within the school itself: the Moppers, who oversaw the cleaning of the classrooms and the hallways; the Veggiebots, who planted and harvested the supplies for the cafeteria; the Soilbots, who watered and trimmed the gardens to keep them in a permanent perfect condition, as well as many others.

In Rosemary-Robotics, technology reached the furthest corners. Of course, its decoration was no exception to that. Upon the walls and the yards, there were holographic three-dimensional video-projections of outstanding characters from the world of computers and science. Such projections consisted of either their novel inventions or their famous quotes.

All in all, there was a particular contrast between the old-classical and the modern styles, which Stier loved ever since he found out about the school's existence. That moment was also when he decided he wanted to study there, as he was convinced that there was no better place to learn about his favourite subjects. Living in the same city as this institution, he felt like the luckiest person alive.

Reasonably, Rosemary-Robotics had a highly demanding academic level: it was a difficult school, and the admission exams were challenging.

The headmaster had a PhD in Applied Robotics, and his name was Morgan Frall. He was one of the people with the most knowledge on robots and Artificial Intelligence. Known as Doctor Morgan by everyone, he was a tall, slender, African American engineer who always wore fancy raincoats and whose hair was short, curly, and completely white due to his old age. He was a charming, talkative man who saw the people's potential and always sought to motivate them to reach it in any way they could. Stier had met him a few days back, during the interview he had taken for the admission process. What stood out the most for him was the headmaster's fantastic, strong, and clear voice, like that of a radio host.

Upon arriving, Stier walked down the cobble stone road that divided the spacious outdoor gardens. He climbed up the white-stone steps of the main entrance and immediately went straight towards the headmaster's office, as he would be the one to give him his results. After a few minutes of waiting, Doctor Morgan came out of his office, and asked him to come in and take a seat.

"Hello, Mr. Stier, how are you today?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Excellent... First of all, allow me to congratulate you, because you have obtained one of the highest scores in the exam and the interview. You also finished the rest of the admission process successfully. From this moment on, you are already considered a student of our prestigious institution. Remember that this is one of the best schools, so you must do your best effort. But I know you will be a great student. I wish you the best of luck."

"Thanks so much!" Harry was grinning from ear to ear, but his happiness was briefly interrupted by the memory of a pending subject of huge importance. "Doctor Morgan, excuse me... I wanted to ask about the scholarship. Did I get it?"

"Oh... you're right, I forgot ... Yes, you did. Thanks to your evaluation and your history, you have earned that as well. I know

that having the scholarship is important for you and your family, and for us it is essential to have you as a student, so that is not going to be a problem. We will be quite glad to see you begin the school year next week.”

Stier was ecstatic, firstly because he had passed the admission process with success, and secondly because he had earned the scholarship that he needed to minimize the high cost of the school fees, which his family would not have been able to pay otherwise. They were middle-classed people who had a good life but lacked any big luxuries. An expensive private school like this would have been impossible to afford.

After the good news, Harry exited Rosemary-Robotics, pulled out his cellphone, and took a selfie with the school and its gardens in the background. He wanted to have a memento of the pleasant moment, which he would later share on social media. Then, he went the same way back home, but this time he was so deep in thought that he practically did not speak to Kimble. Some minutes later, he reached his destination.

“What happened? How did it go, Harry?” his mom asked upon seeing him. She was quite elated. His dad was standing behind her, also anxious to know the outcome.

“Fantastic!” the boy answered enthusiastically, offering a broad smile. “I’ve been admitted, and I’ve earned the scholarship, so my dream of going to Rosemary-Robotics is coming true.”

Rose and Gerard hugged him tightly, feeling proud and happy to see that, despite his young age, their son could start fulfilling his goals. They had always supported him, and they were aware of his fervent desire to study in that prestigious institution.

“This calls for a celebration,” his dad decided. “How about we all go eat pizza at that place you like so much?”

“Awesome!” Stier said with even more joy, already tasting the delicious pepperoni pizza that he meant to order.

Hannah and Erin

As Stier was dying to start attending his new school, the next week passed quite slowly. He spent those days lying on his bed, mechanically bouncing a small rubber ball against his bedroom's wall. He was trying to distract himself in hopes time would pass faster.

However, he also spent that time talking with Kimble, who explained how his technology worked and how Alext had created him. They also talked about the future world and the way in which, in a short time, Dahn had become so powerful that the Legion's members had failed to defeat him.

"Stier, according to my programming, there are certain things that I can tell you and others I cannot," he said unhappily. "It is necessary that you understand that it is for your own safety, as well as the mission's. With my being here, in this time, we are creating important alterations to your reality, and the least thing we want is to make negative changes instead of positive ones. That is precisely the reason why I am limited, and I cannot tell you about your personal future. If I were to do it, we would put the mission to stop Dahn and save humankind at risk."

"I understand that well, Kimble. I'm not sure I want to know things about my future, anyways. That's why I haven't asked anything about it."

"That is very wise of you," he acknowledged, a bit surprised, "especially considering your young age... With that in mind, I would like to tell you that there are two girls in the future that became fundamental members of the Legion. It is essential that you find them because they shall help you overcome the upcoming obstacles. Just like you, they study at Rosemary-Robotics, and you must find them the first day and tell them about me and everything that has happened. Their names are Hannah Miller and Erin Bubleby."

The boy repeated the names out loud to remember them. "Okay... Are you sure I must tell them everything?"

"Yes, a hundred percent sure."

"Alright, Kimble, I'll find them as soon as I can."

A couple more days passed until it was finally Monday, the first day of school. Stier left his house early and walked to school with Kimble on his back. A few minutes before eight, they arrived in Rosemary-Robotics. This time, as it was the beginning of the term, a crowd of students and professors came from all over. Since he could not keep talking with Kimble without being discovered, they remained silent as Stier climbed the entrance steps.

