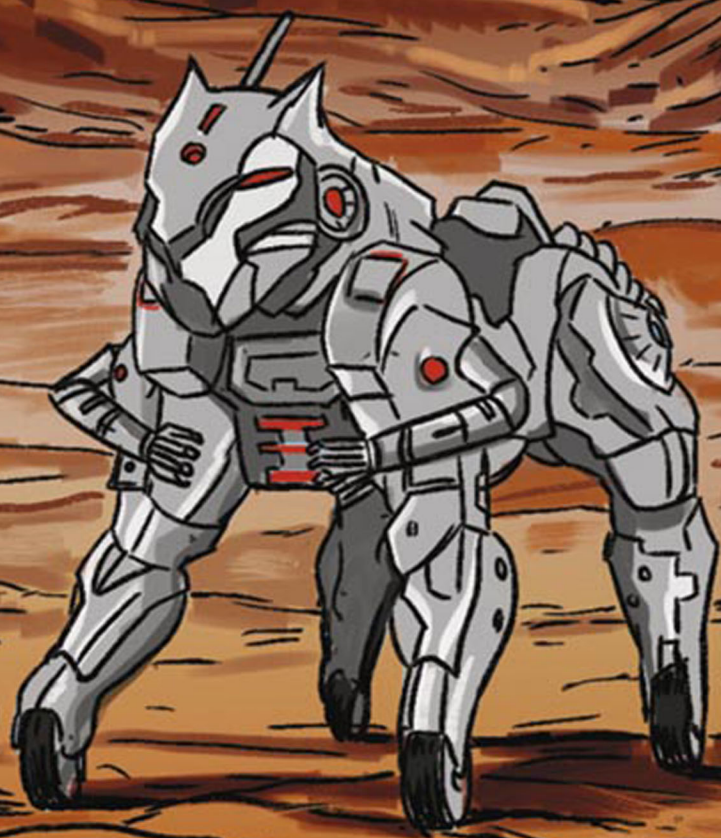


ROBOT RESCUE



By Rosa Nam
Illustrated by Chris Chalik

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Illustrated by Chris Chalik



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Table of Contents

Chapter One: It's Alive	5
Chapter Two: Calling for Backup . . .	11
Chapter Three: Rescue Mission	15
Chapter Four: Sandstorm	21
Chapter Five: Falling into Place	25
About Us	32

CHAPTER ONE



It's Alive

Fifty kilometers away from mission control, Roy's engine hummed quietly. He continued on his usual path toward the object in the distance. He made his way across the windy desert, navigating boulders, craters, and empty riverbeds. On the clock, it was early morning, but you could never tell, since it didn't get

dark on this side of the planet. Roy was a robot. He looked like an oversize cat, minus all the fur, with wheels and extra arms. He could move on all fours or use two all-terrain wheels to roll around.

As Roy approached the black blob, he stuck two thin arms out of the right side of his body. He picked up the object to take a good look at the specimen.

“Anna, are you seeing this?”

“Wha—Hello?” said Anna into her wristcom.

“Daydreaming again?” asked Roy.

“No,” lied Anna.

Actually, she *had* been daydreaming. She had been fantasizing about being the first teenager awarded the Nobel Prize for “outstanding research in space.” She was standing onstage while thousands of people clapped for her. But Roy snapped her back to reality. She was supposed to be observing as he conducted his morning survey.

She had followed her parents and 20 of the brightest minds on Earth to the first colonial outpost in deep space. Well, technically she had been given two options—neither of which was all that great. Either follow her parents or attend a boarding school near her great aunt who perpetually smelled like ginseng. She had settled for space. Watching her creation, Roy, explore was her job this month.

Next month, she would move to the hydroponic hanging gardens. Those were on the side of the cliff where the crew had built their base. But until then, she was cooped up in a stuffy bunker.

Anna clicked on the monitor to see Roy's point of view.

"Another dead bug," said Anna in disappointment. "Nothing new."

It was all the same routine now. Anna had found it exciting the first 10 or so times, but now it was pretty boring. Roy would find a bug, scan it

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