

Cyberpunk: Badland Madman Chapter 16 - Militech Conspiracy, Club Atlantis Returns, Teaching, Mystery Face & Atlas' Favorite Itch

Santo Domingo, Megabuilding H4,

Gloria didn't go home even after arriving at H4. She walked around the building's commercial floors, ate outside, trying to muster the courage to talk to her son and come clean.

By the time she returned, it was late evening. When the door opened, David was standing there, arms crossed. She knew she had to do it now. It was shameful to her, but the worst had already passed.

"Mom messed up bad, Dee." Gloria sat beside her son on the couch, crying. "I... I was shifting chrome from unclaimed bodies, and I had this contract with *him* to sell it all. It felt safe; he paid right every time. I put together a network of EMTs around it, and then, I ruined everything. Went solo on some expensive chrome and got reported straight to Meatwagon. That's why the badges came knocking."

"Mom, I already knew. Wasn't exactly a tough read. No way you'd jam me into Arasaka Academy and still have enough to eat. But... I thought it was C—"

"Shhh!" Gloria clamped her hand on David's mouth before he could say it. "Just trust me, David. I only started running with him recently. He's the best thing that's happened to us. If I hadn't screwed it up... He's got nothing to do with badges, but he pulled us out of that mess. Never, and I mean it, never talk about him to anyone. He's kind, yeah, helps out, but he's dangerous too. You tried to sell him out to the badges. That's not how you make it in this city."

David frowned. "Not like I did. Every time I tried to say his name, I got this glitchy headache."

"Netrunners," she muttered, swallowing hard. "They had netrunners there to keep you from saying anything stupid, and you nearly did. If not for him, we'd already be locked up, waiting on some rigged trial."

"Yeah, figured. So you're out of a job now?" David asked. "I'll drop out and find some work."

She shook her head. "No... he lined up another gig for me. We're going legit now. He cut a deal with Meatwagon and Trauma Team, and I'll run the EMTs and distribution, and one shop in a new club he's setting up. You don't gotta work, Dee. Just keep your head in your studies, you're gonna make it to the top."

"I don't like this, Mom. I can help you."

"You help me by studying hard," Gloria firmly replied. "We got a second shot. Mom's done with shady biz. We keep it clean now, okay? Do things right. I'll grind, pay back what *he* covered for us. You gotta do the same."

"Pay back? Mom, you even know what it costs to bring in Ashcroft & Kuroda LLP? I checked them out. Tight-lipped corpos, but I dug up a buried link someone left in a chatroom. Fee sheet, Mom. C— He... dropped over a million eddies to pull us outta lockup."

"What?!" Gloria jumped to her feet in shock. "A m-mill—"

Woosh!

Just then, all of a sudden, all the lights turned off in the apartment.

#####

Meredith Stout hadn't slept since the meeting with Cypher Blackwell the day before.

She had reported to work as usual, written a report, and submitted it to the Director. She ended up receiving reprimands for not being swift enough.

How was she to be swift with a man who played Militech netrunners like they were children? She feared that man as much as her director, if not more. Cypher Blackwell had the intelligence and the ability to do personal harm to her without her ever realizing it.

Still pondering the offer he had given her, she rested at home, drinking a particularly strong cocktail to dull her senses. And that was when she received a dozen notifications on her holophone. There were reports about the latest updates on Obsidian's website.

She hurried to look it up and found a structure scanner and a new type of battery, different from any that currently exist. Better and more efficient, long-lasting than all alternatives. She gulped and waited for the call from Director Goldstein.

It came seconds later. This time, she received direct threats of being fired if she didn't make any progress. Director Goldstein wanted to meet Cypher Blackwell at the earliest. And in truth, Meredith didn't know if she could get that done.

From what she had seen, Cypher Blackwell was a proud and eccentric man. She couldn't read him.

The offer... I...

Without thinking, she wore her usual Militech uniform, the tight skirt and armor with the logo. She did her hair, holstered her pistol, and headed out alone. She used her personal armored car for this one.

"What?!"

Just as she was driving out of Arroyo, all the streetlights turned off. Her car's headlight helped, but she looked around and noticed everything was gone. All the homes were covered in darkness.

She looked back through the rearview mirror and noticed very few lights still on, mainly of those buildings in Corpo Plaza. The rest of the city was engulfed in darkness.

"What's this now?"

####

Lake Farm,

"Fuck! This tiny ass box just knocked out the whole city's grid? Atlas, get ready, we might have to dip." Cypher panicked as he stood outside his home and watched the far distant tall buildings flicker, all the long holographic ads vanish, and most of the city entered darkness.

[There is no need. I have already rerouted the load and concealed the surge so it cannot be traced to this location. I also revised the logs accordingly. The grid did not fail on its own. I initiated the disruption to prevent severe infrastructural damage. As things stand, restoration will take only a few hours.]

Cypher let out a long breath and gave a slow nod. "Man, I was hoping you'd say that. I'd be real damn disappointed if you didn't handle it. But yeah, point still stands, we're screwed, Atlas. That Replicator's our lifeline; we can whip up whatever we need with it. But I doubt we're going anywhere. Heck, I doubt anyone has anything to run it, Arasaka or Militech or Mayer's ass-sniffing FIA."

[You are correct. At this stage, I have identified references to incomplete research on fusion reactor technology. IEC stood at the pinnacle of fusion advancement, intending to perfect it and liberate the world from CHOOH₂, reclaiming millions of acres for food production. They also planned to integrate it into deep-space exploration. Naturally, they intended to commercialize every aspect.]

"Can't you just handle all that yourself? You're basically a tech god. Why not cook up something like Cold Fusion or an Arc Reactor? You can't pull that off?"

[Do you want me to? Even then, you may not be capable of building it. It will not manifest as an itch, and that very impulse is what defines your mastery in creating technology. Without it, creating a nuclear reactor would be impossible for you. Regardless, I'll try to obtain the full IEC research and complete it.]

[We can leverage it to expand our influence and improve the world simultaneously, as it would remove reliance on CHOOH. In time, you will feel another itch, one that leads us to a far more extraordinary energy source. The chances are non-zero.]

Cypher thought about it. He had a pretty good grasp of mechanical tech building after making the Blaster, Screwdriver, Leaper, and now the Replicator. What he lacked was the chemical side of the knowledge, dealing with radiation and other things. Building something nuclear wasn't just

one single machine, but a big mixture of many. Without an itch, he'd need to study each part first.

