

Becoming A Corporate Anarchist

Keyshawn Jackson Allison

Opening her eyes, Enolia was greeted by purple glowing LED lights that slightly illuminated the otherwise dark room. Her unbrushed straight brown hair was a mess from a night of partying. Her gaze trailed to the wall and with a simple thought, a holographic screen with many options equivalent to a smartphone appeared in front of her. Through this screen, only using her mind, she could turn on and move most things around in the room that she rested her eyes on.

She looked at the LED lights built into the bottom of her wall, and it turned brighter. After resting her eyes on her curtains, it opened to reveal the opposite of what she was hoping to perk her up. An open sunlit metropolis skyline. Rays from the sun barely appeared through the dark smog clouds filling the higher New York Skyline. Over the years of her visiting and staying, she's watched the metropolis grow and morph into something her thirteen-year-old self that first visited NYC couldn't possibly recognize anymore.

For most of her life, Enolia suspected that the world has been the dark future that many generations in the past worryingly predicted. Many complained that things were getting "worse" but she couldn't find the problems everyone was complaining about. To her, these problems have been here for a long while. The climate catastrophes of the 60s, the collapse of NATO in 2072, and the many diseases she read about online that stormed through the earth in the 40s weren't man-made in some corporate lab. Such problems were either recurring or were issues that had been temporarily fixed. Coastal cities combating climate change have found solutions. They aren't energy efficient solutions and too many are doing more damage than good to the energy

consumption in cities. Several low-end districts in New York City alone have been stricken with never-ending blackouts. As morbid as that sounded, that idea always brought her back to her mother constantly drilling into her head the importance of finding her own happiness despite the inevitability of life. The trips she would take to visit her mother always made her forget such inevitability. Unlike her father, her mother made her forget the company, the world, and the standards placed in front of her from birth. During her time in grade school back home in Korea. Her father would rarely check on her nor visit her at home even though he spent most of his time in their homeland. Although her mother's work had her traveling much more, she still made more time for her.

The heiress still couldn't agree that the current era that the human race has found themselves in isn't completely "dark." Although the graffiti she walked past every day sprayed by the street runners of the past and today said otherwise. "We've been warned," "techno dark ages," and her favorite "The United States of No Future." However, her mind met the same conclusion it always did. Every year has its doomers and gloomers.

Enoila had always been on the fence of cynicism and optimism. However, it was 2085 and many of the problems she'd grown up knowing had gotten worse. Either way, the consoling thought was that she had a bright future ahead of her. She'd been getting close to this "bright future" and each accomplishment felt even more empty. What work would she have to look forward to on a dying planet?

Her reminiscing abruptly ended as her cortex uplink began to glitch out. The screen in front of her started to flicker like crazy. She quickly turned it off before it gave her a headache. *The last update was supposed to wipe out any issues.* When it came to a piece of technology hooked up to your brain, it was essential to update so she didn't end up like those people with fried synapses. She couldn't wait for the future update that improves your reasoning,

problem-solving, and learning skills. Aside from that, it beats having a phone. The cortex uplink had every feature of a smartphone, packed into a small square device that was inserted into a slot in the back of the neck.

The corporate heiress shook herself out of bed before calling up her cyber surgeon. The sheath with her double wrist blade itched and felt more sore than usual. Despite her father's protest, she still got one combat augment almost a year ago. She chuckled at his ludicrous requests. *I'm not responsible or old enough for exotic cybernetics in his words. Yet he deems his twenty-one-year-old daughter responsible enough to run the world's largest corporation.* Luckily, she hasn't had to use it on anything other than training holograms.

Focusing back on her glitching screen she quickly scrolled down with her thoughts and semi-ignored her father's message. She briefly read the preview image of the text. "Elonia. Coming tomorrow." A sharp shock went through her chest, and she perked herself up unconsciously like she was already preparing to greet her father. She briefly chuckled to herself before mumbling, "Yeah, of course, he's going to show up now out of months."

Shaking away her slight annoyance with her father she opened the message despite the glitching screen. "Elonia. Good Morning, I am pleased to hear your exams went as expected. I'm coming to that wretched city tomorrow. Your time in that barbaric country is nigh done. Be presentable for the execs."

She stood up to stretch. Turning away from the hollow message she walked to the window to stare outside at the steel-gray metropolis. The pretty lights, decorations, and ads on the building couldn't hide some of the decaying structures below her. Wall Street has even seen better days.

Attempting to access her Cortex uplink was met with failure before a large shriek shot

through her ears after one last attempt.

“Shiba,” she cursed before tapping the emergency motion touchpad of the uplink attached to the back of her ear. A call was coming through from a random number but it was coming through as a shriek. Answering the call quickly, the information of the caller came up in her face before the person could even say a word. *Mikayla Aguir. But we haven't talked since the end of high school.*

“M-Mikayla?”

“Enolia, He-hey! Hope I didn't wake you up.”

“N-no I was already awake, but you definitely shot a jolt through me with this call...”

Her friend laughed on the other end. “I'm sure!”

“So uh... what's up?” Enolia asked.

“Oh! Um... so this sounds crazy, and you probably wouldn't believe it but I own a club now.”

“No. No. I believe it,” Enolia said, smirking.

“Fuck you,” her friend responded chuckling at her response. “Yeah, well me and my brother own it.”

“Shit, Mikayla really? Where is it?”

“The Bronx Anarchy Zone.”

Enolia rolled her eyes. “Seriously Mikayla where?”

“Harlem. 7th Ave and West 114th St. It's called the Firewall.”

