

As the various members of the Mox shouted, or at least spoke strongly at me, Susie finally looked up at me, her eyes still wide. I stared calmly back, giving her a slight nod. I thought it had gone unnoticed, until Rita spoke up, looking between her leader and I, before focusing on the latter.

"Susie... no..." she said, her voice filled with growing betrayal.

Susie didn't even look at her.

Rita's words managed to reach her fellow members, though, as they slowly went silent, one by one. When the room was quiet, I finally spoke up again.

"There is no waiting, Susie, this offer expires in the next minute. You walk out of here right now, go home to grab your things, and leave immediately," I explained, leaning forward, my hands on the table. "I don't care where you go, just as long as you don't stay here. Oh, and don't be smart and think you can escape to Dogtown for a few months and come back when I've moved on. You step back in Night City of your own volition, you'll be dead before your first night. Those are the terms, do you agree?"

Susie gave me one last look before closing the briefcase and setting the clasps. Some of her people, maybe the delusional ones, or maybe the ones who thought they could trust her, smiled as they assumed she had stood up to the temptation. Then she picked up the case and quickly walked around the table, stepping out of the room. The room was silent enough that I could hear the door latch click shut. After a moment, I shifted to look to the side, getting one of my Spartans' attention.

"Follow her out of the city, make it obvious," I ordered. "If she tries to hide, discourage her."

The Spartan nodded and left, following the ex-leader out. Of course, order had been an act, as five of the ten stealth Spartans around the building were already ordered to follow her if she left. That said, the visible Spartan was there to put the pressure on and to show the Mox sitting at the table that we were serious.

Once the Spartan left, I turned back to focus on the gang members, who were all too stunned to talk. Some of them were angry, some of them were betrayed, but all of them were focused on Susie, not me.

"Right, that takes care of that," I said with a smile. "Now, let's talk about shifting the Moc back to its roots. We have a property, inside what is technically your territory. At the moment, the primary building, which had been inhabited by scavs, is being torn down. When that is done, I want to build it into a Mox run haven for the joytoys and escorts you watch over. Doctors, Rippers, beds, a food kitchen, all funded by me. And that's just the first step."

"Wait... I'm sorry... what?" Rita asked, confusion clashing with the betrayal still coloring her face. "You want to what?"

"I want to support the Mox and help it achieve what it was originally created to do," I explained. "Defenders of the weak, the downtrodden. I want to fund you, keep you stocked and ready to help."

"Why... why did you get rid of Susie?" Judy asked, her energy drink forgotten as she looked at me.

"Because she was here for the money," Rebecca explained easily. "I know it, you know it, we all knew it. You just didn't want to believe, or let it seem like you were turning on the Mox. Well, Jackson just proved it without a doubt. Susie Q would have taken whatever he gave you guys to help and skimmed off the top, used it however she felt like. She would have pushed for more and more, taking it for herself and for her power. Now he can actually help without worrying about it all being stolen."

"...yeah, that pretty much sums it up," I agreed, holding back a chuckle at Rebecca's aggrieved expression. ssd

"You realize we run brothels, right?" One of the leaders said, her metallic eyebrow raised. "Haven't you been working to get rid of stuff like that?"

"In a long list of illegal things going on, prostitution is not something I'm concerned about stopping," I revealed, shrugging slightly as I leaned back. "I wish it wasn't necessary for people to sell their bodies, but that's not the world we live in. So, instead of trying to stamp out the oldest profession, I will focus on making sure those who practice it are safe."

"And how will you do that?" Rita asked.

"Well, first, by creating a monopoly on it. Any prostitutes walking under the Mox, meaning anywhere I have influence, will keep their own profits and pay a five percent tax," I explained. "In exchange, they get protection, medical treatment, access to housing, safe spaces to practice their trade, and guaranteed safe ripperdocs. We will also make sure to protect any and all escorts who come to us seeking to escape their current pimp. No more abuse, no more unfair contracts, no more forcing anyone to do anything."

"Ninety-five... how would we be able to fund all of that with such a small cut?" one of the more scantily clad leaders asked.

