

## Chapter 72: Party

I sat in the backseat of a Vanguard and rested my eyes while we were stuck in traffic.

Status	
Level:	19
EXP:	1830/1900
Musculoskeletal:	211
Neural Reflex:	65
Visuomotor Coordination:	87
Endurance:	59
Sensory Perception:	127
Upgrade Points:	0
Upgrades:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Stealth +7</li><li>● Hacking +3</li><li>● Cybernetic Engineering +10</li><li>● Stealth Technology +10</li><li>● Software Engineering +6</li><li>● Electrical Engineering +6</li></ul>
Enhancements:	SAID: Zenitech Sebastien v2 Optics: Mirage Tech Clear-Sights mk.12 Cyberarm (Left): Nova Tech Heracle Mk. 3 Cyberarm (Right): Nova Tech Heracle Mk. 3 Auditory: SocialCorp Echo IV Cardiovascular: BioGen Lifepump 5 Miscellaneous: HSU Custom Shade

I took a look at the results of my hard work for the past two weeks from grinding out in the wasteland. I was so close, and I would normally just take another trip to attain that last bit of experience points, but the party I promised to attend with Joey was today.

This would be my first time at a large function where numerous corpos gathered. I knew these went on often enough, but I never had the connection or time to attend any of them. I also wasn't very good at social events in general.

Most corpos were trained for them their entire lives as they attended their corpo schools, so I was seriously at a disadvantage here. Maybe not exactly in negotiation, but not being able to understand the nuances and implicit rules was definitely a huge disadvantage.

As we got closer, the surrounding neighborhood appeared significantly wealthier, with large estates and fancy mansions. I double-checked my own attire so I wouldn't embarrass myself, looking over my newly bought suit just for this occasion.

The suit had the blue of my logo, with a white shirt and pocket square to fully represent the company colors.

Claire had a field day, helping us pick it out over a call, which was frankly helpful, as fashion wasn't a subject I was well-versed in.

I knew we arrived when we passed through a fancy gate that led into the garden of the estate that belonged to Joey. There were neat flowers and trees planted in the middle of the two lanes of traffic and at the end of it was a beautiful fountain that stood before the mansion. The architecture seemed European to me, but most things with fancy carvings did.

A man with silver hair, who fit the textbook description of a butler, greeted me as I disembarked from the vehicle.

"Mr. Rollo Halls, I presume?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Thank you for joining us tonight. Allow me, Tio, to guide you to our esteemed master."

As we walked in, I couldn't help but notice the fancy-looking cars and flying vehicles that were parked by the fountain.

He led me into an open garden to the side of the house, where I could spot many well-dressed corpos and just the same number of servants frolicking around. I picked up a drink from the tray a server held as I continued to follow the butler.

We walked toward the open yard where I soon heard the sound of an electric buzz, as if something short-circuited. I was soon able to spot what caused the sound as I saw a bald man with a shotgun, which was probably ancient by this world's standard, shooting drones as they zipped by. The man continued taking shots at the drones that buzzed by. Each time he pulled the trigger, another drone got shot down.

There was a small crowd of spectators around him, silently watching him on as they chatted quietly.

Tio, the butler, walked straight toward the man and stood a respectable distance away. When the man finally finished his shooting, he approached.

"Sir, your guest, Mr. Rollo Halls, has arrived."

The man handed his shotgun off to a person standing beside him before he turned around.

“Rollo! Welcome, glad to see you have made it.”

“Yes, thank you for inviting me, Joey,” I said as I shook his hand.

“Why don’t you come with me? I’ll introduce you to a few people.”

He led me into the crowd, toward an outdoor pool surrounded by several comfy-looking outdoor sofas. Each set could easily sit a dozen people, with a glass coffee table in the middle. All the people sitting by the sofas seemed to be bigwig corpos, while they had servants waiting on them behind them.

There were also a few people swimming in the pool, and they were all attractive, but they seemed to be more focused on putting on a show rather than truly enjoying themselves.

We approached a group of four, three men, and one woman, who chatted away on one of the sofas. They all occasionally breathed in from an oxygen mask connected to a metal box marked with SocialCorp. The entire scene was reminiscent of people smoking from a hookah.

“Lady and gentlemen, I hope you’re all having a great time,” Joey said as he placed a hand on the shoulder of the man closest to him.

“Of course, how can we not when your Authentic Corp can serve the finest food and drinks to us,” the lone woman at the table replied.

“Ha, an honor that you think of us so highly. Allow me to introduce my friend here, Rollo Halls.”

There was a brief pause, less than a second, before the man closest to Joey replied.

“The new Halls corporation, I’ve heard of you. I’m Fernando from Holly Corporation. A pleasure to make your acquaintance.” I shook his hand before I moved on to the next person who introduced themselves to me.

The other two men were Malcolm from Mirage Tech, Kevin from Amazing Corp, and the woman was Ophelia from Airo Tech.

They were all executives of their respective corporations, with the exception of Fernando, who was the owner’s son.

Joey and I sat down to join them and after answering some of the questions they had for me, they resumed their previous conversation, allowing me to take a backseat.