Enolia was impressed by her friend's ventures. Out of the many diverse individuals she attended school with, Mikayla always treated her like a normal individual from day one. The daughter of the largest corporation on the planet made many kids outright kiss her or hate her.

Not Mikayla.

“You should come tonight! Last week was opening week but it still has that brand new venue feel to it.”

Enolia smiled at the invitation. She was hoping not to frequent already well-established clubs and restaurants around the city. She’d unfortunately been running out of new prestigious places to visit. For once this seemed authentic.

“I would love to. It’s okay if I bring college friends, right?”

Her friend Mikayla scoffed over the phone. “Of course. The more suits that show up at my place the better. You’ll get the private area of course. As a friend, no charge, and maybe I can show your friends how we used to party in high school.”

Enolia smiled at the comment. “Thanks, Mikayla. Any specific time we should be there?” “Usually the party starts at 8 pm. Come before then if you wanna talk before things get busy once the sun goes down.”

“Thanks, I’ll be there around eight then.” She hung up, finally getting the glitching screen out of her face. Another shriek played through her ear when the call ended. *I’m not going to a party with this shit freaking out in my ear.* She walked to the bathroom and the door slid open at the slightest motion of her right hand. *Harry will make an exception for me.*

Her morning routine was strict as always on a workday. No scrolling, no browsing, no procrastination. Like always she wanted to get everything done on the to-do list for the day, if she could. Her meetings, days of class, and even her social functions were all organized by the AI on her cortex uplink. She was determined to skip any procrastination. No phone scrolling and no visits to the R & D room below to steal any experimental tech. The cybernetic drug endorphine injectors will give her the dopamine she needs for the morning the minute she turns

them on in her Aero-Vehicle. No breakfast because there's a chance she'd vomit it up on her. Elonia walked past her father's employees who were also in high enough positions to use the landing pad.

The landing pad was located inside the center of the building, it allowed many executives who could drive Aero-Vehicles to have their vehicles parked and managed inside. However, their high positions, perks, and salaries still weren't enough to stop them from focusing their attention on the CEO's daughter. Some stopped speaking and just stared as she walked past. Others simply lowered their heads. Her corporate dress fitted nicely as always. It was black with semi-transparent dark silver hexagon-like shapes from top to bottom. The dark hexagon shape was from the material used to make the corporate dresses' bulletproof torso. On both shoulder edges of the dress, were orange neon lights. The sleeves were short to fit the weather. Her clear light brown skin shined with the orange LED lines that glowed on the glass-like walls. Her heels went click, click, click drawing more attention to her than she wanted.

She liked the landing area back home in Seoul because of the privacy it granted her. In the New York Headquarters, however, walking through the crowded hallways and rooms of the company building impacted her focus at times. The landing area was a large room where many Aero-Vehicles were parked. Two security guards sat in a glass cubicle at the left side of the room, providing assistance and security to executives' vehicles. The cold concrete ground was a step down from the silver metallic ground back in Seoul.

She smirked and flashed a glance at the many employees around her. "Good morning," she repeated like she was on auto-tune until finally reaching her Aero-Vehicle. A smile that she hoped could actually uplift their spirits.

No matter the building's cooling system, the humid New York air still managed to leave the landing area feeling sticky. She walked up a few steps and the side door of the

Aero-Vehicle opened. The Aero-Vehicle had two thrusters on either side of the front and back. The coat of the air vehicle was a clean white with orange glowing lines stretching from both sides of the aircraft. The doors were on the side like helicopters of the past. Unlike helicopters though ever since the introduction of Aero-Vehicles in the 50s, they've outdone almost every helicopter in speed, tactical proficiency, and energy. Energy and gas play a big part in the reason people don't see many helicopters flying around these days.

Stepping into the Aero-Vehicle, she quickly slumped into the leather seats. The door closed automatically and a touchpad came out of the wall to her right. She yawned before pressing it on, the touchpad detecting her and her information through the Touch ID.

"Where will you be going today ma'am?" the Aero-Vehicles AI voice asked.

"Dr. Harry. Ridgewood."

"Ma'am, it is important to mention that the district of queens is experiencing a 31% upshot in crime since the start of May."

"Well... at least it's not the Bronx combat zone. Take me to Ridgewood."

The AI of the vehicle confirmed the location before she felt the vehicle slightly lift off the ground. Leaning back into her seat the Aero-Vehicle began to cruise out of the landing area. The large steel doors opened steadily, and many employees took screenshots of her Aero vehicle as it left. The flashing from the phone cameras and eye optic cameras were brighter than the world outside. Finally leaving the company tower, she breathed a sigh of relief as the greetings and fake smiles could be exhausting on days like this. It was the weekend; her corporate social battery was on recharge.

The many sirens, honking, and advertising announcements below were the only sounds emitting noise now. As she looked out the window, the World Trade Center and the shrouded

skyline of Jersey City could be seen. As her Aero-Vehicle veered to the right, the long neon steel skyline of Manhattan stretched from here to Central Park. The advertisement emitting from below on the streets began to echo through her vehicle. Silence was only a luxury she could afford in her quarters. If that was the case for her she didn't want to imagine what it was like for individuals daily on the streets.

After the Aero-Vehicle maneuvered through the many colossal structures, they were officially out of Manhattan as the Aero-Vehicle crossed the East River. A river that emitted a smell of trash during the worst of summer. Looking down, she began to see what the news and many of her associates rambled about. This always reminded her that no one was joking when they said the river was turning slightly more murky, brown, and green every year. Following the river towards the ocean, she was reminded again of the half-destroyed Verrazano bridge that a terrorist decided to take himself out on. Behind it, stood the partnered project between her father's company and the US Government. A massive dark steel Atlantic seawall stretching from Staten Island to the remains of Rockaway came into view. The huge destructive ocean slammed into the steel wall. The ruins of Rockaway brought back memories of her mother's participation in many of the company projects and accomplishments.

