

Chapter 156: Corpo Fatcats

My Volleyball team didn't win the tournament, but it still managed to help me form a connection with the executive from SocialCorp.

Thankfully, I was able to receive an invitation to the upcoming social gathering among the local power players. True to their name, SocialCorp's presence could be seen in every one of these social gatherings. While the one I was invited to was only among the local corporations of Elevate City. It was already more than I could ask for, as it was normally exclusive to corporations above C-Class.

It would take place up in Aegis, as that was the most convenient and safe spot to have a large gathering of executives. It was a hard place for the riffraff to get to, and many executives normally lived in their resorts off-planet.

That was why I was waiting for my shuttle up to Aegis right now, at the base of the space elevator.

"Are you sure you want us to deploy these prototypes out in the field already?" Thorne asked, as he paced back and forth. "There's a chance it could blow up or come apart, right?"

"The new Phantom Guard isn't completely untested, silly. I just hadn't had the chance to thoroughly limit test it against other power armors. We simply don't have any specification on other power armors besides the one our allies gave us, and our...cyber experts aren't that good at designing simulations."

"...That can't be good still, right?"

"It's not dangerous to use. I just don't know how it'll handle against different adversaries without some more time and data."

During the time between the end of the volleyball tournament and the social gathering, I continued working hard on my various projects. I managed to accomplish a lot.

For the cassettes, we completed one with knowledge pertaining to my cybernetic engineering. I had already begun rolling it out to my R&D department. It should greatly increase our speed and cooperation when we develop any new products in the future, since we would have a similar understanding of cybernetics.

Lanus was already working on testing the next cassette which I chose to have my electrical engineering knowledge on it. I wanted to keep some cards close to my chest, so I opted not to compile one for stealth technology yet. Cassettes with combat skills were still under development as well.

As for my power armor project, we finished a prototype, but have yet to complete field testing on it yet. There were a lot of things left to fine-tune that depended on what we would face in the future.

I was confident in the framework of it, but a few things were left to be desired. For one, the weapons were simply open-market railguns. If I wanted to design a weapon that performed better than what was publicly available, it would take another six months at the minimum.

We also didn't know what the standards of our enemies would be. If we knew what to expect from our potential opposition, it would help us optimize the power armor greatly. Unfortunately, reality wasn't so nice, and such information as the specification of power armor was closely guarded and eternally changing.

I wanted to create a simulation program with Lanus to help us optimize and find a sweet spot, but neither of us had made any good progress in it. I simply didn't have the relevant knowledge, while Lanus was only educated in what was available in its database. If it resorted to brute-forcing, we could say goodbye to all its other functions for a few months at the minimum.

The headhunting company I hired was working on finding me a suitable candidate, and I was also looking to trade relevant technologies with my allied corporations, but they all came up empty so far.

Despite the setback, it wasn't enough of a reason for me not to field my new power armor that I called the Phantom Guard.

On a positive note, Lanus was able to replicate the energy shield device I had looted in the past. We didn't understand the underlying principles and simply tried to replicate them. It wasn't easy without any know-how on its production method or how it was even supposed to work, but Lanus handled it.

The analytical equipment was able to assist Lanus in deciphering a lot about the materials and what we couldn't produce, we found alternatives. As a result, our finished shield generator performed at only about seventy-five percent of the original.

"Soon arriving at Aegis spaceport. Please be seated for deceleration." The PA system in the shuttle announced.

We fetched a cab like our previous trip and checked into our hotel. To be honest, I wanted to set up a branch here, but that honor was only available to corporations in D-Class and above. We couldn't even purchase a car or anything up here without meeting that requirement.

Night soon arrived, and we made our way to the venue.

It took place inside one of the most prestigious hotels and also one of the tallest buildings in the entire city as well. We passed through stringent security and were allowed to enter after confirming we didn't carry any explosives.

As they previously mentioned, they allowed four guards to accompany me into the building. They weren't able to follow me all the way up to the rooftop party, though.

I exchanged a final glance with Thorne before I separated from them. I couldn't help but be impressed by how cool my navy blue power armors looked as I parted.

When the elevator arrived at the top floor, I took a deep breath and wore my best business facade. I honestly wasn't the best diplomat, negotiator, or socializer at all with my corpo counterparts. Our very different upbringings caused an unbridgeable cultural gap, but I've been trying my best.

The most awkward part of social events for me was always the beginning. I was a new face and everyone else was likely already acquainted and had formed cliques. That was why, as soon as I arrived, I began searching for familiar faces.

Walking out of the elevator, I passed by the receptionist and sauntered into the rooftop pool area. Numerous people were hanging around, with a few even loitering around inside the water.

After a quick scan, I failed to find my bald friend and continued my way further in. Off to the side of the pool were several long rectangular tables with snow-white tablecloths covering them. There was a wide selection of food from different cuisines available, with robotic waitresses carrying drinks around.

