**Last of the Fusiliers**

*by: Iron*

-- Chapter 1 --

"How bad?" coughed Boltz, leaning against a rock as she finished clearing her lungs.

"The transmission has rusted through!" came the reply, and Boltz promptly snarled and kicked a small rock near her off into the distance. "I did all I could this morning, Boltz, but I-"

"It's alright!" snapped the driver of the now-ruined vehicle. "It's alright, Oily. I'm sorry I snapped, I just...I know you did what you could with what we had, but..."

The dark-skinned woman's words trailed off, the stoic driver struggling to maintain her composure. As a driver, Boltz was privy to a lot of things the others weren't when it came to the affairs of the clan, and this latest problem was pushing her to her breaking point. She knew far better than the rest of her crew about the problems that the clan was having, and now here she was, stranded out on the Road in the blazing sun on a dry, searing day, miles from home and knowing full well that they had many enemies out here with them. All of her troubles were threatening to boil over, and she blinked back tears of frustration as she managed to regain her composure.

"Is there anything you can do, Oily?" she asked, her voice shaky but her tone calm.

For a moment, there was no reply, just the diligent sounds of a small mechanic checking under the car again.

"No, Boltz; I'm afraid we've driven this transmission its last mile. The only way we can fix this is if we can find a full replacement, and that would probably require an overhaul of the whole car."

Boltz nodded solemnly, running a hand through her short, black hair. The other three looked to her nervously, knowing full well what kind of situation they were currently in. They had enough water for the day; not for the two- or three-day hike back home, and the Meateads would certainly be out and about whenever they tried to return home. Brakka was a good shot, but even with her skills they'd never have enough ammunition to take on more than a couple cars' worth of bandits before they'd be overwhelmed...and that would be if they were lucky.

"Scrap?" asked Boltz, collecting herself. "Are there any nearby towns?"

"Nothing that's inhabited." replied the scrawny scout, wracking her memory. "As far as I know, anyway; who knows where the Meateads are setting up outposts these days."

"Anything within walking distance? I don't care if it's inhabited or not; we need someplace to lay low and keep cool until nightfall. It'll be safer to travel, then."

"Should be a town down this road, boss." answered Scrapper. "About a mile; it's hilly country, so we should have cover if a patrol runs by, and the town's largely intact. We gotta ditch the car, though; if the Meateads spot it, they'll know we're in the area, and that town will be the first place they look. There should be a deep gully ahead we can push it into; hopefully they won't notice it."

Boltz nodded before standing fully upright and looking to the others.

"Well, gals, take what you can carry from the car and we'll push Old Rusty to its final resting place. Oily, get your tools and anything light enough and valuable enough from the car to carry. Scrap, grab our water; I'll get the rest of the necessities. Brakka, get your rifle and the ammo, and then help Oily strip whatever's valuable. We need to get moving in two minutes."

It was with a heavy heart that the four pushed the old sedan into the small ravine along the side of the road, especially for the young Mechcleric, who couldn't hold back tears as the ancient vehicle smashed headlong into the base of a rocky cliff at the bottom. Even the most decrepit of cars was sacred to her unique religion, and she cradled what little of value she'd stripped from it tightly in her arms. Scrapper and Boltz simply shouldered their gear and started walking; Brakka stayed to put a massive hand gently on her small companion's shoulder before ushering her away from the gulley. There was no time to mourn; the chances of them being discovered were increasing by the second, and they had a long mile to go.

Boltz wrapped a linen shaw over the shoulders of her white driver's jumpsuit, trying to mitigate as much of the sun's glare from her body as possible, all while maintaining her grip on the box of dry food beneath her arm. It wasn't much, but none of them had intended to get stranded out in the desert; a raiding mission rarely lasted eight hours, and they'd only brought enough food for one meal each. Still, it was all they had, and they'd have to make it last for a good three days or so to make the trip back home. The chances of the town having anything edible were next to nothing; even the most well-preserved foods from the Old World had barely lasted fifty years past the Collapse.

Water was less of a concern, but they'd have to stretch it to make it last three days, even with three whole gallons of the stuff. Three gallons was a lot for as thin a woman as Scrapper; life as a seamstress up until recently had not been very conducive towards her physique, though her frequent trading had made her an ideal scout once the Silk-Queens had begun to resort to more desperate methods of survival. Still, she was not well-suited to manual labor, and the water was a lot for her to carry, though she didn't complain. She had to share the load, after all, and she was grateful her linen tunic and leggings kept her relatively cool.

Brakka was absolutely laden with supplies compared to her fellow Silk-Queens, with her rifle strapped across her chest, magazines in her pockets, a chrome fender over her shoulder and a bundle of electrical wires in her fists. She was positively gargantuan compared to the other girls; nearly 6' 3" in height and 200 lbs, she was at the peak of her physical form, as one had to be in order to be a proper caravan guard. Her bronze skin was well-exposed when compared to the other three, with only her torso and upper legs covered by linen shorts and a tank top, as well as a plate of bent steel over her chest as rudimentary armor. The extra weight meant little to her; if they'd had more time, she would've insisted carrying even more materials her small friend could've salvaged from the car.

