

The MRVNs moved like a swarm, spreading over the buildings and warehouses. The first step to building something new was tearing down the old structures, and that required scans and planning, at least for the more complicated, structurally reinforced buildings. The greenhouses that occupied one of the corners of the space could simply be removed, as there wasn't much to their structure in the first place.

Walking the area for the first time gave me a sense of the space that I mostly missed just looking at maps. For example, I was surprised to see just how drastic the change in elevation was from one corner of the warehouse district to the other. It wouldn't get in the way of our plan, since layering was a great way to direct and design the sort of environment we had in mind, but it was interesting to see what I had overlooked.

As several dozen MRVNs scanned and inspected the buildings for demolition, the others prepared their equipment. Eight universal recyclers, each the size of a [Chevillon Emperor](#), were moved into place, spread out along the densest building locations. They would make quick work of all the scrap we were about to create, tearing down these buildings. The resulting materials would then be shipped back to the large-scale production yard and used to manufacture the parts for the next stage of construction.

About thirty minutes after our robotic workforce arrived, they began tearing apart the first buildings. Working from the top down, the structures were cut into large workable chunks. Those chunks were then dropped or pushed off the side to the ground below before being moved to the closest universal recycler. For the heavier structures, a significant amount of what was being produced was concrete sand, which the MRVNs moved using carts and shovels, filling in low points across the area. What would ordinarily take one man with a large-scale piece of machinery to do in a few hours, the MRVNs could complete in half the time, using a small army.

It's hard to argue with the results, and the price tag is zero.

Judging by the slow but steady progress, the demolition was expected to be completed in just under two days. Of course, the docks were undergoing a similar transformation with a slightly longer timeline, as we were focusing first on the warehouse district, and the scrap in the docks was more... complicated. The large boat needed to be carefully disposed of, or we risked it falling and damaging the dry dock, potentially putting it at risk of flooding.

By noon, I was satisfied with my inspection of the area, and of the security Murtaugh had in place, which meant it was time for us to finally head home. Together we piled into a VTOL, the flying vehicle carrying us all back to Rocky Ridge, where everyone was waiting for us. Well, technically, my doppelganger was heading home because as soon as I stepped into the cargo VTOL, I disconnected from it, waking up in my bed with a stretch. A quick teleport later, and I was back at the Ridge, having beaten the rest of the team home by a good chunk of time.

After taking in the warm sunlight for a moment, I made my way to the security building, finding Sable and David still inside, watching over Murtaugh's shoulder. Both of the humans looked moderately bored, though Sable was hiding it better.

"Well done, Murtaugh," I said, patting his shoulder. "The shades and heavies did a wonderful job, thanks to you."

"It was all pretty simple, sir," He responded, giving me a shrug. "Maesltrom is not exactly strategically savvy."

"Fair, but we still came out on top, and that's enough to celebrate," I pointed out. "Keep an eye on the two construction zones. I don't want any of our stuff to go missing."

Murtaugh nodded, and I turned to focus on Sable and David, the latter of whom was already looking towards the door longingly. The action was over, the fighting was done, and now he was just watching the MRVNs tear down the buildings.

"David, you don't have to stick around here," I pointed out. "Feel free to explore more of the entertainment offerings that we have in the vault. Or check out the arcade at the bowling alley again ."

"Sure, better than just sitting around," He said with a shrug, heading out of the room, making a beeline for the garage.

"I can keep an eye on him, sir," Murtaugh assured him, one of his many screens flicking to the teleport hub attached to the living space, where David suddenly appeared.

"Thanks, buddy," I said, before gesturing for Sable to speak. "So? What do you think?"

"I think that Tinker Tech's security is already Swiss cheese," She responded with a chuckle. "We got five reports of the security being breached before the system fell apart completely from so many slicing attempts crashing the system."

"Glad we kept that place clean then," I responded with a chuckle. "Any physical break-ins?"

"Probably, but nothing that has set off the alarms," She answered with a shrug. "I'm willing to bet that when we next try to go in, the locks are going to be so over cut they won't even work."

"Suckers bet," I responded, shaking my head. "At this point, just cancel the rent, tell our employees that the business is taking a few months as we prepare our new location. Do you think any of them are in danger?"

