



Steel, Scales, and Steam

Амелия

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Above the clouds, the Upper City gleamed with gold and glass, but below the surface lay a sprawling maze of rusted pipes and toxic fog. In this subterranean Underworld, neon lights flickered over dangerous alleys where gas masks were a necessity for survival.



Victor sat in the dim light of his cluttered apartment, the rhythmic sound of a whetstone against steel filling the room as he cleaned his weapons. His cybernetic arm whirred softly, its brass gears and integrated tools catching the orange glow of a flickering furnace.



The heavy steel door slammed open as Ryuk sauntered in, his green and yellow scales shimmering under a tattered poncho and a bird-skull cowboy hat. He flashed a wide, predatory grin full of sharp fangs, his long tongue flickering as his yellow eyes scanned the room with mischievous intent.



Ryuk was not alone; he had brought a group of old allies, three massive beast-men who smelled of wet fur and the deep sea. A towering wolf-man, a horned lizard with jagged scales, and a hulking shark-man squeezed into the small apartment, their presence making the walls feel narrow.



The beast-men loomed over Victor, their shadows stretching across the workbench where his mechanical parts lay scattered. They looked at the human with a mixture of confusion and predatory curiosity, wondering why a warrior like Ryuk would ever partner with a creature of flesh and bone.



The shark-man leaned in close, his gills twitching as he reached out a thick, grey finger to poke at Victor's cybernetic shoulder. He growled a question in a deep, guttural tone, asking what use a human could possibly be in the violent world of the Underworld.



The wolf-man sniffed the air around Victor, his nose twitching near the man's neck as he studied the scent of oil and gunpowder. Meanwhile, the horned lizard-man circled the chair, his claws clicking against the floorboards as he inspected the intricate wires and hacking modules in Victor's artificial arm.



Victor remained perfectly calm, his dark eyes steady as he set down his cleaning cloth and looked the beast-men in the face. He didn't reach for his gun, but his cybernetic hand shifted slightly, activating a small blue hologram that displayed a tactical map of the city above.



Ryuk let out a raspy, barking laugh and slapped the wolf-man on the shoulder, his powerful spiked tail thumping against a crate of scrap metal. He told his brothers that while they had claws, Victor had the mind and the technology to crack any vault in the Upper City.



The tension eventually broke, replaced by the smell of thick cigar smoke and the clinking of heavy bottles as the group settled in for the night. In the heart of the chaotic Underworld, the human and the beasts shared stories of blood and steam, bound by a loyalty that transcended their species.