Side Story Copy

Oswald Corvus sat at his workbench, focused intently on his latest creation. It was the early days of the Empire. Just after the Doppelganger War. Advancement had slowed now that it was over, but for the first time in years, he could work uninterrupted. No interference. No regulation. That was… until he appeared. Lucius Novastride. Oswald glanced up, mildly surprised. “My lord. It is not often I see you leaving your quarters now. What is the occasion?” he asked, feigning interest. In truth, he wanted him gone as quickly as possible. Lucius seemed equally uninterested in being there. “If we are to continue on this path,” Lucius said, “we will need others like yourself.” Corvus let out a short laugh. “There is no one like myself.”

“Nevertheless,” Lucius continued, unfazed, “I have found someone. He held a similar position in another empire’s army. Now that that army has been sufficiently crushed by us… he is looking for work.” A pause. “Work I am keen to provide him. After seeing what he is capable of.” Lucius stepped aside slightly. “Come in. Doctor Helix.” A man in a top hat and goggles entered, practically radiating enthusiasm. “Greetings, Doctor Corvus! I have heard much about you. I am Doctor Icarus Helix. I must say, I’m thrilled at the opportunity to work with you. Exchanging ideas, building on each other’s theories… it sounds like a wonderful intellectual experience!” Corvus didn’t even try to hide his

disinterest. “Need no collaboration,” he muttered. “It is already decided,” Lucius said flatly, and then he left.

A partnership was formed. Shaky at first, but both men were brilliant. Icarus spoke endlessly, ideas, theories, possibilities. He loved the process. Corvus did not. Still… together, they created. What would become the Multitool. The foundation of Multi-tech. The earliest Proxy units, machines capable of regulating the code of entire worlds. Every major advancement of the early Empire traced back to that lab. Helix was ecstatic. He had finally found someone on his level. Corvus felt something else entirely. Threatened. He refused to accept the truth. That it had taken both of them. That he was not the sole mind behind it all.

Years passed. One morning, Helix entered their shared lab, ready for another day of work. He stopped. Corvus stood there, waiting. Two officials beside him. Before Helix could speak, they grabbed him, restraining his arms. “Oswald… what is the meaning of this?” Helix asked, disbelief creeping into his voice. Corvus didn’t hesitate. “The meaning of this?” he said calmly. “You sold us out.” Helix blinked. “I know you’ve been selling our blueprints to the Union.” For a moment, Helix just stared. Then, “Absurd,” he said. “Why would I ever align myself with a lesser nation like that? What have I done to make you believe this, my friend?” “Don’t pretend innocence,” Corvus snapped. “I’ve been with this Empire since its foundation. I know what evidence looks like.” He activated a hologram. Fabricated. Poorly, if you knew what to look for, but it was convincing enough.

The officials tightened their grip. Helix struggled. “Corvus… how could you…?” His voice cracked. “All I ever did was work with you…” They began dragging him away. “Lucius will hear of this...” He stopped. Something shifted. Anger. Real anger. “No…” he said, quieter now. Sharper. “You will pay for this.” His gaze locked onto Corvus. “You’re a fraud.” A breath. “I’ll show you the power of the Helix mind.”

Helix waited. For months. Surely they would see his innocence. Surely Lucius would come. Set

things right, but that moment never came. One day, a guard approached his cell. The door opened with a dull mechanical hiss. “Doc…” the man started, then corrected himself. “No. That title’s been stripped. Mister Helix.” A pause. “You’re scheduled for execution one week from today. Treason against the Multiversal Empire.” Helix froze. “What…?” His voice faltered. “Surely you understand I’ve been set up. Please... let me speak to Lucius. I’ll take anyone. Even that arogant Fleet Admiral, anyone.” The guard didn’t react.