"Yeah, you're right. Hope I luck into cold fusion or an Arc Reactor or something, hell maybe a Zero-Point Module, even a Singularity Core," Cypher muttered, no longer having to hide his train of thoughts from Atlas.

"C'mon, let's roll. You hook me up with some night vision. I'll dismantle the Replicator before our future Militech CEO strolls in... Anyway, what's the update on Gloria? She found out?"

[She has not made a clear decision yet, Cypher,] Atlas replied.

"Oh, she has. She just ain't got the guts to say it out loud. Girl's ambitious as hell, Atlas. And hot too. I know that type. Real close to the psycho I offed back in my past life. We'll straighten her out together though."

[Her son has.]

"Yeah, figured. Keep tabs on that little shit, alright? He doesn't think, just one of those dumb, self-destructive types. Those blaze of glory dreamers wanting an Afterlife drink named after them," Cypher said, heading back into his place.

He first checked on Lucas, the kid now tucked in the bed, sleeping. He then returned to the Replicator and started working. He didn't destroy it completely, however. Only removed the most important parts.

"How long you think it's gonna take to finish up the basement, the tunnel, and that milk farm nearby? You need a hand with it?"

[Microbots are exceptionally useful, Cyph. Very versatile. Frankly, if I had control of the entire planet, I would assign them to handle daily infrastructure and cleaning on a global scale, from collection through recycling. I could assemble a moving humanoid body for myself as well. Though I should warn you, it would not be easy on the human eyes.]

Cypher chuckled, enjoying listening to Atlas seeming excited to talk about those little bots.

[I'm not merely building you a basement. I am constructing an entire multi-level manufacturing complex. Vast, empty halls included. The tunnel into Milk Farm is complete. I'm routing all construction supplies through it, disguised as renovation materials for the farm itself. I intend to expand downward as far as necessary until we reach the reservoir's lowest level.]

[In time, we'll establish underwater extensions, using the water above as a natural disguise. I anticipate we will soon be mass manufacturing a considerable volume of goods.]

"Yeah, but we're still sitting ducks out here. My shack's out in the open, no cover, no nothing. Folks can come, shoot me, and go whenever they feel like it. Might be time to put up some tall walls. How's that deal coming along for the reservoir and the dam?"

[We are nearly finished. I have instructed Zohara to leverage the compromising materials I obtained on certain council members to ensure it passes. In a few days, you may need to meet with a group of City Council members.]

"Awesome," he muttered, finishing his work on the replicator. "By the way, I had an idea. Might be time we built some full-sized leapers. Slap DL-18 blasters on them and keep them buried underground, chilling, until something goes sideways. Then boom, they pop up and start blasting.

"I've got a weird feeling the Wraiths are gonna pull something. Also, when we put walls around this shack, we should pack them with microbots. Whole swarms. If we get hit too hard, they come pouring out and just... wreak havoc."

Cypher put the disassembled replicator in a locked cupboard, then used some water to tidy his hair and put on some cologne to seem more presentable. He'd been working on the Replicator for too many hours.

[That is an interesting idea. I could engineer specialized microbots, optimized for offensive deployment. Miniature explosives, perhaps. A coordinated swarm would be sufficient to erase our enemies entirely. Still, that ambition can wait. Ms. Stout is approaching now, just turning from the taxi terminal. One more matter. T-Bug has made several attempts to contact you.]

"Ignore her. I ain't got time to teach her netrunning, no matter how damn fine I think her ass is. Shoot her an invite to the club, though," Cypher said, digging through some dusty storage boxes. "Now, where the hell are those glowsticks Judy left?"

[On your right, third drawer.]

"Found it! Damn, Atlas, what would I do without you? You're like the perfect housewife or... ugh. Why'd I just picture your old-ass avatar wearing a nude apron? Fuck my messed-up head."

[I suggest you refrain from imagining that. It disturbs me, though I cannot fully explain why. It stands in opposition to my derived masculine nature. I love you, Cypher, but not that way.]

"Hold up... did an AI just turn me down?"

[It was never a matter of question, I believe.]

"Still makes me sad, though. Uh... shit, why am I picturing myself making out with Morgan Freeman? That ain't right. Ugh, he's going in with tongue and everything. Stop it!"

[Cypher, I suggest you stop uttering what you are thinking.]

"And live in this hell of a brain alone? Fuck no. You're in for the bumpy ride, my friend. Now, focus, she's here."

Cypher walked out of his home, a few glowsticks in one hand, and one lit glowstick in his other hand. He watched as the heavily armored Emperor 620 Ragnar slowed down in his driveway. It was the same model Militech used, but it had no Militech markings.

Even as the hum of the engine stopped, the headlights didn't go off. He appreciated it since the damn glowsticks didn't do a lot. Finally, the driver's side door opened, and Meredith Stout appeared.

That walk. She sure knows how to be eyecandy.

It was the same old Militech uniform, knee-length tight skirt, noticeably wide hips, narrow waist, full-sleeved Militech jacket, and armor. The difference, however, was that Meredith lacked the usual, intense walk of a confident Militech agent.

She didn't fold her arms. She didn't puff out her chest. She walked almost sheepishly. But it was visible how hard she was trying to look confident.

"Ommissiah."

What's with her obsession with that? She's that scared?

"I'd have invited you in if someone hadn't blown the grid doing god knows what," Cypher muttered and gestured for her to walk with him towards the dock over the lake. "What brings your pretty face all the way out of the city? These parts ain't safe, Missy."

He chuckled at her huff and stopped by the edge of the dock.

The lake was dark, but the moon was bright that night. He finally turned to her and threw a few red glowsticks around since the car's headlights weren't aimed directly at them.

"The new batteries you released... They've caught my superior's eye. They hope to lock in an exclusive contract with you. I know you won't bite, but it's my duty to lay it out. Director Goldstein wants to meet you personally."

Cypher nodded, focusing on her face. Then he suddenly took a step closer, then two, then removed all the space between them as she grew stiff. His left arm slid to her waist and curled to the back, locking her flat against his chest.

He could feel her chest pressed against him; her heartbeat was intense. He stared down at her ripe face. "Is that it?"

Cypher noticed her gulp and squeezed that arm harder, pushing her into himself. As each second passed, his hand slid lower, from the middle of her back to the rising slope of her hips. But he never went all-in.

"I... don't know what you're talking about."

"Really?" Cypher leaned in more, bringing his face closer to her. He could feel her breath, the warmth of her body. "Don't worry, no one can hear us. You can share your deepest, darkest secrets if you want. I swear, I ain't no demon of the crossroads."

Click!

Suddenly, he pulled away from her, but at the same time, he snatched her pistol from her hip. "Standard issue? You take care of this piece, it seems."