After Hurricane Shepherd, many cities on the Eastern seaboard were pushed to their limits with floods, rioting, and looting. Her mother with her strong relations to New York organized several projects to defend against the climate crisis and in her opinion is most likely the reason Seong Corporation is still plastered on almost every billboard and a lot of apartment projects around the city for the climate refugees. Then came the memories of her mother and father's quarrels. She began to feel herself fall into a deeper abyss of depression. Her real

authentic memories no matter how depressing were finally slipping in. Thankfully it was slowly replaced by the endorphins *Jeez, I'm finally slipping.*

The corporate heiress smiled as she soon realized it was just her endorphins finally kicking in. *Let me just be glad a seawall is there instead of a waterfront center for Seong.* Unlike her late mother, Enolia knew her father lacked the mercy of her mother but he made it up with his cunning. She likes to believe they both had their strengths when her mother was alive.

Feeling the endorphins lifting her mood, Enolia seized the moment and put on her music. A mix of neo-classical, pop, and sometimes hip-pop.

This is the routine Enolia would lose herself in. A routine she knew was just escapism. Escapism only a few could afford by 2084. The average New York citizen spent the day dodging bullets and crowded streets while hoping to catch their delayed train. Most could barely make rent. Any feeling of guilt from being able to afford this level of ease would be hushed by the endorphins being pumped into her system. The tasks of the day were the only thing on her mind. Not the rising murder rate or almost near extinction of the most beloved animals on earth.

The Aero-Vehicle began to descend as she neared her destination and Enolia crossed her light brown legs before looking down at the streets. The streets were quiet around this time of day. Ridgewood's murder count usually lit up around the evening into the night. Ridgewood stood in the middle of Brooklyn, a borough that was currently in the process of being cleaned up by the Corps. On the other side were the rest of the dilapidated slums of Queens.

"Many landing options appear to be available. Please select," the vehicle system stated.

The options were the rooftop, street, and drop-off. Enolia confidently pressed the rooftop as she knew no merc or individual in Ridgewood could crack the carbon aluminum armor of her Aero-Vehicle. As the vehicle touched down, Enolia eyed the sky for any spectating Aero-Vehicle

flying with the company colors and logo. It wasn't hard or long until she saw the black and orange-tinted security Aero-Vehicle with turrets on its side hovering above the M train line that ran past the building.

You can sit there and watch all you want, she thought.

Stepping out of her Aero-Vehicle, Enolia was met by the stench of the overflowing trash in some streets and gunpowder. The only good stench was the many different cultural restaurants that decorated Myrtle Ave. She unsheathed the blade below her wrist again with a simple thought.

“Alert mode on,” the AI spoke before large mechanisms could be heard emanating from the vehicle.

The door to the Aero-Vehicle closed with a harder steel door this time and several automated 50. Cal turrets came out of the top. Feeling that her stuff was more than secure, Enolia entered the door down into the brownstone building. The steps down to the hallways reeked of piss and smoke. Smells her father would gasp at knowing she was starting to get used to it. She knew he wouldn't approve of her visiting a cyber surgeon who wasn't company-approved. However Harry knew her mother, so he was good in her book.

Reaching the sixth floor, Enolia walked down to the door to the apartment hallway. Her heels echoed throughout the quiet stairwell. Hearing the unfamiliar sound, two middle-aged olive-skinned men paused their conversation on the stairs right ahead of her. Enolia shot the men a glare before opening the door, an action that made them both scrunch up their noses at her. “Come here mami,” one of them shouted.

Enolia simply rolled her eyes, her pulse slightly accelerating as she walked through the

door. Walking past scratched and cracked apartment doors, she heard the sounds of the denizens in their apartments. Some normal muffled voices and others completely hair-raising.

Surprisingly, however, her cyber surgeon's door was already slightly open with hip-pop music playing. Walking into the living room, Enolia was greeted by the usual scene of a neighborhood cyber surgeon. The room was slightly lit with a bright white ceiling light in the center of the room. The dark blue tiled floor held some dried streaks of blood. To her left and right were the usual rooms of a brownstone apartment. A cyber-access chair sat in the middle room and a bucket of old or new cybernetics sat below it. That cyber-access chair however was not empty to Enolia's displeasure. A Caucasian man in a green and black bomber coat sat in the chair, his right cyber arm hanging slightly off his shoulder on the side of the chair. Scanning the individual, Enolia landed on the holster that was attached to the man's skinny jeans.

"Enolia!" Harry shouted before stepping back from the individual he was working on. The dark-skinned man immediately stepped forward to fist-bump her. He always wore an old style of clothing from the generation he was probably born in. Dark blue jeans and a black flannel below the operating apron. His red optical eye visors stretch from one end of the ear to the other. His brown afro and beard have streaks of gray eliciting his age.

"Morning, Harry. Working early, I see?"

"Gotta. How else would I know you've been having those glitches lately," he said flashing his usual smug grin. Enolia remembered that Harry monitored the cybernetics of his most loyal clients. That way he was ready whenever they needed his assistance. Such deals like that separated Harry from many other cyber surgeons.

"Who the hell is this!" The man threw his non-cyber left arm up pointing at Enolia. "Sorry, David. This is who you'll be waiting for," Harry answered, placing his right cyber arm

back in its connector socket.

“The hell! I made an appointment. I got a fucking mission later today!” the man said, his face twisting with anger.

“Yes, and you’ll be compensated. A really important client,” Harry said, slightly surprised the man did not know who Enolia was.