The classes were diverse and divided according to each grade. Stier's classes were Fundamentals of Robotics, Artificial Intelligence Principles, App Development, Logic and Algorithms, and Guidelines for Encrypting and Microcontrollers. Although the subjects were quite technical, the school's institutional philosophy—which Doctor Morgan promoted, and to which all teachers adhered—was that classes had to be as practical as possible. For this reason, there were a lot of workshops, labs, and spaces where students could apply theoretical knowledge, so they were always developing or fabricating devices which they programmed to use or improve them.

In fact, every year, there was one of the events to which the student community looked forward the most: the Mechatronic Destruction Championship. Some students participated in this event to create fantastic combat robots, which fought to destroy each other in a final match. The winning robot's team obtained great prestige both inside and outside the school, as well as extra points to get better grades and amazing prizes. Therefore, it was a highly anticipated occurrence which, in one way or the other, involved everyone in school.

Stier hurried through the hallways towards the smart lockers. Once there, he stood before his, and the facial recognition scanner did its job perfectly: with a short beep, the door automatically unlocked and opened. Little by little, the noises in the halls quieted down and, when there was no one around anymore, he took Kimble off his back and put it in his locker with the backpack's invisibility mechanism still active. Checking his schedule for the day, he saw his classes that day were Artificial

Intelligence Principles and Fundamentals of Robotics, so he took the necessary books, which were brand new.

“I need you to stay here, Kimble,” he murmured.

“Of course, I shall be here.”

Stier closed the locker and slid its bolt, locking it. Then, he turned around and raced to the second floor in search of his classroom. He walked down the long hallway, dodging a couple of Moppers that made him stumble and almost fall as they rushed out of other classrooms. He got to the door of room 1F five minutes before the class began.

As soon as he walked in, Stier noticed that the classrooms were also full of devices and the latest technology. The first thing he observed were the students’ desks: structures made of thin aluminum and polished steel that had an elegant board of thin, black crystal which gleamed, as if it were obsidian. However, he instantly noticed that they were not ordinary crystal desks, but rather, huge tablets which the students could use to see their lesson’s information and share it with each other or with their teachers. He also realised that, on the front side, the tablets had printers, in case the students needed a physical document, and on the right side, they had holographic projectors, so that they could model their designs and creations in 3D for everyone to see them. The professors’ desks looked like those of the students, but bigger and with a few other additional accessories.

Likewise, he spotted a special coating on the walls, on which teachers could transmit and project photos, videos, and anything they would like to show the students. Of course, there were also 3D printers and many other modern devices that included several applications, with which they could do their homework, collaborations, or presentations to later share amongst them, and which, as Stier knew, had been designed precisely by the students themselves.

When he found a seat at the back and right side, the classroom was still rather empty. A moment later, the prettiest girl he had ever seen came to sit beside him. She was blonde, she had freckles on her pale, beautiful skin, and she wore a strange outfit: pink

sport pants with white stripes, and a beige knit sweater with a turtleneck.

“Hi, what’s your name?” she asked, adjusting her black-framed glasses.

Dumbfounded for a moment, he answered, “Hey, my name’s Harry Stier... but everyone calls me Stier. What about you?”

Smiling charismatically, she introduced herself. “Nice to meet you. I’m Erin Bublely.”

At once, he remembered what Kimble had told him a few days back. He thought that it was the weirdest coincidence to have one of those two future Legion members sit right beside him, precisely on the first day of school.

But he was even more surprised when a girl of Latino descent, who wore her brown hair in a ponytail, put her backpack on the chair in front of him and greeted them. “Hi, my name is Hannah Miller. And you?”

“He-hey...” Stier was astonished. He knew he would find them both at Rosemary-Robotics, but it was quite strange that, out of everyone else in school, they would be the first friends he would make. He also had not expected them to be in his classroom, nor to sit right next to him.

“I’m Erin Bublely, and he’s Harry Stier.”

“It’s great to meet you,” Hannah replied with a sincere smile that gave away her cheerful personality. She was also pretty, and she wore skinny jeans, a white t-shirt, and runners. The most striking thing about her were her eyes: they were huge, expressive, green, and almond-shaped.

Shen then told them that she came from California, and that, as a child, she had suffered an accident in which she had partially lost her right leg, so now she wore a prosthesis that started at her knee. Nevertheless, with the passing of time, she had managed to adapt so well that she occasionally skated and she could even run without any problem. That accident was precisely the reason why she had decided to study Robotics: she wanted to create a better leg prosthesis and to help people that were in a similar situation.

Faced with Hannah's sudden confidence in telling them about her accident, Stier decided to explain the odd condition that caused him to have one brown eye and one blue eye.

"Well, I think it suits you well," Hannah commented.

The three of them continued talking friendlyly about other matters. However, at one point, Stier noticed a strange sensation had unexpectedly invaded him: he felt as if he had known Hannah and Erin all his life and, without knowing why, he was sure that he could trust them both completely. As he tried to rationalize this feeling, he realised it lacked logic and made no sense at all. Something like this had never happened to him before, but this is what his heart was saying. Talking and laughing together, the chemistry they had was undeniable.

When he remembered that Kimble already knew both girls, for a second, Stier was curious to find out about the future. He wondered what other information the backpack had. He certainly told Stier that it was better not to know, and that his programming kept him from sharing anything more, so he cut his curiosity short.

After talking for five minutes, the three children became good friends. He had the task of telling them about Kimble, his mission, and everything else, and that was exactly what he planned on doing. But when he was about to start his story, a strong voice abruptly interrupted the conversation.

"Good morning, please take your seats." A large, visibly muscular man with a peculiar accent had just walked into the classroom. "I'm Professor Arnold Scharts and I'll teach you Fundamentals of Robotics. So, without further ado, please open your book on page thirty-seven... We'll start with the different types of articulations that a robot can have, and the functionality of each one."

