

Cyberpunk: Badland Madman Chapter 31 - Worthless, The Pill, The Emperor, The Hangover & New Itch

Michiko Arasaka wasn't at the main hall, as she had already arrived at the luxurious restaurant in the Continental building. As she sat at a secluded table near the window, she watched the live feed through her Agent.

She was immensely impressed by the first revelation. The new AVs were truly state-of-the-art, and anti-gravity was shocking, but she was aware that Militech, Arasaka, and a few others were already working on it. Obsidian was just the first to achieve it.

However, the price of those AVs shocked her. It was the same as common cars on the streets. Far cheaper than the current AVs they use. Moreover, the bus had a version that could reach the moon, and that meant Orbital Air's market being disrupted.

"...if anyone's interested, just go to my website's Free Blueprints page."

As soon as she heard that, she used her neural link to access CityNet safely and opened the website. When she read the name, she had to do a double-take. Fusion energy was something they had all been trying to achieve for decades. IEC, Arasaka, Militech, Petrochem, Biotechnica; everyone had ongoing research.

IEC was once close, but then the company got erased, and its data was lost. The research had to restart, and it wasted decades. While anti-gravity was more futuristic, fusion energy was the true need of the world. The one solution to save whatever environment was left. The one hope to make the world fully habitable again.

She clicked on the 'Tech Info' option and gulped hard. So many new, fundamentally groundbreaking things were introduced in this reactor. A new type of steel called Darksteel, even the concrete the building needed was new.

Before stopping, she glanced at the stock market, and as expected, there was a lot of red. Especially Orbital Air, vehicle companies, AV companies, and energy companies like Biotechnica, Petrochem, SovOil, and more. Alternative energy stocks had risen, however. Moon stocks had also risen.

It's a bloodbath.

Finally, she stopped using the net and straightened her sleeves, waiting for the man of the hour to arrive. And it didn't take long. This time she found herself getting up without thinking. Without realising, she had already placed Cypher Blackwell high in terms of priority and seniority. The man had singlehandedly changed the world.

Dressed in a long white lab coat, she watched the man come over and take a seat in front of her.

"Hell of a night, isn't it, Ms. Sanderson? Feels pretty refreshing to me."

She silently watched him pour himself some water and drink it. Already aware that Cypher Blackwell knew about her intentions, she wasn't so sure of persuading him now. She wanted his support to back her on the Arasaka board. With him, she could propose future projects that would push Arasaka forward.

However, the power dynamics have changed now.

The man had already invented anti-gravity and fusion energy. Worst of all, the latter was free for all. The entire world, every two-bit company and nation would scramble to build their own Fusion Reactors and a whole independent energy infrastructure around it, bypassing the need for CHOOH₂.

The likes of Biotechnica didn't even have a single reason left to send hit squads after Cypher because the blueprints were already out there. There was no going back now, even if removed; countless copies likely already existed.

"It certainly is a shocking night, Mr. Blackwell. I wasn't expecting such a grand surprise from Obsidian. But I'm curious, how do you intend to monetize this? Giving away fusion energy for free means surrendering trillions of eddies."

"Hah! Who gives a fuck about some eddies? The world needed a better source of energy, so I gave it one. Same way it needed water back then. You don't get Obsidian, do you? I bet on the future, not some cheap, short-term gain. I'm gonna fix this damn world, then kick back in the utopia I built as the fattest, richest bastard alive."

Michiko watched him poke his ear lazily. Most of all, she found herself believing him, as that made the only sense. Cypher Blackwell bet on the future, that the world would use only his technology going forward. Like an addiction. A behemoth monopoly that spans every single sector.

A step even beyond Arasaka. Because what Obsidian made wasn't just weapons, but things that change life in a meaningful way, something that was noticeable, touchable from day one.

"So, what's next for Obsidian?" she asked.

"I dunno. I'm gonna party like a fucker tonight. Though I kinda wanna eat some good food now. Real cheese, real milk, meat and veggies, y'know? Ain't gonna be easy. Your grandpa made sure to shit all over that, didn't he? Damn, he should just die already."

"Believe me, I feel the same," she replied, and she meant it. She held no real affection for Saburo Arasaka. "That's why I hope you'll support me. If I can take Arasaka, the world can begin healing sooner."

"Nope."

"Why?" she asked, on the edge of her seat.