"No, they will try and bribe them first, and I told them all to take whatever bribes they could get as a bonus," She assured me. "Not so uncommon, as long as the companies aren't trying to instigate us."

"And if they are?"

"That's the cost of business in Night City," She pointed out with a shrug. "You join a gang, you might get shot. Work with a business, you might get burned by competitors."

I nodded, not exactly liking the idea, but also recognizing there wasn't much I could do beyond inviting them to move in, and considering I had no idea who any of them were, really, that was not happening. I had already confirmed that none of them had children, which, by Night City standards, was above and beyond.

"So basically, Tinker Tech is dead in the water until we can build our own security and infrastructure to support it," I guessed, Sable nodding in agreement. "Good thing our skyscraper will have plenty of room. Murtaugh, has anyone been looking around here?"

"None that I can see so far, and I have thermal going constantly," He responded. "Our ground sensors aren't picking up anything either."

"We won't for a little while. They will try to find the answers inside Night City first," Sabel explained. "Easier to get away with... well, just about anything there, really."

"Well, either way, I'm going to increase patrols.... After adding a thermal scanner to the design of the shade," I said, shaking my head. "I really didn't think optical camo was that common, especially not at that quality."

"I would say you're correct," She agreed with a frown. "The militech tech they 'stole,' could have been a paid donation. Someone needed a favor, or a favor forgotten, so they slipped the location to the gang as payment. You really don't see it that often since thermal scans show it clearly unless you're running a very specific chrome build."

"Anything is possible," I agreed, shaking my head. "Still adding thermal to their optics. Shouldn't even be that difficult."

"Fair enough," she responded, watching as Murtaugh focused one of his feeds on someone snapping pictures of the warehouse district. They were standing on the road, so they weren't trespassing, so there wasn't much we could do about it. "Well, step one is complete. What happens next?"

"Next, we keep wiping out Maelstrom, keep building here and in Night City, and I keep making things," I responded with a shrug. "I want to push my current projects as far as they can go before we get too far into construction. Noah and I have some ideas, but in order for me to feel safe about it, I need to push my current understanding of genetics to their maximum."

"Genetics?" Sable asked, giving me a look. "What happened to engineering?"

"I'm multitalented. I made the stimpaks after all, and the meat doppelgangers I have are practically entirely advanced bioware supersoldiers."

"...You are ridiculous," she said, rolling her eyes and shaking her head. "You know, if you had gone to Arasaka, you would be their golden child. They would have given you the world to keep in your good graces."

"Please, and work for one of the companies that ruined the world?" I scoffed. "I'd rather chew a bullet. Which I probably would have anyway, since there would be no way my creations

would have gone unseen if I worked in a major corp. Militech would have done anything to take me for themselves, or kill me if they couldn't do that."

"Yeah... you're not wrong," She admitted, tilting her head. "Well, either way, we are in this together. I've already been fielding questions from my family. If this doesn't work out, they will probably trim me off the family tree just to keep people from asking questions."

"Bastards," I said, shaking my head. "I'm sorry you had to grow up in an environment like that."

She looked at me for a long moment, almost like her brain was struggling to understand and respond to my statement. When she finally did, she acted like she hadn't been stuck at all.

"No one's lives are easy in Night City, or anywhere in this world, for that matter," She pointed out. "Our trauma might be different, but it's trauma all the same. And they aren't all bad."

"Your niece?" I asked.

"Yeah... she is... so unsuited for Corpo life," She admitted, looking away and watching one of the dozens of screens, clearly not actually seeing anything. "She is kind, passionate, and honest. She doesn't have a cruel bone in her body, and she has completely failed to absorb any of the lessons that were supposed to change that."

"You sound worried about her."

"I am," She easily answered. "My brother has already given up, investing his time in training his son, ignoring Cassie completely. Her mother, on the other hand... I'm worried she is going to do something drastic to try and break her into something useful to her."

"Well... I plan on redesigning the beacons for teleporting, putting them into something small enough that it could be implanted and still monitor the user's health," I volunteered. "If you think she could handle keeping it a secret..."

"If she had one... You could teleport her if she were in danger?" She asked, looking back at me with hopeful eyes.

"Absolutely. From anywhere on the planet," I explained. "I have to still design it, and she will have to keep the implant quiet..."

