

Cyberpunk: Badland Madman Chapter 22 - Corpo Trails, Hoverboard Ain't That Bad, Meeting Aldecaldos

Woosh!

Cypher removed the sack from the Wraith leader's head. The face was ordinary with the mask removed. The eyes were Kiroshi with non-human styled irises. The arms were chrome with tubes running over them. He didn't know what kind of cyberware it was.

"Bruce Ward? Never heard of him before." Cypher muttered after Atlas filled him in. "All this just to shake somebody down for cash? Man really brought that much heat for little ol' me?"

Atlas' human avatar was present, leaning against the nearby wall, arms crossed. "After Scav hunting? I would say they went in unprepared."

"True." Cypher clenched his right fist and spat on his knuckles. He pulled his arm and punched the Wraith leader in the face. It instantly woke the man up.

"Looking for me?"

"Uh...? Huh...? Wh... what? Where the hell am I? No! What was that thing? Those monsters! You... you're Cypher Blackwell!"

Bruce Ward tried to break free, but the chains made from Arc Alloy weren't so easy to break.

"Whoa, you know who I am? Guess I'm famous, huh?" Cypher said with no enthusiasm. He wasn't even looking and instead worked to wear metal knuckles on both his hands. "My netrunner says you came clean. You nuked all your data before this raid. Means you're hiding something. And I don't do secrets."

"We just—"

Bam!

Cypher didn't wait and punched with the metal knuckle, ripping the cheek off the Wraith's face. "I wasn't really a violent man before this life. But Night City's a great teacher. So, first question, who ordered you to target me? I know you fuckers were scouting my property for days, so don't lie."

"He is trying to access the net." Atlas suddenly spoke, walking to stand in the field of view of the Wraith. However, Atlas no longer looked like Morgan Freeman. Instead, Atlas had taken his giant Omnisiah form with red robes, cyber arms, tentacles, and other trinkets all over him.

"A-Ah, what the fuck are you?!"

"I am what you should fear," Atlas replied.

Cypher nodded, then pulled the gun off his hip. Just a plain pistol. He pointed it right at the Wraith's cock. "I'm counting to five. You answer the damn question, or I'm turning you into a

bitch. Don't worry, I'll patch you up nice and give you a real deep pussy. Ain't it called Midnight Lady? Yeah, that's the one. Then maybe I'll call up some Animals so they can have a little fun."

"..."

Bruce Ward stared at Cypher's face for a very long time, horror all over his eyes and messed-up face. Scavs tortured you, made XBDs, or harvested your organs and chrome. Wraiths did the same. But this was his first time being told his gender would be changed, and then... Bruce failed to even imagine what those Animals would do.

"It was Dogkiller. Never contacted me direct, but one of his lieutenants came sniffing around for this gig."

Cypher eyed Atlas for a moment. Dogkiller's name had appeared before during that cave massacre with Panam. He didn't know where Dogkiller was, but he knew that the man had his Wraiths spread all around Night City. Besides, Dogkiller was the leader of all Wraiths.

Bam!

Cypher punched him again.

"W-Why? I answered!"

"Felt like it," Cypher said. "Why'd you nuke your personal data? What were your orders?"

"Don't know. They just told me to do it. Then rough you up some, see what falls out."

"Did they explicitly instruct you to extort Cypher Blackwell for money?" Atlas asked in a demonic voice.

"No!" Bruce yelled. "I mean, yes! But they didn't drop an eddie count. Just ordered me to lean on you some. Rattle you with my boys. Maybe spill a little blood too, if I could."

"If you could?" Atlas repeated. "They said it?"

"They did! Didn't sound too sure I could pull it off. So I rounded up every gutter gonk I could get... They all zeroed?" Bruce asked.

Bam!

Cypher punched him again, just taking out his annoyance at that point. He looked at Atlas then. "You think someone's tryna feel me out or something?"

"That seems to be the case. I naturally did not allow any communication to go out from the Wraiths, and there was no spy in visible range, nor a drone. However, if someone was watching from a spy satellite, then they may have seen the Leapers."