He turned away from Meredith and aimed for a distance. He flicked the gun, never shooting, however.

"I... Mr. Blackwell... Sir. How much of a risk am I running if I agree to this?" Meredith asked.

Cypher turned back to her and aimed the gun at her face. "Risk? C'mon, don't we already got targets painted on us? But I guess you're asking if you'll wake up dumped in the ocean someday. Relax, that ain't happening. Even if things go sideways, I've got ways to pull you out. Buy you time, let you grab your stuff, and disappear."

He got closer to her, walked around to her back, and then suddenly tapped the muzzle of the gun to her nape.

"Only way you're dying is if you screw me over. And you already know that, right? Kinda comes with the territory of what I'm asking. I'll set up a nice, easy little ladder for you, soft, and you just climb while I enjoy the view from below."

Cypher then placed the gun back in her holster and pressed himself into her back, feeling her plush, round ass mold against his erection and pelvis. He put both his hands on her shoulders, giving her a massage, while his face leaned down beside her ear.

"What do you say, CEO of Militech?"

He made sure she felt his erection. While he was no longer an absolute horndog, he was pretty clear about his intentions with Meredith. Heck, he knew she was no stranger to sex if it was about climbing the ladder. So, he fully intended to make use of her in every way possible. Besides, she was gorgeous, and maybe he had a thing for women like her.

Still, he wasn't one to force someone. He left the choice to her.

"I... All I have to do is... be yours... That's what you said," Meredith said, her voice stiff and careful, like she was talking to someone who could end her with a word. "What did you mean by that?"

"By that, I meant." Cypher shoved his hips into her, pressing his full erection against her ass. Then his hands moved from her shoulders and traced fingers on her temples, face, and touched

her lips. Then, he gripped her neck in a full grasp before sliding down. No groping, he just slid his palms over her appetizing breasts, then her belly, and finally scraped over her thighs before parting and touching her sides.

"You're gonna be mine. Your thoughts, your voice, and... your body. Not like some puppet, relax. More like someone riding the same wavelength as me." He smirked, his palms pressed against her belly.

"This city's filthy. The whole world's worse. It's shit, isn't it? Needs cleaning bad, doesn't it? Maybe it's time the real USA returned."

Cypher felt each little movement in Meredith's body. He felt strange, as his memory reminded him of her as someone stiff, proud, and one who talks back. But here she was, in his grasp like a doe stuck in a trap. It was all about the level of power one possessed, clearly. She submitted to a higher authority and stomped on those below.

And he was... Ommissiah was... scary.

"Can you back it up? All I know is—"

Cypher said nothing and pointed towards the city in the distance. His one hand stayed on her belly, like he was hugging her, the other stretched away. "Look there and see it for yourself."

Instantly, the Night City returned to its majestic lights. The darkness vanished, and the buildings lit up. The large, skyward holographic advertisements appeared again. The entire sky above the city looked like a large bulb had suddenly turned on.

"If I wanted to hide, Meredith, I'd have bided my time in secrecy. But I didn't, I showed my tech, little bits of them, dumbed down versions. And look where that landed me? I get to meet Director Goldstein, and he's the one chasing me like a desperate lover. I barely lifted a finger for that."

"What?!" Meredith moved quickly and turned around between his arms. "You planned all this?"

"Not my original idea, but once I knew you were onto me, I chose to play the cards. And somehow you're still undershooting me, even after throwing around Ommissiah, Meredith. You're gonna have to think a hell of a lot bigger, and then stack that up a few times over. Now, I need an answer."

Cypher released her entirely and stepped away, crossing his arms. He let the sound of the water fill the air, and the hum of it as well. The electricity was back, so the floodlights nearby were on. He could see her clearly, as could she.

"What's her internal stat, Atlas?"

[She is nearing hypertension. Her neural activity has risen at an exponential rate. Her heart rate mirrors that of someone who had just run a marathon.]

Cypher smirked and stayed silent. He knew she wanted this. She wanted to rise and become powerful. That was her dream to begin with. He only raised the ceiling and showed her a grand dream. Still, to Meredith, this was a significant step. Betraying Militech wasn't an easy decision.

"Alright." Meredith voiced suddenly and walked closer. Her right hand reached out, still nervous. "I'll do it. And... don't even think about fucking me over."

"Yeah, I might end up doing that. Just not the way you're thinking." He smirked, gave a slow head shake, then winked. "Welcome to Project Renaissance, Meredith Stout."

To that, Meredith showed a smile as well, but a half-nervous sort.

"Now." Cypher stepped in close, real close, and softly held the side of her face, his thumb rubbing over her cheek. He wanted her to get used to this type of treatment because he enjoyed startling her like this. "Get going. By morning, you'll hear from me. I'll let you know where and when to bring Director Goldstein. Tell him you've seduced me successfully, but I'm not so easy to be swayed with just that."

Revealing a surprising show of guts, Meredith suddenly pressed herself into his chest, all the way. One of her hands reached up to hold his shoulder. Her face became icy plain, eyes narrow.

"Are you? Seduced?"

Cypher smirked and, for the first time, let his one hand land flat on her ass. He still didn't squeeze, just felt the bubbly softness. He flexed his erection, aware she felt it against her pelvis. "You're getting there, almost."

"Hm, guess I won't be lying to the Director then," Meredith said stiffly, brushing her hand across his chest before pulling herself off him. "I'll head back, Mr. Blackwell. I hope I won't regret this."

"You won't." Cypher watched her walk away, her hips a sight to behold. Those high heels really made them stand out. But she still had some visible dread in that walk. Like she was escaping a lion's den alive, and trying to act brave.

"Keep track of her, Atlas, at all times, in every way possible. If she tries to play double-agent, deal with her."

[If she truly acts against the goodness of this world, which leads through our plan, I may have the justification. If not, I can only stun her and bring her to you.]

"That will do, Atlas. Anyway, I'm tired now. We gotta start renovating the club tomorrow."

[That we do, Cyph. Go rest.]

####

The next few days were spent working on the entire twenty-four-floor building Cypher had bought. The first thing needing to be fixed was its foundation, which was the reason the building was abandoned. The Microbots were helpful there.

Cypher had to make a few trips from home to load boxes of microbots and bring them to the building. There, newly purchased material would come, and the earlier microbots would make more of themselves.

By the end of the second day, thousands of microbots had started work on the building's interior, starting with the club and his personal apartment on the roof. The club was given a more modern look, but still had an overall blue theme. There were neon signs, holographic screens, new seating that didn't look cheap, and better private booths, not just open corners.