"I can put it into her shoulder, she already has a small bit of cyberware there that should disguise it," Sable said, her excitement at the prospect leaking through her usually controlled facade. "Are you sure it's safe?"

"The teleporting or the entangled photon?" I asked, continuing when she gave me a look. "The photon doesn't release any energy on its own, and we fixed any issues the teleporters caused a long time ago. They are both perfectly safe."

She nodded along, already knowing the answer but clearly wanting to hear it again. She agreed that it was a good idea, and that assuming she could get some time alone with her, she would be able to convince Cassie to not talk about it with her parents.

After discussing what came next a bit more, Sable brought up something that I was not at all happy to hear.

"You need to hold a press conference to explain what's going on," She explained. "I can set it up, but you need to be the one standing at the front, discussing what's happening."

"What? Why me?" I asked, shaking my head. "That's a terrible idea, you're the one with experience with this sort of thing. You're the face of our business."

"Yes, I am," she readily accepted. "And if this were purely just a business, money-making thing, then I would absolutely be the one doing the talking. But you've made it very clear that this is more than just making money."

I couldn't help but frown as she talked, unable to deny what she was saying, but still hating the idea of a press conference. This world's media made the worst of my world's content look like Pulitzer-winning work, after all.

"You're trying to start something big here, Jackson," She continued, not missing a beat. "Unless you plan on creating a figurehead from the ground up, which I would highly recommend you don't do, as it's never successful long term and much more complicated than it's worth, then you need to get out there and be seen. People need to recognize your face, they need to know who Jackson is."

I frowned, trying to dissect her words and find *some* reason to deny their truth. Unfortunately, she was absolutely correct. I had planned for her to be the business lead, and for Jackie to be our public, down-to-earth, man-on-the-street type connection, but that wasn't enough. Jackie didn't have the leader vibe, and making someone a figurehead was just asking for trouble down the line. I needed to step up and out into the spotlight if I wanted to send a strong message.

"Fine, I will do a press conference, but you are going to teach me how to do one," I said. "Getting up there and looking like an idiot would set us back way more than just keeping quiet and getting things done."

"Done and done, Jackson," she said with a smirk, walking past me, stopping at the door to the outside. "First session is tonight, after dinner. Don't be late."

I watched her leave, before shaking my head and turning back to the various feeds and scans Murtaugh was running. Some of them were looking at Rocky Ridge, some at the new construction site, while others still focused on the interior of the vault. After a long few minutes, I patted Murtaugh's shoulder and left, heading to my workstation. When I arrived, Samwise was waiting for me.

"Jay. With a portion of our capabilities now revealed, I believe it is time for you to move into your new workshop," He said, his hands clasped behind his back. "At least until we can further improve our structures here."

I let out a sigh, looking around the interior of the garage for a long moment. Eventually, I nodded, realizing that he was absolutely correct. We were officially entering the big leagues, which meant big league security threats. If all that stood between whatever I was working on and corpo espionage was the thin, barely passable construction of this garage, that was not going to cut it.

"Alright, buddy, take me to the new workshop," I said. "I'm sure you've got everything all set."

"I do, it's been ready for nearly two weeks now," He assured me, escorting me down to the teleporter room. "The new space is significantly larger than the garage, and is connected directly to a production facility twice the size of the garage addition. The AI MRVNs are on hand to assist in construction, while normal MRVNs staff the production facility. Just next door, through a simple hallway, is the bio lab, Frank's personal lab, and my own personal workshop. We-"

"Wait, you have your own workshop?" I asked, raising an eyebrow. "I mean, that's good, I just didn't know."

"I do, I utilize it when most of you are asleep," he explained with a nod. "It is where I keep up with upgrades and my own personal projects. Do not worry, Jay, I will still be assisting you in your projects."

"That's good, you make all of this so much easier," I said, even as I stepped up to the teleport platform.

With a flash, I vanished from the basement room and reappeared at a small teleport station tucked into a hallway, which used the same [paneling and design](#) as the rest of the behind-the-scenes spaces of the vault. A quick walk later, and we stepped into my new work area. It was an expansive [open room](#), with computers along one wall and a metal walkway above us, featuring another row of computers. It was brightly lit, with a paneled floor and concrete structure. One wall was built at an angle, fitted with fake windows, showcasing a snowy mountainside.