“You know,” he said flatly, “I always thought you were cooler than Corvus.” Helix blinked. “There was a whole debate about it. Who was smarter. Who really made everything.” He shook his head. “Guess we were wrong.” His expression hardened. “You’re a fraud. And a traitor. Rot.” The door slammed shut. Helix’s head lowered. And in that moment… He understood. No one was coming. Not Lucius. Not the Empire. Not the truth. It didn’t matter what actually happened. He had already been decided. A scapegoat. So he made a decision. If no one would save him he would save himself. That night, under the cover of darkness, the cell door opened. Quietly. Effortlessly.

He had designed it, after all. Escape… was trivial. He walked through the facility unseen, slipping between systems he understood better than anyone who built them. By morning, he was gone. By evening, everyone knew. Screens lit up across Empire worlds. His face. Everywhere. WANTED: ICARUS HELIX – TRAITOR. Helix stood in the crowd, watching one of the broadcasts. A commentator praised Corvus. Called him the sole architect of the Empire’s greatest technologies. Helix’s hand tightened into a fist. He needed to disappear. So he did.

He found a world no one would look for him. Unremarkable. Forgotten. Perfect. At first, he built a bunker. Simple, and safe. Then the Empire found him. The first attack barely failed. His defenses held, just barely. So he built more. More layers. More systems. More safeguards. They came again. Stronger. So he built again. More complexity. More traps. More redundancy. Again, and again, and again. The bunker became a structure. The structure became a system. The system became... a

labyrinth. Endless. Shifting. Impossible. The Empire kept coming for years. Until one day… They didn't. A war with the Union. Bigger priorities. Helix was forgotten.

Occasionally, someone would find the world. Treasure hunters, explorers, opportunists, they all came for the same reason. Each of them believed there was something waiting at the center of the labyrinth, something worth the risk. A prize, an answer, some hidden truth that justified the journey. None of them ever made it through. They couldn't, because Helix had designed it that way. There was no exit, only the illusion that one existed, and that illusion was enough to keep them moving forward until the maze consumed them.

At some point, something else changed. A faint glow began to form around Helix's head, subtle at first, easy to dismiss as another anomaly in a world already filled with them. But it didn't fade. Instead, it stabilized, becoming something constant, something real. The Mind of the Multiverse had appeared without explanation. He didn't know when it had begun or why it had chosen him. There was a part of him that wondered if the Caretaker had given it to him as a reward for what he had created, but there was no answer to that question, and no way to find one.

What he did know was how it felt.

His thoughts no longer slowed. They didn't pause, didn't settle, didn't leave space for rest. Ideas layered on top of each other endlessly, branching into possibilities faster than he could consciously track. Every system could be improved, every structure refined, every flaw corrected. Plans formed constantly, each one feeding into the next. Revenge, optimization, expansion his mind ran through all of it without stopping. Sleep became less of a choice and more of an impossibility. Even when his body demanded rest, his thoughts refused to allow it. He worked continuously, driven by a momentum he could no longer control, until something finally forced him to stop.

His body was failing. The signs were gradual, but undeniable. Fatigue lingered in ways his mind could not override, his movements slowed, and for the first time since gaining the Mind, he recognized

a limitation he could not think his way around. He was aging, and if nothing changed, he would die before achieving anything he still needed to do. Corvus would outlive him. The work would remain unfinished. That was unacceptable. So he began a new project. If his body could not sustain him, then he would replace it. He turned his focus toward cloning, developing new bodies that could serve as vessels for his consciousness. The idea was simple in theory, grow a suitable host, transfer his mind, and continue indefinitely, but the execution proved far more complicated. Organic systems did not behave like machines. They were unpredictable, resistant, prone to failure in ways that logic alone could not resolve.

The first batch failed completely. The second showed promise but deteriorated quickly. The third did not survive long enough to be usable. Each attempt revealed something new, and with each failure, he adjusted his approach, refining the process with relentless precision. He continued, driven by necessity and obsession in equal measure. Eventually, after countless iterations, he achieved what he had been aiming for. A stable body. It showed no signs of decay, no structural weaknesses, no immediate flaws. For the first time, he allowed himself a moment of satisfaction. This was the solution.