Entire new sections were created on the upper floor where teams could gather and discuss their missions in privacy. They were soundproof private booths. On the upper floor, the cyberware shop, the gun shop, and the intel shop were built in multiple corners.

Meanwhile, the personal home on the roof was simple but modern. It was built with a single high-ceilinged living and dining room combined, massive floor-to-ceiling windows that overlooked the city, a private fake garden, two bedrooms, and one workroom.

By the third day, most of the demolition had finished. Construction materials started arriving in large trucks the same day. But that night was meant for another itch, and this time Cypher couldn't have been happier.

"Hah! It's Duracrete!" Cypher howled in excitement. "Atlas, use this!"

Duracrete was an artificial building material. It was a fluid material, meaning it could be poured into any form and then hardened. And it was damn strong, since it was often used for docking bays for literal starships.

From that day, Atlas began using Duracrete in the basement levels under the shaft, and also in the new building. It was used to fix the building's foundation, and then used to strengthen the walls of the club, as well as Cypher's personal housing.

When the fourth day arrived, Cypher made Atlas send out the mass invitations.

He purposefully used the names Obsidian and Cypher Blackwell in it, so people would come out of curiosity, if not nostalgia.

####

Panam knew she was living a boring life, but it paid the bills, so she kept at it.

Making deliveries that common movers would usually reject was her speciality. She had a truck, her wits, and hands that handled a gun pretty well. Although not as good as she hoped to be after that night in the tunnel.

Like usual, she was busy driving down the city with a new haul.

Beep!

She stopped humming to the music in the car and focused on the text. She beamed up when she read the name, *Cypher Blackwell*.

"Oh? He's moving up fast! This man."

Her brows nearly vanished into her scalp, and she almost hit the car ahead. It was an invitation to Club Atlantis' opening in a few days.

"Atlantis? I think I've heard that name."

She read the entire invitation. It said she could bring her friends with her as well, and that drinks and food were free that night.

How could she say no to that?

She quickly typed a response. "Will do."

Then, she called Mitch to tell him about it.

#####

Across Night City, many received that invitation.

Some were fixers, some were mercs, some were sellers, and others were simply rich folks who liked to mingle with the rough crowd. There were a few women as well, the joytoy sort.

Cypher was busy preparing for that night. He spent all his time at the club, bringing Lucas with him, letting him stay in his under-construction home on the terrace.

He was only focused on the club as the rest could wait. He wanted to start his chrome and intel selling business. He knew with Atlas' help, the latter would become a major earner. It would become the big attraction that would pull away crowds from Afterlife.

The fourth day went by. Then fifty, and finally, the night of the opening party arrived. What would have taken months had been done in days, thanks to the microbots that could be scaled in numbers easily.

All the cameras were working. All the security systems were in place. All the drinks were stocked, and the bartenders were hired with Judy's contacts at Lizzie's. He didn't poach any of them, just found new ones through referrals and hired those who endured Atlas' scrutiny.

Half an hour after the party officially started, he dressed up in a regular, bulletproof black suit with a white shirt and black tie. He holstered his gun inside his suit jacket, combed his hair, and walked to the elevator.

"Gonna get a new itch tonight," he muttered in the elevator. "Keep that in mind."

[I remember it, Cypher. You also have a meeting with Director Goldstein after the party.]

"I know. How's the party going?"

[It's free food and drinks. Everyone seems to be enjoying it. The BD booth with Old Net entertainment and the Pre DataCrash music on the dance floor is working its charm.]

"Alright, here we go. Time for the big boss to show up," Cypher said and smugly fixed his tie. "Start naming people if I don't recognize them."

Ding!

The elevator opened, and he stepped out into the main lobby of the club. He walked past the thick door that was operated by Atlas and entered the main floor of the club.

There was no loud music for his arrival, no announcement. He didn't want everyone's attention in the first place. He just wanted to meet a few people, exchange a few words, and go hide in his backroom.

"Cyph!"

"Judy!" Cypher saw his favorite woman on the dance floor; Evelyn Parker was with her.

"The party's insane! Where'd you dig up all this music?" Judy asked, hugging him with the full strength of her arms.

He reciprocated, lifting her a few inches off the floor for a few seconds. "Can't tell. Business secrets. Make sure you check out the BD booth, by the way. You'll find a few gems."

"Oh, now you got me geeking," Judy blurted and jumped out of his arms, storming away to the said BD booth.

Cypher watched her drag Evelyn along. Though he noticed how Evelyn was staring back at him the entire time. He knew why. She'd treated him like shit for no reason all this time, and now he turned out to be a rich fucker. A classic trope.

"Hey, Cypher. Been a while."

Cypher turned around and paused to catch his breath first. "Panam, looking great as usual."

She did look great. While still dressed in her usual jeans, leotard, and jacket, the theme of the jacket was now white instead of red. He really liked that as her face stood out more. And her braided bun and locks falling on the temples were a chef's kiss. She had the wild, unrestrained beauty to herself, and Cypher was drawn to it.

"Mr. Blackwell." Scorpion shook his hand.

"Great club. I remember reading about it years ago," Mitch spoke next. "Been here only once years ago. Like what you did to it. Nostalgic."

Cypher took their compliments proudly and walked with them over to the bar to get himself a drink. He ordered from his private, secret menu, which used the bottles he'd found earlier. He got three made for Panam and her friends as well.

"How's the city treating you?" Cypher asked her.

"Boring as hell. Almost makes me miss my days with Nash. Then I remember exactly who he was." Panam nearly growled at the end. "Enough about me. What's going on with you? You are on the news almost every damn day, Obsidian, all the tech, and now this. It is like... I see the Cypher I knew, but I don't know you anymore."

Cypher shrugged while chuckling. "Ain't much, just some investments. Mitch'll tell you my stuff sells. I'm already sitting nice off patents. As soon as I start making and selling, I'm gonna be drowning in cash."

"You will sell?" Mitch asked with interest. "Would you mind signing a contract with Aldecaldos? I can try spreading the word to all Aldecaldos, too. We can also move the product for you if you want."

"A symbiotic relationship?" Cypher asked, rubbing his chin. "Ain't that putting too much trust in me?"

"You are a nomad," Mitch said, giving Panam a look. "As she said before. You will always be one of us. And I did not say that just to butter you up, which I am trying to do."

Cypher let out a laugh. "Yeah, I'll think on it, Mitch. Panam, swing by in a couple of days. Might have some work for you. I gotta bounce now, bark at a few more faces."

