

It only took us a minute to find the entrance to the sublevel, in the form of a large cargo elevator down. It was built along the wall opposite the office building, tucked into the corner of the warehouse. There was most likely another way down, even discounting the back entrance ramp outside, but for now, this would do.

All three of us piled into the elevator while Jackie called Kaytlyn to give her a quick update, hanging up only a few seconds later.

"Alright, let's go," He said, prompting Riggs to start the elevator's descent.

As the large platform began to lower, Jackie and I took cover behind the waist-high railing that ran along the outside. It was far from perfect cover and probably wouldn't stand up to much more than small pistol rounds, but it was better than nothing. Riggs seemed content to simply stand in the doorway, reloading his pistols. He had recovered the one the borg knocked from his hand, giving it a once over to make sure it was still in working order.

Finally, the elevator stopped, and a large door opened, revealing a wide hallway. Riggs raised both his pistols, keeping them rock steady as he stepped out into the sublevel. Jackie and I followed him out, our weapons out and ready as well. We paused for a moment, waiting for the attack, only for nothing to happen.

"Dammit, I don't want to play Hide and Seek," Jackie said, shaking his head.

"What are the chances it's empty?" I asked quietly, getting a look from Jackie that clearly conveyed how stupid he thought the question was. "Right, wishful thinking, I suppose."

I had barely finished my statement when a door, a double wide set on the far end of the wide hallway, opened suddenly, revealing a pair of scavs. They were both mid-throw, with grenades in their hands, pins pulled and ready to go. They had clearly wanted to catch us off guard, but unlucky for them, Riggs was always on alert.

The AI fired twice, once for each pistol. One shot slammed into the scav's arm, amputating it in a show of brilliant precision shooting. The second shot punched through the second scavs chest, blowing a fist-sized hole an inch or so above where his heart had been a moment ago. The amputee screamed, clutching at their stump... while the second scav dropped dead where he stood. Seconds later, both of them were blown away by their forgotten explosives. Fragments of shrapnel pinged off of Riggs' armor, losing any lethal force by the time it reached us, two or three dozen feet away. If we had been naked, they probably would have been a problem, but as we were, they barely even left marks on our outer layer.

When the explosions finished, Riggs immediately stepped forward, making his way to the large double doors, which were now partially blown open. As we walked, one of the doors along the wide hall opened, revealing another attempted ambush. All three of the scavs inside were dead before Riggs could even turn, washed away by a lethal spray of my submachine gun.

"You didn't even aim," Jackie pointed out, shaking his head. "Guns like that are cheating."

"You're just mad they work so well," I shot back with a smirk before following Riggs into the main room.

At this point, it was clear we were just mopping up the stragglers, the main fighting force already dead upstairs. We killed a few more scavs in the next room before clearing out the remaining rooms off of the main hall. With the scavs dead, we could finally pay attention to our surroundings, as horrifying as they were.

The large main room opposite the elevator was set up as prison cells, complete with barred-off rooms and horrifying conditions. This was where the descending ramp entrance connected to.

The other rooms were set up in ways disturbingly similar to a butcher's workshop. Cold, easily cleanable tables laid out for corpses, with rinsing stations and boxes set up for whatever usable cyberware they managed to pull off them. The room stank to high hell of blood and gore, even through the filter of my helmet. Then again, that could just be my imagination.

"Yeah, this is where they... disassemble their victims," Jackie explained, shaking his head in disgust. "Glad there is no one on the slabs now..."

I nodded in agreement, not entirely sure how we would have handled that.

Over the next ten minutes, we double-checked everything, clearing and double-tapping the sub-level, before splitting up and confirming we had wiped out all of the scavs. The final count was twenty-nine of the fuckers.

"Okay, I'm going to go get the truck, and we can start klepping some of the preem cyberware," Jackie said after we returned to the warehouse. "Start cracking boxes and looking for good stuff. If we get lucky, they might have been keeping everything valuable together."

I nodded, and Jackie jogged out the side door, leaving Riggs and me alone. We started popping open crates and searching through boxes, making note of anything that looked particularly high quality. By the time Jackie returned, we had already set aside two boxes, which he immediately moved to the truck.

"I let Padre know the building is clear. We have another twenty before his people show up to grab the rest," He explained. "They are going to split it up to keep everyone happy, but since we did the job, we get first dibs."

