

Chapter 39: Fighting Back

The visor I attached to my headgear highlighted the various figures and vehicles just outside the clinic. Just as I finished counting them, they vanished from view. They must have destroyed the cameras outside.

“They failed the quiet approach and quickly switched it up to the loud approach. These guys really are your typical bullies.”

“Rollo, we have no time to analyze them! I’ll go out and flank them with Peter. You head to the control room.”

“I’ll go with —” Thorne instantaneously interrupted, “No, it’s our job to keep you safe. Besides, you haven’t trained with us yet, so you aren’t as coordinated as we are.”

Well, I can’t argue with that.

“Okay, let’s try to get this done fast and clean, yeah? I’m really tired of having my clinic be a battleground.”

He nodded and jogged out of the room with the security guard, Peter, who had carried the body into the operating room for us earlier.

I headed straight to the control room; I unlocked the door using the biometric scan and found one of the other security guards, whom I hadn’t seen yet tonight, sitting inside. He gave me a brief nod and the glow in his eyes returned and his gaze unfocused.

The screens on the walls showed the current situation, which was the attackers breaking into the lobby through the hole they blew open from the earlier explosion. They were having trouble pushing into the lobby itself as the turrets in the ceiling deployed and rained hellfire at them.

After our last rodeo at the clinic, I had the sense to upgrade our defense, but it seemed I hadn’t gone far enough.

I saw the only other guard on shift tonight defending the lobby, working perfectly in sync with one of the turrets. Seeing how that particular turret reacted, I could tell the man beside me had manual control of it and the two guards had practiced their coordination regularly.

Good job Thorne.

Another explosion rocked the building once more, as the bastards blasted another hole open through the windows of the lobby, creating a new entry point.

A short moment later, the door behind me swung open.

“Are they trying to blow up the entire building?” Claire said as she speed-walked toward an open seat.

“Shouldn’t be if their goal was to steal tech,” I said, as I started hooking up to the control system.

I gained access to the system and took manual control of a turret in the lobby. It felt like a video game, to be honest, especially with my virtual connection.

“I got the new entry point,” I stated to my nearby partner, who nodded in response.

From the virtual view, I saw a man dashing in through the new hole, holding an LMG. The automated system may need some time to identify and ensure he was a threat before shooting, but I didn’t.

I pulled the trigger, and the turret instantly opened fire. Streams of large caliber rounds soon ripped the confident man apart.

<p>+10 EXP +10 EXP</p>

An extra notification popped up behind him, informing me that I had managed to pick off another one of them.

A few guns then stuck out around the corner and shot toward the turrets, but the armor plating simply deflected the small caliber rounds, leaving only shallow dents behind. They refused to leave cover, so the situation devolved into a stalemate.

Just as I checked the ammo count on the turret, I looked up to find the outline of all the attackers outside the building highlighted in red with two friendlies in blue beside them. Then the sound of gunfire from their side intensified for a brief moment before it halted entirely.

The red outlines disappeared rapidly, leaving only the two blue ones remaining. A voice soon rang out from our comms.

“We’ve cleared all the attackers out front. We’re going to take a look around as well, just in case. Keep the turrets ready until we’re done,” Thorne’s voice reverberated in my head.

An hour after that, I sat in one of the break rooms along with Thorne and Claire, who both looked exhausted. I couldn’t fault them either as I left the aftermath to them entirely, handling the police and the cleanup.

“It is obvious who organized the attack. They barely even tried to hide it. They used their own employees, for god’s sake.”

Claire let out a sigh, “Calm down, Thorne. Even if we knew who it was, it doesn’t mean we have to rush in to retaliate. Let’s talk and plan things out first.”

“She’s right, focus on reinforcing our defense for tonight and send out a few teams to dig up some more info about Hathway tomorrow, I want to know where everything they own is, their production facilities, offices, everything we can find.” I stood up and made my way to the door.

“You’re going out still?”

“Yes, there are some preparations I need to get done before we strike back.”

If Hathway was blatantly attacking us, I saw no reason not to retaliate, but unlike them, we would stick to our specialty of stealth. Our equipment was due for an upgrade and I just happened to be close to leveling up, so I had some community cleaning to do tonight.

“I heard the CEO sent a team out to retrieve some vital info to improve our project. How come we haven’t heard back anything yet?” A man dressed in a traditional corpo suit asked. Beside him stood a woman, leaning against his desk.

“I don’t know. Everyone I asked has either been tight-lipped or clueless as well.”