"I would fund it at a loss, from my pocket. I will also provide support in tech, buildings, and if someone needs a particularly intense reminder that treating escorts poorly is a bad idea."

I gestured to the remaining Spartan, leaving very little to the imagination of what I was suggesting. By now, there were enough Spartans on the streets, defending my buildings and property, that they were easily recognizable. People knew how effective they were, and the fact that they came off as surprisingly personable, in a world where real strength usually meant some level of cyberpsychosis, meant people didn't mind having them around.

The people who weren't committing crimes didn't mind, at least.

"That... and we would run protection?" Rita asked, her brow furrowed.

"You would run all of it," I explained. "Maybe not you specifically, I think you would be better off having a sort of council, where each member runs a specific aspect, but yes, the Mox would run all of it. Oh, and any of the hard drug trade will stop as well. I won't stop any minor drugs, but anything like Glitter is off the table."

"Like the Tyger Claws would share that with the Moxes," Rita responded with a snort. "Or that we would want that shit around here."

The mood at the table, at least what the Moxes were projecting, was slowly starting to change. The original anger had passed, replaced by confusion, and now was slowly giving way to hope.

"Why? Why do all of this?" Judy asked with a frown. "Why throw money at us? Especially when there isn't anything for you in it."

"Because I believe in human potential," I admitted with a shrug. "I believe that we can be better than this. Better than what the whole species has become. We can do better, and I plan on doing everything I can to make that happen. Money means nothing to me save for how I can use it to fix this city, and beyond."

"That's not all," Rita said, looking at me with narrowed eyes. "You're buying property like a fiend, stomping out gangs, building up influence... you're trying to take over the city."

That got a reaction, from myself included. A lot of people had guessed that I had goals that were loftier than land grabs and whittling down threats, but no one had figured out that I wanted the whole city. Or at least no one had figured it out, only to make a dozen excuses and then blurt it out.

"I am," I agreed with a nod, not bothering to lie. "But can you really say that it wouldn't be better off with someone working to improve it for everyone?"

"...No, no, I can't," she admitted with a frown. "But why bother? Arasaka could have done it years ago, but it wasn't worth the money."

"Same reason as before. I want to help humanity regain its potential and become something better," I explained. "This city could be amazing, and I'm going to make that happen."

The table was silent for a long time before Rita took a look around, meeting her comrades' eyes one by one, before looking back at me.

"Alright, let's say that we are in," She said, leaning forward. "How exactly would this happen? You described a pretty big increase in our scope. How are you going to manage that?"

The talks continued for a while, Rita taking a larger and larger role negotiating and discussing terms, discussing options, and what would be happening in the coming days. When

we left several hours later, I was feeling confident that the Mox would be working closely alongside us for a long time. Where any other gang that agreed would be slowly phased out and converted into other things, the Mox would grow alongside our influence.

Eventually, they might even be converted to a legitimate section of the government, once we took over completely. Hell, they might even take a role similar to a union, growing global, then interstellar as we expand. That was a lofty idea, but I could see the use of it. Even if we eventually made prostitution fully illegal, and started applying pressure to clean it up, sex would always sell. Porn, strip clubs, host bars, and more would all need the same kinds of protections that prostitutes did now, and those I couldn't reasonably ban, even if I controlled the planet with an iron fist.

Either way, they had more than insured our support, as long as they followed the rules we set up, not that I thought they wouldn't

When I left, I transferred fifty thousand eddies to Rita, telling her to get the bar and exterior cleaned up. If I was going to be their backer from then on, then people needed to see that they were benefiting from that.

Of course, that was only a fraction of what we would be investing in, on top of supplying plenty of wholesale items made in-house for free. The Mox could expect a lot of changes happening around them, and, with any luck, they would grow with them.

When we eventually arrived back home, I headed to the security hub, where Murtaugh and Mary were spending most of their time. They had been hard at work preparing for our invasion of Tyger Claws assets, and had been making great progress so far. I watched them talk for a few minutes before stepping into the room proper.

"Hey guys, anything to report?" I asked as I stopped by Murtaugh's control console.