Professor Scarts had been born in Austria. Due to his size and strength, he commanded respect just by looking at him. He was a prestigious researcher and a writer of several books about robots and advanced machines, who had been a bodybuilding multi-champion in the past. His class would soon become Stier's favourite one, but that exact day, he was unable to focus or even

listen to the professor. He just wanted the class to end as soon as possible so that he could tell his new friends everything. For this reason, the next two hours felt like an eternity during which his mind wandered, imagining what Alext would be like, and trying to decide the next steps to follow to stop Dahn.

When the class finally ended, Stier, Hannah, and Erin hurried to one of the big indoor gardens, where they sat on a bench under the shade of a leafy tree. It was then that he could tell them, in full detail, everything that had happened the previous days, just as Kimble had instructed. At first, the girls did not believe him and thought he either was joking or imagining it all.

“Time machines don’t exist in real life, only in movies,” Hannah said, narrowing her eyes and shaking her head with clear rejection.

“A virtual assistant in a backpack can be possible,” Erin commented with the same reluctance, “but one that recognises you just by touching it isn’t. I have never seen such thing.”

“Well, aren’t you skeptical,” replied Stier, a bit annoyed, even though he knew that, if he someone told him this story, he would not believe it, either. “You can trust me. I’d never lie to you. Wait here, I’ll bring Kimble so that you can see him with your own eyes.”

He quickly headed for the lockers. When he came back, he was carrying Kimble on his chest with the invisibility mechanism activated so that no one saw him.

“What do you think? Amazing, eh?” he joked as he gestured up and down his torso, knowing perfectly well that his friends could not see the backpack.

“I don’t see anything.”

“Are you kidding?”

Stier laughed and, sitting between them, said, “Of course not. I’d already told you that, for security, he has an invisibility mechanism. Kimble, please, would you be so kind to say hi to my friends?”

“Hello, Hannah and Erin,” exclaimed the deep semi-robotic voice. “It is a true pleasure to meet you in this timeline. My name is Kimble. Stier, if you allow me, I think this is an adequate

moment to deactivate my protection mechanism so that your friends can see me.”

He turned his head both ways, confirmed nobody was around at that moment, and happily complied. “Of course, Kimble, go ahead.”

The girls were quite amused with the backpack’s robotic voice, but when they could see it at last, their amusement turned into surprise and both their jaws immediately dropped.

Erin was the first one to speak. “Woow! That’s so cool!” she exclaimed. “Kimble, without a doubt, you’re an amazing device. I have never seen something similar before, and that rocket of yours is beautiful, though I think the best thing is that you can become invisible.”

“Thanks so much, Erin, that’s very kind of you.”

“It’s truly awesome!” Hannah said. “So, everything you’ve told us is true: the time machine, Alext and his fight against Dahn, and also the thing about the mission you’ve been assigned.”

“It is,” Stier confirmed. “At the beginning I couldn’t believe it, either, but it is all true... And now that you know, I want to ask you both for help because I can’t do this without you.”

“Of course, we’ll help,” Hannah replied convinced, as she tenderly put her hand on his shoulder as a sign of support. “You can count on us. What must we do?”

“First we need to go to the Beehive to talk with Alext. That’s where we’ll find the glasses for that.”

The Bus

That next Saturday, a few minutes before ten in the morning, Stier, Hannah, and Erin met at the bus stop in front of their school. Even though they did not have to attend classes that day, they had decided on that meeting point to go to the Beehive together.

They got on the white sophisticated bus with the license plate XRV-745. As all public transport in the city, the vehicle was controlled by a Driverbot, a kind robotic driver whose metallic body had a black suit with a white shirt and a tie painted on it. It also wore a stylish retro cap with a small visor and copper clasps on each side. They took the route that departed at 10:05 AM, which would take them to their destination in about an hour. Fortunately, since it was the weekend, the bus was almost empty. After the Driverbot politely greeted them and they climbed inside, the three friends sat at the back, where they could talk freely during the whole trip without anyone listening.

“Kimble, please tell us, what is Alext like?” Hannah asked curiously.

“Of course... Alext is one of the most intelligent people in the world. He has specialized knowledge on technology fields such as Robotics, app development, and computer programs. He easily masters anything that is software or hardware, including things related to Artificial Intelligence. He created several highly advanced devices, among which I include myself, as he created me. His intelligence and skill, along with his huge personality, sense of justice, and strength, made him the only person truly capable of facing Dahn. At first, Alext did not want to lead the Legion, but he had to fight to defend his family and survive. After he won some battles, people gradually began follow him, recognising him as the leader they needed to confront the tyrant, and they asked him to lead the rebellion. He accepted the enormous responsibility only because he did not want people to suffer at the hands of Dahn and his Kentaurs. Although it was a long, draining fight, it got the Legion closer to victory. However,

seeing his movement in danger, Dahn desperately attempted to stop Alext by setting a trap to annihilate him.”

Kimble was quiet as he remembered the painful situation. After a short pause, he continued with an evidently rueful tone. “Though Alext barely made it, Dahn unfortunately eliminated his family... It was the most terrible and bitter moment for him, and he could not recover nor be the same person after that. Feeling guilty for his family’s passing, he left the Legion, and without a leader, the opposition was soon defeated by Dahn’s powerful Kentaur army. Devastated by his loss and with no hope for the future, Alext sent me here to the year 2025, eighteen years back, to do whatever it takes to keep the terrible world dictator from originating.”

“But stopping Dahn in this timeline won’t save Alext’s family,” Erin reflected. “Timelines don’t work like that. Isn’t that true, Kimble?”

“You are correct... By using the time machine to send me here, we created a different timeline. The time passing here and now is our present. In his temporal dimension, it is Alext’s present too, maybe even his future, but not his past. Sending me here cannot change his past, he cannot do anything to avoid what happened to his family. The only thing he wants is to help you in this timeline, so that what happened in his dimension does not happen in yours, and Dahn does not appear, control everything, destroy the civilization, and hurt many people.”

“Poor Alext,” Hannah said, her voice laced with sadness. “He must be suffering a lot.”