With this, he could finally move forward, free from the limitations of his current form. He pulled the lever and released it from the pod, already anticipating the next step. The body stepped forward, younger than him, unscarred, whole. For a brief moment, everything aligned exactly as he had planned. Then it breathed. Helix froze as the body's chest rose and fell on its own. A second later, its eyes opened, unfocused at first, then slowly sharpening as it looked around the room. "What… where am I?" The voice was uncertain, searching. Helix exhaled, the tension draining from him as his hand moved toward the disposal lever. "Another failure," he muttered, disappointment outweighing any initial hope. "At this rate, I'll never surpass Corvus."

He was about to pull it when the clone spoke again. "Corvus?" The shift was immediate. The confusion in its expression hardened into something sharper, more defined. There was no recognition in

the traditional sense, no memory to anchor it, and yet the name clearly meant something. Helix paused. "You have… memories?" he asked, studying him more closely now. The clone looked down at his hands, flexing them as if trying to understand their existence. "I don't know anything," he said slowly, struggling to articulate something he couldn't fully grasp. "But that name… I hate him. Who am I?"

Helix stepped closer, observing him with a level of attention he hadn't given the previous attempts. There was something different here, something that didn't fit the pattern of failure he had come to expect. "You…" he began, but the words didn't come immediately. It had been a long time since he had spoken to anyone. A real conversation, even one as simple as this, was enough to make him aware of something he had been ignoring for far too long. He was alone.

The realization settled in quietly, without resistance. When he spoke again, his voice was steadier. "You are my son," he said. "Aurelius Helix. Welcome to the family." Aurel hesitated for a moment, clearly unsure how to process that, but the uncertainty didn't last. Instead, something simpler took over. He stepped forward and wrapped his arms around him without thinking. Helix stiffened at first, caught off guard by the contact, but after a brief pause, he returned it. For the first time in a long time, he didn't pull away.

Helix's focus shifted completely. This was the new goal. He poured everything he knew into his son. For the first time, he had someone to truly share his ideas with, someone who could keep up, challenge him, expand on his thoughts in real time. It was the kind of collaboration he had always claimed to hate, but secretly wanted, something he was never truly allowed with Corvus. Aurel was brilliant, undeniably so, but he was also perceptive. Beneath the constant stream of ideas and theories, he could feel something else in his father. A quiet sadness. A tension that never fully went away. And underneath all of it… paranoia.

After a year or two, the two of them were working side by side on a new project. A robot, something similar in structure to Mother, though more refined in Helix's eyes. They had been making

steady progress when Aurel suddenly stopped. Helix glanced up. “What’s wrong, my son?” Aurel hesitated, then spoke plainly. “Why are we doing this? You say you want revenge, but… all you’ve done is hide.” Helix didn’t answer immediately. When he did, his voice carried a tension that hadn’t been there before. “Because we are not ready,” he said. “And the Empire is waiting just outside to strike. You’ve seen the maze. You’ve seen what happens to those who try.” There was an edge to his words now, something unstable.

Aurel frowned slightly. “Not for the past five years,” he said quietly. Then, softer, but more direct: “Old man… listen. That thing, the power you have. I love you, but it’s driving you mad. You need to...” “I am not mad!” Helix snapped, the outburst sudden and sharp. “This is the only way we can stop Corvus!” The room went silent. Aurel clenched his fist, but he didn’t argue further. Instead, he turned and walked out. Helix didn’t follow. He just stood there, staring at the workbench, the weight of the moment settling in after the anger had already passed.

Later, Aurel stood at the edge of the structure, looking down into the endless space below. He loved his father. That hadn’t changed, but something else had. Even if he was a clone, even if he wasn’t the original, he wanted people to know the Helix name. To understand what his father had created, what he was capable of. He wanted that legacy to exist in the open, not buried inside a maze no one could escape, and as much as it hurt to admit it… Helix wasn’t capable of doing that anymore. That night, Aurel left. He didn’t make a scene. He didn’t try to explain. All he left behind was a small note. I will make you proud.