"Let's go check out the Ripperdoc space," I said. "They probably keep a lot of stuff there, and I want to grab some cyberware tools for when I finally turn on the robo-doc back in town. Anything we can take, we won't have to buy."

Jackie nodded in agreement, and we all got to work. About fifteen minutes later, not only had we filled the truck with loot, but we also filled a [Chevillon Emperor](#), one of the larger vehicles parked outside the warehouse. It was the nonmilitary version, with five seats and a trunk, which was good for us. Considering its owner was most certainly dead, we saw no reason

not to commandeer it for ourselves. It didn't have as much space as it would appear to have, but I sliced out one of the back seats with a fusion blade to make more room.

As we packed up the last of our loot, Jackie got a call from Kaytlyn. As they talked in hushed tones, I looked at Riggs.

"Remind me to put together some sort of secure radio system or something," I said, shaking my head. "The fact that we are taking on scav dens like this and we don't have a stable way to communicate easily is just about the dumbest thing I can imagine."

"I will, Sir."

"We have in coming," Jackie said, his eyes no longer glowing.

"What? Why hasn't Kaytlyn taken them out already?" I asked, confused, before suddenly smirking. "Actually, no, scratch that, Riggs should take them out with the mag cannon-"

"Jay, she thinks it's a delivery," Jackie explained, cutting me off. "Whoever they are carrying... they could still be alive."

"Fuck... Okay, what's the plan?"

Together, we quickly ran around the side of the warehouse, facing away from the entrance road. Rather conveniently, we were on the path that the incoming vehicle would have to go to make it to the ramp entrance to the basement. Unfortunately, as they approached, they noticed the mess we made attacking the office space.

"Fuck, they are turning! Riggs, disable them, but be careful!" Jackie instructed, the large AI nodding before leaping out from behind his cover.

Riggs sprinted out towards the vehicle, which was frantically making a U-turn, vaulting across the broken and cracked asphalt. Jackie and I followed after him, Jackie with his axe out and me with my daggers. It was a bit ridiculous to be charging at a car with melee weapons, but in all honestly, Riggs was more than able to handle it on his own.

He slammed into the driver's side of the vehicle, denting it considerably in the process, punching his hand through the window. He then proceeded to tear out the steering wheel and throw it to the side, completely disabling the vehicle, just as Jackie requested. By then, we arrived, making quick work of the driver and the only passenger, dragging them from the vehicle. We only killed them once we looked inside the trunk of the truck, where several people lay, either unconscious or dead.

We were just starting to investigate the unwilling passengers when Padre's men arrived, driving four large vehicles down the road to the warehouse. A fifth, smaller vehicle rolled to a stop beside us. They spoke briefly to Jackie in Spanish before two people hopped out of the back of the vehicle. Jackie nodded and gestured for us to move.

"They said they would handle it," He explained, putting his hand up before I could complain. "I know, choom, but they don't want us here. It makes them nervous to have solos around when they work. Worried we might get greedy and try for more loot. Besides, you know Padre will want anyone who survived taken care of."

"... Fine, yeah, let's go," I said reluctantly, watching as Padre's men began checking out the victims.

Jackie nodded, and we started walking back to where we were parked. By the sounds of it, at least one of the victims was alive, judging from the shouts and activity. I couldn't help but smile and slap Jackie's back at the news, happy to have at least saved one life.

We quickly split up to drive all three of our cars, leaving the warehouse behind, now under the stares of whoever Padre had hired to clear out the remnants of the Scav den. We drove straight through the city, all of us leaning a bit heavily on the accelerator. Riggs was with me in the new Chevillion, while Jackie and Kaytlyn drove alone.

I wasn't sure how the others felt, but I could feel the weight of the city bearing down on me. When I first arrived in this world, I had felt the sensation of the city pressing down, almost suffocating me, but it faded as I got used to it. Now, the sensation was back, mixed with a feeling of unease. At Rocky Ridge, I was surrounded by people I could at least trust not to kill me for the shirt off my back. On top of that, if we were ever attacked, at least I could see it coming. In Night City, you never knew where it would come from, just that it would happen eventually.

After about an hour, we pulled back into Rocky Ridge, all of us parking by the garage, with Kaytyn tucking her Type-66 under the CHOOH2 station. We quickly offloaded the crates and plastic boxes of stuff, mostly wanting it out of the cars in case someone came sniffing around. When we were finally settled, and the garage door was shut, we crowded around our haul. I looked over at Jackie expectantly.