Joey offered me the oxygen mask, and seeing the confusion on my face, he whispered to me an explanation.

“Cloudpuff, it’s what most corpos like to use instead of alcohol. Healthier too.”

I tried it out and got a slight buzz when I breathed it in. As I was studying this new experience, I listened in on the conversation taking place.

“So anyway, Ophelia, I happened to come across the Layfit wine you were talking about last month. I’d be honored if you accepted it.” Fernando snapped his finger, and a woman came out of nowhere, holding a bottle of wine out to him carefully.

*So I guess Ophelia wasn’t like most corpos, then?*

I watched as the face of the man named Malcolm turned red as he glared at the bottle of wine.

“My, how thoughtful of you. I humbly accept, then. I’ll be sure to put in a good word about your company’s purchase order.”

“Thank—”

“Ophelia, you can’t be serious. Our company really needs those extra parts. Airo Tech should’ve expanded their production by now with that new mine you found,” Malcolm interjected.

“I’m sorry dear, your company isn’t the only one who’s in dire need of our products. I’m afraid you’ll have to pay the expedition fees if your needs are truly so dire.”

Before the conversation could heat up further, Joey took this opportune moment to insert us back into the conversation.

“Oh, so Airo Tech found another mine, huh? How fortuitous in these trying times, with the spacers hogging all the resources so they can recover from their war. Have you guys completed expanding your production yet?”

“Not yet, but it will be soon. The increased wastelander activity has delayed things, unfortunately.”

*So they hit it big and found a mine, huh? Mighty confident of them to have let that news out to the public. I wouldn’t be surprised if other corpos try to steal the mine if they find out where it is.*

*Wait...If they found a mine already, will they still need their prospecting equipment?*

“If your company is still busy with your new mine, would it be open to renting out their prospecting equipment?” I asked.

“Hmm... If it’s for a short period of time, I don’t mind doing your corporation a favor.”

“That would be great. Cheers!” I held up my drink and toasted.

A dozen servants soon came to our area and placed down platters of food.

True to Authentic Corp’s name, all the proteins were authentic, with real chicken and pork.

*Coming to this party is one of the best decisions I've made.*

---

I took the next day off as well because we settled on a two-day break every time we returned from the wasteland.

With only the tidbit of experience points I needed, I couldn't sit still and went off first thing in the morning. While I could have gone last night, the party yesterday went pretty late, and I was honestly too lazy once I changed out of my suit.

I went to the areas filled with bars and clubs to search around, but I came too late, or too early, depending on how you saw it. Either way, the area was deserted, so I could only drive around town.

The poorer areas were just as quiet so early in the morning as the activity during this time was all in the office areas.

It took me a whole two hours before I heard gunshots while waiting at a red.

I made a right and quickly chased after the source, only to witness three cars driving parallel to each other, exchanging gunfire. The cars were marked in gang signs and each represented their colors, dark yellow and neon green. Two of them belonged to the green gang, while the other belonged to the yellow one.

It didn't take long before the yellow car lost control and crashed into a building, either due to damage to the vehicle or the driver.

Whichever it was, the surviving party celebrated by shooting into the sky as they drove off.

I followed after them and thankfully; they seemed completely oblivious as they cheered and occasionally took potshots at their surroundings.

They finally stopped when they arrived at a small apartment complex, entering into an underground parking garage.

I quickly parked around the corner and infiltrated the building from the backdoor. The security of the door was close to non-existent, and I made my way straight to the basement.

It wasn't hard to find my targets, as they weren't being the quietest, drinking away by the hood of their car. It seemed they had taken over a corner of the garage, setting up their own cozy little corner with couches and speakers that blasted music.

They only made it easier as I watched them shoot up on drugs and danced around. I turned on my active camouflage and approached in a straight line.

*Let's get this over with.*

I took out my SMG that was attached to my lower back and made sure smart rounds were loaded up.

*Kiri, mark all my targets for me.*

'Affirmative.'

With no real threat in sight, I moved close and got on top of one of their cars. From the vantage point that I had, overseeing their entire party in the corner of the parking lot, I pulled down the trigger on my SMG.

+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP
+10 EXP

I wasn't sure if there were more of them in the building, but my goal was complete.

---

I spent the rest of the day in the garage of my office. I still had the Vanguard I bought that I could tinker around it. With two additional points in electrical engineering, I immediately got to work.

By the time most corporate workers were well asleep, I finally emerged from the garage.

I didn't emerge alone, though. I was accompanied by the baby I had been working on, and Thorne who tagged along.

"Rollo, please tell me you didn't remove any of the safety features," Thorne asked, with his cyberarms tightly gripping the seatbelts.

"Of course not. However, they may not help when I'm testing this thing at top speed."

"...Do you really need to push it to the limit?"

"Of course, the fastest way to test energy efficiency and the motor output."

"And the fastest way to our deaths," Thorne muttered.

"Right, running into bullets is fine with you, but when we go a little faster, and that's where you draw the line?"

“...Come on. Let’s get this over with.”