For a while, he drifted. The multiverse was overwhelming at first. He didn’t understand it, not fully. He was naive in ways Helix never had been, but that didn’t stop him from moving forward.

Eventually, he found his way to Porta Nexus. There, he began presenting his ideas to anyone willing to listen. Most weren’t. They dismissed him quickly, seeing nothing more than an inexperienced newcomer with theories too ambitious to take seriously, but one person did listen. A wealthy Purrmont

merchant. The man crossed his arms, looking down at the collection of devices and schematics Aurel had laid out before him. His expression didn't change much, but there was a glint of interest in his eyes.

"I can see why others would dismiss this," he said slowly. "But us Purrmonts… we have an eye for talent." He extended a hand. "We'll invest. Mr…?" Aurel lit up immediately. "Aurelius Helix!" They shook.

Helix Corporation was born. At first, things moved quickly. Aurel's ideas were strong, his innovations impressive enough to gain traction even without major backing. His profits began to rise, and with them, his confidence. He would prove it. Not through revenge. Not by tearing Corvus down, but by surpassing him. Still, his company remained small in the grand scale of the multiverse. The Empire didn't notice. Not yet, and Aurel… wasn't a businessman. He trusted too easily, missed details that others exploited, and found himself repeatedly swindled by people who understood the system better than he did. Progress stalled. Finances tightened.

Then, one day, someone new appeared. A man in a green coat. A strange mask with horns. The offer was simple. Funding. More than Aurel could have imagined. In exchange, he would align himself with them. With their group. Their… ideology. Aurel hesitated, but only briefly. He accepted. Not entirely willingly, but he didn't have another option. From that point on, his focus began to shift again.

Less time inventing, ore time managing. Running a company. Maintaining appearances. It wasn't what he wanted. So he found a workaround.

He revisited old designs. The Proxy line. Then he built something new. An improved model. One made in his own image. It would act as him. Handle the business. Deal with the world. While he stayed where he belonged, behind the scenes. When the unit activated, its eyes flickered to life.

It looked at him… strangely. "This is… odd," it said. "I remember being you. Not fully. Fragments."

It paused, processing. "But I also feel… different." Its gaze shifted downward. "I was a clone. Now I'm

a machine copy of a clone. A copy of a copy." Aurel smiled, unfazed. "Yeah. I get that," he said. "I felt the same way when I realized what I was." He stepped closer. "But you're not me." He held out his hand. "We're not going to have the same experiences anymore. Even if you're acting as me, you're still your own person." The unit looked at his hand, then back at him, processing. "In my eyes," Aurel continued, a faint smile forming, "you're Eight." The unit hesitated for only a moment before taking his hand, and just like that, Eight was born.

Helix Corp didn't just grow. It exploded. What had started as a small, struggling venture rapidly expanded into something far greater. Aurel's innovations pushed the boundaries of what people thought possible, while Eight handled everything Aurel couldn't. Negotiations, logistics, contracts, he understood the system in a way Aurel never had. He was efficient, precise… and a little ruthless when he needed to be. Together, they became something else entirely. A partnership of legends.

As their influence spread, the larger world began to shift around them. The Empire fell. Project Deforestation marked its end, and with it, the death of Corvus at the hands of Rebbecca and The Reaper. When Aurel heard the news, he felt something he hadn't expected. Relief came first, immediate and undeniable, but it didn't last on its own. There was something else beneath it, something quieter and harder to define. It wasn't over. Not for him. There was still something he needed to prove.

A few years later, during the events surrounding the Wishing Door, a familiar interruption cut through his work. Aion. His broadcast forced its way into the space, as it always did, impossible to ignore once it began. Aurel barely glanced at it at first, already expecting to tune it out until it passed.