Oily tagged along at the rear of the group, her tool satchel slung over her shoulder and a variety of pendants and wards she'd taken from the car hanging around her neck. Her decrepit, black shaw and lenin tunic were all that remain of her order within the Silk-Queens; the other Mechlerics had left as soon as the clan fell on hard times. As a Mechleric, she was often shunned by the rest of her clan, as men and women of her order were naturally outsiders. As such, she'd had trouble making friends, especially since many other Mechlerics had abandoned the Silk-Queens when they could no longer pay, and only frequent travels with Brakka and Boltz had given her any loyal company. On occasion, Brakka even listened to her reciting her holy mantras from time to time, apparently finding the verses relaxing.

The journey was hot and exhausting, even for a mile's walk, but finally the small band of road warriors came upon the outskirts of a small, abandoned town. The sign leading into the town was so faded that none of them could deceiver its meaning; not even Oily with her knowledge of Old World language could make out any of the faded symbols. The town was old; pre-Collapse old, with many examples of the pristine Old World construction styles that could not longer be replicated, and so the whole town was in shambles. It was a miracle any of the ancient buildings were still standing, and those that were immediately drew the attention of the group.

"There!" Boltz pointed at an old, two-story, concrete building. "We'll camp in there; it's about as defensible as anything in this town can be."

"If we're lucky, maybe we can salvage some stuff!" gasped Scrapper, her reserves of strength all but utterly exhausted. "But I think I'd like a nap, first!"

Boltz silently nodded in agreement, adjusting the box of food under her arm as the group continued on towards the building. It was in remarkably good condition, considering how long ago it must have been built; no one had ever quite pin-pointed the exact date of the Collapse, but estimates were that it had been nearly three centuries since. The thick, concrete walls of the building were pockmarked from centuries of erosion, and only the faintest blue stains suggested that it had once been painted. A huge, metal door was framed on the front of the structure, also stained with ancient, indiscernible colors of some kind, though when the group scanned around the edges of the building they found a battered-down side door. The only windows were in the upper levels of the structure, most of which looked surprisingly intact considering their age and constant exposure to the desert sun.

Brakka dumped her things and entered the side door slowly, her rifle raised and ready to fire at anything that moved. The door opened into a decrepit hallway, the wallpaper and drywall all but gone along the interior walls, ending with a old, metal door on one side and a corner down the other way. Her cracked, leather boots were nearly silent as she stepped across the sand built up in the ruined doorway, her eyes and ears poised for the slightest sign of movement. There seemed to be no traps present, and she carefully motioned the others to follow her in, taking things one footstep at a time towards the distant turn in the hall. Boltz followed her in, revolver at the ready, and she split off to move in the opposite direction from her large friend, clearing out the other end of the corridor.

Cautious to a fault, after nearly fifteen minutes of carefully picking their way through the building the girls found nothing threatening; not even the barest hint of a booby-trap, neither upstairs nor down. Boltz's intuition had been spot-on; the upstairs would make a perfect lookout point, and the remains of what had once been two bedrooms were on the southern side of the floor, perfect for napping. The only area that remained inaccessible was a thick, metal door on the ground floor, presumably leading to some kind of garage judging by the immense, metal door outside, and it posed a unique problem. The door was incredibly solid, made entirely of presumably reinforced metal which someone had once tried to break through; dents and scratches covered the door, but whoever had been there before had made no progress. Bypassing the door by destroying a wall wasn't an option; the walls around the presumed garage were solid concrete, just like the outer walls, only to be covered up by drywall and wallpaper to mask its presence.

Deciding that there were better things to do than waste time on the door, the women set up camp upstairs, Scrapper watching the road through a yellowed, cracked window while Boltz took inventory. Just as Boltz had known, their supplies were meager, but she was betting one meal apiece and careful rationing of water would last them for three days of night travel. It wouldn't be pleasant, but they didn't have a choice, and she was willing to bet that a good nap would help take the group's minds off of food. A quick round of dice determined Oily would be lookout while the rest napped, and within the space of half an hour the ancient beds were occupied by three exhausted Silk-Queens.

Now, Oily knew better than to defy Boltz's orders, but she was intrigued by the metal door downstairs; surely it couldn't hurt to investigate it while the others were asleep. Her wiry frame snuck downstairs with practiced stealthiness, taking care to step on the edges of the steps to avoid any creaking, and made her way to her destination. There it stood, just like it had earlier, and she could only marvel at how well-constructed it was. From the looks of the damage on its surface, someone had taken blades, a hammer, and possibly even a powered saw of some kind to the door and the surrounding wall, but to no avail. The damage was, thankfully, not recent, otherwise there would be concern about the local raiders potentially coming back to try again, putting the young Mechleric at ease as she continued her examination of the door.