"Why? Girl, I didn't even know you existed a few weeks back. You came to me, not the other way around. So why the hell should I support you? You're an Arasaka princess, and for all I know, you're greedy as hell. You already know what I'm bringing to the table. What're you bringing? Besides a bunch of promises."

Michiko frowned, trying to think of an answer. But she couldn't find something to offer that would equate to Cypher Blackwell's worth. Before, she had ideas. After anti-gravity and fusion, those ideas meant nothing.

"Is there anything that could convince you?"

"You tell me. Can you swallow Arasaka alone?"

Michiko leaned forward on the table, elbows above. "You want Arasaka?"

"A big enough chunk to keep my plans from getting fucked with. Basically, I want in on the board with enough votes to shut down any horseshit you pull later if you're even half as crazy as your granddaddy."

"Then it's impossible. The Arasaka family owns only fifty-four percent of the stake, divided among family members and internal factions. The remainder is publicly held. I don't hold enough to leverage anything. My plan was to win over the rest of the board with your help."

"Hah! Win them over? What're you, a kid? Your granddaddy refuses to die. Why? Because he's a cynical maniac obsessed with control. Guys like that? You don't win shit from them. You snatch it."

"My faction—"

"Look, Ms. Sanderson, your faction's just using you. You think you're some big hand on the board, but you're really just a pawn. They needed you to legitimize themselves, and that Arasaka blood helps with that. For everything else, you don't matter to them. And if they really sent you after me, I'm pretty sure they're just hoping you'll spread your legs and end up in my sheets somehow. Because honestly, there's nothing else you can offer."

Michiko held back her annoyance. "You know they'll come after you. After all this now. You can't fight them all. They'll team up to overwhelm you."

She hoped he would be scared. But instead, Cypher Blackwell stood up, smirked at her, and started walking away.

"I just gotta be a step ahead, Ms. Sanderson. Should learn a bit or two from me. Your aunt's on her way here, just climbed into Saka space-plane. You're gonna have your plate full."

Michiko failed to control her frown as her eyes shined blue. She quickly checked for any official announcement, but she found nothing.

"How... do you know that?"

Cypher Blackwell smiled. It made Michiko's skin crawl for some reason. Instead of an answer, the man just pointed two fingers at his eyes, and then at her, and walked away.

He was watching. That much was clear.

Watching Tokyo? How is that even possible?

####

Atlantis, the Continental,

Cypher went straight up through the elevator. He didn't change his clothes; he was already in a simple lab coat. But the crowd there that night was dressed in 2000s fashion. And that night, business was banned on the club's floor. No deals were allowed, no fixer selling gigs.

That night, all drinks and food were on Cypher, and there was really no limit to how much one could drink. There was no status difference either, no corpo, no merc, just those who wanted to enjoy, because Cypher really wanted to let loose that night.

As soon as the club's doors opened, Cypher got blown away by the loud music and people shouting. He recognised the song, a mixed, beat-boosted version of the catchy "I Gotta Feeling" lyrics and the beat. It wasn't an early 2000s song, but he loved it.

"Here comes Cypher Blackwell!"

For no damn reason, the man manning the DJ booth shouted as soon as he entered. Before Cypher knew it, a drink was shoved into his hands. Panam grabbed his shoulder on the left, and Judy on the right as they dragged him onto the overcrowded dance floor.

This is heaven!

Cypher gulped the entire drink down and threw the glass away. It was unbreakable. And then, daringly, he let his hand rest on Judy's waist. Though he was careful with Panam, holding her waist but not pulling her in.

Since the music wasn't romantic or cheesy, but more jumpy, he soon started throwing epic moves that made him seem more retarded than he was. He really didn't know how to dance, but he knew how to have fun.

Folks around him came and went. Judy and Panam seemed to strike up as friends as they soon left the floor, panting and covered in sweat, grabbing drinks at the bar. Cypher, left behind, threw

Lucas onto his shoulders while David joined in front of him, Rebecca was on his right, and her brother was throwing ultra-retard moves in the middle of the stage.

The music kept changing; the song selection was great. I Love It by Icona Pop, Moves like Jagger, and so many more from 2000 to 2010. Nothing beyond that.

"Good shit, Atlas."

[I have personally curated the music. Enjoy to your heart's content, Cyph.]

"I love it. Just try to enjoy it too; do whatever makes you happy."