Opposite of the rather stunning fake view were two doorways, one just about as big as a standard double door, while the other was significantly larger, bigger than your average industrial garage door. The double door was currently open, revealing my private production facility on the other side.

All together, it looked every bit like a secret laboratory for some sort of evil mad genius, overlooking the Alps. I loved it.

"This is fantastic, Samwise," I said, patting his shoulder as I walked further into the room. "You really outdid yourself."

"Thank you, Jay," He responded. "Noah and I worked together to provide you with the optimal space for you to do your work."

I nodded as I explored the room for a few minutes, connecting myself to the computers and familiarizing myself with the space. Once I had explored all the nooks and crannies, I settled in to break in the workshop. While I wasn't concerned with fitting everything I wanted from the Jurassic world before the two weeks were up, that didn't mean I was about to waste the free time I had.

As before, my progress through the genetics branch of the tech tree was fast, quickly approaching the last legs by the time I was called away from my workshop for dinner. My understanding of the processes they used and the knowledge they had was growing increasingly fast, and it wouldn't be long before it was finally time to put the knowledge to the test with a live subject. After that, we could put the knowledge to work in more specific creations.

After dinner, I sat down with Sable, who began reviewing the basics of a press conference. Of course, from her perspective, it was a relatively simple concept. She even showed some examples of her own conferences, which she held for previous jobs. Apparently, you didn't need to be shaking the foundations of an entire city to have one. You just needed an announcement that people would want to hear about. Then, you invited journalists and bloggers, most of whom you had bribed to attend, and you made your announcement. They wrote articles or posted videos of the conference on their respective platforms, spreading the word of whatever the conference was about.

Sable was a surprisingly good teacher, even if we were continually distracted by talking about seemingly random topics. It was hard to concentrate around her, and she didn't make it any easier with her subtle smirks and winks. She knew exactly what she was doing, and she was clearly enjoying it.

Of course, it didn't help that I did as well.

When we were done with my "lesson," I spent a few hours catching up on projects not related to the Jurassic tech tree, specifically the upgrades to the shades and the next stage in tracking and teleport chips. I passed the designs to Samwise and Frank, respectively, putting them both in charge of getting them to the proper people.

The next morning, after a quick breakfast, I checked in on the progress on our new land. I was surprised at just how quickly the MRVN units were tearing down buildings, despite knowing full well they were industrial little workhorses. They had also erected a tall chainlink fence, with razor wire on top, around the entire area, as well as the docks.

Murtaugh also reported that there had been two infiltration attempts so far, both of which were stopped within seconds when they were spotted by a heavy unit, which scared them off

immediately. Save for some damage to the fence, which was rather cleverly constructed with systems to detect when it was being cut, nothing of worth was lost or damaged.

Once I was done getting updated, I headed back down to my lab, but this time, I was not alone. David was with me, following me from the security office. He had apparently enjoyed our first time working together and was eager for more. I warned him that we would likely be working on some repetitive tasks, but he insisted, and I wasn't about to say no. As I started the design process, I had him sitting at one of the linked-up computers, watching what I was doing through my implant.

We basically worked through the rest of the day, and by the end of it, I was finally standing on the precipice of the genetic tech tree. There were still quite a few smaller devices to build, niche machines that I would need to complete in order to *really* uncover the full breadth of what the Jurassic world was capable of. I would also need to run a whole gamut of test runs, including small genetic manipulations on minor aspects, just to test out my knowledge and equipment. After that, I could finally move on to a full-scale biological test.

Both David and I were already incredibly excited by the progress we had made, and the fact that, very soon, we would be shifting to biological creation. Frank was already working with Samwise to install the new machinery in a section of the biological lab, as well as in his personal lab. After David had left, Frank and I stayed behind to work on getting everything ready,

"Are you certain a full-scale test is needed before we can move on to our set projects?" Frank asked, watching a pair of MRVNs install a row of sapphire glass artificial wombs. "You usually seem so adverse to creating actually sentient beings for simple reasons."