Cypher hummed, scratching his chin lazily. He wasn't scared or worried that someone saw his tech. The leapers were there for protection, and they did it. The annoying part was not knowing who was spying on him, or who put the Wraiths to this job.

"Make more Leapers. Big ones, gotta be a hundred, then make a bunch of tiny hand-sized Leapers packed with explosives. Crank out as many as you can, like a thousand maybe. Turn all the land and water around me into one giant minefield. We got all these nice people donating their skulls, so turn every last one into Gun-Skulls and slap DL-18 Blasters on them. Keep 'em outta sight though, strictly for indoor security."

Cypher looked into the distance, frowning.

"If we had our energy shit sorted out, we could've built a couple of SecUnits for security. Those things are straight-up super soldiers. Anyway, design hidden turrets with energy blasters in mind. And make some Microbots packed with explosives, scatter them everywhere, maybe all over Night City.

"Spy on every patch of land nobody's watching. Run all the data. Think we're in the big leagues now with the shop open and all. NUSA sent Morgan Blackhand after me, and that tells us something."

"What about your security?" Atlas asked.

"I'm gonna get chipped in. Not the crazy shit, just Bioware. Grafted Muscles, maybe toss Vik and Nina Kraviz that new stuff we pulled from the SecUnit designs. Gonna get Skin Weave too, and since it's all nanites, I want you running them. I'll grab Subdermal Armor while I'm at it. Oughta be enough to keep direct bullet hits from punching through me."

"I believe I can merge this world's bioware designs with the knowledge we gained from SecUnit to create superior bioware for you. I can also enhance the Subdermal Armor's capabilities," Atlas replied at once, already working. "It's done. The designs are ready."

Cypher didn't even flinch, so used to Atlas being a god stuck on Earth with his dumb ass. "Alright, get the Microbots to move the dead bodies from outside, keep it under wraps. I'm gonna go sketch out the design for this damn hoverboard. The SecUnit itch's starting to pound like a headache. Finishing this new one out might help."

"What of this Wraith?" Atlas inquired.

Cypher looked back at the man, bloodied and terrified. "Thanks for donating your skull, I guess."

"N-No! I told you e—"

Bang!

Cypher pressed the gun's muzzle on the man's chest and shot through the heart, killing him without damaging the skull. In any case, Wraiths and Scavs were the same to him.

Quickly after that, Cypher turned and went back to the part of the first underground level where he'd bashed his computer screen before. He quickly replaced it with a new one and fired up the Atlas-made design software. The computer was completely offline and didn't even use market parts. It was all custom.

Soon, he started drawing all the parts, writing all the steps, making diagrams, and making files for the printer. As he worked to fully write it down, he slowly realised how advanced this damn thing was, despite looking so low-tech and coming from futuristic 2015.

It was laughable because what he'd discovered in it was something not even this world of 2077 had.

"Atlas... Did I just discover a room-temperature superconductor?" Cypher gawked at the screen. "This shit's straight sci-fi. Why the hell would you use it to make hoverboards of all things?"

"Maybe the tech was so standard to them that building hoverboards with it made business sense," Atlas said, scanning the designs virtually.

Cypher leaned back in his chair, arms crossed. "Man, this is magic. Lossless power grids. Maglevs getting cheap as shit to make. Night Corp's rebuilding the city's Maglev Network and hooking it up outside the city, too. Soon it'll reach Chicago. Problem is, it's still hella expensive right now. With this stuff, it'd be cheap as building NCART. Night Corp'd sell their soul to get their hands on it."

"Or terminate you for it," Atlas added. "But it resolves an even greater obstacle for you, Cyph. The primary limitation in nuclear fusion is the immense energy and spatial capacity demand to cool reactor magnets. Once hydrogen plasma exceeds one hundred million degrees Celsius, electromagnets contain it within a magnetic field to prevent the reactor walls from melting.

