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To Denny
A book about a better world for my (much) better half.

And to all the bionic heroes who are helping to build that future. May all your departures be thrilling and your arrivals glorious.

PROLOGUE

I'm part human/part machine.
I'm a bit bionic.
I'm like Wolverine.
You could call me Alfie Wolverine.

That's not true, by the way. Not going to lie: I'm not even one bit like Wolverine. 'I'm like Wolverine' is one of the things they teach you to say at Limb Lab during New Limb, New Life lessons. They worry people will laugh at you or start hating on you for being part mechanical, so they teach you a load of jokes and put-downs.

And, in case the jokes don't work, they teach you karate.

They even teach you what to think.

For instance, don't think too much about how your accident happened. Accidents happen. End of. Start talking about it, and you'll start thinking about it. Start thinking about it, and you'll soon be thinking bad thoughts such as, *Was it my fault? Why didn't I*

just . . . ? etc. Rule number one: don't talk about it. Talk about something else.

That's the advice.

So I'm not going to talk to you about me.

I'm going to talk to you about Eric.

Eric is missing.

There is no sign of him. Weird, because normally wherever Eric goes he leaves plenty of signs. For instance: broken doors, crushed wheelie bins, and, one time, a car stuck up a tree. (Controversial!)

Today, there is nothing. No clue. It's like he's evaporated. It's not like he would be easy to miss . . .

Eric is six foot six.

He likes to sing.

He's super polite.

He does as he's told.

He's made of metal.

When he's cheerful, his eyes light up. Literally.

When he's worried, he spits fire. Literally.

Eric tends to take thing literally.

He can prepare light snacks.

Get rid of unwanted guests.

He can be conveniently stored in a shed.

He is magnetic when anxious.

Everyone knows him.

No one has seen him.

The thing is, I really want to find him for you.

Eric always says if you lose something try to retrace your steps.

So I'm retracing my steps.

These are my steps . . .