

After finishing and handing off the designs for our new heavy combat robots, I searched the town for someone to talk to. I had been more than productive, putting the surprise extra day to fantastically good use, crushing two future problems before they became anything urgent, so now it was time to relax a bit. Vik would be here sooner rather than later to install our new hearts, which meant the day was, functionally, drawing short.

I left the workshop behind and headed to the Shack, waving to Riggs as I spotted him on a vague patrol. He was wearing his new [power armor](#), the version I had made only recently. He had even taken the time to paint it, going with a navy blue that he seemed to like. Someone, most likely Samwise or one of his helpers, had completed my plans for a back-mounted gun latching system, as well as a pair of hip holsters for his pistols. The back system carried his mag cannon, as well as four spare cylinder magazines for them.

"Looking good, Riggs. I like the color," I called out as the AI half waved and half saluted back. "It's not a bad idea for quick identification."

Riggs waved back but continued on his patrol. I snorted at the quiet AI's choice to basically ignore my invitation to chat, before stepping into the Shack. I let out a sigh at the much cooler interior, spotting Jackie sitting at the table, scanning through a tablet. He had another tablet next to him, which he was writing on with a stylus, taking notes about what he was reading.

"Whatcha doing?" I asked, dropping down into a seat opposite to him.

"Taking notes on what I want my restaurant to look like," He responded with a frown. "Or, at least, ideas on what I want it to look like. I spent some time with Samwise looking at one of the buildings in the campground for the test kitchen, and it got me thinking about the actual restaurant."

"Anything interesting yet?" I asked, leaning on my hand, my elbow on the table.

"Not really, Genio, still just trying to figure out what I want in general," He responded, shaking his head, his frown deepening. "Do I go with a theme? Do I make it comfortable or classy? Am I making a quick stop, or do I want a sit-down place? No puedo decidir..."

He trailed off, leaning back in his chair and tossing the stylus on the table. I could see the uncertainty in his eyes, the indecision making the challenge seem overwhelming.

"You got plenty of time to figure it out, so just take it slowly," I assured him. "One step at a time. Trying to crack it all at once is just gonna overwhelm you."

"Yeah, yeah, that's basically what Misty said, too," He responded, rubbing his eyes with the heel of his palm. "What if I'm not cut out for this running my own restaurant thing?"

"Really? You're a great chef, Jackie. Your food is amazing," I pointed out. "You've put a lot of time into getting better too."

"No, I mean... thank you, choom, but I meant like actually running the restaurant," He responded, shaking his head. "With Frank and I working together, and some 'bots to help, I know I can cook... but I have no idea what I'm doing running a business. I mean, what the hell do I know about seating arrangements and interior design?"

I leaned back in my chair, slightly rocked by the truth of his statement. Jackie was clearly turning into a top-shelf chef, but he had no experience with business, customer service, advertisement, or anything else to do with running a successful business, never mind one as complicated as a restaurant.

"That... is a fair point," I admitted with a frown. "I'm sorry, Jackie. I'm so used to looking at the big picture these days, I kinda skipped out on the details..."

Jackie visibly sagged in relief at my words. He must have been nervous about admitting that, because he genuinely looked like something had been lifted off his shoulders.

"Thank you, Genio, I am so glad you understand. I've been running myself in circles trying to figure this all out..." Jackie explained, shaking his head. "So... what do you think we should do?"

"Well... I could probably build you a general manager, an AI who can be your assistant and run the business side of the restaurant," I suggested. "Or, we could hire some human staff, starting with someone who can run the business and take care of all the extra bits on the side. The restaurant would still be yours, they would just help you run it."

"I think... having a person on hand would make things easier, so they could interface with other people easier," Jackie pointed out.

"True, but I have multiple ways to make an AI that can seamlessly fit in with normal people," I pointed out. "And I'm not talking about the liquid skin system that Riggs uses. You've seen my biological doppelganger, right?"

"Huh... Okay, that's fair. In that case, I don't mind you making a few people fill the restaurant and run it for me," He said, leaning back with a smile. "Better than hiring some random manager. Probably try some bullshit to take over or something anyway."