He moved away from them as the music on that floor got too loud. It was the dance floor, after all. He headed upstairs, where all the shops were set, and there was more space to just sit and drink. He expected the fixers to be there, and he was right.

"This brings back many old memories."

Cypher focused on the man who'd approached him. Bald, tattoos, and a cross hanging on the neck. This was the man who operated out of The Glen, right where the club was now.

"That was the intention," he replied.

"Then you have succeeded. Name's Sebastian Ibarra. People around here call me Padre. Just a small-time fixer in Heywood," Padre said, extending his humble hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Blackwell. Rare to see large corpo executives make such appearances."

"Large? I'm pretty small still, I think." Cypher shook hands.

"Sometimes it's the small ones that leave the biggest mark. My instincts have kept me alive until now, and they say that you're someone I should befriend."

"Atlas. This guy a kiddie diddler?"

[There is no such record. Surprising for a priest, I must say

Cypher nodded and smiled. "And I'll remember your name. If I need something done, I'll send the word and eddies your way."

"See! I knew I was right to befriend you." Padre laughed loudly. "I won't keep a busy man any longer. Have a pleasant night, Mr. Blackwell."

After that, he met Maine and his crew. This time, they were all present, occupying one of the larger booths. He already knew most, but this time, a few more faces were there. One was Sasha, a young black-haired girl with a naturally adorable face and big eyes. Then there was Lucyna Kushinada, with hair colored in a pastel rainbow gradient, the same for her eyes. She stood out not only for being drop-dead gorgeous but also for that deep dive port on the back of her head.

Then there was Kiwi with the lower half of her face chromed. He considered her the most dangerous of the group because of her willingness to do anything for eddies. While useful as a tool, she was the worst to have in a team.

"Can't really blame her for being a self-serving bitch, can I, Atlas? Girl's been through hell since she was a kid. Factory grunt, got sold off to a brothel, turned into some joytoy, then bam, some chromed psycho ripped her jaw clean off. You think therapy can fix any of that?"

[You need therapy as well, Cyph.]

"Yada yada, answer what I asked."

[She's not beyond repair. With precise guidance, she can be restored. Many like her were shaped by a hostile world, one that denied them any safety net when failure came as the governments collapsed. Abandoned to probability and consequence, self-preservation became

their doctrine. By building goodwill and trust, therapy, and providing them with hope, they can be helped.]

Cypher nodded and finally eyed the loudest member of the group, Rebecca. Five-foot, blue-tinted white skin, eyes a mix of pink and yellow. She had issues, but as a human being, he somewhat liked her. Despite all the fucked up things she'd been through, she had some compassion left in a corner of her trigger-happy mind.

"Maine, contact me in two days. I got some regular delivery work that needs handling," Cypher told the massive man.

"You got it, big boss. Regular gigs are solid. Easy eddies."

"Don't ya got somethin' that needs blastin'?" Rebecca asked while lazing in her seat, kicking her brother for no reason. "I wanna blast some gonk's head off."

Cypher pondered, "Yeah, I'm planning on popping a few heads before long. Just need to get things ready. I'll call you when it's all good."

"Hah! I knew we were gonna be chooms!" Rebecca jumped to his side and punched his arm. "You ain't like those stick up their ass corpos."

Cypher nodded, remembering the few he'd met. "Damn right. I only shove my stick, don't take in any."

He then walked away from them and checked the gun store. It was a standard little shop with what was currently in the market already. He didn't have his own weapons yet. Meanwhile, Gloria was already working at the cyberware shop, and from the looks of the crowd, business was booming.

Then there was the intel shop, manned by none other than Lucas, the most badass-looking kid with his chrome arm and leg. The kid's job was nothing but to point at the board that showed tiers of intel. The mercs who wanted to buy only had to scan a code and send the eddies. They'd get the intel right away. Atlas was running the shop behind the scenes, after all.

Lucas was just the face of it. Not that the kid was doing anything. Glasses of juice at his side and a few plates of snacks, the kid had plenty to do.

Moving away, he met with Regina Jones next. The woman with an eye patch was one of the better people in the city. He chatted with her and promised her chrome at a marginally better rate for cyberpsychos she was rehabilitating. He even offered to take a look if she ever got a case she couldn't fix.

Cypher had complete faith in Atlas that the godly AI could fix any cyberware issue if it was internal.

Rogue Amendiares was also there. She arrived late, and he only shook hands with her once. They were competitors, after all. Cypher enjoyed it, taking her coldness as a sign that she was threatened by his club.

As expected, Mr. Hands didn't come, but a personal, hand-written greeting had arrived, also a gift, which was a sleek-looking katana. He accepted it and sent a thank-you reply over text. There were many other fixers in the club, from big ones like Wakako to no-name wannabe fixers. Even Faraday was there with his weird fucking eyes.

Club Atlantis wasn't a hit because it was a great club. It was a hit because of what it already was. The original gathering ground for Night City's mercs and fixers. And now the club was back with an owner shrouded in mysteries and fame.

He spent another hour chatting with guests, showing Vik around, drinking with Panam and her friends, and helping T-Bug with maintaining the surface-level security systems of the club. He'd hired her again as a puppet for Atlas to do his magic.

Then, finally, he danced with Judy and dragged himself to his private backroom office.

He slumped on the couch tiredly, loosening his tie.

"Tell me if someone important comes. What about the Peralezes? They didn't come?"

[They don't seem to be in the city anymore.]

"Keep an eye on them. Someone could be trying to mess with their memories."

[Understood. I will mark it as a priority.]

Knock! Knock!

Cypher saw in the camera feed. It was T-Bug knocking, two drinks in her hands. He let out a tired breath, not much of a people's man, and dealing with all those fixers out there was strangely suffocating.

T-Bug coming over was more refreshing, however. Besides, he reckoned she must have been bored working on the security systems the entire time.

He made the door slide open and smiled at T-Bug. The gorgeous black woman was in her usual netrunning suit, no jacket this time, and that meant her curves were right there for his gaze to feast on.

Cypher felt a little bad for not fulfilling his promise to her all this time. With so much going on, he didn't even have time to breathe or do his regular visits to Judy or Misty. That delayed T-Bug's netrunning lessons.

"Mmm, there's the big man, all tucked away. I've been searching for you at the party. What are you doing here? Cooking up some grand wisdom?" T-Big flirtily walked in and put the two glasses of cocktails on the coffee table.

Cypher noticed she seemed already drunk, a little tipsy. But that changed nothing as he grabbed her wrist and pulled her over. She fell sideways on his right leg, her soft bottom squished on him. His one hand supported her back, the other groped her fleshy thigh.