“Yeah and you just lost one,” the man said, shooting up from his seat Enolia a glare. It was probably Enolia’s endorphins probably made her slightly feel bad for the goon, but she needed her repairs. “I’m sorry sir,” she choked out, flashing her usual rehearsed smile. “Yeah. Fuck you suit!” the man proclaimed before briskly walking out the door with his right hand resting on his holster.

Enolia breathed a sigh of relief before approaching Harry.

“Oof thought that might have ended badly...”

Harry shook his head, arms folded before resetting his computer with his eye optics. “

“Maybe I wanted it too. Maybe I’ll finally get to see those blades I installed in action.”
“I’ve been using them in virtual reality and it’s pretty fucking cool,” Enolia responded staring at the area the blade was held in.

“Yes, even the daughter of the largest corporation on the planet needs something to defend herself. Now take a seat, let’s see what’s wrong.”

Immediately Enolia hopped into the cyber chair before staring up at the bright white doctor’s light that always made her feel she was in a normal office. Harry grabbed a wire before plugging it into a slot on the side of her neck past her now perfectly combed straight hair. “So just a few hitches?”

“Yup and a goddamn loud noise.”

“Yeah, this generation has been reported to have such issues but it's nothing that can't be fixed in a flash with a quick software update,” he explained. With a few clicks of his keyboard next to her, a holographic download bar came up in front. “You should be seeing the estimated download time through your device.”

She hummed in response.

“Good. So settle in. It should take a few minutes. Anything else?”

“Yup. The double claw blade. I saw there were new options online last night.”

“Yup got them in stock. Lemme guess the purple?”

After the usual upgrades and fixes, Enolia left with a smile and wave. This was a part of the day she enjoyed, even though it involved her sitting in a chair like she was at the doctor's office. Walking through dilapidated buildings, hip pop blasting through the walls, while your eyes are on every corner gave a rush the Virtual reality machine in her room couldn't conjure up. When it came to doing something she was not supposed to, Enolia easily put all effort into doing it. Despite the warnings from her father, she still hasn't visited the company cyber surgeon.

Stepping out the door however she was stopped by the two figures from earlier, her smile quickly dissipating. Both men reeked of smoke and other substances. Their clothes were ragged, slightly torn and didn't seem to rock any of the latest brands today. One of the middle-aged olive-skinned men stepped forward, opening his mouth revealing many missing teeth.

“I think you need an escort.”

Enolia rolled her eyes and smiled. She felt disrespected that the individuals around her weren't scanning her before speaking. Maybe then they'd watch their tone.

“You have a scanner?”

“Nuh uh, hun I don’t install none of that shit.”

“I think you need a scanner. It's good to know who you're speaking to.”

Suddenly his friend's right eye glowed blue. *He has a scanner.*

Enolia took a breath preparing herself for the two results she was about to meet. Praise or an immediate attempt on her life.

His friend's face grew wide and he stepped back arms out. “Um... my apologies. Adam, we should go.”

“Why I'm not done talking to this broad yet.”

“It’s fucking Enolia Seong. Let’s go,” he said, pulling his friend's arm.

Enolia nodded and smiled at the results she expected. A small part of her had always hoped for situations like this to go sideways. She walked through the hallway and wasted no time heading up to her Aero-Vehicle. It wasn’t the dangers of the neighborhood pushing her to speed up but the idea that just for once she had the whole day ahead of her.

After spending the day at home planning and confirming reservations for the week. The hour was near to meet up with her classmates. This time to her pleasure she wouldn't be leaving Manhattan. She ditched the corporate dress and wore something a little less noticeable. She slid on ripped black jeans with purple neon glowing laces on her shoes. After rummaging through her closet, Enolia put on a black bomber jacket with purple neon lines on the sleeves and a black and gold crop top. She remarked how easy it was to blend in with the crowds outside the Manhattan corporate metroplex. Only people living there and in other neighborhoods knew her face on sight, her frequent showing in the media. Others who dwelled in the lower reaches of the city could care less about corporate drama.

She walked to her Aero-Vehicle through the landing pad area that was slightly quieter than earlier that morning. Most executives had already gone home or ditched work way earlier in their Aero vehicles. Sitting down in her AV, she enjoyed the smell of strawberry from her perfume, the sticky summer air clouded her sinuses outside the Aero-vehicle... Enolia quickly settled into her ride, listening to music and taking in the views while the AV blasted through the sky to pick up her friends. The usual depressing scene around her was overshadowed by the stimulation pills and endorphins being pumped into her system before leaving. First was Elizabeth, a 21-year-old brunette Caucasian transfer student from the UK over to New York to study. Unlike her other friends, she and Enolia are the same age. Second was Clara, a short Mexican girl with links back to the many corporate/cartel organizations that litter Mexico. She as well was abroad to study, however, Enolia vibed with her much more than the other two. The last, Liara, was an African American girl with ties to the Helix Corporation. The second most powerful corporation in the nation rivaling hers. *The world? not so much.* Again, studying away from her home in the Jacksonville Metroplex.

Each time she landed to pick one up, it was on a landing pad of a skyscraper or Condo. Enolia chuckled at the thought that many anarchists out there would love the chance to blow this Aero-Vehicle out of the sky. However, Enolia's friends were each tailored to her escapist lifestyle. Discuss the world's problems and what their companies or families can do to help. No, each of them was only focused on what celebrity party to attend next or what country to visit.

The four girls quickly began to take multiple shots from the drink bar in the middle of the AV cabin. Clara quickly downed a shot of Vixen.

“Hey Enolia, you said this place was near Harlem right?”