“Yes, and so are many others,” Kimble replied. “Dahn is a cruel individual who has a matchless obsession with gaining power, no matter what or who gets in his way.”

“Tell us more about Dahn,” Stier requested. A knot in his throat that had formed as he heard about the dreadful situation Alext had gone through. “We need to know what we’re up against.”

“Of course... He is as intelligent as Alext, he masters everything related to technology. But unlike him, since he was a child, Dahn always had an evident tendency towards evil: his

focus was dark and negative. Even before attending one of the best technology schools, he had already created devices to hurt people. At first, they were harmless, but as he grew up, he became smarter, crueler, and much more perverse. When he was finally old enough to go to school, he found himself surrounded by people, and with his charisma, he started gaining supporters: classmates and friends who thought of themselves as superior to other people and who called themselves Kentaur's. Professors were rather considerate with Dahn because of his great intellectual capacity and his age, even though a few of them already noticed signs of his bad intentions. Some years later, he became a very skillful hacker, and he managed to penetrate sophisticated bank security systems, anonymously stealing big amounts of money. From that moment on, he had the necessary resources to obtain power and reach his objectives. As all societies, ours had opposing ideologies, and Dahn took plenty advantage of this, and he started gaining even more followers who also sought power by any means. With his group of Kentaur's, he soon adopted a political military focus that secured his army and his relations with the high spheres of power. His influence spread throughout the planet, crushing anyone who stood against him."

"Wait, wait," Erin interrupted, a bad feeling in her gut. "What school did he go to?"

"Rosemary-Robotics... The same school you three attend."

"No way!" Stier exclaimed in disbelief.

With her usual mental agility, Hannah questioned, "How old is Dahn right now? Is it possible he's already a student?"

"Yes, Hannah, I am certain that he is currently a Rosemary-Robotics student. I do not know his exact age, but in the future that I come from, he must be around twenty-five or twenty-eight. Subtracting the eighteen years of my time travel, he must be between seven and ten years old right now."

"Does that mean he could even be our classmate?" the girl added.

"That's right."

"But I haven't heard of anyone in our class named Dahn."

After sorting through his memories, Stier agreed. “Me neither.”

“Same here,” Erin said.

“He may be in a different class or grade.”

“We do not know that,” Kimble chimed in. “Dahn is a pseudonym he chose for himself when he became a hacker, for protection and for keeping others from discovering him. He managed to eliminate any trace of his real name and the group in which he was, and that is precisely why I do not know that... In this moment, he could be anyone who is between the ages I have just told you.”

The children remained silent, perplexed by the new information that Kimble had shared. They would have never thought that the most terrible person in the world could be so close to them, go to their school, and perhaps even take the same classes. They thought hard about who Dahn, the dictator that would destroy the world, could be. Although they already had many theories and ideas of his identity, they were unable to reach a definite conclusion.

The Beehive

As minutes passed, they took notice of the landscape through the wide windows of the bus. There were not houses full of trees and colourful flowers anymore, nor people walking on the streets with their pets. Now they could only see broad concrete roads, industrial buildings, and big factories of various shades of gray, all of them enclosed in wire fences and bars of chipped paint. The traffic had become scarce, and it was easy to perceive that the place was almost abandoned. After some more minutes, they reached the last stop. The bus screeched to a halt, and they got off, arriving in a practically deserted zone.

A few meters away, at the end of a long metal fence, there was an immense sliding gate, above which there was a curved, rusty sign that read: *The Beehive - Welcome - We Develop Innovative Technology*. At the back, beyond a gigantic, paved courtyard, they saw several hexagonal buildings that were quite tall, just as Kimble had mentioned a few days before.

They heard the door of the bus close behind them. When they turned around, they watched the Driverbot's arms slowly turn the huge steering wheel, maneuvering the vehicle for a U-turn and going back the way it came.

"What do we do now, Kimble?" Stier asked, looking up at the prominent buildings beyond the bars, while the bus unhurriedly drove away.

"According to the location registered on my map and to what my GPS indicates, we must enter and advance southeastward for approximately a hundred and fifty-eight meters. That is where the building of Innovation and Design is. On its ninth floor, we shall find the glasses we need."

"But everything's closed, how will we get in?" Erin asked.

"Look, a security booth," Harry intervened, pointing towards the interior. "Surely there we'll find a control to open the gate."

"I'm on it!" Hannah said, and at once began to climb the fence which was over three meters tall.

"No, Hannah, wait, I'll do it," the boy interrupted, worried about his friend, but she did not stop. Maybe it was because of

her missing leg, but she loved to physically prove herself and discover her limits at every chance she could get. That personality trait of hers was something that Stier would always admire. He saw Hannah as someone who, with happiness and a good attitude, fought and daily overcame the difficult obstacles that life gave her.

Thanks to her physical ability, the girl climbed up the fence without much difficulty. When she landed on the other side, she looked at her friends with a broad smile, proud of her achievement. Then, she rushed into the booth and pushed a big red button on a dashboard, but the gate did not move because there was no electricity. After some instants of examining the small room, she located the general electrical switch at the opposite end of the wall. *Uh-huh*, she told herself as she saw it was off, *so that's why it won't open*. She took a couple of steps toward the cabinet of the red and gray kill switch, grabbed the dusty lever, pushed it upwards with effort, and activated the kill switch. The gravel buzzed loudly and the neon lamp hanging from the ceiling automatically came to life with a couple of blinks. *Alright! Now it should work*. Then, she pushed the red button again, and this time, with a resounding snap followed by some unpleasant creaks, the gate gradually began to slide open, thus allowing her friends to cross it. However, none of them realised that, by restoring the electricity, they had also turned on the small red light of a security cam placed at one of the exterior corners of the booth.