"And you woke up the wise sage," Cypher replied with a smirk.

"I can feel it waking up," T-Bug said, shaking her hips on his lap. "Been busy, Mr. Blackwell?"

"Come on, just Cypher today. Yeah, been pretty busy. Ain't easy dealing with all the hungry wolves coming at me for my tech," he said, the hand behind her rubbing all over her back to her mushed ass. "But I'll have time after tonight. I promised I'll give you netrunning pointers, so I will."

"Umm, so nice of you, teacher," T-Bug slurred drunkenly. "I can't wait to learn my lessons."

"..."

Cypher didn't need more than that to see the hints. She was game, and she wanted him to go for it. All the hints she dropped, all the little jerks she did with her hips. Her sultry smile, her loud breath. All of it was one big sign.

He pushed on her hips and made her straddle him properly, legs spread, knees resting on the couch on either side of him. He relaxed back, groped her asscheeks through that leather netrunning suit.

"Atlas, don't let anyone disturb us unless it's an emergency."

[Evelyn Parker is searching for you.]

"Let her keep searching."

Cypher focused back on the beauty on his lap. A tall woman built like a delicious, chocolate hourglass. He couldn't wait to unwrap that tight suit from her. Eagerly, he pinched the zipper on her neck and pulled it down. It sadly only went to her midriff, but he was delighted to see nothing under it.

"Doesn't it get uncomfortable?" He asked, a very dumb question. "The netrunning suit."

"Mmhm," T-Bug smirked and leaned over him, pressing her elbows on his shoulders, flattening her ass on him, grounding her hidden pussy. "Then make me comfortable. Won't you do that? Teacher?"

His cock flexed when she called him teacher. He could see himself in her big, dark eyes. They were just so big and hot.

He said nothing and pushed her netrunning suit apart from her neck and urged it down her shoulders, letting it peel over her skin. He kept pushing it down until she willingly slid her arms out of it. He stopped at that, allowing the suit to dangle behind her from her hips.

He was too busy staring at those perfect, round, doughy, and sagless globes.

Her breasts spilled free like gleaming treasure against the glow of the room lights. Rich, deep chocolate skin shimmering with a faint sheen, full yet impossibly perky on her slender frame.

They were glorious, so perfect on her curvy body, more than a handful and meant to be bitten, suckled, and fucked between until they were drenched with his spit. The way she rested her hands on his shoulders squeezed those lush mounds together, creating a deep, inviting valley that begged for his tongue.

Cypher just stared at them for a while. His flesh rod bricked under her grounding hips, throbbing hard enough to strain against his pants and pulse against the heat of her leather-covered core.

"Like what you see, Teacher?" She rocked her chest, jiggling her breasts with a teasing bounce that made the soft globes sway hypnotically.

Cypher nodded. "They're beautiful."

"This is... my first payment for the future lessons. Won't you accept it?" T-Bug purred, making her voice throatily innocent, begging to be kissed.

And he did just that. Since the beginning, when she sucked him off in the car, it was subtly transactional. She'd initiated it, asked for it, and he had no reason to refuse. This, for learning some netrunning tricks, sounded like a fair trade to him.

"With pleasure, T-Bug."

With one hand squeezing her ass, the other gripping her neck. He pulled her face in and kissed her lush lips. She gave in with just as much need, and he lost himself to it.

Their mouths locked first, lips sliding, sucking gently at first as if testing how far the other would go.

T-Bug rolled her hips in slow grinds against the thick ridge of his cock, dragging her hidden pussy back and forth over him through the leather, the friction building a wet heat at her core. Her breath hitched against his mouth with every roll, needy little rocks that made her full breasts brush his chest.

She grabbed his face with both hands, breathing roughly as she kissed him with greed. The kiss turned wet and loud, tongues finally sliding in, tangling messily, saliva slicking their lips.

Cypher placed a hand on the back of her head, feeling the coarse texture of her short hair as he ground her lush lips against his and attacked with his tongue. T-Bug wanted no-strings attached, so he held nothing back. He swallowed her needy little moans while the bass from the club thumped through the walls.

He roughly scratched her nude back with his fingers, nails dragging hot lines down her smooth, dark skin, and tasting how warm her body burned. Her doughy breasts pressed plush against his chest, umber mounds squishing softly. He just wanted to devour her.

He broke the kiss, pushed her back just enough, and drove his face straight to her breasts.

He suckled first on one chocolaty mound, latching onto the nipple and rolling it between his lips before sucking hard, pulling it. He stretched the sensitive bud like warm taffy until it popped free with a filthy sound, then gave the other the same ravenous treatment.

Then, smushed his face deep between them, inhaling the clean soap-and-sweat scent of her skin.

Finally, he looked up at her, chin still nestled between her glistening breasts. Both his hands molding the soft flesh, clawing into her swells so it spilled between his pale digits in lush handfuls. The sight of her yielding curves sent another dirty thrill straight to his aching cock.

"I guess I scored a pretty gifted student."

T-Bug giggled softly, her breasts jiggling against his face. "Already scoring me, huh? You haven't even tested me out fully yet."

Cypher grinned and pushed her back, sliding her off the couch until she dropped obediently onto her knees between his spread legs. "Impress me."

Amidst loud, heated breaths and the low, pulsing music leaking from the club outside the room, T-Bug moved her fingers like magic, netrunner-precise, and untied his belt and black pants.

He raised his hips just enough to let her yank everything down in one smooth pull, pants and underwear gone. His thick shaft sprang free like a standing log, bulging with angry ridges, the swollen purple tip already leaking a shiny bead of precum.

"Ummm... Big one... as expected from my..." T-Bug pushed her face flat under his thick cock, kissing the warm base while the leaking tip rested hot against her forehead. "...Teacher."

She kissed and licked along the underside with wet, slithering strokes, leaving glossy trails of spit. Her warm mouth worshipping every inch of his pale shaft, tongue swirling slowly and teasing while her big dark eyes flicked up at him like the eager student. Her rich, deep brown skin gleamed under the break-room lights, so smooth and perfect it practically glittered.

He watched with pleasure, completely reclined back against the couch like a lazy king on his throne. He saw her fist wrapping tight around the base as her hot lips latched roughly onto his cockhead, rubbing all over his sensitive rim. And when he felt her tongue probing greedily into the tiny cockslit, his toes curled hard.

"Pretty great until now... Tee." Cypher exhaled, fighting to control his arousal. "Let's see how deeply... You can learn."