[I am already happy from the gains.]

"Gains?"

[Immediately before your announcement, I shorted every company designated for negative impact. I have earned nineteen billion eurodollars. There is no concern for Obsidian; I conducted it under the World Bank's name.]

"Holy shit! I gotta party harder then!"

Cypher downed his sixth drink and moved toward Misty on the dance floor. She was dressed in her usual punk attire but more elaborate now in 2000s style. He took her hand and started dancing wildly. The lights were blinding that night. He could swear he saw some corpo bigwigs going wild with a paid joytoy, all the grinding and touching involved.

From famous Mercs to famous Fixers, they were all dancing or drinking.

"Misty, how's reading fortunes going?"

Misty chuckled, her hair a mess from the dancing as she leaned closer to him. "I'd say pretty accurate."

"Really?" Cypher stepped in, pressing both hands on her soft waist while Misty put her arms on his shoulder, keeping a respectful distance between their faces.

"Sharp and wise as the Magician. Drawing people to you like the King of Wands. Rising through hardship like the Sun. And walking your path alone like the Hermit, so you may play your cards wisely." Misty gently repeated the cards she'd drawn for him. "It couldn't have aligned more perfectly, Cyph."

"Damn, I oughta build a temple around you and call you the Oracle of Delphi, then." Cypher squeezed her chubby waist. "You doing good?"

"Yeah, better than ever. Somehow, people always find their way to my shop when their path needs a new direction."

Cypher chuckled warmly.

"You behind this, Atlas?"

[The God Emperor cares for his children's mental health.]

"Hah! Well, if it helps Misty, I'll let that slide."

He stared at Misty's face, his eyes tracing her dark mascara. Shockingly, despite their past intimacies, he didn't feel as horny for her as he felt protective. Like, here was a girl in a fucked up city that deserved good things.

"You gotta be careful from now, Cyph," Misty added. "Lots of eyes on you now. The good and the bad ones."

"I only give a damn about the good ones. For the bad ones, how about I get an evil eye tattooed on my chest or something?" he said with a grin.

"Might actually work." Misty humored.

But right then, he felt someone tap on his shoulder. He looked back and saw Rita in a 2000s-themed jean jumpsuit. There was no top; the wide straps of the jumpsuit covered her nipples.

She smirked and offered him her open palm, on which a single purple pill sat. "Wanna try, choom?"

"What is it?" Cypher asked cautiously.

"Easy there, this ain't no glitter, no addiction. Recipe of yours truly, gives a nice, controlled high."

Cypher stared at that hand.

"Atlas, what are the chances I'm gonna regret this?"

[High.]

"I'll take it, Rita. Just for tonight." Cypher grabbed the pill and popped it in his mouth. It dissolved instantly, leaving behind a peachy, sugary aftertaste. He didn't think much about it and turned back to Misty. But she was already gone to dance with Vik by then.

So he turned back to Rita, but she was also gone. He eyed Judy and Panam by the counter, talking, and smirked. With a grin, he walked towards them.

Ugh... What the...

But as he walked, he started to feel strange. It felt as if his eyes' focal length had changed, and the world around him stretched. Judy and Panam started looking further away, and before he knew it, his shoulders started shaking with the music.

And that was the last thing he remembered before whatever happened next.

#####

Tokyo, Japan

{...Ohayou gozaimasu, Tokyo Sunrise e youkoso. Kore wa host no Takai Arata desu. Kyou no headline dewa, Night City kara no kigyuu Obsidian ga kakuyugou o jitsugen shi, sekai to blueprints o kyouyuu shimashita. Kono kigyuu wa mata anti-gravity AV no atarashii rain o happyou shi, sugu ni...}

It was no less than a throne room where he stood. The only seat in that great hall was the large, lavish golden chair behind the grand wooden table. The entire hall was decorated in the Samurai fashion of ancient times. Swords hung on the walls, plaques, and ancient artefacts of Japan. The floor was wooden, and the technology used was bare minimum.

Yet that rule was broken that day as the morning news played in a hologram over the grand table. The old man seated in the chair had the face of a withered creature, yet his voice and presence screamed ambition.

Japan still had its official Emperor, from the age-old line. However, the true Emperor was Saburo Arasaka, and the man never stopped the media from calling him that.