"It's only been a few days," Aion said, his voice carrying that same practiced confidence, "and yet two Aspects have already been claimed. Firstly, by the amateur Captain Raleigh and the mysterious man she hangs out with..." Aurel didn't react. That wasn't his concern. He turned back to his work.

"And the other Aspect?" Aion continued. "Well, former Fleet Admiral of the Multiversal Empire, Admiral Marcus Novastride has taken it for himself. Watch out for this one. The Empire may

be gone, but it looks like he still has some fuel left in the tank." That name made him pause. Marcus Novastride. Aurel glanced back at the screen, only half interested at first. Then he saw it. Marcus. Standing beside, his father. Helix looked worse than Aurel remembered. Thinner. Sunken into his chair, as if time had finally started catching up to him. And yet… he was smiling. The image cut away before Aurel could process anything else. The room went quiet. Neither Aurel nor Eight spoke. There was nothing to say.

They didn't know what had happened. They didn't know if Helix was alive, if Marcus had killed him, or if something worse had occurred. All they had was that image, and the uncertainty it left behind. So they did the only thing they could. They kept going. Helix Corp grew even faster after that. Not just out of ambition anymore, but pressure. A need to reach something higher, something that could finally put an end to the lingering doubt neither of them could shake. The war came and went. Marcus was defeated before Aurel ever had the chance to confront him. Whatever answers he might have had disappeared along with him. In the end, nothing changed. The question remained.

Then the cost of his earlier decision came due. The man in the green coat returned. He appeared without warning, as if he had always been there, simply choosing when to be seen. The strange mask with its horned silhouette made him impossible to mistake for anyone else. Aurel didn't greet him. He already knew why he was there. The man stepped forward and extended his hand. "Make me a transcendent-class item," he said. It wasn't a request.

"So yeah… then I got taken hostage, Noir busted us out, we met… and well… Eight died." Aurel stood at the edge of the island in Noir's world, staring out into the storm. Lightning flickered in the distance, briefly illuminating the dark ocean below. The wind carried a low, constant hum, like the world itself was mourning something it didn't fully understand. Beside him stood a small memorial stone, set carefully near the edge. In honor of Eight – Proxy Helix. Noir and Eevynin stood nearby in silence. Normally, one of them would have said something, anything, to break the tension. A joke, a

jab, some kind of deflection. But not this time. They could both see it in him. He wasn't just sad. He was shattered.

Aurel looked down at the small piece of living metal resting in his hand, its surface shifting faintly, like it still had something left to say. "Most people would say Eight was a great guy…" he muttered, his voice uneven. Then he let out a quiet, bitter laugh. "Who am I kidding? Everyone hated him. Called him slimy. Fake." His grip tightened slightly. "If only I… if only I had gotten through to him… maybe he would've…" The thought didn't finish. It didn't need to.

Eevynin stepped forward slightly, careful with her words. "Are you sure you don't want to go back? Your company… everything you built. You were talking about legacy. About proving Corvus wrong." Aurel shook his head, not even looking up. "No… I can't. Not without Eight." He paused. "It was never really about that anyway." Noir shifted uncomfortably, clearly trying to find the right words and failing. "Hey… I've got plenty of reasons to hate that bastard too," she said, her tone rough around the edges. "But he's dead. And what happened to Eight was… yeah. It was awful. He got used." She exhaled sharply, frustrated with herself. "Ugh… I'm terrible at this."

Eevynin stepped in, softer, more deliberate. "I think what she means is… you've already surpassed him." Aurel glanced up slightly. "You helped us. Both of us. More than you probably realize." She gave a small smile. "You inspired us... Even if you're not as smart as me." That got the faintest reaction. Aurel smiled, just barely. "Yeah…" He took a breath, steadying himself. "Wanna go work on that monstrosity of yours?" Eevynin nodded. Before leaving, Aurel turned back one last time.

He walked up to the stone and gently placed the piece of living metal on top of it. It settled there, shifting slightly, as if acknowledging its place. Then he stepped away, and this time he didn't look back.