"I'm not exactly thrilled about it, but my primary concern is with sapience, not sentience," I explained. "I mean, don't get me wrong, there are plenty of things I would find acceptable to do to sentient life. However, this testing is required. I will not fall for the same handwaving traps that people from the Jurassic dimension fell into. All of this technology is safe, the massive catastrophes related to it comes from the mistakes and ineptitude of the people using it. I *refuse* to be like them. We will thoroughly test everything, then double, triple, and quadruple-check it. Every project we plan on releasing to wider use *will* have kill switches and backup kill switches."

"Are you sure we *can* avoid such problems?" Frank asked, his hands behind him as he stood next to me.

"Absoluetly. The issues in the Jurassic world were caused by human error, hubris, and greed," I assured him. "As long as we keep our heads on straight and don't start fucking around with thinking things through, there is no reason we can't do this right. Not to mention, I don't plan on releasing twisted abominations of a dozen different animals stuffed into one, doing my best to create custom, exciting dinosaurs. Anything really complicated we will be making will come from mostly intact samples."

"You do have some plans to experiment..."

"I do, but again, nothing is being made without appropriate safeties in place."

Frank nodded, and we both got back to work finishing up the lab. As much as I might have wanted to, I resisted the urge to start working on tests that night. Instead, I once again left the workshop, heading to the living area and to Jackie's apartment.

That night's meal was simple, just some barbecued chicken with rice, cooked mostly by robots, as Jackie was using the opportunity to test the chef version of the new, [fancy-looking robots](#) I had made, specifically for working around civilians. Most of the team was tired, having run several small raids on secondary Maelstrom target areas over the last two days, while I worked on the Jurassic tech tree. They had squads of shades and heavies as backup, but running around all day, killing and clearing these spaces had clearly left them exhausted.

Despite being made by a robot, the meal was still excellent, probably because Jackie, despite not actually cooking, kept a close eye on the robots making it. He seemed happy with their performance, but had a few suggestions for their final versions, which I happily filed away.

Once we were done eating, we gathered around to discuss the last two days, specifically the progress of the MRVNs, before moving on to the several raids and cleanups the team had been doing without me.

"So far, we've cleared seventy percent of our new land," Kaytlyn explained. "We found a few hideouts, two of them with a bunch of Maelstrom gathered. We *think* we interrupted a push back, but there's no way to know because they didn't exactly surrender or offer to explain."

"How many Maelstrom have we killed so far?" I asked, the morbid question popping into my head. "And do we have any estimates on how many there were to begin with?"

"Murtaugh would know exactly," Riggs pointed out. "But probably close to five hundred."

"Jesus... why do I have this feeling you're about to tell me that's a small number?"

"Cause it is," Gloria cut in, finishing a sip of her drink. "Maelstrom is a pretty small gang compared to others. Tyger Claws have thousands inside the city, same with the Valentinos."

"They never seemed that small?" I said, framing it as a question as I looked at Kaytlyn.

"Maelstrom doesn't have the layers. No real drug sales, no illegal business, at least nothing large-scale, not compared to the other major gangs," Kaytlyn explained. "Just stealing and killing, and butchering themselves with chrome. The other gangs have whole branches hidden behind closed doors, working on logistics and business."

"Well... how many more places are you looking to hit?" I asked Kayt, as she had taken over the raiding, working with Murtaugh to plan and direct our forces.

"At this point, we've already hit most of the major hotspots the Aldecaldos found for us," she responded, leaning back in her seat. "There are a few small spots we need to clear and set up surveillance, but beyond that, it's down to what we can find and what our friends can uncover."

Rather than setting up small teams of shades and heavies to watch over every corner of our property, we were setting up fast reaction teams and surveillance equipment. I was still nervous about leaving our tech out in isolated positions, where a determined corpo could potentially ambush and take them for their own study. Our forces were focused on our primary construction zones, where they had as much backup and support as we could manage.

"If you think it's safe, you can split the group up and work and take more robotic backup," I pointed out. "Should let you cover more ground."

Kaytlyn nodded in agreement, though she didn't confirm or deny the idea. We continued to discuss the following day, including Jackie's plan to finally open the test kitchen for Nomads, as well as my press conference, which would take place the day after. Eventually, Sable and I split off for more lessons, while the rest of the team went about their day, unwinding from their own work.