"This eliminates the massive energy demand required to sustain the cryogenic system that keeps the magnets stable at low temperatures, significantly simplifying the path to net energy gain, where the reactor generates more power than it consumes. In addition, without large-scale cooling systems, the reactor can be designed far smaller, possibly compact enough to fit within the size range of a car."

Cypher felt excited just hearing all that. Thankfully, he was no longer so dumb as not to understand. "That means... making a nuclear fusion reactor is highly possible now."

"That is true, Cyph."

Cypher clenched his fist. "Man, I was hoping for something like an Arc Reactor. That could make power by itself. With this thing, we're still boiling water, but fuck it. Let's roll with it. If the next itch sucks, we're storming Arasaka and snatching those scientists."

"I have already begun preparing for it, Cyph."

"Well, I'm heading to bed. I'll make the Hoverboard tomorrow morning."

####

The next morning, Cypher woke up to the alarm bell blaring some weird music.

He knew it was some trash Atlas had picked from the Old Net. Instead of complaining, he washed his face, took a nice dump while surfing the net on his Agent, made himself a nice cup of coffee, and got to work.

As Atlas had printed all the parts needed for the Hoverboard, such as the main frame, and had gathered all the needed parts, it was up to Cypher to mash it all together.

The Hoverboard in itself was a very compact device. It was thin and hid its tech in a sleek design. But the battery used in it was worse than what he had for Servo Skull. Still, he had to follow the original design; upgrades could wait.

Finally, the CPU was a basic component that helped with stabilization. The most important and expensive component was the superconductor and the magnet-related portion. Beyond that, the Hoverboard was a basic thing, far from the level of SecUnit, Replicator, or his Sonic Screwdriver.

"Well, it looks just like the movie," Cypher muttered and did one last check. The Hoverboard was pink with some branding on it, and had the usual round disks under it. "Let's test this thing, then we'll upgrade it."

He grabbed it from the table and took a few steps back. Then, he just threw the board onto the floor. There was no loud thud, and it hovered a few inches above the ground, silent.

"Ah! The itch's gone." Cypher exclaimed in relief and jumped onto the Hoverboard.

It carried on his momentum and started moving. But Cypher then kicked and picked up more speed. The more he kicked, the faster it went.

"Fuck yeah!" he yelled, still kicking, seeing how fast he could get it going. The factory floor was huge, so he had plenty of room. "Atlas, you think we oughta sell this?"

"Not before we determine the appropriate handling of this new discovery. Otherwise, you will give the world reason to pursue you." Atlas replied. The God Freeman flew beside Cypher like Superman. "Still, I foresee this device selling successfully worldwide. Demand would span civilians, office workers, and gangs alike."

"Yeah, that's right." He swung the Hoverboard around and cruised it back to the workstation. "But this thing still ain't fast enough. Time to juice it up. We got better batteries now, and we can slap on some tiny boosters from Leaper's propulsion tech."

He got right back to work. He dismantled the Hoverboard, changed the battery, and added other things. Whenever he got bored, he also worked on his exo-suit, which was coming along well.

It truly reminded Cypher of Iron Man, but Iron Man's suit was too damn sleek. This IEC Dragoon-based exo-suit was bulkier, and had a lot of exposed joints, motors, and other parts. He didn't like it initially and hoped to make it sleeker.

However, Atlas told him that the suit would also house many tiny Microbots, and they would exist to repair his armor on the go. By keeping some of the parts exposed, it would be easier for the Microbots to repair. Besides, the front part of the suit was solid, and most weapons would be ineffective.

He didn't bother after that and followed whatever blueprint Atlas had made. The guy was far smarter than him to begin with. Heck, Atlas had added a rotating DL-18 blaster-inspired gun on the left shoulder. It would remain in Atlas's control and deal with any enemy behind him.

The suit was still a few days away from completion, however.

"Alright, it should run faster now." Cypher finished upgrading the Hoverboard and tested it again. Since the Hoverboard couldn't naturally hover faster, it all depended on how much thrust was given.