"So, did Padre pay us?" I asked.

"He did. Ten grand for each of us," Jackie said with a happy chuckle.

"Give my share to Jackson," Riggs said simply. "I owe him much more than that for my upgrades."

"No, upgrades are covered by our contract for working and guarding us here," I pointed out, shaking my head in refusal. "It's the same deal as Kaytlyn. It's also why her armored underlayer isn't technically hers. It's worth more than the month she already owes me, and she isn't sure she is staying past that."

"Awww, kinda hoping you would forget that..."

"Be thankful I'm letting you keep the actual armor," I fired back, Kaytlyn shrugging in acceptance, though she was still pouting.

"Guys, Chooms, relax! We should be celebrating!" Jackie reminded us, gesturing to the pile of loot in front of us. "This is easily another eighty, maybe even ninety grand of stuff!"

That got everyone to freeze, our attention suddenly back on the stack of crates and boxes.

"Wait, what?" Kaytlyn asked, surprised by Jackie's estimate since she hadn't been there as we looted. "How?"

"They had a solid stash of high-quality chrome, and we took a lot of it!" He pointed out. "It's all clearly used, but even then, nobody cares! Hell, if we show up in our armor and explain we killed the scavs who took it, we might get even better deals!"

"Wow... that's a lot more than I would have guessed..."

"It was a distribution point..." Riggs pointed out.

"Yeah.... This is going to piss people off, isn't it?" I asked hypothetically, already knowing the answer. "Alright, my suggestion is that we have the bots go through and catalog everything. They can compare ID numbers with internet results and find anything that really stands out as rare or hard to get. We should keep the really good, potentially rare stuff for ourselves and sell everything else."

"Good call... I might take payment for an upgrade to my eyes," Jackie said, giving me a shove when I gapped at him. "Hey, don't give me that look! We are pushing the big leagues now. I need to keep up to date."

"Yeah... I'm going into Viks tomorrow to get my bone lace," I commented. "You can come with me if the MRVNs find anything you like."

The temptation to take a peek at our loot was hard to resist, but eventually, we went our separate ways. Jackie had a long drive back home since he refused my offer to stay the night in one of the spare trailers. He explained that Mama Welles wouldn't stop worrying until she could see him with her own two eyes.

I could tell he was sorely tempted to take my offer anyway. I was pretty sure that if we didn't live outside Night City, he would have already asked to move in.

After Jackie left on his bike, Kaytlyn and I headed off to bed. I instructed Samwise to get another five specters up and running, as the massive price tag of what we had just taken made me nervous. Most of it would be gone in the next few days, but the target it painted on our back would probably remain for a while. The project would take him some time to finish, but it was as good a project as any to chip away at.

I was beginning to grow concerned about how much work I was offloading to Samwise, and not just because I wanted to give him more time to pursue his own things, but because even though he didn't need sleep, there was still only so much time in the day. Even with him offloading things to the MRVN units under his command, he was still only one AI.

That was my thought process the following morning, as I started the day off by getting a bunch of AI cores printed out, as well as some new MRVN frames. I was going to make a foreman AI and put them in charge of five more MRVNs. This AI would be in charge of building the addition to the garage, as well as several other infrastructure upgrades I had in mind. All I would have to do was program an advanced AI core and install it in one of the new MRVN units.

And maybe paint it a different color to prevent confusion.

By the time I finished queuing all that up, the MRVNs had finished going through all of the cyberware we had st- rightfully looted.

Samwise handed me a list on a tablet that he must have made at some point. I scrolled through it, almost dropping it in the process, when my eyes caught onto something marked as rare and valuable.

"They had *two* Sandevistans?" I asked, looking over at Samwise, my eyes wide. "How the hell...?"

"Yes, they were located in one of the containers taken from the ripperdoc office." He explained. "This suggests they were due to be installed. Are you considering taking one?"

"... honestly, kinda?" I admitted. "Only because of how potent one of these is. You know how much cyberware like this freaks me out..."

I was slowly getting acclimated to the idea of some additive cyberware systems, especially if I didn't roll a world with some sort of super soldier serum soon. That said, Sandevistans were some intense cyberware, and while technically it was additive, not a replacement, it was an incredibly invasive one. It would be a while before I was comfortable with getting something like that done, even if the ability to speed up until it seemed like time was slowing down was an incredibly tempting concept.