They closed the gate again and advanced towards the place Kimble had instructed. Crossing the spacious courtyard, they rushed past some buildings until they reached the one for which they looked. They climbed the exterior stairs, pushed the crystal door open, and entered the lobby on the ground floor. It was evident that, in another time, this had been a technological park where diverse innovations and gadgets had been created, as there were computers, machines, designs, and mock-ups of different products and devices everywhere, but now it was all abandoned and covered with dust.

“What happened to this place?” Hannah asked.

“My records show that this used to be an outstanding, innovative place for technological research and development,” Kimble answered. “There used to be many labs of science and experimental techniques here. In fact, I know that this is where the research on Artificial Intelligence began, although it was never proved that they created it efficiently. At one point, there was an accident in which they lost control of a machine created with military purposes, and some people were injured, while others passed away. In consequence, the authorities closed the facilities and the investors stopped contributing to the researching with financial resources. Without money and government authorization to operate, the owners and researchers abandoned the place, and that is how it has been ever since.”

They approached the elevator and pressed the button to go up. They waited for a few minutes, but nothing happened, so they concluded that it was not working and took the stairs to the ninth floor, where they meant to find the glasses to talk with Alext. They climbed the steps slowly and silently. Even though there was no trace of anyone else there and they had not seen anything weird so far, the environment felt eerie, as if someone were watching them.

When they reached the sixth floor, they stopped a few seconds to recover, as they were breathless after the effort made. The girls leaned on a wall and Stier took Kimble off his back to stretch and rest.

Suddenly, something caught the boy’s attention. On the back wall, behind the piled-up desks and tables, someone had painted a phrase that said, *The Legion starts here*, along with an arrow pointing down at a black poster which he could not see clearly.

“Wait here,” he told the others before curiously approaching the painted wall by himself. With every step he took, the black poster became clearer, until he could see that it was a print of a coat of arms. On the center, there was a drawing of a bearded man with dark glasses; on each side, lions with garlands and feathers, and at the base, a band which read: *Legion*. He removed the print carefully, trying to not to break it, and then brought it back to his friends.

“Look... this was on the wall.”

“Do you know what it is?” Hannah questioned.

“No, I don’t, but that phrase on the wall pointed to it.”

“Wow,” Kimble said, “that is... the Legion’s coat of arms!”

Puzzled, Erin echoed his last words.

“Yes,” the backpack replied, “it is Alext’s face as a symbol of justice and opposition to the totalitarian regime that was being established. It is the image that made people feel identified and motivated to join the fight, which gave it authenticity and recognition.”

“Wow... but how did it make it here?” Stier asked. “Neither the Legion nor Dahn exist here yet, do they?”

Kimble had no answer. Indeed, both had yet to exist, and he was sure that the image did not come from the future because there was only one time machine, the one that Alext had built to send him here, but it had exploded. Nothing made sense.

They decided that they best continue searching for the glasses to talk to Alext as soon as possible. Perhaps he would know what was going on and he could tell them why the Legion’s coat of arms was there.

Deep in thought and without speaking, they resumed their way up the building. But when they reached the eight-floor landing, they heard some thunderous noises that made them stop to see what it was about. Soon, they saw papers, boxes, and everything else around fly from the back and straight towards them, while a huge projector rose with a roar, casting a beam of red light.

“Watch out! I think a robot is attacking us,” alerted Kimble. The children could not see what was happening because of the dust and trash floating all around. “We must get upstairs. Go!”

Suddenly, fear came over them and, without thinking twice, the children ran up the stairs. However, just halfway through the last flight, the last one of them, Hannah, stumbled and fell. Her prosthesis had come loose and detached, leaving her with a sole leg and thus unable to climb the remaining steps.

“Oh no!” she cried out, wincing with pain. “Not now... Worst moment ever!” She reached down her side to grab the prosthesis,

even though she knew that she could not put it back on now because the scary robot was coming with that red light at full speed.

“We got you!” Erin exclaimed as she and her other friend ran back downstairs to assist Hannah.

Once they reached her, they each put one of her arms on their shoulders and helped her climb. Stumbling, they got to the ninth floor, which was the last level of the building, so there was nowhere else to keep going up. Right now, running down was not an option, either, as they would come across their pursuer. But the robot was struggling to get up the stairs, which gave them some valuable seconds to hide, crouching down behind some old desks. Hannah used those moments to try to readjust her prosthesis.

“Kimble, quick, what do we do?” Stier asked with sincere desperation.

“My sensors detect the presence of Artificial Intelligence controlling the robot, although it is quite primitive, and that is why it is slow on the stairs. Perhaps it is the machine that went out of control some years ago, the reason why these facilities closed. In that case, despite being an old gadget, it will be very dangerous. It might be slow over there, but here it can be a much faster and lethal machine. That red light is a scanner that detects people. We have to be careful not to be discovered, otherwise we will be in great trouble.”

“How do we stop it?” Hannah asked, her voice urgent and fearful.

“We can do it with an electromagnetic deactivation device... Quick, Stier, look for a small square object inside of me. It is an electronic plate of integrated circuits with four round neodymium magnets.”

Still crouched down, Stier took the backpack off, opened the zipper, and instantly spotted the small object stuck to its interior. “I got it!” he exclaimed, holding it up and examining it warily. “What now?”

“You must put it on the robot. The plate’s magnets will effortlessly stick to the metallic structure. Once there, I shall send the signal to deactivate and disable all its systems, but the plate

must land right on its data processor; if not, it will not work. It is most probably located on the head... Stier," he called with a suddenly dramatic tone that was both serious and uneasy, "you all must be very careful. It might be an extremely dangerous robot."

"I know."

"Now put me on your back, I shall go with you."

Erin and Stier ran back towards the stairs they had climbed and stood at each side of the robot, flanking it, as Hannah remained hidden under the desk at the back. The noise the machine made as it moved up the stairs was becoming deafening, so it obviously would not take long to appear before them. Stier held the device in his right hand, feeling nervous but ready to stick it so that Kimble would render the robot useless. He began to see the red beam scanning the entire ninth floor: it was here at last. Upon seeing it, Stier was astonished. It was more than two meters tall, and its shape was very strange, as it looked like a big red crab with eight legs and two huge powerful metal claws.