"How would one open this?" she wondered. There were no handles or knobs or buttons adorning its surface; only a single, deep hole that ended halfway through the door. A keyhole of some kind, she surmised, but one far larger than anything she'd ever seen before. Such a mechanism would require a very special key...and now she was too curious to not try and look for it. Several minutes of searching downstairs and upstairs offered nothing...at least until Oily set foot on the rug at the top of the stairs and noticed a slight drop, as if the floor had given away slightly. Taking great care not to make any noise, she managed to move the rug and open the trap door with relative ease; neither were secured in any way. Inside lay a bundle of crispy, brown paper wrapped in plastic; a shiny, golden locket; an old book; and, most important of all, an old, steel valve that ended in a thick, keyed rod; the answer to her puzzle.

She had struggled to contain her excitement as she descended the steps in a hurry, her hands gripped firmly around the hefty chunk of metal, whispers of holy litanies upon her tongue as she descended. If beyond that door lay a garage, the wealth of tools and parts held within would work miracles for her own garage back home. The stockpile of fuels and oils that might lie inside made her weak with excitement; even the oldest, stalest of oils could have some salvageable elements. And, of course, the greatest jackpot of all; a pre-Collapse automotive, untouched by human hands or nature's fury for centuries. Oh, she nearly wept as she screwed the key into place and turned it with all of her feeble might, prayers of fortune spouting from her lips as she felt hefty mechanisms inside the door creak and give. With a whimpered cry she felt the crank at last force the door to give, and with a groan the door hinged open just a hair's width.

The tiny woman shoved and pushed with all of her strength, the great barrier giving as stale air rushed past her and metal groaned against metal. With a final shudder, the door opened fully, and the young Mechleric stood before a gaping, black void into the unlit space before her. Oily shivered in her sandals as she dug through her pockets for a match, finally finding a half-empty box and lighting one. Holding it aloft, the contents of the room were difficult to discern, but even in the faint lighting she could make out one object in particular.

It was a car...a pre-Collapse car...a car more beautiful than anything she had ever laid eyes on. Oily's mouth was agape as she stepped reverently around the machine, the flickering light of her match illuminating the pure, silvery-chrome paint of the gorgeous vehicle with an orange tint. The grill and headlights met her gaze in the flickering match light, like a serene face framed by curved metal. She knelt, her whole body trembling, as she examined the great car's tires; solid as the day they had been built, with beautiful, untarnished whitewalls and chrome hubcaps. The contours were crisp and smooth, the metal impossibly blemish-free and clean, the glass like crystal...it was an object of unknowable power and worth. The Mechleric didn't even dare touch the great beast, fearful that the slightest touch would ruin the beautiful sight before her, and in her trance she couldn't even whisper a prayer of thanks to the steel gods she worshipped.

She panicked when the match finally flickered out, cursing the tiny piece of wood not for burning her fingers, but for denying her more of this glorious relic of ancient years. With a pounding heart and gasping breath, she scrambled for another match, attempting to strike one so she could lay eyes the great car once more, but her efforts were cut short when a noise reached her ears that made her pause. For a moment, she was certain her ears were lying to her, but as Oily knelt in the darkness, she could hear the gentle thrum of an engine idling. Impossible, she knew, but there it was; an almighty engine humming directly in front of her. There had been neither the whine of it turning over, nor the roar of it coming to life; just the gentle hum of an engine idling. Had she been in such awe before that she hadn't noticed? If so, how could an engine still be running after three hundred years of sitting in some forgotten garage?

"Thank God!" came a voice from somewhere in front of her, groaning as though it had been awoken from a deep sleep.

Oily promptly fell on her rear, her eyes as wide as saucers, unable to do or say anything.

"I've lost count how long I've waited for someone to open that damn door. Ugh...how long's it been?"

Someone was in the room with her. Oily wanted to yell, scream; do anything to get the attention of her sleeping compatriots upstairs, but she found herself too frightened and too confused to do so. A thousand and one thoughts tumbled through her mind. Who else could be in here? How long had they been in here? Were they responsible for up-keeping this beautiful machine? Would they hurt her?

"Hold on, lemme hit the lights." came the voice again.

There was a \*click\* and suddenly Oily was forced to recoil in shock as a pair of blazing lights invaded her eyes, her thin arms futilely trying to shield herself from the powerful beams. With another \*click\* the lights dimmed, but still they burned the poor Mechleric's unadjusted eyes, even with her arms trying to protect her.

"Damn, sorry, little lady. Didn't mean to scare ya; these things never were easy on the eyes."

Oily blinked away tears as she lowered her arms, desperately trying to see who was speaking to her.

"How long's it been since I went under? Never had much stock in style, myself, but those are some interesting threads you're wearing." came the voice again, though now there was no mistaking who was speaking.

It was the car. It couldn't be possible, but it was. For every word the mysterious voice had spoken, the bumper of the car had moved, as though the car was trying to imitate a human's face. Oily's eyes slowly adjusted to the glaring headlights of the car, and from within those burning, yellow orbs she could see pupils, or at least, that's what they appeared to be. A small, black dot in each of the car's headlights, both focused directly on her.

"You alright, miss?" asked the car, one headlight partially closing, as though it were expression confusion.

-- CHAPTER 2 --

"I-it's not possible!" Oily gasped, her eyes as wide as saucers.

"What's not possible?" asked the car. "You never seen a Dire before?"