"I would have to agree. I'll make an AI who can handle all of that," I assure him with a smile. "Meanwhile, you can think about what you want for the staff, robots, or real people, because I'm not making a dozen AIs just to be waitresses."

"That's fair. Right, okay, perfect!" Jackie said, his excitement in the restaurant resurging as one of his major issues was solved. "Any idea how long it will take to get the manager done?"

"Depends. If you want a biological with an AI brain, a few days," I responded, doing some math in my head. "If you're okay with an ALEO with liquid skin, like Riggs and my robot doppelganger, they could be waiting for you tomorrow morning."

"...what are the chances that the ALEO gets discovered as a robot? Or an AI, I guess."

"Pretty low, and even if they do, I don't mind people figuring out we have the liquid skin system, so they can just pretend to be a custom Gemini or something," I explained, waving it off. "While people finding out I use AI would be bad, right now, my biggest concerns are people finding out about my teleportation tech and the proto-matter system. Beyond a few other small things, revealing some of our tech is fine."

"Does that mean you're gonna start handing out your plasma guns then, Genio?" Jackie asked with a flash of excitement in his eyes. "I've been dreaming of getting my hands on that pistol again."

"That's... a good question," I admitted with a frown, tilting my head as I considered the idea.

I trailed off and considered the possibility of arming everyone with plasma weaponry. Between the penetration, heat transfer, and final energy detonation, it was, by all accounts and measurements, superior to mag weapons. It also wasn't a huge stretch that it existed. Energy weapons already existed here, they were all just either not worth the effort or only viable in specific circumstances. Sure, the primitive energy weapons they had access to here were nothing compared to what I had, but that was fine, right?

Suddenly showing off a full array of plasma beam weapons, from basic pistols all the way to rapid-fire or heavy weapons, would certainly catch a lot of people's attention, but it wouldn't be nearly as big of a deal as, say, my teleportation system. I had even managed to ween the beam weapons off their massive dependency on Alien Alloy. The original versions were almost entirely AA, but my latest model only had a bit more than the original lasers.

That said... there wasn't much reason to implement it. The mag weapons I had created, especially the newly upgraded models, were more than enough for what we were fighting. None of the armor a civilian, even a civilian with access to the black market, could reliably stand up our mag weapons, especially the mag cannon, which we could all now use in our power armor.

But damn if I didn't want to show off my plasma beam weapons.

I considered it for nearly a minute, during which Jackie got up to make us both some coffee. As he placed the steaming cup in front of me, I shook my head.

"I think it's probably best that we hold off on those for a bit longer," I admitted with a frown. "As much as I *really* want to start using them, they are a huge upgrade past what standard weapons are capable of. That said, I will start stockpiling them, so when it's time to use them, we can immediately pull them out."

Jackie sank a bit when I said no, but nodded in understanding as I assured him that they would be ready for when we needed them. I would store the extra weapons in the vault, with a teleport prepared for easy access. I quickly used my implant to send a message to Samwise, both to start making plasma beam weapons, mostly rifles and pistols, as well as a single liquid skin version of an ALEO unit.

Unfortunately, with my new self-assigned tasks, it looked like my short break was already over. Not only did I need to start making a few extra batches of Elerium, but I also needed to prepare the programming for a restaurant manager. After saying goodbye to Jackie, at least until Vik arrived, I headed back to the workshop, heading straight for the Elerium chambers, which were built along the now sealed garage door bay in "my half" of the workshop.

Samwise and I had long since automated the process of making Elerium as much as we could, but since it was black-boxed and required that I be involved, there was only so much that could be done. Usually, I would do this only once or twice a week, since I tended to only use the small Elerium nodes these days.

I quickly placed the tiny seed diamonds in each open slot before adding a whole list of other ingredients to the proper containers. Once everything was set, I activated the machine, which would add the ingredients one at a time when it was time. This would create five large crystals of Elerium, each of which could be broken up into a few dozen nodes or quite a few more micro-nodes. While I had gotten a lot more efficient with my Elerium power systems, the plasma beam weapons required, at minimum, a single large node, preferably multiple.