In response, Elizabeth's face quickly soured. "Harlem?! Isn't that area fucked up?"

"Pfft. No.. the media just makes it seem that way. But unlike the Bronx, it's one of those places where if you don't fuck with anybody they won't fuck with you," Liara explained. "What she said," Enolia added in quickly downing a shot of Vixen.

The Aero-Vehicle descended as they approached the club, Enolia catching a few glimpses of the front. Above the entrance, "Firewall" in big red letters sat above it. Red lights ran along the walls up to the top of the eight-story building. The street by the entrance was filled with all kinds of luxury cars and exotic vehicles. *Damn, Mikayla where'd you get the connections?*

As the Aero-Vehicle landed in the middle of the street, it began to flash red neon lights below it warning everything and everyone to gain some distance. Eighty percent of the eyes from the diverse crowd at the entrance gawked at the Aero-Vehicle. Most figured it was someone from the Seong Corporation but based on the reactions of Enolia stepping out, they didn't expect it to be the heiress. She smiled and waved the best she could as she almost stumbled down the steps of her AV. The buzz was already setting in. Clara and Elizabeth stopped to pose for the gawking and approaching crowd who were taking all kinds of snapshots from their many devices.

"Come on you guys," Enolia ordered with a smile, pulling her friend's arms. She didn't wanna get caught out in public in front of the cameras like this. The media would have a field day if they figured out the state she was in. Approaching the entrance the security guards simply gave her a quick scan without cybernetics and gave her the go-ahead.

Entering the building, the air-conditioned and surprisingly fresh-smelling air hit Enolia with a shock.

Elizabeth stumbled forward leaning slightly on Enolia as they walked through the neon hallway where many other partygoers were socializing. "You said your friend owns this club!"

“Yes, Elizabeth! You're gonna break into a panic attack if you keep worrying, just relax,” Enolia spoke, raising her tone to combat the loud setting.

“You don't gotta tell me twice,” Elizabeth responded, eyeing a couple making out as they walked past. As they entered the club, the dance floor emitted many bright colors as the music in the club hit its peak. Three small steps led down to the large dance floor and four stone pillars stood on each corner of the dance floor. Red lights shot up through the pillars giving the place an underground club vibe. To the left was a large bar with a diamond glass counter where three heavily cyberized people served drinks. Enolia wasn't interested in other drinks for now, but her two friends Clara and Liara pointed it out excitedly. Scanning the large open area, Enolia spotted Mikayla waving at her from the second-floor balcony. Enolia felt her heart begin to pick up at the sight of her friend. She wore a graphic black tank top that exposed her tanned arms. Enolia smiled at the sight of her friend's black right cyber arm with gold material decorated on it. Her curly dark brown hair waved with her movement and a hat she was wearing with her club's logo on it caused two bangs to droop from her forehead. Her freckles and her facial shape immediately didn't cause Enolia to notice the four years of aging. *Maybe she did need that drink.*

The heiress headed up the steps towards her friend placing her hair behind her right ear as she began to fidget with her fingers. The minute she reached the top, half-cyberized arms pulled her in. Enolia felt her friend's hard beating chest and the scent of lavender that always accompanied her quickly brought memories.

Drawing back from her friend, Enolia's eyes widened at seeing her. Her black skirt, stockings underneath, and exotic preem boots she was wearing came into view. “You look-” “Like a wired psycho.”

“Yeah exactly,” Enolia responded grinning. Spotting her friends coming up behind her, Mikayla quickly motioned them to follow her.

“Come on girls, your private room is ready,” she expressed. Stepping into the private room, Enolia was impressed. The seats were fine leather and cool clouds of mist came out of vents next to glowing LED lights that switched colors every few seconds. A table with several iced drinks sat in the center as well. The balcony also gave them a full view of the club.

Enolia’s friends entered the room humming in awe and voicing their pleasures.

“Mikayla. This is Elizabeth, Clara, and Liara. These three girls got me through Helix Academy. Especially Liara”

“Nah I think it was me,” Clara responded from the leather seats in the center of the room. Mikayla smiled before swinging her arm around Enolia. “Well, whoever it was. You girls are looking at the women who got the princess of Seong through high school.” Enolia immediately knew where this was going. She sighed and quickly headed towards the cooled drinks before her friend began storytime. She watched and listened, her visions and hearing getting more muffled as she downed drinks throughout the night. Mikayla rambled about the many escapades they got up to at Seong Academy. The ditching, fighting and the overall chaotic school years Enolia used to get up to. Despite her calming down in college, Enolia had a special place in her heart for Mikayla. After her mom died freshman year of high school, Mikayla was the only bright force in her life for many years.

Since her first time arriving in New York for her studies in 2080, she and Mikayla have hung out like crazy. They didn’t have to worry about the time constraints that stemmed from her visiting from Korea. However, Enolia became enamored with her studies while Mikayla maneuvered through New York City's underworld. The heiress didn’t expect to see her in the almost perfect confident condition she is today.

After the stories, came the dancing. After dancing, came the boys. Enolia, before a couple of drinks, was timid and enjoyed just challenging men whom she thought couldn't meet her status. She would never go to the next level when she was sober, she was too concerned with her future. However, after a couple of drinks, that was out the window. Before Enolia knew it she was dancing and making out with a dark-skinned man in the middle of a dancing crowd, and she didn't even know his name. Considering her friend's success rate, Elizabeth had no issues finding herself a nightly escort. Forty minutes into them being there she had several men trailing her. By this time of night though only a cute Hispanic guy remained. Clara had the appearance to attract a guy but further than that, men would find themselves stonewalled by her true interests, women. Laura, who had her man waiting for her at home, watched on and enjoyed the night in other ways. As the clock approached twelve, Enolia could barely remember saying goodbye to her friend.