"Are...are you an Avatar?!" she gasped, trying to restrain herself from squealing in delight, her small body practically jumping to its feet.

"What?" the car asked, confused, but Oily went right on going.

"An Avatar of the V8!" she exclaimed, completely beside herself. "A holy manifestation of the gods! Oh, praise be! It's a miracle! The V8 has blessed us-"

"Woah, woah, woah, little missy!" said the car, revving its engine to get her attention. "Now, I don't know what you're talkin' about, but I ain't no god, and I ain't no V8."

Oily looked utterly devastated.

"Y-you mean...y-you're n-not an Avatar?" she whimpered.

"Well, I know I ain't a god, if that's what you mean." it replied. "Plus, this engine's got no valves; I'm all nuclear, missy."

"N-nuclear?" she asked, confused.

"Yeah. Nuclear. Not the most common thing in the world, I know, but it means I'll pretty much run forever." he said, his bumper turned up in a grin. "I don't mean to brag, but doesn't matter how many cylinders you got in an engine; ya ain't gonna beat a fusion reactor in horsepower."

"Oh, wow!" she gasped, her mind abuzz trying to wrap her head around infinite energy. "So, that explains how you've been running for so long in here, doesn't it?"

The car narrowed its headlights, slightly twisting its front end in a look of confusion. How such a thing was possible was beyond Oily's ability to explain, but she surmised that it was pointless to question how a car could move when it could talk, too.

"So long?" it asked. "What do you mean, 'so long'?"

"I mean since the Collapse!" she answered, taking a tentative step forward. "No one's quite sure how long ago that was, but most people think at least 300 years!"

The headlights widened.

"300- I've been sitting in this garage for 300 years?" the car asked, incredulously.

"Um, I think so." said the small Mechleric. "I mean, we tried getting the big door open when we got here, but from the state of things I don't think anyone's been in or out of this room since you...fell asleep...whenever that was."

The car sat silent for a moment, no doubt pondering its predicament. Oily didn't know how much she could explain to the sentient machine; society in the Wastes had little understanding of the Old World, and if the Old World had talking cars then she had no idea just how little she even knew at that. For all she knew at this point, everyone in the Old World walked upside-down and breathed water.

"I think I need a drink." spoke the car, matter-of-factly. "My guts are feelin' a bit dry."

"Well, I haven't gotten a good look around the room, yet, so I don't know what's in here. Um, what exactly-"

"Oh, oil." replied the car, rolling its headlights upwards. "Good old engine oil. Give me a sec."

With a blinding gleam, its headlights blazed back to their highest setting, joined by the glowing, red taillights on the car's back end. Together, the powerful lights lit up the garage's interior to a respectable degree, bathing the room in an odd, orange-ish hue.

"There! That outta do it!" it spoke. "Could you see if there's a can in here for me, miss? I can't light the whole place if I help you search, I'm afraid, and I ain't got much room to maneuver."

It wasn't lying. With the whole garage lit up, Oily could see that it was boxed in quite well thanks to the piles of junk surrounding it. For such a beautiful car, it had certainly found itself in an unseemly place. The young woman set about picking through the debris, careful to avoid making too much noise, hoping that she'd be able to find a can that hadn't solidified yet. As she picked through the mess, she found a few smaller cans, but these were dried up and useless, unfortunately. It took her a good five minutes to find a large, six-gallon drum buried behind some old tires, and when she managed to pull it out she felt at least some of the contents inside move.

"I think this one's good!" she announced, pushing it over towards the car. "If you can give me a minute I can find a way to siphon some out..."

"Well, thanks, little lady." said the car, dimming its lights and lowering them back down. "Don't worry about a siphon; I got this."

Oily wasn't sure how a car could possibly open and drain a drum of oil by itself until she noticed something long and shimmering emerge from the dark underside of the car towards the drum. She gasped in surprise and stumbled backwards, away from the serpentine thing that was extending towards the drum. It suddenly stopped as the car glanced in her direction as she stumbled.

"Oh, I didn't mean to startle you, miss!" it said. "It's just me; I got a lot of these little suckers for handling stuff normal cars can't. It's not gonna bite."

The thing (perhaps a tendril of some kind?) continued towards the drum before jamming itself into the lid and prying the plastic container open with a single, smooth motion. Oily stared in surprise and awe as the tendril dipped into the oil inside with an ugly, squishing noise. Both she and the car winced at the sound.

"Ugh." groaned the car. "This stuff's gotta be centuries old; I think I gotta agree with you on how long I've been in here, miss."

"I heard it sloshing around." said Oily. "I think there should be some good oil left in there, somewhere."

With a nod, the car continued, pushing the tendril deeper, its headlights squinted as it concentrated on the task at hand. For a few moments, there was just the soft squishing of the solidified oil, but then the car's headlights opened wide again. There was a moment of silence, before a quiet slurping noise was heard, and the car visibly relaxed on its suspension.

"Right there! You were right, little missy; there's some good stuff right in the center." it said. "Ah, yeah...that's the stuff."

Oily watched in nervous silence as the car slowly drained the oil from the drum, before she spoke up again.