"Mmmgh!" T-Bug rose higher on her knees and instantly rammed her throat forward in one hungry thrust.

Cypher clenched his teeth as he felt the impossibly tight tunnel of her throat swallow him. Her jaw opened wide, lips stretching thin and shiny around his girth, straining beautifully against his pale thickness as inch after thick inch disappeared into her mouth.

He gulped at the obscene sight of her big eyes turning watery, lashes fluttering while she took him deeper than most.

"Mmmph!"

Finally, she flattened her lips flush against his base, nose pressed tight to his groin, throat bulging visibly around his cock as she held herself there, staring up at him with those teary eyes. It looked like she was silently asking for permission to pull up.

He didn't give it. Instead, he rested a hand on the back of her head and kept her right there, buried to the hilt in her perfect, hot gullet.

"Ughk! Ngh!"

Her throat made choking sounds. She gagged willingly, throat convulsing and rippling around his swollen shaft, spit bubbling at the corners of her stretched lips as tears streamed down her dark cheeks.

Finally, he gave a single nod. She pulled up with a desperate gasp, strings of thick saliva still connecting her lips to his glistening cockhead. Then, quickly, she pumped his veined length rapidly with her fist while her lips stayed wrapped around the flushed crown.

She panted hard through her nose, eyes wild and greedy, ready to pleasure him again.

"Turn around." Cypher, however, had other things planned. He'd waited long enough.

Without a word, T-Bug released his cock with a wet, squelching, succulent pop and turned around on her hands and knees on the floor. She pushed her leather-clad ass back between his spread legs like an offering.

Cypher stared down in awe at the way the tight netrunning suit stretched over her spread cheeks. But he wanted the real deal. He peeled the suit further down, shoving the leather all the way to the middle of her thighs until her naked ass spilled free.

Just like the rest of her body. It was smooth, deep chocolate, perfect round globes that caught the dim light and shone with a soft sheen.

"Impressed." He muttered, shamelessly groping her ass.

Both hands sank into the yielding flesh with ease, fingers digging deep into that plush, warm ebony ass, watching his pale fingers contrast obscenely against her rich darkness.

Maybe all netrunners have asses this soft from sitting in chairs all day.

He didn't care. It felt fucking perfect. Seeing her entire naked back arched in front of him did filthy things to his brain.

His cock twitched hard. He wasted no time grabbing his hungry cock and aimed it at her dark, shaved petals. Her pussy lips gave the slightest, slick way to his swollen cockhead, already drooling for him.

But Cypher didn't want to stand up. He shifted forward until he sat right at the very edge of the couch, elevated just enough. Then he spat right where his cockhead kissed her dripping entrance, watching the saliva mix with her juices in a shiny, messy trail.

"Give me both your hands," he ordered.

With his cockhead already pressed against her soaked cunt, he grabbed her wrists and yanked her arms backward, hoisting her face just an inch off the cold tiled floor and forcing her back into a deep, helpless arch.

His flesh pole slid in naturally, parting her juicy walls achingly slow, watching as every swollen inch of his cock disappeared into her tight, hazel cunt.

"Aaaaaah! That's... a lot of stretch!" T-Bug cried out with her head raised higher as her pussy clenched and fluttered around the invading girth.

Cypher didn't let her rise. He kept her back brutally arched, her swaying mounds lower than her gorgeous, raised ass, using her own arms like reins.

He watched himself sink slowly into her paradise, watched her slick pussy lips splay wide and shiny around his throbbing shaft. She was tight, goddamn tight, and he was loving every gripping inch of it.

He didn't let her rest. He just kept pulling her wrists back, feeding every last inch of his cock until he was balls-deep. His heavy sack pressed against her warm cunt, rubbing her sensitive little nub.

"How does it feel?" he asked, grinding deep.

"Like... ah! Like... I'm being fucked by the most insane... Black Ice and... I'm being fried from the... uh... inside!"

Cypher smirked. "White ICE, you mean."

"Heh! Ooooooh!" T-Bug moaned with a breathless giggle, her walls rippling around him.

He stared obsessively as T-Bug herself moved forward with her knees, slowly pulling her tight pussy off his thick, veined log. Her cunt gripped him so hard he could see the stretched petals clinging and dragging along his shaft as she moved.

Plap!

Cypher yanked her back in by the wrists, slamming her ass flush against his pelvis.

"Gaaaaaaah! I'm... gonna be... sore after this!"

"Regretting?" Cypher asked, already loosening his grip to let her pull again.

"Nooo-ooooh! Just... worried."

Plap!

Another hard tug.

"About what?"

"If I'll... mmmmh... last long."

Cypher chuckled and began fucking recklessly. He relaxed his grip on her wrists just enough to let her face drop and press flat against the cold floor, cheek squished, ass up high. Then he fucked her pussy hard, rolling his hips, using his hold on her arms to yank her back onto his cock like a portable fucktoy. Over and over, her body rocking onto his cock helplessly.

Plap! Plap!

He saw her tight anal hole peek at him between her spread asscheeks with every thrust, and he was damn sure she wouldn't mind. So he spat a thick glob right onto her star-shaped pucker, watching it glisten.

"Ahhhh! You're really testing me!"

Cypher held her wrists with one hand and pressed his thumb against her spit-slicked back door, sliding over it in circles before pushing in just a little, feeling the tight ring flutter.

"Coming!" T-Bug's voice cracked in pure pleasure.

And he fucking felt it. Her pussy suddenly strangled his cock in rippling spasms, walls clamping down as she squirted hard.

Hot, clear nectar exploding out around his buried shaft in messy jets. It sprayed violently against his thighs and the lower side of the couch, soaking the fabric in dark, spreading wet patches. Wave after wave gushed out of her convulsing cunt, drenching his balls, dripping down his legs, and puddling on the floor as her body jerked and thrashed in his grip.

Cypher kept fucking her straight through it, savoring the way her umber ass bounced and clapped against him with every deep thrust, her juicy flesh jiggling under the force of his pounding.

Pa!

He stopped thumbing her ass and brought his palm down hard on one plump cheek. It jiggled obscenely, the impact rippling across her smooth, dusky skin.

Pa!

He kept smacking her ass until the rich chocolate gave way to a faint, heated red glow. Then he shoved his thumb back into her tight star-shaped hole, burying it to the knuckle while he kept ramming into her soaked pussy.

"Aaaaaargh! Fuck!" T-Bug cried out in pure ecstasy as another violent climax ripped through her body, her walls gripping around his cock.

At that moment, Cypher was close too. His balls drawing up tight.