"At the moment, we are solidifying a few final leads," Murtaugh explained. "We should be clear by tomorrow morning, around four AM."

"Mary?"

"I've already identified everyone we can, and have everything I need to claim their accounts," she responded. "If all goes well, purchasing all of their property won't actually take that much of our own money, clearing out the Claws will pay for itself."

"That's good... I want this to happen as soon as it can, sometime in the morning preferably," I explained, leaning back on a desk, trying to keep an eye on everything. "I'm going to get some sleep, but I want you to wake me up when it's time. I want to be here when your teams engage."

"Of course," Murtaugh agreed.

"I'll wake you up, Jay," Mary said with a smile. "Should I wake up Sable as well, or just you?"

"Just me," I responded. "I'll ask Sable and wake her up if she wants."

We talked a bit more about their plan, but at this point, the two had more than proven themselves to be capable of this song and dance, so I was happy to leave it mostly to them. The outline of their plan sounded good, and they would wake me when they were ready to go. That was all I really needed to know, so in the meantime, I would get some sleep.

I quickly made my way back to the vault, making sure people knew what would be happening in the morning. I promised Sable I would wake her up, before we both slid into bed for an early night.

By the time I returned nearly nine hours later, it was technically the early morning of the fourth day of my twelve-day break, and I was feeling tired but ready. Most of the team had decided to join me in watching from the security hub from over Murtaugh's and Mary's shoulders, as the moment didn't feel like one you could just skip over.

According to Mary, the first step in the plan was disbursement, spreading our Spartans across Tyger Claw territory. Our construction efforts quietly came to a halt as all of our frankly massive VTOL fleet was repurposed. Each ship was filled with nearly eighty percent of our Spartan army. We had seven hundred Spartans in total, at least currently on Earth, which meant five hundred and sixty of them were ready and waiting.

About twenty percent of those Spartans were stealth models, spread out and approaching targets. The vast majority of our forces would be deploying from the VTOLs, jumping down from them, and engaging in a surprise attack. Some of them, however, would be approaching from the ground, sent to take care of smaller groups and individual targets.

The sheer scale of deployed assets was not high because we were worried that they would be overwhelmed, or that the Tyger Claws even had a chance. Instead, Mary and Murtaugh were attempting to make as even and clean a sweep of the board as they could, something they had almost aced during our scav hunt.

They wanted to decapitate the gang, undercut its various projects, take down specific individuals, and crush the rank and file, all at the same time. It was frankly a ludicrously large undertaking, and they were already performing wonderfully.

Around twenty minutes after the pair started deploying our forces, everyone was in place. The screens around the security hub, the dozens of TVs hung on the wall, and the several computer screens in front of Murtaugh all showed images of the largest assault points, with hundreds more being recorded by single Spartans or pairs prepared to take much smaller targets. After one final check, both Murtaugh and Mary looked back at me.

"We are ready," Murtaugh said. "On your word."

I stayed quiet, nodding once so they knew I heard. For a long moment, I watched the live feeds, people moving around, Tyger Claw members of all shapes and sizes, doing a whole

variety of things, from sleeping to packing drugs. After letting out a long breath, I gave the order to kill thousands of people.

"Do it."

They both nodded, and it began, the order going out simultaneously, every single group we could see moving at once, and beyond. Hundreds of Spartans dove out of VTOLs, landing on roofs, smashing through windows, dropping into alleyways, and slamming into cars. The shooting started immediately, ranging from instant executions to open firefights, though they started pretty one-sided. They ended that way, too, but in the larger concentrations, some TC members actually managed to die on their feet.

As we watched, it was hard not to feel a little disquieted. At first, it was because of the utterly one-sided slaughter, the TC barely managing to put up a fight. In total, throughout the whole conflict, the Tyger Claws took down just over a dozen Spartans. Then, as the Spartans continued to work, the sick feeling came from all of the horrible things they began to uncover. Several shipments of people for sex trafficking, an in-house scav set up for targeting people with parts that the Tygers specifically wanted, more drugs than I had ever seen before, several times over, not to mention dozens of joytoy and prostitute filled brothels, all of them crammed with victimized people, barely beyond slaves.