"So, um...do you have a name?" she asked. "I mean, you speak and all, so..."

"Oh yeah, I gotta name." replied the car. "Name's Roy. And yours?"

Roy. Not a common name out in the Wastes, nor was she expecting a human name, but it seemed to suit the car well. Oily assumed it was a man's name, for the car's voice had a unique, masculine quality to it, as well as a strange accent she couldn't identify. It gave it...him an allure that only compounded on his smooth, chrome-finished frame, and before Oily responded she could've sworn it sent an excited shiver down her spine.

"I'm Oil Can!" she said, her full name sounding both odd and ironic at the same time. "But, uh, everyone just calls me Oily."

The car, Roy, chuckled, and Oily blushed.

"I gotta say, that's an unusual name from...uh...my time, I guess. It's cute, though; I like it."

Oily blushed even more. Perhaps under any other circumstances she wouldn't, but something about Roy just felt...good to her. She couldn't put her finger on it; maybe it was because he was a man, or considered himself a man? She didn't have much experience with men; not many Silk-Queens did, these days.

"Th-thanks. Uh, Roy's a nice name, too..."

Roy's bumper turned upwards in what could only be a grin.

"Well, thank you kindly, little miss Oily. Your blush is pretty cute, too."

The Mechleric's face now resembled a stop light.

"Uh...um...your, um....your paint is really, um...shiny?" she countered.

Roy chuckled at that.

"You don't have to try and flatter me, Oily. I know I'm not the fanciest car around; all us Fusiliers got the short end of the stick when it comes to looks."

"No!" she gasped, shocked she'd even given him that impression. "No, no no! You're...you're beautiful, Roy! The-the way your fenders curve, your grille, the way your hood slicks backwards towards your windshield....you're...you're...handsome."

Roy looked surprised, but his grinning bumper remained.

"Well...I gotta admit, Oily, I've never been called handsome before."

She ran her hand nervously through her hair before she responded.

"Well...I mean, you're the nicest car I've ever seen...I've only ever worked on old rust buckets..."

"Ah, so I'm being complemented by a mechanic? Well, I guess I gotta take your opinion, then." he teased.

"Um...it's Mechleric." she corrected. "I'm um, I'm a Mechleric."

Roy tried hard not to laugh at that, just managing to reduce it to a smirk. Oily didn't get the joke.

"Well, it has been 300 years." he reasoned. "Back in my day, we called people who fixed cars mechanics."

"Oh!" she answered, puzzled. "I wonder why they changed it."

"I don't know. People forget; 'specially when it's been 300 years. Heck, you didn't know Dire Machines like me existed 'till now; I'm impressed you even kept the "mech" in the name."

"We did our best." she replied, cracking a smile at the comment.

There was a moment of awkward silence as the two stood/sat across from each other. The gentle slurping of the oil-thirsty tendril and Roy's humming reactor were the only notable sounds in the room. Eventually Roy pulled the tendril from the sludge, grateful for the lubricating drink, and let out a sigh of relief.

"I, uh, never thanked you proper for the oil." he said. "Thanks for bringing it over, uh...earlier."

"Oh, no problem." Oily replied. "I'm glad you liked it."

Roy nodded. More silence.

Oily couldn't take it anymore.

"I wasn't lying when I said you were handsome." she blurted out.

Roy raised a headlight, again surprised.

"I, uh...my clan, we...we don't have many men anymore." she admitted, hanging her head a bit. "It's hard to...to find someone...special, you know?"

Roy was silent for a moment, before creeping forward a few feet on his tires. His perfect, whitewall tires, framed by those fantastic, chrome-plated fenders...

"Little miss Oily..." he said, his accent seeming to grab her in a way it hadn't before. "Are you comin' on to big, old me?"

The Mechleric's face was resembling a stoplight again as she raised her eyes to meet his headlights.

"I, uh....uh...maybe?" she said, confused. "I mean, you're...you're beautiful, Roy. Handsome. Um, whatever it is..."

Roy crept forward again, before speaking up.

"What if I told you I thought you were kinda pretty, too?" he purred.

Poor Oily would've tumbled to the concrete floor if Roy hadn't had three tendrils waiting behind her to catch her.

-- Chapter 3 --

"Well, good thing I caught you, huh?" came Roy's voice, the world spinning back into focus.

"Wuh?" groaned Oily, clutching her head. "Wh-what happened?"

"I told you that you're pretty and you took it kinda hard." said Roy, his grille and headlight eyes now back in full focus.

"...Oh..." she whimpered, her blush returning.

"Woah, there, little lady." he chuckled. "Don't go fainting on me, again."

Oily shook her head, trying to fully clear her senses, and managed to plant her feet on the concrete floor. Roy's tendrils gave her support as she stood upright, shaking slightly as she recovered.

"I'm, uh...I'm sorry about that, I don't...know what came over me." she said, still breathing hard.

"Nah, don't be. I never was good at laying it on easy. Fusiliers are anything but subtle."

She nodded, a smile returning to her face. Roy tilted his front end, mulling something over in his head before his bumper turned up in a grin. With a gentle hiss of rubber on concrete, he rolled forward a few feet towards the Mechleric. Oily gulped in surprise, startled again by his forwardness, but she found herself a little too preoccupied to react at the moment.