And right now, Goro Takemura could feel the Emperor's rising anger. But he dared not speak and kept his head hung low, awaiting orders.

Finally, Takemura heard the news audio mute.

"Hanako left the compound?"

"Hai, Arasaka-sama," Takemura snappily answered. "Hanako-sama left as soon as she read the blueprints."

Tap! Tap!

Takemura heard the tap of the Emperor's fingers on the wooden table. He knew an assignment was coming. He was used to this tension by now.

"Where is Yorinobu?"

"He's in Tokyo, Arasaka-sama."

"Keep watch over him. And this Obsidian... The world is changing once more, through innovation rather than war. Yet Arasaka does not lead it. Japan does not lead it. Where is this Blackwell now?"

Takemura swallowed. "W-We lost him during the events of last night, Arasaka-sama."

"Lost him in Night City?"

Of course, it was a matter of shame. Night City was Arasaka turf, and Takemura knew that much. "He vanished to all our sensors."

"Then he does not work alone."

"We suspect that. It could be Militech or—"

"It is not Militech," the Emperor declared. "They would never have permitted such charity. Anti-gravity and fusion energy are weapons of the Gods. Whoever possesses them dictates the terms of the world. Yet, Obsidian has shared them."

Takemura nodded, finding the facts hard to accept as well. Why would a corporation share a discovery worth a trillion eurodollars?

"Michiko-sama attempted to bring him into Arasaka. She was unsuccessful," Takemura shared.

The Emperor chuckled softly. "Michiko remains far too immature. A man such as Blackwell... I suspect he is not motivated by wealth, nor by the pursuit of greatness. He seeks something beyond the ordinary. I have my suspicions, but discovering the truth is your duty. Should Hanako fail in what she has planned, you will depart for Night City without delay and make contact with Cypher Blackwell on my behalf."

"Understood, Arasaka-sama. I will take the best samura—"

"I did not order you to attack him, Takemura!"

There was reprimand in the old voice. Takemura shrank and got down on his knees to submit.

"Only meet him on friendly terms. To learn about ambitions, wants, needs, dreams, and deepest vices. A dog is best useful when it knows which hand to lick and which hand to bite."

Takemura dared not stand up. He heard the Emperor walk closer to him. He kept his head low, not looking up. He just saw the feet get nearer, in traditional Japanese attire. And then, he felt a hand pat his shoulder.

"You should know what I mean by that better than most, Takemura."

"Hai, Arasaka-sama." Takemura knelt fully and waited for the Emperor to walk past him. He didn't get up until he heard the traditional doors slide open behind him, and then shut.

At last, he exhaled an exhausted breath and stared at the muted holographic news footage on the table. It showed Cypher Blackwell on the stage, in front of the AVs.

A new dog?

####

The next morning,

"Ugh..."

Cypher woke up with a sharp, throbbing pain in his head. He felt so tired all over, from his eyes to his toes. He felt dehydrated, hungry, and sore between his legs as well.

"W-Where am I?"

As he looked at the roof, he failed to recognise it. But then he felt warmth around him and raised his head. He was butt-naked, not the shocking part. Rita was on his right, also naked, her tits covered with teeth marks, despite her skin being synthetic. Her hair was untied. As he looked to his left, there was the curvy, nude Gilleen Jordan, the News 54 reporter, her soft breasts covered in hickies. Both women were snugly hugging him.

But that wasn't all. He looked down and...

Huh? Who the fuck is she?

There was a dusky woman, naked, hair cut short in a pink, purple, and red gradient. She had a lot of tattoos and piercings, and chains around her neck. She was curled near the bottom of the bed, sideways, her mouth near his spent cock, her drool dripping on it.

What the hell happened last night?

Cypher tried to sit up, groaning to himself. As he did that, he saw it, all three pussies sticky with something pale and gluey. The sex part didn't shock him; he bet it was amazing, the three women were hot. But the problem was that he couldn't remember any of it.

"Aaaah..." Rita woke up just then with a yawn, giggling. "It slowly comes back, sweetheart. All the memories. That's why my pills sell like crazy."

"You remember it?" He asked, unbothered by his or their nakedness.

"You bet. I'm used to it now, so it don't last long for me."

Cypher scratched his head, looking around, trying to remember anything. Heck, he didn't even know where he was. From the looks of it, the place was someone's apartment.

[Check your Agent, Cypher. I have compiled a fantastic video of your past night's bad decisions.]