It certainly made me feel a lot better about ordering the mission forward despite the inevitable death toll.

That, and the fact that we had discussed adding a bit more flex in the hard rules we had created when clearing out the scavs. By and large, the scavs had all deserved to die, as their business was fundamentally horrifying. There were a handful of exceptions, mostly people forced into it through blackmail or worse. For example, one of the group's best rippers had been kept in line by a missing daughter, who we were thankfully able to free.

Despite how bad they were, there was still a lot of room for flexibility. A courier whose greatest fault was believing the romanticized stories of his older cousin? Spared. The older cousin, who ran the books for a serious chunk of the TC's sex trafficking? Not spared. That was the kind of research Mary was doing in preparation, tearing through thousands of gigabytes of data to figure out everyone's connection to everyone else, and how deep they were into the dark, twisted core of the gang.

I could even spot some of the mercy being applied through the image feeds, like an underground gambling house that was cleared completely, and most of the dealers were spared.

The assault persisted for hours, though the levels of continued violence slowed down considerably after the first ten minutes. After that, most of the enforcers were already dead, and then it became about clean-up, destroying things like weapon caches and drug distribution centers, along with hunting down anyone who managed to escape the first massive sweep.

By the time that Sable was awake, confirming that many of the properties we had been negotiating with had been purchased, some for cheap and others for full price, most of the violence was over. After that, it became about setting up visible groups of Spartans to keep the area under control. That included Warthogs of various types driving around the roads and parked in important areas.

It was during this phase that something rather surprising happened. My Spartans had dealt with the NCPD before, mostly as they checked out our work and patrolled around us. So far, they were much more interested in making sure our attacks stopped at clearing gangs than in the fact that we were openly crusading through the city. Hell, I actually got the feeling that quite a few officers actually appreciated having the Spartans around patrolling wide areas around our properties that dotted the city.

Which was why the Deputy Commissioner, a harsh, clean-cut military woman with a gnarled scar running along her face, showing up was strange. Even more strange was that she showed up with only one escort, in a civilian vehicle. She approached one of the Spartans, both her and her escort's hands by their sides.

As she got closer, Mary must have spotted the feed in her multitasking, as that's when it popped up on one of the larger screens, expanded from one of the many smaller ones.

"Jackson-

"I see it," I responded, leaning in as if it would help with the camera quality. "Who is she?"

"That is the [Deputy Commissioner Dana Drake](#)," Mary responded. "Longest running member of the force, with a reputation for playing rough with the rules, but keeping to them. Looking up more now."

"She is legendarily clean," Sable said, looking up from her tablet. "She's refused bribes of every kind, from just about everyone you can imagine. The dirty cops, including her boss, hate her, but the clean and good-intentioned ones rally around her, which is why she still has her job. And is still alive."

The woman crossed the last few steps, stopping just a few feet from the Spartan, not an ounce of fear in her eye.

"Soldier, I'd like to speak to whoever is in charge," she said. "Preferably away from prying eyes. Can you make that happen?"

"Escort her somewhere nearby, safe," I ordered, glancing back at Mary. "Actually... get her off the street, but pull up an armored Warthog and get her to the Apollo through the secure elevator. I'll meet her there. Sable?"

"Yeah, I'll come with you," She agreed. "She isn't the kind of person you deal with without training."

"Right. Well... Mary, Murtaugh, connect to some of the more vital feeds to my office," Ordered, already on the way out. "Keep up the good work."

I left the security room and stepped into the teleport hub. A few bounces around later, and we stepped out into a small room connected to my office on the very top floor of Apollo Tower. This was actually the first time I was stepping into the finished version, as none of the public tours had traveled through it.

[The room was large](#), with high ceilings and a thick, comfortable maroon rug. The prevalent theme, beyond the maroon, was granite and gold, with a large desk on one side and huge windows along the other. A staircase led up to a second level, where there was a large table, chairs, and room for at least twenty people. In the main area, one of the walls, the one opposite the full-stocked bar, was covered in various screens already displaying many of the Spartan and drone feeds.