Oily gasped as a thick, chrome tendril looped its way across her back, carefully drawing her closer to the broad, smooth hood of the car. Another tendril, smaller and thinner than the previous, carefully wound its way up her forearm, gently rubbing her in a reassuring way. The young woman's heart pounded in her chest, the sweat beading up on her face causing her face oils to run in streaks down her cheeks. This couldn't be happening; such a magnificent machine, a perfect car; a *living*, thinking car; and it longed for her. A small, meek creature like her had captured the desires of such a powerful, metal beast, and the mere thought of it made her head swim.

She almost didn't notice three more tendrils, one with an organic-looking, metal hand at its tip, began to slip under her clothes and lift them away. The hand gently cupped one of her pert breasts, gently squeezing the mound of flesh and eliciting a moan of excitement from her. First her old, ragged shaw and Mechleric pendant were lifted from her shoulders, followed swiftly by her grease-stained undershirt. She gulped as her arms were carefully guided upwards, freeing the old top and exposing her bare chest, only to shudder as the tendrils lowered to her belt and loosening it. Two tendrils slipped between her hands, granting her something to grip as her ragged shorts were pulled down to her ankles, exposing her pale, bare hips. Oily's words and limbs utterly failing her, unable to respond to her sudden de-robing, but her plush nethers and longing moans certainly indicated that she wasn't opposed to it.

"R-Roy..." she whimpered, her breathing ragged as her arousal skyrocketed.

"Something wrong, little lady?" he cooed back at her, his immense frame shuddering as her now bare body brushed up against his grille. "If you're not sure about this..."

"No!" she almost shouted, determined. "I...I don't want you to stop, Roy...please don't stop..."

The powerful, nuclear engine beneath Roy's hood growled with anticipation.

"But...Roy, I've....I've never..."

A tendril gently sidled up to her lips and shushed her, brushing lovingly across her ever-reddening skin.

"Don't you worry, Oily." he purred. "This ain't my first rodeo; we'll take this nice and slow, okay?"

She nodded, whimpering with need and lust, only to gasp in surprise as the nearly dozen or so tendrils that had sneakily wrapped around her limbs and body raised her up onto his spotless hood, laying her carefully across the warm metal. She shuddered with joyous bliss as she felt the immense power of the engine below her vibrating up through her body, stoking her desire to wondrous levels. The tendrils rubbed and stroked every inch of skin they could, evading only her most sensitive areas while a single, digited tendril ran lovingly through her hair. Roy had every opportunity to take her at that very moment, but he kept his word; he wanted her to be comfortable and ready when the time came to really impress her.

In all her years on this earth, Oily had never known the intimate company of another; contrary to popular belief, the Silk-Queens had not all resorted to lesbianism to make up for their lack of male partners. It had made things very difficult and frustrating for everyone involved, but especially for Oily, for even the handful of men left in the clan had no interest in a scrawny, short, pale-skinned Mechleric. Even her own feeble attempts to satisfy herself hadn't sated her longings, and thus sex had eluded her. But this? Even without penetrating her, Roy had brought her to new heights of lust and pleasure; the many smooth, strong, metal coils that rubbed across her skin were already more gratifying than anything else she'd ever experienced. Had she the inclination, Oily could have just let him touch her like this and never regretted going further, content to just lie here and receive all the physical attention she could ever need...but Roy was offering her even more.

Slowly but surely, one of the thicker tendrils pulled away from Oily's bare thigh and lowered itself into position, poised right at the entrance to her sex and ready to strike at a moment's notice. The ecstatic squirms and twitches of the petite road warrior were kept in check by the rest of Roy's probing appendages, ensuring a perfect angle of access for the eager tendril. But, Roy wanted to be sure; certain that she was ready to take the last plunge into the world of love-making, and the tendril remained at bay as he spoke.

"You ready, Oily?" he whispered to her, his powerful voice rumbling up through his chassis and into the soft flesh of her body. "I can keep this up all day, if ya want..."

"Ah..." she gasped, basking in the attention from the other questing, metal tentacles and groping hands. "t-tell m-me what it's l-like..."

The car chuckled, but kept up his careful ministrations.

"It's tight and warm...and wet...your cute little cunny's gonna squeeze all around me while I push my way in..."

She whimpered, his clear words painting pictures of ecstasy in her mind.

"You're already soaking wet, Oily; it'll be smooth and painless. That's the trick, little lady; get you all worked up so you're body's all open and eager...then I'll start pumping in and out, rocking you back and forth up there on my hood...probably won't stop after the first or second time you've cum, either...If you wanna, I'll just keep going...makin' you call out my name while you're leaking all over the place...I might even just fuck you until you're completely exhausted..."

She nearly choked with excitement at his use of the word "fuck". There was something so primal about that word when he said it like that; she'd never imagined it could be used in such an intimate way, before. It was enough to send her over the edge and let her make up her mind. She had to know. She had to make him prove what he was saying was true. She NEEDED to make him prove it.