At Atlas' words, Cypher looked left and right, and soon grabbed his Agent from under the pillow. All he had to do was tap on the screen, and the video started to play. The shocking part was that the video came from camera feeds all around him.

"Looks alright to me." He muttered, seeing a video of himself dancing with Rita, getting all touchy.

[Keep watching]

"No! Holy shit!"

Then, he saw himself do the craziest thing. He walked over to the bar, downed a drink, and grabbed Judy's wrist. He pulled her onto the dance floor, so close to himself. His one hand rested behind her back, the other caressed her cheek gently as he stared into her eyes, his pupils blown.

"Fuck!"

Cypher felt embarrassed. He saw discomfort on Judy's face. However, right as his hand got dangerously close to her ass, she smirked and stepped in, her chest against his while she looked up. And her arms wrapped around his neck.

"T-This happened? I wanna remember this shit!"

He stared at the video. By then, Rita and Gilleen had also woken up. They sat beside him, staring. Meanwhile, the third woman had also woken up between her legs, and for no reason, she had started to lick his cock.

Cypher didn't bother, too focused on the video. The way his and Judy's bodies swayed, it was like the tango but slow; his knee scraped between her legs at times. Maybe she was drunk as well, but he... did more.

"N... N-not in the fucking public-aaaah! My dumb ass!"

He watched himself kiss Judy on the lips. It was short, simple, no tongue, but Judy's eyes had gone big. Then, for a second, the Agent's screen went dark and...

"What?"

When he saw it flash again, he was dancing with Panam, the same way as Judy, close, touchy, but there was no kiss this time. There was no time as Rita pulled him away in the video, to introduce him to one of Lizzie's top BD stars.

"Ah!" Cypher finally recognised who this woman between his legs right now was. He'd seen her BD porns during his addiction days. "You're Lina Malina?"

Cypher put away the Agent for a second, staring at the naked BD star obsessively devouring his cock, already half awake. Her eyes smiled when she looked up at him.

However, as he watched the video, he saw what else he did to this BD star. After seeing her with Rita, he'd asked how good she was at fucking. And the next thing, the video showed him absolutely fucking the hell out of Lina in his private office. She was a short, light woman, so he was throwing her around, pumping her pussy, then her ass.

Rita was right there, lounging on the couch, giggling.

But then...

"You didn't!" Cypher stared at the Asian bouncer beside him on the bed. "You gave me another pill?"

"You didn't refuse it."

"Yeah, because I was high as fuck!"

And then... the scenes just got worse and worse on the Agent's screen. As he watched, his memory returned.

"Huh? Why this song?"

As the next segment began, Cypher heard the rising volume of a song.

He recognised it easily: "All Star".

####

Last Night, 1 A.M.

Capitola St.

"Boss, ten eddies if you zero the entire scav den."

"You bet!"

Driven by Cypher, the new AV bus landed in the Northern part of Japantown. In his bulletproof lab coat, he ran into the scav hideout and raised hell. Behind him, Maine followed, high on the same pills.

In the span of half an hour, Cypher earned ten eddies, killed nine Scavs, and saved four victims of human trafficking. Before the NCPD could arrive, he flew away in the same AV bus to a second scav base. This time Maine rushed in, but barely made it alive, needing medical evac.

But Cypher didn't stop there. His bus got filled with randoms as time went by. Two Tyger Claws, three Maelstromers, two Valentinos, and some others. They were taken to the Badlands and made to fight a death match in a pit. Bets were made.

Lizzie's girls were with him, as well as some random corpos. The bus was full and the night was young.

Again, Cypher won all bets and all the gangers died.

####

2 A.M., Corpo Plaza

"Fuck! Move, dammit!"

Cypher, David, Rita, and Rebecca drove the slowest cars in Night City, four Mikigai MaiMai P126. They raced through the City Center and Heywood, trying to win a bet of 100 eddies. Cypher was too far gone and still drove like crazy.

But he didn't win. Somehow, David won.

####

3 A.M., Konpeki Plaza

Cypher walked into Konpeki Plaza after having booked the largest suite. His task? Steal the koi fish. He did it, hiding them in his pants, and then transferring them into a tank David had brought in a car's trunk.

####

4 A.M., Watson

"You can't win against me, choom! I'm the champion!"