I would be on Elerium-making duties for the next few days, at least, until the stockpile I had in mind was complete.

Once a batch going, I started programming the AI systems for Jackie's new manager. Luckily, it wouldn't require much input from me, since I already had a standard AI design. All I would really need to do is tell it what it should focus on learning, and limit its other areas before starting to feed it information. The AI would be ready to implant in the ALEO by the following morning.

Not long after I finished preparing the AI Core, Vik arrived to perform our final, for now, bioware surgery. Getting a secondary heart added to my circulatory system was an equally exciting and nerve-wracking prospect. Working with my lungs, the heart would all but eliminate fatigue due to lactic acid buildup, since that was caused by inefficient oxygenation. Too much activity would still tear muscle fibers, as any serious workout would, but when I recovered from the heart implantation, I would be able to run until my muscles gave out from breaking down, as opposed to lack of oxygen.

Rather than let Jackie go first again, this time, I volunteered. I was ready, already killing time, and since I was *once again* waiting for midnight for my new tech tree to show up, it made sense for me to go as early as possible so I could get as much sleep as possible.

Once I was lying back on the surgery table, Vik went over the same general spiel he had given for the lung transplant before administering that anesthesia. Less than thirty seconds later, I was out.

When I woke up, still feeling groggy, I could see Jackie was lying out on another gurney just a few feet away, snoring loudly. I resisted the urge to wake him up, instead following Frank downstairs, where I ate a large meal and was escorted back down to my room in the vault by Samwise. There, I slept for another few hours, all the way until just before midnight, when Sam

woke me up again. Fighting back the rising sense of déjà vu, I reached back into my head and once again checked my internal timer, letting out a long breath of relief when it showed only fifteen minutes remaining.

"Okay... well, the timer is consistent, at least," I said, shaking my head. "Fifteen minutes to go."

"Are you prepared for the transition?" Sam asked, handing me a shirt, which I quickly put on.

"As ready as I can be," I responded. "Excited to see what I will get, mostly."

Once I was dressed, I sat down at my desk chair, leaning back slightly as I closed my eyes. I steadied my breathing as the timer continued to run down. As it got lower and lower, I could feel it slowly freeing itself, pulling away from me before eventually coming free at zero. As the timer disappeared, I could feel the tech tree approaching, slotting into place. As it did, I swear I could hear the familiar sounds of music, but it was gone before I could even try to identify it, like it was only the phantom of the music.

I shook my head, pushing past the strange experience, before diving into the tech tree. I immediately noticed that there was a lot of stuff I recognized. I could easily identify dozens of products from a variety of companies like Apple, Samsung, Sony, and Microsoft. Hell, I could even recognize the car brands. The range of these familiar products and programs started with systems that were archaic when I was growing up, and continued all the way up to and a little past what I would call modern tech from my old world. Most of that tech I could see, plain as day, my knowledge with previous tech trees revealing almost the whole map.

There were multiple spots of fog that I couldn't see into, ranging from small little clusters all the way to a singular spot that dwarfed the rest, a significant chunk of the tree that was obscured entirely save around the edges. I poked and prodded some of the edge tech, finding incubation systems, DNA sequencers, biological vats, extraction equipment delicate down to the micrometer, and a vast amount of computers and programs dedicated to interpreting, reading, and attempting to manipulate DNA, sequence by sequence. Slowly, the phantom [song returned](#), louder and louder, until my mind finally caught up, and I realized exactly what I was looking at.

"Life... finds a way."

I laughed, shaking my head as I stared at the tech tree for the Jurassic Park universe. And not just the first movies, but all the way to the modern films.

"Jackson? Is everything alright?" Samwise asked, tilting his head slightly. "What have you been given?"

"An extremely specialized branch," I explained. "From a world where one man's crazy dream pushed the world's understanding of genetics and biology dozens, maybe even hundreds of years into the future. Where whole species were brought back from extinction, using nothing more than samples found in insects, trapped in amber."

"That sounds exceedingly useful."