In a low voice, Kimble instructed that the robot's data processor was right under a silver antenna located on top of it, between what looked like a pair of bright yellow robot eyes: that was where Stier had to put the device.

"Yikes! How am I going to get up there?" Stier asked, still squatting, as he watched the immense robot pass in front of him. With that size, neither he nor Erin could reach its head.

"It's gigantic! Stopping it will be impossible," Erin hissed, shaking her head in surprise, and joining her friend. The machine had not detected their presence yet.

The colossal crab advanced, its powerful legs booming at every step with a tremendous sound: *BANG, BANG, BANG*. Meanwhile, its bulging yellow eyes spun in all directions as they scanned the surroundings, and its thick claws pushed the furniture and other things on the way. If it kept going like this, it would soon find Hannah.

"Look, some boxes are there!" Stier pointed out. "I can climb them to get on top of those cabinets and jump on the robot from there... Erin, I need you to distract it, so that I can get up there

without being detected, and then lead him to me, so that I can jump.”

“Is that a joke?” she exclaimed, trembling and jittery. But she knew there was no other choice: she had to be brave and accept her role as the decoy. “Alright, I’ll distract it.”

She closed her eyes for a moment, taking a deep breath to pluck up courage. Then, her demeanor changed: when she opened her blue eyes, she was full of determination. She spotted the handset of an old, corded phone, and she swiftly grabbed it and threw it the robot, screaming, “Hey, you crab! I’m here, come get me!”

At once, the huge crab turned and detected her. Briskly moving its legs with an impressive noise, it spun around and rushed to catch her, snapping its big red claws. Erin started to run all around the place, dodging desks, chairs, and other furniture, trying not to get caught, as Stier hurried towards the boxes, which he placed beside the file cabinets. He climbed on top of them, as he had planned, and signaled his friend to pass by him. Pale with fear, but courageous, she headed towards him, the violent, dangerous robot right behind her. Just as the crab passed by, Stier jumped off the cabinets and abruptly fell on top of it. He barely managed to hold on after rolling a little, but as he did so, the deactivation device slipped off his hands and fell to the floor.

“Shoot, I dropped it!” he yelled, swaying on the crab’s head.

Seeing what had happened, Hannah shouted from her hiding place, “I’ll throw it to you!” Swiftly, she then hurried to reach the device and give it back to her friend. However, when she did this, the robot saw her and, instead of chasing Erin, headed over to her. Realising the situation, Hannah had no other choice but to leave the device and run to the opposite direction to escape. Unfortunately for her, when she once again passed by the spot where Kimble’s device had landed, one of the crab’s legs crushed the object, destroying it completely. They were doomed: with their only weapon now in pieces, they had no way to stop the robot. Stier had watched it all happen and, in that moment, he saw an opportunity to get off it and jump onto one of the desks

beside him. There was nothing he could do there to deactivate the robot, anyway. Once on the ground, he went towards Erin.

“We have to go to the floor below,” he yelled, thinking that it would be difficult for the machine to walk downstairs, which might save them. “That’s our only choice!”

The robot still following her non-stop, Hannah ran to her friends, and they all escaped down to the eighth floor. When they were just a few feet from the stairs, a fully determined man zoomed between them, coming from the opposite direction. He wore an unbuttoned white robe, which waved after him like a cape, and in his left hand he held a kind of car battery with cables connected to it. Unexpectedly, he nimbly jumped straight towards the robot. Dodging its awful claws, he slid under the crab’s belly and put the battery’s cables there, which instantly caused a short circuit. As many sparks flew, the robot’s systems shut down and it became immobile, its claws still open wide.

The Man in The White Robe

The children were astounded at the determination and authority that the man in the white robe demonstrated. He did not hesitate to pull such a dangerous move and risk his life to disable the robot and save them. He was tall and slender, but he also seemed strong, quite agile, and athletic. He had brown wavy hair, and he was white and about forty-two years old.

“Thank you for saving us,” Hannah said, relieved.

“It’s no problem,” the stranger replied dryly as he dusted his clothes off.

“Who are you?” Stier asked.

“My name is Samuel Laoch. I’m an engineer and developer, and I was the director of this place before it was abandoned, that’s why I know it perfectly well.”

“And how did you know we were in danger?” Erin questioned, intrigued, as she had thought there was no one there.

“When you restored the electricity for the main gate, you also activated all the security systems of the Beehive, including the surveillance cameras. When they detected you, I received an automatic alert in my cellphone, and I saw that you were inside. Immediately, I knew that you would need my help, so I came as fast as I could. You were lucky I was nearby.”

“Thank you!” Erin exclaimed. “We discovered that, some years ago, a machine went out of control in this place and that’s why it was abandoned. But we never thought we’d run into something as scary as that.” Her hand still trembling, she pointed to the big red crab, which was currently unmoving and silent.

“No, little one, you’re wrong... That crab is just my old guardian robot. It was deactivated and abandoned, just like everything else here. Once you entered the perimeter without authorization, it came back to life, and since its main instruction is to defend the facilities from any trespasser, it attacked you. However, that robot wasn’t the reason why this place was closed. The real reason was much more frightening and dangerous. But that’s classified information, so I can’t say any more... Now, it’s time for you to tell me: who are you and why are you here?”

“Sure... These are Hannah Miller and Erin Bublely, and I’m Harry Stier. We’re here because we need to find a device. It’s an important matter...” He still did not trust Samuel. The man had certainly saved their lives, but Stier was unsure of his intentions and of whether to tell him about the glasses they needed, Kimble, and Alext. Suddenly, he thought of asking him about the coat of arms that he had found a few floors below. He pulled the paper out of his pants’ pocket, unfolded it, and showed it to him. “Do you know what this is?”

“Yes, I do,” Samuel answered, his tone a bit sharp because he also did not trust the children. “I printed it a couple of days ago. It was on one of the floors below.”