"I need it, Roy..." she whined, her palms clenched tightly against the warm, polished steel beneath her. "Please...I need it..."

Roy didn't say anything, only letting out a soft groan that transitioned into a chuckle. With the precision and ferocity of a coiled viper, his tendril struck, plunging into her depths without so much as a moment's hesitation. Oily nearly screamed from the sensation, burying her face against Roy's hood to muffle her cry and so as not to disturb the others upstairs. The other tendrils held her tightly, one of the metal hands gripping her own right hand firmly and lovingly; Roy was not going to half-ass this experience for her, and he intended to make sure that the petite, little Mechleric would never forget this day.

In and out he went, jackhammering her soft, tender insides with the smooth but solid head of his penetrating tendril. Feminine fluids oozed from around it as it pistoned in and out of her virgin hole, eliciting whimpers, squeaks, and squeals from the young woman. Her cute little rear was raised nearly a foot in the air, granting Roy perfect access, all while squishing her small breasts again his warm steel. In her twenty-three years in the Wastes, Oily had heard of sex many times over; she was certain that every case she heard of must have been pathetically inept compared to what Roy was doing to her, now.

Roy bucked on his suspension, grunting with exertion and raw, unbridled lust. 300 years was hard on a Dire Machine, even when in hibernation, and his sexual desires were among the many things he needed tending to. Beneath his chassis, an impressive, alien protrusion had emerged in the past few minutes, leaking copious amounts of a thick, silvery fluid onto the floor. As he plundered Oily's nethers, a few spare tendrils were stroking and pumping his own, metal loins, satisfying his own needs rather than asking his lover to do so. The ancient car had no regrets in doing all the work; even centuries ago he'd enjoyed pleasuring his partners far more than them trying to pleasure him, and Oily was no different. He might've contemplated how old habits die hard on any other occasion, but in the throes of passion he only had pleasure on his mind; his and Oily's.

Oily writhed helplessly atop her impromptu, chrome bed, fighting to keep herself from crying out in joyous rapture. Roy's powerful, infinitely flexible coils were wrapped lovingly around her, tightly enough to keep her from sliding off the hood but loosely enough to allow her to pitch and turn at her body's whims. The finger-tipped tentacle had moved from her hair back to her breasts, alternating between the two to drive her excitement as high as she could. It was as though she was being adored by a dozen, passionate lovers all at once, but with the precision and cohesiveness only a singular partner could provide. As the singular, penetrating limb plowed in and out of her dripping pussy, she could barely lift her stomach or hips from Roy's hood, all of her strength going to her quivering limbs.

Roy wasn't going slow; while he had been happy to slowly build up to the main event, he found himself unable to hold back, now. Speed wasn't an advertised feature of a Fusilier, but Roy emphasized it with relish, especially when it came to a new lover. Hit hard, hit fast, and make a lasting impression; that was his game, and he was damn good at it. Oily was feeling it first-hand, and while she wanted this euphoria to last forever, her body was reaching its limits, and her climax was imminent.

"Roy!" she yelped, the pitch over her cry shaky and wild from her body being pleasured so furiously. "I-I-s-something’s...c-coming...!!!"

"\*huff\* Let it out, Oily." he panted. "Don't fight it!"

With a helpless wail of explosive ecstasy, the Mechleric came, her vision going white as her body reacted to her first, true orgasm. Small streaks of feminine fluids were squirted across Roy's hood, gleaming in the light from his headlights, just as seemingly every muscle in the woman's small body tensed spastically. Her hand clutching Roy's squeezed with startling strength, while her free hand held tight to the edge of his hood. Her toes curled, her back arched, and her eyes snapped shut. Her heart and lungs seemed to stop for just a moment as her nerves fired, and sweat dribbled down onto her metal resting place.

Roy stopped rocking on his suspension as he felt his lover collapse against his hood, her breathing ragged and her heart pounding hard enough to reverberate throughout his metal body. The poor lady was practically crying, overwhelmed from the force of her first orgasm, dozens of tendrils stroking over her exhausted form. Roy hadn't held back; he had given it his all, and he let out a tired sigh of his own, knowing he'd more than satisfied his new lover.

"You okay?" he panted, his headlights flickering from the excitement.

"Rroyy?" slurred Oily, her face planted against his metal. "Ish...ish it like thath all the time?"

"No," he chuckled, reassuringly tightening his tendrils around her. "...no, I got a bit carried away, Oily. Sorry about that."

"Okay..." she gasped in return. "Good....I don't think I can handle another one like that."

Roy nodded his front end in response, snorting as he vented excess heat from his grille.

"Heh. Got it. I'll remember that."

"WHAT IN THE WASTES IS GOING ON IN HERE?!?!" came a shriek of surprise.

Both Roy and Oily's eyes locked on the still-open door where, silhouetted against the dim light, was Brakka with her rifle raised. The Amazonian woman was in a combat stance, but her face betrayed her confusion, uncertain of how to process the sight before her. There were several moments of stunned silence before Oily feebly raised herself onto one arm and groggily addressed her friend.