"In a world where most of the planet is barren, and hundreds of thousands of species have been made extinct?" I said with a smirk. "Yeah, I think it might come in handy. Maybe not right now, but in the future? I could bring extinct flora and fauna back. We could completely revitalize the planet."

I quick dove back into my mind, scanning through the starting points of the branches that led deeper into the fog. There weren't many branches, which gave me a lot of hope that I would be able to completely saturate the branch without working myself to the bone like I had with the Fallout tech.

After a few minutes of searching through the outskirts, I finally settled on my first build. It was definitely on the simpler side, a variable egg monitoring system that was designed to watch and monitor every single shift and change inside an incubating egg. It was almost completely uncovered, save a few bits that were so specific to the machine that I couldn't see them.

Pumping out the design was simple, my custom CAD program following my mental commands easily, taking what would have been an hour-long project and compacting it into fifteen minutes. When I was done, I sent the designs off to the workshop production room before immediately diving back and selecting another machine, this one an old DNA sequence. It was clearly advanced for its time, but still definitely old, its interface an archaic CRT screen with clunky controls.

Now, DNA sequencing was nothing new. My world had the ability to sequence DNA in machines that fit on a desk, and the tech had gone through a few iterations since then in this world. However, it was still a long process. This machine, built in the Jurassic reality in around 1993, was, as far as I could tell, comparable to the machine from *my world*, though slightly larger. And it was just the start. This was a machine that could beat out tech fifteen or even twenty years more advanced than it was, and I could already feel the next iteration was miles ahead.

The DNA sequencer took a bit longer to design since I wasn't nearly as familiar with the process, and it was a significantly more complex piece of equipment. Still, with my advanced CAD, the process only took around forty-five minutes.

After sending the design off to production, I left my vault room and teleported to the workshop, where I was greeted by the parts needed to construct the egg monitor setup. With Samwise's help, I put the incubator and monitor together rather quickly, letting the small bits of information, both about the machine, how it was used, and even details about the information it was pulling out, lock into my brain. As a pair of MRVNs hauled the machine away for scrap, I examined my new knowledge, feeling that I had, in fact, gotten a little bit extra.

This was a phenomenon I had experienced, without even realizing, during my work on exploring the Synth branches of the Fallout tree. When making the machines that made the synth parts, I wasn't just gaining information about the machine and how it was made, I was also learning about how it was used, and the science behind what it could do. While not a massive

addition, it was additive, slowly building a complete picture over the process of making many machines. It was also unique. After all, building all of the guns I had didn't give me an encyclopedic understanding of how to use firearms.

My theory, now that I had confirmed the phenomena was happening at all, was it was a difference in purpose. Most of what I built from the tech trees I had used so far had been simple use machines. Guns that throw plasma, while complicated in nature, were not used to unravel the mysteries of the universe. I didn't need a particular branch of knowledge to use the plasma thrower, and the same went for the vending machine tech from the Sierra Madre, or the universal recyclers from Titanfall. Building those machines taught me the methods that went into building them and the way that they worked, but I didn't need a degree in material sciences to know that junk goes in the last two machines and good stuff comes out.

Even the medical equipment I made from Titanfall, including the Auto-Pharma, hadn't taught me much since I didn't need much knowledge to use them. Completing the autopharma had included the knowledge of how to program new ingredients, but that was it.

On the other hand, maybe I was just coming up with excuses when, in reality, the answer was just that I got more info because the entities arbitrarily decided that for some things, I would get more info, and in some places, I wouldn't. Either way, I wasn't about to look a gift velociraptor in the mouth.

After completely assembling the DNA sequencer and pausing to absorb the information, I got to work on the next two machines, a more advanced sequencer and an extraction machine designed to carefully pull out biological material from extremely delicate sources, specifically ones trapped in amber. Now, in a vacuum, that wasn't really worth all that much, but I had a feeling that the next steps in development would include extraction methods from other materials, like fossils. If I remembered correctly, while amber-trapped insects were how they created the first dinosaurs, later attempts were made via more advanced methods, methods I wanted.