After a few kicks of his own, he used the thrusters built right inside the thin frame of the Hoverboard on the back end. Once they turned on, Cypher gained more speed than he could control.

Bam!

"Fuck!"

He fell comically, as he didn't maintain the center of mass. The board just flew faster than him, and he rolled backwards, falling on his ass and doing a few more rolls before stopping.

"Gonna need some training." He muttered, rubbing his head. "And probably a helmet."

"Cypher, Ms. Panam Palmer is approaching the property. ETA ten minutes."

"Oh?" Cypher glanced up at the clock projected on the wall. "Damn, it's already noon. Right, the Saul thing. Yeah, let's get outta here. Ain't much I can do till the next itch hits."

He removed his work gloves, patted his clothes clean, and grabbed the Hoverboard as he went upstairs. Once inside the house, the secret elevator entry disappeared inside the cupboard doors.

Without wasting time, he threw the Hoverboard onto the living room couch, turned up some music, and disappeared into the bathroom to shower.

####

Panam was slightly nervous about this one.

"What am I even doing?" She asked herself as she drove over the highway by the trash fields.

Initially, she had been extremely cautious of Cypher Blackwell. Back then, he was a nobody. But now, much had changed, and she had grown to trust that man. She hated corpos, but she had seen Cypher go from that crazy man in the cave to being a successful corpo, still a crazy man.

However, she knew the reality of Aldecaldos. They were not inviting to outsiders, and as a tight-knit nomad family, they naturally suspected everyone new, as uncertainty meant risk to survival.

The camp was already divided; some wanted to go with Saul's plan. Others wanted to do their own thing. And the third side was already working with her and finding jobs through Cypher. But by bringing Cypher directly to Aldecaldos' camp, she didn't know what that would do.

All she wanted was to stop Saul from falling into Biotechnica's trap.

Finally, she took the turn and drove towards the dam. As she neared the shack, she noticed weird black patches all around the shack, as if there was fire. But that made no sense because there was nothing but solid rocks and dirt.

Curious, she eventually stopped her truck by Cypher's car and walked over to the shack's door. As she was reaching for the doorbell, the metal door slid open for her with an automated chime.

"Cypher?" She poked her head inside, looking left and right.

"Come on in, Pan! I'm in the bath!"

She heard the muffled voice from the bathroom and finally stepped inside the house. She'd never been there before or around the area. She never had the chance or the need to visit that area.

Looks better than I expected.

She noticed how mismatched the inside and outside of the shack looked. It was too modern, from the floor to the lighting to the furniture. She didn't want to, but she got a quick glance into the bedroom as it was right beside the entrance.

Ignoring the bed, her eyes froze on the entire wall of screens and a large computer rig on the side. That worked like a quick reminder for her that Cypher was more than what she saw in that cave. Behind that face and easygoing personality was an extremely intelligent mind.

Not intruding, she turned and walked into the living area. She went to the couch and sat down, but despite her best efforts, she couldn't stop looking at the strange, pink board beside her. It was like one of those skateboards, but without wheels.

"What is this?" She grabbed it and turned it around, noticing two metallic circles. "For skiing?"

Panam curiously traced her fingers over the smooth surface. Without much thought, she gently tried to place it on the floor to see how it would look and...

She jumped to her feet like a cat taken by surprise.

"What the... Anti-Grav?!"

"Nah. Just superconductors and some science voodoo."

She looked up and saw Cypher standing with just a towel wrapped around his waist, taking something out of the refrigerator. She looked down at the hovering board again and saw the word 'hoverboard' on it.

"Superconductors? In something this small?" she asked. Being a techie herself, she understood exactly what she was looking at. "That is impossible."

"Room temp superconductors, Pan. Yeah, I cracked it last night and made this thing. Kinda sick, right? C'mon, try standing on it."

"..."

Panam stared at Cypher's face for a very long time. She watched him drink a whole can of NiCola. Then she looked at the hovering board on the floor.