There was an awkward silence in which no one spoke and they just looked at each other. Then, Kimble whispered something to Stier that only he could hear: “You must trust him.”

The boy thought, *Are you sure?*

“Yes,” Kimble answered. “Tell him everything.”

Alright, if you say so...

Stier proceeded to tell Samuel a detailed summary of what had happened in the last days, explaining how he had found Kimble, what his mission was, and the search for the glasses to contact Alext with and obtain instructions on how to stop Dahn. He also mentioned the big disaster that people would face if their mission failed. Samuel listened to his explanation avidly, but strangely, he didn’t seem surprised. Stier began to doubt that the man believed his story, so he decided to show him Kimble as irrefutable proof that what he said was true. Kimble deactivated his invisibility mechanism and briefly talked to Samuel, confirming everything the boy had said before. When he was done, the man was quiet for a couple of minutes, and then he said something that shocked them all.

“I’ve seen Alext. That is why I already knew about some of the things you have mentioned.”

“What? You’ve talked to him?” Hannah asked urgently. “But how? What’s he told you?”

Trusting them at last, Samuel explained that some days ago, as he did a routine check on the floor where they were now, by

chance he found a pair of peculiar glasses that he had never seen before, and he did not know whose they were. They seemed like virtual reality glasses and had an odd cable that was surely meant to connect them to some device, though he did not know which. When he put them on, he could see a video of a man named Alext saying that the future was in danger because of someone who called himself Dahn, whom they had to fight by creating an insurgent group known as the Legion. At the beginning Samuel had not believed it, but after watching the video a couple more times, he realised it was real. Besides, he did not know why, but just by listening to Alext's voice, he felt that he was trustworthy.

He added that he, in fact, had never spoken to nor interacted with Alext, he had only watched that video. He also informed that the glasses had other available features and maybe more information, but they were blocked with some special coding, and he could not access that. Nevertheless, what he had watched was enough for him: he decided to replicate the Legion's symbol because he was certain that one day someone would come looking for the glasses. He just never imagined that the searchers would come so soon, let alone that they would be children.

They continued talking for a long time. From that moment on, Samuel became their great friend and loyal supporter.

The Bunker

“Where are the glasses?” Stier asked Samuel at the end of their conversation.

“For security means, I’m keeping them in the underground Bunker over there,” he answered, pointing to some dirty abandoned windows through which they could barely see. “Let’s go get them.”

“And what’s going to happen to the giant crab?” Erin asked.

“Don’t worry, he wasn’t badly damaged. A short-circuit in its energy source was the only way to stop it at once and to keep it from harming you. I’ll fix it later and I’ll reprogram it so that it can continue to guard this place, but now recognising you three. Once it’s reactivated, you’ll be able to instruct it if necessary and, for everyone’s safety, I’ll also make sure Kimble can communicate with it remotely. If things will be as catastrophic as they seem they will be, the best we can do is prepare as much as possible.”

“So, maybe we should name it,” Hannah joked.

“That’s an excellent idea,” Erin giggled. “I have the perfect name already: since it’s a big red monster, what if we call it *Red-It?*”

“That’s awesome! We should give Red-It a tour around school one day, everyone would freak out,” Stier proposed, briefly imagining his classmate’s shocked expressions upon seeing the big scary robot strolling around the gardens of Rosemary-Robotics.

“Better yet, we should sign it up for the Mechatronic Destruction Championship. I’m sure it would win!”

Still laughing, they all walked down the stairs together. When they reached the sixth floor, Stier paused for a moment and turned to the left to read the message sprayed on the wall: *The Legion begins here*. Once again, he pulled the coat of arms with Alext’s image out of his pocket. Stier began to identify with the movement that had just started. As he continued his way downstairs, he just thought, Samuel was right. *The Legion begins here*. And considering his friends as future allies in upcoming battles, he added: *It starts with us*.

They exited and walked across the spacious courtyard until they reached a small, insignificant, rectangle-shaped building. On the outside, it did not give any clue of its purpose, so no one would have imagined that it led to a place full of incredible devices. It just looked like an old storage room that contrasted sharply with the other buildings, except, perhaps, because of the big, heavy metal door hidden at the back.

Once before it, Samuel entered the password 37218820 into the sophisticated access panel and pressed his thumb into a fingerprint reader. Instantly, the big electronic locks and the strong metal bolts activated with an earsplitting noise, moving from one side to the other and, after a few seconds, granting access. Samuel easily pushed the heavy rectangular door, which flipped horizontally and, after a few seconds, allowed them into the building. The entrance was almost a meter and a half wide and looked like it led to a bank's big vault. But the only thing there was a modern elevator that descended underground.

“What is this place?” Hannah inquired.

“It's an old nuclear shelter built in the eighties,” Samuel replied. “It has thick walls made of reinforced concrete, so it's unbreakable. The elevator leads down to three underground levels. This bunker was here before the Beehive itself was built. We just thought we could use it as a safe storage for special projects, that's why we kept it through the development. The first level is for telecommunications: there is a computing center, telephone lines, and a recording and video-broadcasting studio. That's also where information on graphics, documents, and blueprints is kept. The second level contains special projects that require a high degree of standard security. Finally, on the third level, there is everything related to information and devices that are labeled top secret, as no one without a high-level authorization can get access to them. For your own safety, you should never go down to that last level. It's essential that you understand: never go there, it's extremely dangerous.”

With that said, he pushed the button of the elevator that corresponded to the second level. When the door opened underground, they saw a spacious room that seemed like a huge

storage room, full of shelves and closets of different sizes whose strengthened doors protected the projects kept inside. Each piece of furniture had a small digital sign on its door that read its corresponding denomination.

The children followed Samuel to the back of the room, where they reached one of the last closets. A sign that read *Vision* gleamed on its door.

“Vision is a very proper name for glasses that let you talk to someone from the future,” Hannah said, amused but also thoughtful.