I designed and assembled both machines, as well as another sequencer, before calling it a solid start and taking a step back from working on the tech tree. I had made a good dive into two branches, and while I was excited to learn more, I was determined not to burn myself out. I had two weeks to work on the tech tree, and as long as I built six or seven machines each day, I was pretty sure I could get through everything I wanted. If I fell behind, I would just dedicate a few days to getting ahead again.

While the MRVNs took out the latest builds, I switched out another batch of Elerium. The previous batches were already turned into weapons, which were being stored in a dedicated armory in the vault. I might not be switching over yet, but when I did, we would be ready.

It was still too early for anyone else to be awake, so I turned my attention to the liquid skin ALEO unit, as well as the AI core that had been collating overnight. I considered designing a face for the 'bot, but realized it would make much more sense for the AI to have a say in that.

So, instead, I double-checked the core's stability and inserted it into the frame, running it through several self-diagnostics before finally booting it up.

The new AI-driven robot tensed before mellowing out and turning to focus on me.

"Greetings, sir."

"Hello, my name is Jackson," I explained, sitting forward with a smile. "Can you tell why I created you?"

"I am to assist one Jackie Welles in creating and running a restaurant," they responded.

"That's correct, though that will likely only take a portion of your time," I explained. "Most likely, once you get a feel for being alive and working with others, I will also put you in charge of a few other businesses. But that's in the long term. For now, feel free to access the internet, read about the local situation, and talk to the others."

"Should I not have my outer cover for this?" The unnamed AI asked, looking down at their bare hands.

"... Hold on a minute."

I quickly called Samwise, who agreed to help the new AI settle in and start doing some research. Their first jobs would be coming up with a look and a name, as well as familiarizing themselves with the local customs and systems.

As I watched Samwise guide the new AI away, I mentally congratulated myself for trusting Samwise to take care of the original group of AI MRVNs. At this point, they were able to take on simple tasks by themselves without the need for detailed and specific blueprints. It would be a while before they were on par with Sam himself, but they were awake enough to take care of a good chunk of the responsibility I was trusting Samwise with.

With the new AI set for at least a few hours, I headed out of the workshop. I had planned to head to the Shack, but stopped when I saw what Noah had been up to.

The [entire parking area](#) across from the workshop, as well as the defunct power station, had been cleared and cleaned. The topsoil had been stripped two feet down for a large plot of land, pushing into the area where a few trailers had been. Inside that area, MRVN units were working to haul out large amounts of dirt, clearly digging a large foundation for what would eventually be our visitor greeting and business meeting space.

Curious at what was going on, I crossed the street and peered into the growing pit. It took a minute for me to work out what they were doing, but it seemed that the MRVNs were dumping dirt and rocks into a large machine I didn't recognize. The machine was taking that dirt and forming it into compact bricks, which the MRVNs were then taking and stacking in large piles in a now cleared area nearby. At least, that's what it looked like from the outside, but I had a feeling it wasn't quite that simple. I spotted Noah overseeing the digging, so I made my way to him.

"Making good progress," I said, the AI robot turning to look at me. "I got some good news, too. My tech tree this week is small enough that I think you can use... let's say seventy percent of the above-ground production to continue working on this."

"That is good news, Sir," He said with a nod. "That should allow us to complete this within a week."

"Also, once we establish our resources are being shipped in from somewhere else, and our mass production is set up, we will have a few deliveries sent here for the wall," I gestured to the Hesco barriers set up on the other side of the pit. "No matter how nice we make the buildings, we will always look like a ramshackle military base with these dirt barrier walls."

"I wholeheartedly agree, Sir," Noah said. "I have several designs for a wall system that would be both functional and architecturally pleasing, though they will require us to update the already-in-place systems."

"That's not a problem, as long as we do it in chunks to prevent shutting too much of our defenses down at once," I pointed out. "Either way, keep up the good work, Noah!"

I patted his metallic shoulder before leaving the construction yard with one more look around. In truth, I was very curious to see what sort of designs Noah had for most of the buildings, but I didn't think he would be very happy with me watching over his shoulder, especially for these smaller projects.

Once we started planning out the city builds, I would be gathering people to go over the AI's plans, rather than letting Noah run free and do whatever he wants.

Either way, it was time for some breakfast.