Without a word, she stepped on it, and by the slightest of her body's motion, the Hoverboard moved forward. She wobbled, trying to balance herself.

"Easy there!"

She felt Cypher's hand behind her back, and the other offered for her to hold. She took it and let him pull the board around the room. She could feel the smoothness of hovering above the surface.

"This is... insane! Nobody has managed to crack this since... hell, I don't even know how long. You are going to get yourself killed, Cypher. Call it a prophecy if that helps. You need serious muscle watching your back every hour of the day. The things you have built in just a few..."

Panam suddenly realised she was rambling and shut her mouth. It was one of her bad habits, not being able to shut up whenever she felt passionate about something. In her eyes, Cypher was more than just a corpo or a friend. To her, he seemed like a bright spot in the mostly dark future of humanity.

But all that was too philosophical, and she kept it to herself.

"I know, and you don't gotta bottle yourself up. I like hearing you go off like that. It's kinda cute."

"..."

She looked away and got off the Hoverboard, feeling warm all of a sudden.

Cute? Really, she couldn't remember the last time being called that. Hot, crazy, deadly, she was used to that. But cute?

"I'll go toss some clothes on me. Then we'll go take care of your headache."

She watched him walk into the bedroom, and as she was alone, she began fixing her clothes for no reason. Only halfway as she fixed her jacket and leotard, she realised how strange she was being.

No! Oh, no, no, no. You will not go on that track again, Panam. He's not interested.

She still ended up fixing her hair, making sure the locks falling over her temples were perfect. Finally, she looked down at her tight blue jeans and pulled them up as well, keeping them snug over her body. The straps running around her thighs helped.

"Let's go, Panam."

Panam failed to hear him.

"Pan?"

"Hm?" She snapped out of the haze and looked over. "Ah, right. Time to go. Have suits become your default now?"

"For now, yeah. These things are damn near bulletproof, every inch. Gonna cook up some other kinds later. But for now, this does the job. Used it to take out those Scavs."

She nodded and walked out of the shack behind him. She watched him take her truck's passenger seat. She didn't mind at all and quickly took the wheel and started driving. The low hum of music constantly filled the void of silence between them.

"So... what is your plan? What are you going to do with... it?" She asked, unable to help herself.

"Working on fusion energy, so I'm probably gonna build a real fusion reactor pretty soon. Cheap, easy energy's the key to fixing this fucked up planet, right? I got plans, big ones."

"That's like begging for death. The whole damn world will come for you. Some to stop you. Others to use you," she warned.

"I know. But I got my ass covered. Unless they straight up nuke me or something, I'll be fine."

"..."

She had to at that point, and turned her head to look at Cypher. She hoped to find at least some semblance of fear or worry, but no, the madman was busy, one knee folded as he used a nail clipper to cut his toenails.

"You... You are insane."

"Great, I fit right in with Night City."

She rolled her eyes, but chuckled anyway.

#####

Cypher really needed to clip the damn toenails, as wearing shoes had started to hurt. So, he did it during the ride with Panam. It also helped him focus and keep the dragon from rising.

"So what were those burn marks outside your home?" she asked.

Cypher frowned, trying to remember. But then it clicked. "Ah, that? Nothing, just a bunch of Wraiths attacked. Killed every last one of them fuckers."

Clip!

He clipped the thumbnail and dodged as the chipped piece nearly struck his eye. "Wanted to squeeze me for cash. Protection money, hah. Guess who's the one needing protection?"

[Cypher, I believe you are overdoing it now.]

"You think so? Alright."

Cypher quickly shut his mouth. The goal was to be cool and mysterious to Panam. That was how you impress a badass like her. Get her curious as much as you can.

"Say, Pan. Why'd you folks come to Night City? Ain't there other places better than here?" Cypher asked.

"Got tired of running transport caravans through the Free States. Saul thought Night City would give us a fresh start. But our reputation is still not worth much, and he doesn't let us smuggle like before. Keeps talking about going legit. Too damn scared to take the real jobs. Now we are bleeding money because of his stubbornness."