Samuel smiled at her for a moment before using the master key that hung from his neck to unlock and open the closet. He stepped aside to let the others see the interior. The strange glasses that would contact Alext were there. They were the same colours as Kimble—black, metallic gray, and white—and they also had the strange cable Samuel had mentioned. Stier already knew that cable would be the special connection for one of the backpack’s exterior holes.

“Please, let me connect to the glasses so that they synchronize with my systems,” Kimble told him. “You must put them on to confirm your identity. Doing that will unblock all the information they contain and will also let us communicate with Alext.”

Stier grabbed the glasses carefully, as he did not want to drop them, and then sat on a wide chesterfield with his friends. He took the backpack off and managed to plug the cable into it with a resonant click. His hands trembled a little as he thought of talking to Alext, the strange man from the future. Following Kimble’s instructions, he put the glasses on and, automatically, the same video that Samuel had watched started to play.

Stier had not talked to Alext yet, but Samuel was right: he looked trustworthy, anyone who saw him could know he told the truth. As soon as the video ended, the glasses began to synchronize with Kimble, and a blue light activated, spreading from the cable to the glasses and back again. Stier also realised that he had been identified, as more content was now available.

“Alright, we are done!” Kimble announced. “We can communicate with Alext now. Do you wish to do so?”

“Yes!” Stier replied with determination. “We need to get answers.”

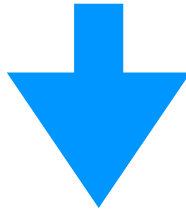
“Okay... If you prefer, I can project the call through a hologram, so that you all can see him, and he can see you too.”

“That would be great!” the boy said excitedly, taking the glasses off and putting them next to Kimble, on a metal table that was around.

They waited a few instants, and then a 3D projection of Alext’s image in full colour appeared a few inches above Kimble. He looked tired and a bit older than in the video Stier had just watched, but it was definitely him.

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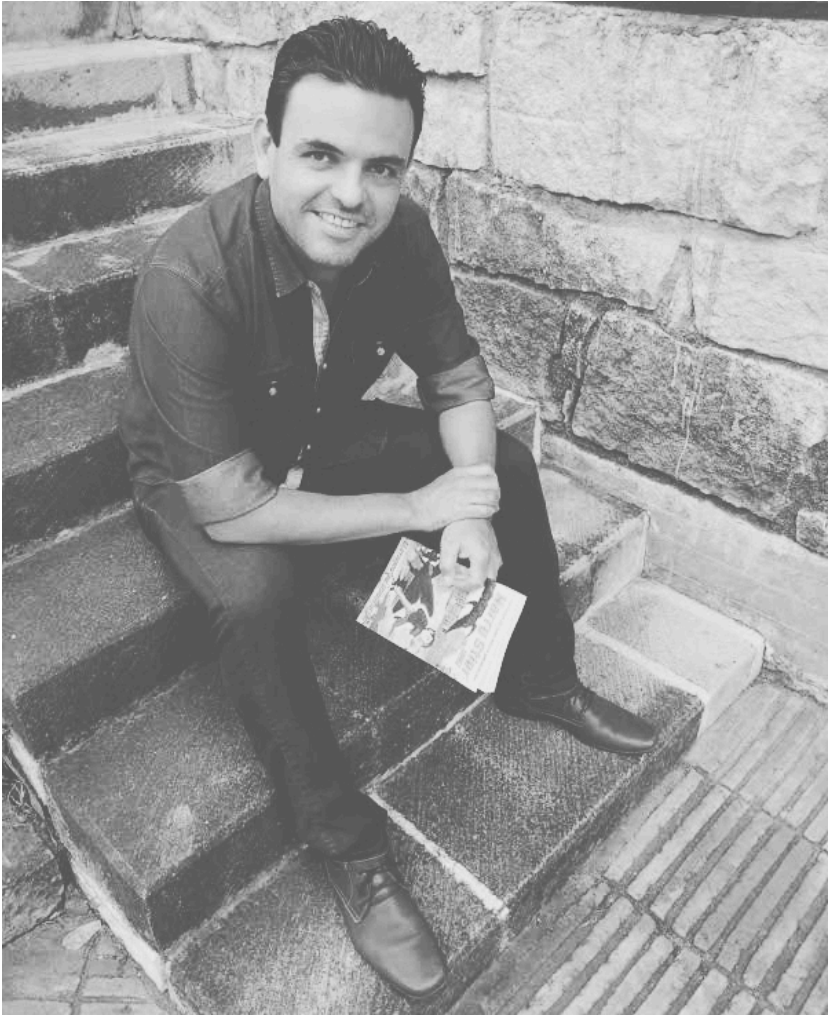
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Hello! My name is **Enrique**. After some twists and turns in life, I realised that my mission is: **making children read again!**

I am proud to believe that this is the most important, **generous, and gratifying** task there can be.

Being a parent myself, as I wrote **Harry Stier**, I made sure to highlight **values such as friendship, strength, and resilience** with a **fun and exciting** book because my young children would be the first ones to read it and **teaching them well has always been my priority.**

So, you can relax: **this book is good for readers of all ages!**

Moreover, my experience **as a father and a writer** has taught me something simple, yet true: **all children can be avid readers!**

To achieve this, it is essential to give them a book that tells a **fascinating story... that catches their attention from beginning to end!** That is why I have decided to write a series for children and young adults which is so addictive that, **once they begin reading, they will not want to stop.**

You are now holding in your hands the magnificent story of **Harry Stier**, a seven-year-old boy who is quite intelligent and who must face **big challenges** in an amazing world full of **technology**, but above all, **in the company of great friends!**

Enjoy your reading.

PS. If you want to know more about me, visit

<https://harrystier.com>





Hi! My name es Alext.

I need your help...

***The Kiintos Legion
must grow so that we
can defeat Dahn
and save the world!***

***Please share my story
with your best friends.
Invite them to join us!***

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