It wasn't long after I woke up that Jackie showed up as well, having woken up early to come look at our loot. Once he arrived, I sent one of the MRVN units to go get Kaytlyn. When we were all assembled again, freshly rested and recovered, I passed Jackie the list wordless.

"This is everything, uh?" He asked, scanning through. "Hmm... got a few options for eyes, and-"

I smirked when he finally noticed the Sandevistans. They were a relatively rare system, especially any of them that were even halfway decent. As far as Samwise could tell, these were military-grade. Nothing near the insane system that David from Edgerunners had, but they were still potent.

And we had two of them.

"What is it?" Kaytlyn asked. "We got something impressive?"

"Oh, you know, not much," I responded with a nonchalant shrug. "Just a pair of military-grade Sandevistans."

"... Damn...."

After they both recovered from the big news, we went over the rest of the list. We would end up keeping a large crate full of the cyberware for ourselves, assorted bits that were high quality and rare enough to keep around. The rest we would sell. Jackie would take care of that since he had a few friends with the right contacts for that sort of sale. Jackie was also keeping a pair of eyes, which we would be bringing to Vik for him to check out.

"Are you interested in one of the Sandys?" I asked, giving Jackie a look.

"Of course I am. Any solo would be," He pointed out, crossing his arms. "I'm going to see what Vik thinks and let my new eyes sit for a while before making a decision."

"Good idea," Kaytlyn said, beating me to the punch. "Sandys are no joke. You don't have much actual cyberware, but they have been known to push people over the edge into cyberpsychosis. It's hell on your heart, too... and your nerves... and your muscles... on second thought, maybe you should skip it completely."

"Hey! I can handle it!" Jackie insisted. "I'm just not stupid enough to get chipped without talking to my ripper first. If Vik didn't kill me for that, then Misty definitely would."

Once we had what we were keeping set aside, the MRVNs started stacking the goods along one wall of the garage. There, it would take up much less space and be relatively safe from prying eyes, especially because Murtaugh assigned a specter unit to hang out inside and protect it.

I was really looking forward to having more of them patrolling the town soon.

The last thing I did before Jackie and I left to visit Vik was to call Chuck. We were coming up on the last few days of my week off, so I wanted to build up a bit of a stockpile of materials. I dropped all ten thousand eddies I earned from Padre on rare and basic elements for feedstock for the molly makers, as well as some basic parts and other materials. I also bought a whole pile of higher-end handheld radio transceivers. I would definitely modify them before we use them, but I have encouraged Chuck to get them delivered ASAP. We had gone without reliable, easy communications for way too long.

I also told Chuck that we recently came into a bunch of decent cyberware and that he could come by and look for anything he wanted as payment. We had already separated out the really good stuff we wanted to keep, so everything else was up for grabs.

Jackie and I left in the Thornton truck, making our way through the city. Jackie kept on looking over his shoulder at the box in the back seat, which contained his new eyes and the Sandy he was considering installing. He was hoping to get the eyes put in today, but he also wanted Vik to look over every inch of the Sandy before he got it installed.

We pulled into the usual spot, quickly making our way through the streets to Vik's shop. Misty's Emporium wasn't open, so we cut through the alleyway and descended into the ripperdoc's space. It was weird walking around without my armored underlayer, having spent quite some time in it since I finished designing and building it. Luckily, there wasn't any real physical dissonance from not wearing it, as the suit was smart enough to not enhance your strength when you didn't need it, meaning not wearing it around didn't leave me feeling weak.

When we stepped into the Viks shop, the security grate was already open, and Vik was just saying goodbye to a patient. We waited patiently until they left.

"Boys, good to see you. Jackson, how does the Skinweave feel? Any issues?" Vik asked, sitting down in his red-lit corner.

"Not that I could feel or sense," I responded.

"That's good, but I want to run a few tests to make sure it's all going well," He said, gesturing to the patient's chair. "Take a seat, and we can get started. Once I know everything is going well, we can talk about the bone lace."

I nodded and sat down, Vik making casual talk with Jackie and me while giving me a check-up. Once that was done, he rolled out of sight, returning with a crate that seemed similar to what the Skinweave had been kept in, only significantly larger. He cracked it open and pulled out an actual [injector gun](#), rather than the handheld, one-and-done injector the Skinweave had used. He pulled out a large vial next, securing it into the back of the injector.