He finally finished clipping his nails and relaxed in the seat. He eyed the tanned woman, her brows furrowed. She really was passionate about her people. "Well, guess every road circles back to Saul being a dogshit leader then. If I had that many mouths to feed, I'd be doing whatever the hell it took. Plus, Biotechnica ain't exactly the kinda people you wanna shake hands with. Those fuckers got a rep for using nomad clans like lab rats."

"What?!" Panam slammed on the brakes, eyes locked on him the whole time. Lucky for them, the road behind and ahead stayed empty.

"What exactly is that supposed to mean? Lab rats?"

"Huh? Y'all seriously don't know? Damn, I figured you'd at least know that much."

"We know they are evil and do experiments. But we know nothing about them using nomads for it."

"Hope you got the stomach for this." Cypher shrugged, then used Atlas to message Panam's Agent. "Check the link out. Got some dirt on Biotechnica. Real disgusting photos. Buried deep too, since there ain't no such thing as free press. They handed some nomad clan their miracle vaccine. Looks like poison if you ask me."

Cypher knew about the future Red Ocher family that was captured by Biotechnica for experiments. However, Atlas had already found countless similar cases from the past. All the data was in Biotechnica's systems.

Right in the middle of the road, he waited for Panam to finish reading the stuff he just sent her. She looked slightly shaken by that, and it was understandable. What Scavs and Wraiths did to people was one thing, but what Biotechnica was another. They could fight Scavs and Wraiths, but a corpo that large had infinite resources. The Bright Family of Aldecaldos would never be able to fight them.

"It's... It has to be a trap, then," Panam growled, slamming a fist into the steering wheel. "The second Saul agrees to their deal, we will be at Biotechnica's mercy."

"Probably. C'mon, drive already. Sitting here ain't gonna stop Saul."

"Ah, sorry." Panam quickly began driving again, but faster than before.

A bit of a drive later, they finally passed the Sunset Motel. Seeing how rundown it was, he pondered buying it as his access point into the Badlands. But he stopped thinking as soon as the truck took a turn onto the dirt road.

Just a short drive later, Panam slowed the truck and parked between some other nomad-themed cars. The entire camp was clear from there, made up of green tents, large cargo trucks, nestled between rundown wind turbines.

Cypher got down first and stretched his back, then took a wide view of the camp. In his ear, Atlas was giving a quick rundown.

[Some of them have serious criminal charges. From murdering NCPD officers to human trafficking.]

"I'd be more shocked if there weren't any such folks, Atlas. Watch my back now."

"This way."

Cypher walked right beside Panam, looking at all the tents, the people working in them, and even kids running around. But it didn't take long for all of them to start staring at him like he was an animal in a zoo.

He followed her to the first large tent on the left side. It had antennas on top, and two armed nomads stood in front of it. No surprise, Saul Bright was inside there.

"So you went through with it, Panam. Brought him here," Saul Bright voiced in an unwelcoming tone, his arms folded. "You're wasting time."

"I said I would do it if that's what it takes to wake you up," Panam said sharply and looked at Cypher, who was standing right beside her. "While you sat around waiting for Biotechnica to hand you their blessing, I went out and found real jobs for our people."

Cypher nodded, but he wasn't looking at Saul. Instead, he was looking at the large tent with so many techies. The nomads really had all they needed in a closed community. Well, all except for money and food.

Snap! Snap!

Saul suddenly snapped his fingers towards Cypher. "So why are you here? What's the play? What are you after in all this? I dug into your past. You worked for the Wraiths once, right? Ex-Nomad. Addict. You expect us to put faith in you?"

"Yeah." Cypher blurted.

"What I'm trying to do is find a permanent fix for my family's situation. Put down roots, grow our own food, and stand on our own. But you? You want us playing bodyguard and running your errands."

Cypher just nodded, still staring at all the stuff around. The crowd was gathering, and members of the Bright Family came to see the new face in the camp. He was just listening to Atlas in his head, seeing if there was any noteworthy talent in the wild. Obsidian was open to hiring now.