By the time her mind began to clear she was on the platform of the 116th Street station sitting on the legs of the handsome dark-skinned man from earlier. Elizabeth also stood leaning back on the Hispanic boy she left with. Clara and Liara sat on the benches next to the other two as well, laughing and pointing at the many sights the station had to offer. The mutated rats that ran along the subway tracks held Clara and Liara's gaze like they were in a zoo looking at a zoo enclosure.

Enolia found herself growing disgusted at the green veins that glowed on the rats so she turned to her companion for comfort, taking his mouth in hers.

“Yo back up nigga. Get the fuck out of her face!”

The shouting quickly drew Enolia's attention. Drawing back from the man, Enolia turned, her vision slightly blurry.

An old man with many scars around his face and gray hair that was falling out stood a mere two steps from Elizabeth. He was mumbling unintelligible jargon in Elizabeth's face which had her frozen with fear. His red cracked goggles like cyber eyes shone in her face. The brown dirty synthetic rags he was wearing covered most of his body and arms down to his knees revealing his damaged rusted first gen cyber legs. Enolia was sure she could smell him from here.

The young mean-looking Hispanic boy pushed Elizabeth slightly to the left before getting in the man's face. "I'll crack your skull and shove you onto those subway tracks right now bitch!"

"Fucking wired crackhead," the dark-skinned man Enolia was sitting on said before standing up. Enolia in her drunken state attempted to scan the man. Her vision, not resting on him long enough to get a good reading.

The Hispanic boy rolled up his sleeves with his cyber hands. "Yo Bro! I said move," he shouted before shoving the old man.

The old man raised his left arm from out of his rags revealing a rusty cyberized arm quicker than

Enolia's enhanced mind could keep up with it. In one swift motion, the man's cyberhand collapsed as a 10-inch blade erupted from his fists. Enolia watched the company logo on the blade fly through the air before it plunged dead center into the Hispanic boy's face. In less than two seconds the boy's body slumped over on the blade before collapsing forward.

Her friends immediately erupted in terror. Elizabeth's screams echoed throughout the subway station before the wired psycho silenced her with a few violent stabs to the gut.

"Oh shit," her companion shouted before running in the other direction. Liara and Clara did the same, immediately pushing past a frozen Enolia. Enolia stared at Elizabeth as she

struggled to take her final breaths.

“E-Elizabeth,” she stated, not fully grasping the situation. She raised her gaze to see the man staring at her with his wide goggle-like eyes. He screamed loudly at her before starting to walk towards her.

In a flash, Enolia felt her veins surge as she activated her Seong Mk2 counter system. She clenched down her teeth painfully as the drugs that shot through her overpowered her fear. The feeling being way more intense than anything the training simulations could try to replicate.

The wired psycho lunged at her, his blade dripping with blood as it flew through the air. Through the assistance of the counter system, Enolia weaved to the right, the blade breaking through her dark brown straight hair. With a flick of her wrist, in two seconds she stabbed the cyberized maniac multiple times in his side before leaping backwards. The crazed mechanical individual dropped to his knees temporarily, not really grasping the fatal wounds in his side. Her dead friend and the dead Hispanic boy were nothing but set pieces to her at this point. The only thing running through Enolia’s mind was dealing with all and every threat present to her at this very moment. Her eyes focused on the lunatic blade and didn’t break from it. Stumbling forward from his kneeled position, the psycho shouted unintelligible dialogue before attempting to stab her again. Only this time in one sudden motion, Enolia cut the man's blade in half with her superior wrist blades that had leagues better material than whatever this psycho was packing. To any bystander, the homeless man and she looked both psychotic. Many would question why a young adult was equipped with military-grade cyber blades. Many wouldn’t even bother asking before running in the other direction. She could cut through him

like ribbons right now and she raised her hand to do exactly that. Her features indicated a small

hint of excitement as the counter system did away with any fear she was feeling. Before she could, a large shot rang out behind her, and the man's face exploded open like a watermelon splattering blood all over Enolia's crop top and jacket. Turning in a flash, Enolia scanned the black-suited dark-skinned man with orange-tinted tech-glasses. Her systems labeled him not a threat but his affiliation was connected to the Seong corporation. *One of her guards.* He walked past her before scanning the lifeless corpse of the man below her. "Yes the threat is eliminated," he said to someone he was communicating with on the radio. Turning to the heiress, he folded his arms. "Ma'am, are you okay?"

The shock, her counter system still on, and the drinks in her made it increasingly hard to speak. "Y-yes," she could simply let out. She felt like she was coming down from a high, or a good workout.

"Alert the city authorities of the incident. I'm returning back to base with the package," the man said again as a train pulled into the station. People stepped out of the train horrified, some screamed, some cursed and others simply walked past it. Avoiding the publicity, the company guard quickly rested his arm on Enolia's shoulder guiding her out of the station in her almost lucid state.

Thanks to the pills given to her Enolia awoke in her room staring up at the ceiling like the night before didn't happen. She slept a dreamless night. The trauma and shock of the previous incident, are almost nonexistent. Memories of their college friend Elizabeth flooded back into her mind. As a result of the drugs, she didn't dwell on Elizabeth. *Just gotta contact Clara and Liara. Make sure they're okay.*

A couple of knocks came from her door. She bought up her cortex uplink and could see that the time was seven. "Shiba... It's seven on a Saturday morning..."