Riggs immediately took up a position by the corner, watching the skyline as much as he was watching the interior. He didn't have to worry much, the windows of both towers were thick enough to handle just about any portable weapon available, with three thick layers of sapphire glass with layers of impact-absorbing gel in between each one.

Not to mention shield projector scanning for anything that might be able to get through that, ready to create an energy shield at the drop of a button.

"Any guesses as to why she wants to see me?" I asked Sable as I looked over my desk. "I mean beyond the obvious."

"If you impressed her, it could be for support," she responded. "She has had to claw tooth and nail to stay in her position, and it's been close quite a few times. Without her, the city would have fallen a lot further than it has. Still, with how much of her efforts go into staying in place, she hasn't gotten much done lately. Too busy playing cat and mouse with [Jerry Fawltter](#), her boss."

I nodded in understanding before realizing that it would probably be a good idea to have something to offer our guest. I called down to a food place on the lower floor, telling them to get a few things ready before sitting down at my desk. I absently played with my outfit, which is a more simplified version of my ostentatious golden suit, missing the suit jacket cape and most of the gold.

About ten minutes after Sable and I arrived, my private elevator let out a ding, before a pair of Spartans stepped out, followed by Drake and her escort. As they stepped past the Spartans, I waved them away.

"Thank you for escorting them, you two. You can head back to your post," I said with a smile, standing up at my desk, walking around it to greet Drake. "Deputy Commissioner Drake, it's good to finally meet you. I have to say, it's good to see that we have people willing to struggle against the corruption that plagues this city."

"Thank you for meeting me," The older woman said with a small nod. "I'm... glad that my efforts are appreciated."

"Of course. But please, come, sit," I said, gesturing to the two couches off to the corner. "I have some refreshments on their way up as we speak. Is there anything specific I could get you?"

She shook her head before claiming one of the couches, her escort standing behind her. Just by the way he moved, I had a feeling he was a [full conversion Gemini](#) or a similar model, which could put him anywhere between a level one and level two enhancement from Project Tulip. He scanned the area continuously, spotting Riggs as he stood in the corner, before quickly moving to continue his scanning. As Sable and I sat on the second couch, I smiled.

"So, what can we do for you?" I asked.

"You overtook five separate undercover operations this morning," she said simply, giving me a hard look. "Before we discuss anything, I need to know what has happened to the officers involved."

I frowned, standing up from my spot and heading over to my desk. This was all to cover up the fact that Mary was already sending me the info to my interface. I told her to put the feed up on the screen before focusing back on Drake.

"My intelligence operators uncovered your undercover operations and isolated them in a way that wasn't obvious," I assure the Deputy Commissioner, gesturing to one of the screens. "A few bruises to sell the act, but they are all safe and sound."

The feed showed five different rooms, each with people who easily passed for Tyger Claws. Some of them were pacing, one of them was enjoying a breakfast burrito, and the other was snoring loudly.

"You uncovered our operations?" She asked, raising an eyebrow. "Why not just ship them to the NCPD?"

"Our netrunners and intelligence workers are very good," I explained. "And we didn't know the details of their missions. And since none of them would admit to being undercover..."

"... What would we need to get them back?" she asked, her face still carved from stone.

"Send a car," I said simply as I returned to the couch. "I can get you the address in a moment."

It appeared as if she had expected me to ask for something in return, but very quickly accepted and passed on the address I sent her. Once she was done informing her underlings so they could take care of the rest, she fixed me with a hard look.

"Thank you for clearing that issue up," She said cleanly. "Now we can move on to why I wanted to meet with you directly, face to face."

"Of course, what can we do for you and the NCPD?"

"You can elaborate on your goal in Night City, and explain your future plans," She said simply, not flinching in the slightest. "It is clear you are doing something, I'm just not sure what it is."

"Hmm... That's an interesting hypothesis," Sable responded, leaning back forward beside me. "If you believe that is what is happening, why have you come here directly? One might think you have some sort of motive..."

"I suppose I do," She admitted easily. "To put it bluntly, I would like your support to take control of the NCPD. In return, I will support your endeavor, assuming it is not appalling."