"Hey, Brakka!" she managed, a weak grin on her face. "You have GOT to try this!"

-- Chapter 4 --

Roy took a long draught of oil through his feeding tendril again, his engine still revving from the exertion of the past half hour. It had been a long, LONG time since he'd last gotten his rocks off, and so the thick pool of silvery nanites on the floor below him was quite substantial. Several pints of the stuff had even gotten onto the muscular legs of the woman currently wrapped over his grille and front bumper, mixing with the sweat on her tan skin. Brakka's arms were draped over the top of his hood, her forehead pressed softly against his grille as several tendrils supported her back and kept her upright. Her breathing was as shallow as Roy's would have been, had he been human, her body spent from the exhaustive sex she'd just had.

"Oily wasn't kidding." she whispered into the grille, her large muscles more relaxed than any other time she could think of. "Never thought my best lay would be a talking car."

"Yeah," gasped Boltz, her ebony form splayed over the big car's hood and a thick coil laying just outside of her vagina. "never thought I'd hear those words."

"Amen!" said Scrapper, who was sitting up and stretching atop Roy's roof, a pair tendrils laying across her legs.

Oily simply smiled and said nothing, content to remain coiled up comfortably against the broad windshield of her lover, her right hand clasped tightly around one of Roy's.

"And I never thought my best would be with four, gorgeous ladies all at once." remarked the chrome-plated car. "Three, maybe, but never four."

"Never?" giggled Scrapper. "You got enough limbs for a whole clan, big guy!"

Roy simply smirked and took another draught from the oil drum, before withdrawing his feeding tendril at long last.

"Well, I think that drum's done for." he said. "Oily, thank you for finding that, again; 300 years has left me pretty dry."

"No problem..." she mumbled, still exhausted from the intense, erotic workout she'd experienced half an hour before.

Roy groaned as he shifted on his wheels, careful not to dislodge any of his ladies as he did the car equivalent of a full-body stretch. Now that every system in his chassis was in full, working order, he was desperate to see the outside world once again. Even if the world was nothing like he had known it centuries ago, he so longed for the sun again, and he was certainly curious to see where his new lovers called home. While his mind was drawn to images of films that depicted such a bleak, apocalyptic future, he reasoned that it must have something to offer if it had produced such beautiful women.

"Well, girls, Oily told me you all lost your ride..." he began, relaxing from his stretch. "...I'd be happy to give you all a lift home."

Brakka, Boltz, and Oily let out exhausted groans of approval, while Scrapper jumped right off his roof and did a celebratory dance.

“’Course I’m not gonna be much use if the roads aren’t good.” He pointed out. “Not sure what you ladies are all used to drivin’, but I’m no off-roader.”

“Don’t worry that big, chrome bumper of yours!” chirped Scrapper, patting the big car’s righthand door. “You’re talking to the best guide in the region; I’ll find us a smooth way home.”

The next hour was spent letting the girls recover from their romp (though Scrapper seemed completely unphased by the whole thing), while Roy gave his wheels a good spin, lifting them off the garage floor one at a time. Any ordinary tires would have rotted away centuries ago, but being a Dire machine Roy shared the human body's ability to heal and self-maintain, allowing his tires to remain fully intact and inflated. As the Silk-Queen warriors rummaged upstairs for their gear, the old Fusilier wondered how he'd fit in out there. Back in his time, he was a showpiece; a marvel of modern engineering mixed with a scientific miracle that people would flock to car shows to see. Out there? Roy had no idea what "out there" even was, anymore.

It was with more than a hint of fear the old, pristine car reached out with his tendrils and gripped the base of the garage door. It had taken him considerable effort to turn himself around in such tight quarters, but with some bumping and scuffing he'd managed it. He didn't even bother trying to open it via the designated button on the wall; without power, it would be a fruitless effort. With a whine from his reactor, Roy forced the sliding door open, raising it upwards and letting light spill into the garage for the first time in over 300 years. Even as a machine, Roy's headlights blinked shut in response to the blazing sun, recoiling his tendrils in shock. As his vision returned to him, the Fusilier got his first glimpse of the new world, and the remains of his old town.

The town was a battered shell of what it had once been. A small, prarie town now reduced to so much sun-baked rubble, it was barely recognizable amongst the sand piled in drifts along the streets. Instead of the welcoming, occasional sounds of main street and passing cars, there was dead silence; an otherworldly deafness that accompanied the scathing daylight. Roy felt himself roll backwards a bit in shock, as it finally hit him just how far removed he was from his old world. In the comforting, familiar dark of his garage he'd been able to cope with the arrival of his strange, new companions, but now...now he wasn't so sure.

"Roy?" came Oily's voice from behind the car. "Are you ready?"

The chrome car's reactor thrummed quietly, the large car saying nothing for a moment as he tried to come to terms with his thoughts. What would he even do out there, in the Wastes, as they called it? Would others accept him? Maybe, he told himself. Maybe. But he had four ladies who were more than happy to have him, and to a 300-year-old concept car like him, that was all he could ask for.

"Yeah." he responded, his bumper turned up in a smile as the Mechleric approached his front end. "I think I'll be alright, Oily."