“...You know what that means, it’s time to start searching and applying to other companies, you’ll come with me right?” He reached out and grabbed the woman’s hand.

“Yes, of course,” She rose to her full height and grasped the man’s hand with both of hers.

“Excuse me for a moment. I’ll be right back.” She exited the office, and I followed.

She gave a pleasant smile to the few other employees on her way to the washroom, but the moment she was alone, her facade instantly vanished. “Fucking horny bastard, as if I have any more use for him if he can’t get me a promotion. I hope he enjoys himself starting back out as the new guy in another company.” She vented to herself as she vigorously washed her hands.

While she was busy with that, I brought up my terminal and connected it to the security card she had hanging from her waist.

Peter, you’re green to go, you got about twenty seconds. I sent the message through our company’s network.

There was only a five-second pause after I sent the message before I got the reply.

I’m in, thanks Yuki.

As soon as I saw the message, I disconnected the card and waited for the woman to exit the washroom together, as it would arouse suspicions if the door opened by itself.

Once I was out, I quickly slipped into the staircase and deactivated my stealth augment. I gave a quick glance at the camera above, thanking our cy-sec specialist for looping the feed for us.

The newly upgraded cybernetic we just installed had much better uptime than before, but it was still limited. It did have more functions and was invisible to infrared sensors, so I wasn't complaining.

In fact, there wasn't anything to complain about my new employer at all. The pay wasn't anything special, but they didn't work us to the bone with long hours and even had a few days of paid holiday a year. And I hadn't even brought up the hazard pay for work-related injuries, which I've never seen in any employment contract before.

I'm done here. Get out within five minutes. A text alert broke me from my musings.

As instructed, I rushed out of the building by making use of the active camouflage and returned to the car parked a street away. Sitting in the car was Peter, who somehow returned faster than me. He gave me a curt nod and pressed some buttons on his handheld terminal.

Within a minute, a fire alarm was heard from the building we just exited and people soon rushed out. The firefighters responded promptly and arrived within 5 minutes, but before they faltered when a sudden explosion threw shards of broken glass down from the twenty-third floor of the building. The smoke coming out the window showcased to all that the raging firing was still going strong.

Having confirmed our mission was complete, Peter started up the car, and we drove away in silence.

I stared at the rearview mirror as we left the scene and felt slightly bad for the corpos staring blankly at their workplace. The ones who worked at our rival company, Hathway, were going to be out of a job very soon.

I've really started becoming one of them if I can empathize with them...

At least my input was accepted, and we started a fire to force the evacuation first to prevent unnecessary casualties. Only their decision-makers were at fault, after all.

Our drive back to the clinic was uneventful. We parked and headed back into the security room where our boss, Thorne, sat along with another one of our colleagues.

"We're back. We can confirm the office we went to is destroyed. I made sure to blow up their server rooms," Peter reported.

He stared at the projected map in the middle of the room for a second before he responded, "Good job. You guys can go take a break first. We're moving out together later tonight," He said, as he drew an 'X' on a spot on the map that I recognized as the location we were just at.

"Understood." Peter and I saluted in sync and walked out of the room.

It's time to enjoy a nice break in the middle of work. How nice, maybe I should take a nap. They did say we were going out tonight.

“Rollo, all the attacks were successful. We have either disabled or destroyed all the important assets they own across the city. Though we can't reach the ones located in other cities, they can't operate properly in Elevate City anymore,” Thorne reported, as his eyes glowed.

I was glad to hear the good news. It was unfortunate we weren't able to touch their production facilities located in the Asia Union, but we've crippled them enough. We just have to deal the final blow.

“Good, have the team prepare to set out soon. Let's give our friend James an evening visit.”

As planned, we headed out once the sun had set. We brought two teams, half a dozen men with us, bolstering our number up to eight, including me and Thorne.

Leaving two men behind to watch our vehicles, the six of us made our way inside a megabuilding, all dressed casually with the exception of the sunglasses we wore. It helped scramble our faces from cameras and had the technology to sync our vision like the visors we used.

We got into the elevator together and when the door closed, Thorne plugged into the panel and signaled Claire to begin her remote takeover.

Automatically, the button to the topmost floor lit up, and the elevator ascended. It brought us to the roof access floor that was normally only open to the maintenance crews. From there, we spotted the penthouse below.

We acknowledged everyone was ready before we collectively turned on our active camouflage and descended to secure the area.

My vision was soon filled with various outlines of the guards on the floor as if I was wall hacking in a video game.

Now then, what kind of welcome gift should I give to my friend James? After all, how can I show up empty-handed?