She stumbled out of her bed before putting on her silk dark purple robe, she didn't even bother fixing her hair. Stomping over the door, she opened it with a huff. "What is it!?" In front of her stood her father in his usually dignified manner, his hands behind his back and his chin proudly held up. He wore a traditional black Korean hanbok with silver polyester to tie the clothing together. His almost jet-black hair was proudly combed back on his head. His eighty years of aging not only showed through a few wrinkles. However, he did not resemble an eighty-year-old man at all. The advances in medical science within their own corporation had been revolutionary for the one percent since the 2070s.

He stepped forward and Enolia moved to the side letting him in, her words caught in her mouth. Walking deeper into her room he looked around and scanned before resting his eyes on the mess that was her office desk. "You know you have maids for this Enolia?"

"Good morning, father," she responded, standing with her arms at her side. "Morning," he let out in response, scanning the experimental cyber tech on her desk. He knew she stole from the labs from time to time but he only let it slide because he believed it forwarded her talent and success in her Cyber Augmentations degree. Turning to his daughter he approached and hugged her. "You seem tense," he stated pulling back from her. "Well, I just woke up. Didn't really get a chance to prepare for your arrival." He hummed in response, his face etched with a hint of disappointment. "You mean it's not that impudent stunt from last night."

She began to fidget with her arms before turning her gaze away from him towards the wall. "Oh, you heard about that huh," she let out with a hint of sarcasm.

"Indeed," he responded, turning away. The curtains opened when he rested his gaze on them, revealing the semi-lit skyline. "It was stupid of you. You could have been killed in this wretched city... like your mother."

"Oh hey Enolia are you okay? Yes Father, thank you for asking."

He turned to her, concern and disappointment etched on his features. “My apologies. It must’ve been harrowing,” he responded, resting his hands on her shoulders. She turned her gaze away from him, shutting her eyes to hold back any tears. “Yeah, it was...” *Thank god for the dopamine injectors.*

“Aside from that you handled yourself most impressively, I was told. The cyber surgeons on the lower floors must really be doing their job well.”

Enolia ignored the praise before folding her arms.

“On the other hand, we will talk more about this later. I have something very important to discuss with you.”

Of course, I bet something very important. “What is it?” Enolia stretched before heading over to her closet. *The normal corporate wear for today.* She would love to just toss on a top and jeans but her father was here. She knows he cares about appearances when around the employees.

“We’re heading down to the labs. I will be waiting in the living room,” he said before leaving the room.

Enolia was frozen for a second before quickly closing her door. Letting out a deep breath before composing herself, she quickly went into the bathroom to shower and put her face on. Despite what happened the night before she focused on the menial tasks that awaited her day. Usually, she decided it was best to shove whatever away and let time chip away at it.

Stepping out of her room, her father stood in her living room with his personal security guard chatting away. They immediately ended their conversation at her appearance, the security guard leaving the place.

“Where's Ha-eun going?” She was surprised because he never left her father’s side. “I

don't need him for this Enolia. Our headquarters in this city is equivalent to a fortress. The United States Government could care less as long as I answer their pleas." "I'm sure Father. I'm ready, however."

At that, they went on their way towards the elevator that took them to the lower floors. The ride was tense and quiet but quick. Enolia hadn't been down to the labs since the month before but she had the place memorized completely from her frequent visits.

When the elevator door opened they were greeted by the usually busy lobby of scientists and workers. Her father led on and took a right towards the R&D labs.

"So where are we going?"

"A place only those as high as us are allowed into."

Her father was always cryptic but she ignored his usual schtick and just browsed through her feeds on her cortex uplink. Eventually, they entered the room where their version of cortex uplink and other brain cyber tech was being designed. The room had many white steel tables filled with chips that were being reconstructed by Mark Ones. The Mark One robots that were produced by her father's company in the 2050s are what really put them on the map. She figured they probably were what made them the top company in the world. All of their Mark Ones were sold to smaller companies and other countries as workers or dumb soldier bots. She had to admit that they were dumb, so luckily the robotic uprising she feared wasn't coming soon.

Suddenly her father stopped at the white and orange steel door that sat at the end of the room. The heiress always wondered what it was but she never cared to ask and just figured it was storage. Two cyberized security guards with assault rifles stepped to the side from the center of the door as it opened with a large screeching noise. Inside was another elevator, the revelation pushing Enolia to return to her scrolling.

Stepping into the elevator, the two cyberized security guards stomped in behind them.

“Only a precaution,” her father stated as the elevator began to descend. As it descended, orange lights on the wall were the only thing around them lit, until they reached the bottom. To Enolia’s amazement was a large room with at least 50 cubicles on each side. Inside the cubicles sat workers, typing away at computers and talking consistently through their cyber uplinks. Many cyberized guards, some of the best stood guard on the sides of the room. In front of them was a path towards the end of the room where a giant screen sat with the world map tinted in orange. On that world map sat hundreds of thousands of dots, if not millions. The elevator finally rested on the bottom before her father stepped off. Enolia was stuck on the dots on the screen and to her surprise they were moving. “Father, what is this?” “The Achilles heel of The United States, The Helix Corporation and many others who would seek to stand against us.”

“Against us?”

Her father stopped at the center of the room before smiling. “Do you believe your mother was killed by some steeled-up wired anarchists with a death wish?”

Enolia raised her eyebrows at the questions. “Well... yeah.”

“Hmph... we crush individuals like that daily,” her father scoffed.

“So-”

“Your mother was killed by a merc. A merc paid by the funds linked to the United States Government.”

Enolia’s face twisted with confusion, the remaining drugs in her brain keeping her from freaking out, yet. “Are you sure father... that's a huge claim...”

Her father stepped further down the path towards the screen. “I’ve known this for years.