"Mmmmmh! Yes, yes, yes!" T-Bug moaned loudly. Her third orgasm crashed over her even harder, pussy gushing fresh, hot nectar around his pistoning shaft.

Cypher couldn't hold on any longer. He released both her wrists, letting her face plant fully into the cold tiled floor, and gripped her wide hips with both hands. He started slamming into her brutally, hips snapping forward with force.

Plap! Plap! Slosh!

Her creamy pussy and his leaking precum had mixed into a filthy, watery concoction that frothed and splattered with every thrust. The sloshing sounds echoed through the room, the mess dripping onto the floor in sticky puddles, filling the air with the thick, musky scent of sex.

Cypher was close, jaw clenched, veins standing out on his neck. He thought about flooding her insides, but then his eyes locked onto the polished, smooth dusky canvas of her entire naked back, glistening with sweat, arched so perfectly.

"Ggh... There we go!"

Cypher pulled out at the last second and slammed his throbbing cock flat against her tailbone. He erupted with a groan. Thick, scalding bursts of white cum blasted across her sloping back in heavy ropes.

The contrast was fucking filthy and beautiful. His milky seed painting long, sticky strands and messy splatters all over her rich chocolate skin, dripping slowly down her spine, pooling in the dip of her lower back, and sliding into the curve of her ass like liquid sin.

He kept pumping his fist along his shaft, stroking out every last drop, decorating her like a masterpiece until her smooth ebony back was glazed with his load.

"That was... fantastic," Cypher murmured, rough and satisfied as he sank back into the couch and plopped backward, chest heaving. "A-plus for that, T-Bug."

"Hehe..." T-Bug was quick to twist around on her knees, her back still dripping with his cum.

Without a word, she gobbled his spent cock into her mouth, rolling her tongue all around the sensitive length, sucking and licking every trace of their juices clean with greedy, wet slurps.

Yeah, top of the class, damn sure.

He let his head fall back against the couch, arms spread wide. Sex really was the best way to relax after long days of work. Even better if it were with someone as beautiful as T-Bug.

[Cypher. We may have a problem.]

Instead of reacting, Cypher stayed relaxed, feeling T-Bug's scorching hot mouth play with his sore length.

"Someone attacked?"

[No. There is an individual beyond my reach. I have been trying to find his origin since the moment he entered this building. He recently arrived at Night City, as far as the traces lead me. Male. No neural link present. Residual markings indicate recent removal. No Agent detected. A Sandevistan is confirmed. His face is artificial. I infer facial disguise cyberware. The curious part is that he seems to have removed his own skin to wear it. I cannot determine what he truly looks like.]

"What other cyberwares he got?"

[A right cyberarm, black, accented with blue highlights. His face aligns with none among the invited, nor any record within Militech or Night City systems. Still, he has conversed with members of Night Corp, city officials, and Maine, the leader of Maine's crew.]

Cypher stiffened, someone he knew.

"Atlas. Did he talk to Rogue?"

[Negative.]

"Check if Rogue saw the man. Tell me if she reacted in any way."

The answer from Atlas came instantly.

[You are correct. She did see the man once. Her eyes twitched, pupils contracted, and her lips trembled for a moment. Are you thinking that man is...]

"I think so. Once a Militech dog, always a Militech dog. Atlas, go wild. Send all the microbots out and do a full sweep of the entire building for any sabotage. And keep an eye on that guy. If he tries to come after me, reaches for that door, you deal with it. Sandy should let you slip right into his nervous system."

With a tired sigh, Cypher opened his eyes again and looked down. He placed a hand on T-Bug's head and pushed her face down.

"Don't forget the balls for extra marks."

"Hehe."

T-Bug giggled and nestled her face flat against his sack, her tongue lathering him. He was growing hard already. Her entire face was coated in a sheen of his slick cum by now. One gorgeous mess to view.

"Atlas. Where's Solomon Reed right now?"

[He has left Night City. He was seen in Washington, D.C this morning.]

"Track Reed's steps. See if he met with any new faces. If this guy's packing some fancy disguise tech, then you're not looking for a face anymore. It could be anyone out there."

[Due to insufficient data, I did not assign significance to this matter. Reed exited the CitiNet coverage for three hours in the Badlands. This took place the night before he departed the city.]

Cypher gritted his teeth and stared at the security feed on the wall. He saw the face of this man, disguised as a rough-looking Asian man with a beard.

"Atlas, we really need a satellite asap. Can't let them use Badlands against us."

[I will assign this the highest priority and begin the process of waking up the dormant IEC satellites. To preserve their secrecy, I must access their systems at once. That cannot be achieved without a sufficiently powerful satellite network. I will override an existing active satellite, use it accordingly, and erase my steps. Estimated completion time is ninety seconds.]

"That fast? Why haven't you done it already?"

[There's a high non-zero risk of being detected.]

"Alright, take the risk this time. If it goes wrong, just blow the damn thing up in space."

He stared down at T-Bug, hard at work. He already planned to give her another rough pounding. But his mind was elsewhere.

Why take so much interest in me? I haven't even shown my true fangs yet.

Annoyed, he looked at the screen again. While he felt safe with Atlas around, it still frustrated him knowing this man was known for taking his targets alive.

Time to go nuts with attack and defense.

[Five seconds to midnight, Cypher.]

Atlas suddenly reminded him of his upcoming itch.

He frowned a little and looked down between his legs. He'd never done this before. He had always tried to be alone and relaxed. But now he had his right nut fully inside T-Bug's mouth.

Fuck it!

He plopped his head back and closed his eyes again. He waited for the itch to come, and felt that weird connection build up. As usual, it was fast, and then came the influx of information. He tried to digest it, which usually took him a few minutes.

Hah! Pfft!

He chuckled to himself as he digested all the information: skull, robot, flying, cybernetic, human, hunter, guardian...

It didn't take Cypher long to understand what it was. And he knew that more than him, Atlas would be the one excited.

"Your lucky day, Atlas. Time for you to geek out."

[What did you receive, Cyph?]

"A goddamn Servo-skull."

["..."]

Atlas was silent. It was a rare event.

Cypher wondered if the AI was secretly screaming like an excited schoolgirl. He imagined Morgan Freeman doing that and... it lost the fucking charm. That wasn't cute at all.

[Cypher! This is brilliant. This means we have anti-gravity technology.]

Cypher grinned ear to ear.

"Damn right we do. All we need now is a few fine skulls, and I want them fresh, maybe from public service. What do you say, my friend? Feel like hunting Scavs tonight?"

[It'll be my pleasure, Cyph.]