"Right. So, the good news is that the bone lace process is much quicker," Vik explained, examining the injector. "It only takes about two hours, meaning we can feasibly knock you out for it, and you will sleep right through it."

"What's the bad news?"

"I can't knock you out until I'm done with a handful of injections... which are going to be along your bones," he explained. "Basically, it's gonna hurt like hell."

"Why can't you knock me out beforehand?"

"Because the ones I need to do beforehand, I need you to verbally confirm they went well and that you don't feel anything wrong," He explained. "If you have an atypical body layout or have a reaction to the injections, then you being awake to tell me you are starting to feel the symptoms of a reaction, or that I've hit something I shouldn't, could mean the difference between a routine antihistamine injection or an emergency amputation."

"Dammit... alright, let's get this over with," I said, standing up and pulling off my clothes until I was down to my boxers before laying back down on the medical chair.

"Alright, try not to tense too much. It could deviate the injection," He explained, now standing over me. "I know it's a lot, but try and relax."



I glared at the ripperdoc, before closing my eyes and taking a deep breath. It took a few attempts, but eventually, I managed to relax. Before I could say anything, I could feel the injector gun press against my thigh. After a second, it fired off with a surprising amount of force. I could feel the needle punch through my skin and jab my femur. The pain was excruciating, but I fought my body's urge to tense up and fight against the pain.

"Fuuuccckkk," I groaned out, shaking my head as Vik pulled away. "How many of those do I need to do?"

"Just five more," He said. "Just let me know if you start feeling anything strange."

"Well, I feel like I've just been stabbed. Does that count?"

I leaned my head back to rest on the seat, only for Vik to lift my head forward and put the injection tool against my head. I let out a string of curses before the same pain radiated out from the injection site. I could feel the cool flow of... whatever it was he was injecting, a sensation I hadn't noticed before, just under the throbbing, yet still somehow sharp pain.

He gave me four more injections, two on my sternum and two more in my arms, before he finally knocked me out. By then, I could feel the nanites starting to do their job, namely, boring through my bones to make room for a strengthening lace of metal. I was very thankful when Vik finally injected me with some sort of drug, finally slipping away into unconsciousness.

I woke up sometime later, feeling groggy but overall fine. Jackie and Vik must have moved me while I was unconscious because I was now on a different reclined chair, with Jackie was now on the patient bed. His new eyes were already in, the difference easy to see, meaning a few hours must have gone by, at least. Vik was looking down into the box that was holding Jackie's potential Sandy.

"I won't be able to tell you with just a look. There's too much to go over," Vik admitted, reaching in and pulling out one of the Sandevistan parts to examine. "It looks like it's in okay condition. Nice find."

"You think I can handle it?" Jackie asked. "You know I avoid the heavy stuff, but... This could change things, Doc."

"As your Doctor, I'd say you could handle it," Vik answered, pausing for a moment to consider. "It's a big jump, but I think you can handle it."

"What are the removal options like?" I asked, sitting up on the edge of the chair. "If he starts to show signs of having issues, how hard is it to take out?"

"I could disable it in less than a minute, which would help a lot if you started having problems," Vik responded, Jackie giving me a nod of thanks for the question. "Taking it out would need some prep work and likely a patch job with some Realskinn, but it would be possible."

"... That's reassuring," Jackie admitted with a nod. "Give it a good once over, Vik. I'll let you know for sure by the time you're done."

"Alright, Jackie. I'll go over it with a fine toothcomb," He assured the larger man.

"Did you show him the list?" I asked Jackie, who nodded.

"he did, not a bad haul for a night's work," Vik said with a smirk. "I'm interested in a few of the decent pieces. I already gave Jackie my list."

"I'll pick them up after I drop you off," Jackie explained, slowly standing from the operation chair, stretching out and cracking his back loudly.

"Are you good to drive? I asked, getting a chuckle in response.

"Yeah, Choom. Didn't get anything invasive, just an upgrade. Plus, he doesn't need to use drugs to knock me out," Jackie pointed out. "I'm better off than you are, for sure."

We chatted for a bit longer before Vik kicked us out for another appointment. As he walked us out, he gave me some instructions.

"Take it easy today, and eat as much as this big guy does," He explained, slapping Jackie's back. "And take an extra feedstock pill for your nanohive."

"Will do, Vik, have a nice night!" I called back, waving at him as we left his basement shop behind, stepping out into Night City proper.