"So..." Cypher finally looked at Saul. "Number one, I ain't some magic messiah that's gonna turn this shithole into paradise. Number two, I ain't your bitch, so don't come at me like I owe you jack shit. I helped Panam because she's a friend, and honestly, most of the Aldecaldos are better than the clowns in this city. Don't mean you're all saints, though. That dickhead over there's got a record for killing an NCPD officer. Left a three-year-old orphan. Hell of an accomplishment."

"..."

The crowd looked towards the man Cypher had pointed at.

"But I gotta say, Panam. Saul's not wrong." Cypher eyed the gorgeous Nomad and chuckled at her shocked expression. "He's spot on wanting to settle down, grow food, and be independent. It's an amazing idea, but it's closer to a wet dream than reality. Tell me something, Saul Bright, or anybody else here. Any of y'all actually seen Biotechnica's farming contract for those engineered crops?"

Cypher looked at everyone as the heads shook.

"Like they would let us folks see it before they got a gun to our head and pen over the contract ready," a nomad shouted. He was wearing a cowboy hat and looked middle-aged with a nice mustache.

"Exactly. I like you, man," Cypher blurted and started treating the occasion like a speech to all Aldecaldos instead. He knew Saul couldn't be individually moved. So, the best route was to push enough Aldecaldos to go against Saul.

Ting!

Beep!

Chime!

All of a sudden, dozens of Agent phones in the pockets of nomads beeped a notification. Those who had neural links received it straight into their holophone.

“Open the text I just shot over to y’all,” Cypher said, and also pointed at tens of large flat screens all over the tent. “It’s the latest contract Biotechnica handed some nomad family down in Brazil. Read the whole damn thing and tell me that don’t sound more like slavery than independence. I get Saul’s angle. Work for them just long enough to get your hands on the crops you need, then bail and settle somewhere else with the seeds.

“Man, that’s naive. Hell, even Lucas would call bullshit on that. Know what it sounds like? Johnny Silverhand nuking Arasaka and somehow expecting corpo terror to just vanish overnight.

“Didn’t do shit though, did it? We’re all still getting fucked. You are, I am. Water’s full of chemical sludge, breathing air that’s probably melting my lungs, eating food old-school dogs would’ve sniffed and walked away from. And Biotechnica’s right there at the center of all that shit.

“The contract straight up says you gotta renew it every damn year if you wanna keep growing their engineered crops. And they can pull the plug whenever they feel like it. Sure, you could tell them to get fucked and plant anyway, but trust me, you ain’t beating them. They got chemical weapons they can spray over your fields that’ll stop even grass from growing.

“Once you sign it, you’re Biotechnica’s slave. Their board, their rules, and you ain’t even a player in it, just some side-character they toss in the meat grinder. Sure, they got crops that’ll grow damn near anywhere, but you really think they’re gonna let people grow food for free?

“Hell no. Scarcity keeps people desperate, desperate means bigger checks for them. And odds are they’ll hand you some sketchy experimental crop that gives your clan cancer or fucks your genes so your kids grow with three eyes and ten arms. Wouldn’t even be the first time.”

Ting!

Beep!

Another bundle of files got sent to everyone’s devices around Cypher. This time, they revealed some of the dirty things Biotechnica had done to nomad families. From straight-up human experiments to post-experiment cover-up massacres, and other things. There were photos, nasty ones with gore.

Cypher said nothing about them, however. The files spoke for themselves.

Truth be told, it wasn't even hard to influence the Aldecaldos, at least the Bright Family. Saul had a plan, but it was flawed. All he had to do was reveal the dangers of that plan. And Biotechnica was such a disgusting company that finding scandals about them was too easy for Atlas.

Besides, Biotechnica itself was responsible for the world being so ass. Their greed had destroyed entire ecosystems so they could hold a monopoly over food.

Too bad, even replicator can't solve the bigger problem.