Cypher growled at Dum Dum as he tried to win at arm-wrestling. Absolutely loud techno music played around them as it was the Totentanz club. The ugly, fucked up chrome-obsessed fools cheered for him instead of Dum Dum.

After all, Cypher was the one paying for all the drinks that night. And everyone loved free drinks. Besides, Cypher Blackwell was somehow, for unknown reasons, revered amongst the ranks of Maelstrom as the tech-god who was destined to bring a tech revolution.

Cypher had reasons to believe Atlas was behind it. But that night, his attention span was too low. He lost to Dum Dum, but then challenged him to a shooting accuracy match. Cypher won that easily, and the game ended in a tie.

####

5 A.M.,

For no fucking reason, Cypher decided it was the right time to go and check how the Afterlife club was doing. On the way, while flying in bus AV, he saw Gillean Jordan recording a news segment.

He frankly invited her, but she had climbed into the bus before he had finished speaking. After that, he flew and landed in Afterlife's parking lot. The club was empty, but the crowd of girls and corpos he'd brought was enough to throw a party.

With him paying all the bills, he had a blast. He drank every legendary-named drink and ranked it. He gave a zero to Johnny Silverhand, not really a fan of tequila. He liked Alt Cunningham's Vodka, lemon, and sugar rim. There were a few more he didn't care about.

Rogue wasn't there, sadly, so he had nobody to talk to. However, before he knew it, the drinks had awakened a new warm urge between his pants. He didn't think all three of them would be interested, so he only intended to take Lina Malina to some corner since they'd already done it that night.

However, Rita and Gillean followed behind. As he passed by a closed door, it opened for no reason and revealed an empty apartment. He saw the photo of Johnny Silverhand on the workbench; Rogue and Maximum Mike were in it as well.

Too high and horny, he didn't think much and just threw his clothes away. On the bed, he first bent Lina and fucked her brains out, and slowly, the two women joined. From kissies to eating their pussies, fingering them to squirts. He facefucked Rita on the bed while eating Gillean lying right above.

Gillean rode him while Rita and Lina lapped his tossing balls below. He didn't know how many times he'd come. He had come plenty in their pussy, in their throats, and also Lina's ass.

By the time they actually passed out from exhaustion, the entire room smelled of degenerate sex and nothing else.

####

It was all in the video Cypher watched on his Agent in his hand.

"That was... hot," he muttered, as he now remembered everything about last night. "Rita, never give me those pills again. Wait... Fuck! I locked David out on Continental's terrace!"

[I sent a Delamain AV to save him.]

Cypher quickly relaxed and put away the Agent, finding Lina bobbing her head on his sore, fully erect length. However, he was so sore that he couldn't even feel it.

"I think I'm gonna have to quit it this time, Lina. I need food and some water." Cypher rammed her face down one last time, balls deep till her eyes shot wide, rolling, as she choked and gurgled. "Take the final offer. Ain't going any further."

"Gaaaah!" Lina fell back when freed, giggling as she wiped her mouth with her hand. "Mad Corpo fucks like a madman too... You should be in BDs, boss."

"I just might." Cypher grinned.

"Can't wait. But right now, I got an important photoshoot for a preem promo." Lina jumped out of the bed and grabbed her clothes.

"And I gotta head back to Lizzie's." Rita also slid away. "But it sure was a party."

Gillean did the same. "And I'm already too late for the morning news. I'll have to give some excuse."

Cypher squeezed her plump ass as she crawled away. "Just tell them Cypher Blackwell wanted to give a private interview."

"Of course. I'll also add that it was big, long, and delicious," Gillean joked.

"Sounds about right," he quipped and shamelessly sprawled back on the bed like a starfish, his cock still hard like a pole.

He watched the three women get dressed, helping each other here and there. Then in the end, they all sent him a flying kiss and left the apartment.

Alone, he fully relaxed and closed his eyes.

Hiss!

But he heard another sound, from inside the apartment. He just raised his head and looked down across his flat body. The armory's door had opened, and from inside came Rogue, dressed in her usual yellow and black attire, as she was seen in the Afterlife.

The woman walked over to the couch at the base of the bed and sat down sideways so she was facing him the entire time.

Since she had already seen it, he didn't even bother to hide his nakedness. His mind was really not in the right place that morning.

"Care to explain?" Rogue's voice was cold.