Before then The United States and The Helix Corporation had been gunning for us for years.” Staring at the screen, a small smirk broke across his face. An expression Enolia wasn’t used to seeing. “The entire world buys the technology and cyber technology our company produces. Not only placing it in their households but installing it into their bodies. Taking out and installing limbs like a clothing line. Each dot on this map is a person. People with my cyberware installed into their bodies,” he explained using his cyber uplink to link to the screen and zoom into one of the dots in the Midwest of the United States. Eventually, the screen opened and was now on the point of view of some man in his apartment by himself watching television. Then it zoomed out. “Even those with our products in their living spaces play a role in this,” he explained zooming into another dot on the coast of California. The screen opens to a full view of a person's room and hallway. Enolia assumed it to be a camera the victim of this bought.

“Some of these individuals are important. Some mindless meat sacks just meant to be infantry in the coming conflict,” he explained. He walked over to one of the cubicles to his right before presenting the screen of a woman working. Enolia stepped forward horrified to see the body of an individual pulled up on the screen. The information on all the cybernetics the person had was available. A backdoor had been built into all of their cybernetics, no matter the company. “Take control of this individual.”

Her computer screen switched to the point of view of the man she was told to control. From what she could tell, they could see the man through his television camera. His feet were currently kicked up as he watched that very television.

“Richard Scott. A United States Senator,” her father stated before pointing to the large screen. Suddenly on screen, the man’s left and right legs unfolded and rested on the floor. The man gasped and began to breathe faster, as his legs stood up by themselves taking him off the couch. In a panic, the man grabbed the head of his chair to hold on before his cyber hand began

to glitch out. He wailed and began to curse before breaking into a full-on scream as he tossed himself out of his penthouse window. Enolia watched as the man plummeted to the ground in terror, the screen cutting the millisecond he hit the ground. “Excellent.”

Enolia did not know what she was seeing. She had to be hooked up to one of those Virtual Reality interfaces. The feeling of vomiting over the weight of what was being shown to be ever-increasing.

Her father must’ve noticed the look on her face because his features became slightly concerned and he rested his arms on her right shoulder. “I know this is a lot to take in but what happened yesterday couldn’t be a greater example of our power and your potential... After seeing you deal with that man in the subway we took. I knew you were capable.”

Everything around her went silent as the words that came out of her father’s mouth finally seeped past the metal of her brain. “You... did... what?”

“After your graduation, you will return home where you will take your place as an apprentice under the lead developer of R&D. In less than two years I will organize you to take his position... I have been meeting with several European national officials on how to profit from this scientific endeavor. Only high-level officials know, that the workers in this room are dedicated to Seong for the-”

Enolia felt herself stumble from the lightheadedness she was experiencing. She didn’t know whether it was the drugs, learning her father murdered her friend through the use of some subway roaming New York City chrome head, or the drinks from the night before but she needed to get out of that room. Her father, noticing her panic, sighed before motioning for guards to come over. “Take her to her quarters and get the best doctors in the building. I want my daughter to finally be healthy after the events of last night.”

After being taken to her room, Enolia stumbled through her door, her mind running on overdrive. The world felt confined and like it was closing in on her. Unconsciously she pushed one of the nurses off her that was helping her walk. The Caucasian nurse stared at her worryingly.

“I just need rest. Please take your leave,” Enolia stated.

Quickly shutting her door, Enolia tore open the buttons of her corporate dress, hyperventilating.

The minute she opened up her cyber uplink, she was flooded by many notifications of her nervous state increasing. She quickly scrolled past them before resting on her vitals. She had at least several drugs being injected into her system and yet she still couldn't handle what she was feeling right now. For once she couldn't shush away the reality that was starting to hit her. Enolia then collapsed onto the ground being faced with a horrible choice.

Since her mother's passing, distractions were given in various ways to stop reality from setting in. In high school, it was her schoolwork but even then it wasn't enough. Mikayla had to fill the void. In college, it was partying, and drinking. Almost every day at the same time she would have all kinds of endorphins pumped into her to keep her dopamine at a consistent level. She felt like a fool.

“Elizabeth,” she mouthed before breaking into tears. The reality that was fabricated for her was falling apart.

Many thoughts flooded into her head. Was her friend just an experiment? What if she didn't dodge that blade? She wondered if her life was just to be controlled and orchestrated by others. A sentiment she used to scoff at when it came to the anarchists around her. That feeling of anger, the one that pushed people to riot in the streets of the corporate metroplex below despite the dire consequences. She was finally starting to understand it.

She questioned if her mother knew of this. However, her mind quickly came to the conclusion that her mother did not know. In no way could anyone be happy with the knowledge of what was down there. The isolation and despair down there are what awaited her for the rest of her life if she simply submitted and headed back home to Korea.

It only further affirmed the decision that was forming in her laced-up head. That place had to go. Whatever semblance of freedom that was left in the world could be crushed by what was being cooked up in that lab. She stood up and took a deep breath before walking over to her bed. Laying down on her back, she stressfully ran her hand through her hair.

“Download the last twenty minutes. Send it to my personal folder.”

So, the cortex uplink did what it was told. She quickly disconnected from the company wifi link. Enolia remembered her mother’s wishes to prioritize her happiness. It was one of the only things that felt real to her. At that thought, she brought up the control systems that marked the period at which each dosage of whatever drug it would be. She was afraid of what cutting it off would do to her. Would she become one of the angry rebels screaming through the streets in their high-powered vehicles fighting the corps at every turn? Much worse would she become one of the screaming psychos on the corner preaching the coming end? What she did know was that she wouldn’t be the architect of destroying the one thing she cherished in her life, her freedom. If someone of her caliber were to surrender, what hope did those below have?