I noticed some curious gazes my way, and I was instantly reminded of Yu Kenneth, the SocialCorp executive's words. He informed me news of me had been making their rounds among the few social gatherings he had participated in. As someone from SocialCorp, it was without a doubt that I had come under the scope of some powerful people, but I didn't know why.

Not spotting any acquaintances, I went even further in, toward an area with several spacious gazebos that could fit at least a dozen people each. All the corporate executives around this area were happily chatting away while occasionally taking a hit of Cloudpuff. The trend that SocialCorp had spread, but to me, it simply looked like a respirator mask connected to a box.

It was here that I finally spotted a familiar face, but not one I expected. I only inadvertently noticed him as I scanned for bald heads. He had this distinctive hairstyle where he only had several strands of long hair. I had only seen this style among employees of one particular corporation.

Thankfully, the man in question had just gotten up from the Cloudpuff area and was walking in my direction.

I didn't hesitate to approach.

"Mr. Sun, it's been some time, but I hope you remember me." I greeted the vice president of the Aegis branch of Ferrumus Corporation.

The man gave me a quick look and quickly put on a business smile.

“Ah yes. Mr. Halls. I hope you have been doing well since the last time you visited our branch.”

“Yes, all thanks to you and your company.”

“Good, good. I’m going to grab some food. Why don’t you come along?”

“I’d be happy to.”

I walked alongside him as we slowly made our way around the buffet. We chatted about mundane things mixed in with some roundabout messages that most corpo likes to employ. It was really annoying for me, but I had to play the game.

I tried getting him to spill some clues on what the rumors about me were, but he either feigned ignorance or I didn’t make myself clear enough.

Still, it was a pleasant chat despite not making any significant gains. It was way preferable to being alone at this party. After we got some food, he even invited me to the gazebo he was at and introduced me to his companions.

“This is Rollo Halls, from the Halls Corporation.” He gestured toward me before introducing his acquaintances from left to right. “And from left to right, that is Mueller from Nova Tech, Havana from Premier Arms, Tuk from Amazing Corp, and Jewel from AeroDynamic.”

Despite not knowing the new people personally, I had experienced each of their products. They were only branch managers like Bi Sun was for their respective companies, but it didn’t change the fact that I was approaching the big boys’ table.

I was mostly a bystander after that as they chatted. For the first time, I took a hit of Cloudpuff, so I wouldn’t stand out. It wasn’t anything like I had experienced before. I felt all my stress disappear in an instant, a bit elated and relaxed, but not so slack that I would lose myself to sloth.

When I willed it, I was able to immediately snap myself out of my relaxing trance. It wasn’t so bad, but not something I would repeat. I never liked losing control of myself to any substance.

Before I knew it, Joey had appeared somewhere along the way, and I attended the rest of the event under his guidance.

Once the event was over, I made my way back to my hotel with my employees.

“Well, was it worth busting our ass to get you acquainted with those corporate fat cats?” Thorne didn’t bother to mince his words as soon as we arrived.

“Nothing concrete yet, but it’ll definitely be worth it as time goes on. It isn’t easy to collect info from high-ranking corpos, you know? Our chatting app only has reached for the lower rung, which is why this is much needed.”

“Yeah, it may be needed, but that doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“...I’m sorry if you don’t like me getting all chummy with them. I know you’re...not a fan of them and it’s understandable with your history. However, I’ll need to stick close to them from now on if we want to keep growing.”

“Rollo...Do we need to keep expanding? I know we talked about how we need to in order to attain the power to defend ourselves, but it seems like we’re attracting even more danger with our aggressive expansions.”

“...In a way, you could be right. I’m not sure. It may be possible to just stop here and dig in with what we have and we could live it out peacefully, but that lacks...ambition. Now that we’re in the position with the power to do something, I’ve been starting to want to change this world...for the better.”

I took a moment to reflect on what had happened in such a short time. It hasn’t even been two years since our company was formed.

At some point in time, I realized I would never be truly safe because of how this world and its society were. If I wanted the peace I looked up to in my world, I would have to take it in my hands to change it. The only way to do that was to stand at the apex.

“...Forget it. Even if you change your mind, there’s no telling what kind of danger could come our way. I can’t complain about wanting to constantly strengthen ourselves, either.”

“Thanks for watching out for me. I appreciate it. But for now, let’s rest, and take the next few days to go sightseeing. It’s our first time in Aegis without some pressing matter waiting for us to deal with.”

He nodded and retreated into his room in our suite.

Just as I got ready to shower, I suddenly received a message from one of my new acquaintances I met today that I didn’t expect.

I double-checked the name and made sure there was no mistaking the name Jewel, the representative from AeroDynamic before reading its contents.

Two days from now, 14:30, at Launder’s Cafe.

Why in the world did she suddenly want to meet with me?