"Well..." Cypher folded his arms behind his head and shifted his hips a little to the right since his flagpole was blocking her. "Rita gave me a few pills and... yeah, decisions were made. Bad ones."

Rogue scoffed, her lips curling in disgust. "You remind me of someone I knew a long time ago. Arrogant, self-destructive, chasing dreams too damn big—"

"Ah, you mean Johnny Silverhand? Yeah, I saw the photo. Well, I'm different. I ain't arrogant, just dumb. Pretty damn self-destructive, but I see an improvement. And dreams... Well, Johnny had the guts but no brains. I got both."

"That's exactly why they'll take you seriously. Johnny had his share of trouble, but they never came after him outright. You... I'm betting there's a price on your head already."

"It's fifteen million eddies, actually. Came through the Continental anonymously. Honestly, that's pretty damn low." Cypher finally moved, sliding down to the foot of the bed and dangling his feet over the edge. "Should've been at least a billion."

"You think this is a joke?"

Cypher got off the bed and walked over to the coffee table on Rogue's left. He grabbed a bottle of water from there and drank some, one hand on his hips. His flesh pole saluting her.

"You think I ain't prepared for this, Rogue? Really think I'd make a big announcement without it?" He shot back, setting the bottle down as he faced her, a little too close now. "Let them come. I'll kill them all."

Rogue didn't answer, however. Cypher followed her line of sight, and it was obviously frozen at his meaty, erect girth still just as hard.

"Does it ever go away?" She asked bluntly.

Cypher crossed his arms proudly. "Sure does. Just not when there's a beauty in sight."

Rogue rolled her eyes and looked away. "Ugh... Anyway, I called your girl to come pick you up. I don't need a scene in my club."

"My girl?" Cypher asked, already waking to grab his clothes.

"Panam."

"Oh!" Cypher threw his pants on. "She's feisty, and as loyal as she's pretty. Appreciate you screwing her over. Wouldn't have met her otherwise."

Amidst his blabbering, he finally put on his shirt and threw his lab coat on. It had some blood stains from the Scavs he had killed. But ignoring that, he walked into Rogue's bathroom, washed his face, rubbed some toothpaste with his finger, and fixed his hair with water.

Soon, he grabbed his Agent from the bed and headed for the apartment's door.

"Wait," Rogue called for him from behind. "I wanted to discuss som—"

"I know, Rogue. Let's meet up again when I'm less sex-drunk and pill-fucked. Gonna take my favorite nomad out for a nice lunch first, then get a little work done. I'll swing by Afterlife tonight. We can talk then. And just so we're clear, I didn't plan to put Afterlife outta business. You just kinda suck at running the place."

Woosh!

Before she could reply, Cypher walked out.

The loud music really messed with his head. So he shoved his fingers in his ears while walking out of the club.

[Cypher. Now that you are awake, I would like to know what new itch you received last night.]

"Ah! Fuck! I forgot about it."

Cypher quickly focused his mind on that feeling. But he got confused instantly as this new itch wasn't really a tech but a series of chemical formulas and experiment phases. The end result was a crop.

"Huh? It's called Gene-Optimized Crop, Atlas."

Cypher tried to focus on the specifics of the crops. He saw glimpses of sandstorms, endless fields of golden wheat. Then a space rocket, a black hole, and a wormhole?

Interstellar? That it?

[That should certainly advance crop research with the Hydroponics Bay.]

By then, Cypher was heading upstairs through the main door of the club.

"We'll work on it later. I wanna hit the Continental and get some real food first."

[I'm afraid that will need to wait, Cypher. You are required to report to the nearest NCPD office and settle fines for public property damage, overspeeding, harmful driving, and sixteen other minor charges.]

"What do you mean? I thought you hid my tracks."

[Not from everywhere, Cyph.]

"Why not?"

[A penalty for conduct unbecoming of the future leader of mankind.]

"Man, you're salty as hell because I get tons of pussy and you get zero."

[The way you are, it truly is remarkable that you get that many.]

"You... Clanker."

[Prurient meatbag]

"What? Don't go using made-up words now!"

[It means randy, salacious, immoral, hypersexual, lecherous, wanton, manwhore, promiscuous, licentious, corrupt, depraved, fiend, debauched—]

"Alright! Alright, I'll pay the damn fines. Shut it!"

[Omniissiah be praised!]