
Episode 467 – Harry Potter and the very horny AU

Dan had been riding for hours when he saw the service station in the distance. He knew that it would be little more than a spot on the map with minimal facilities and a small selection of sad-looking products, but he also knew very well that he needed what little convenience it offered. It wasn't just that he needed to top up his bike, but also that he needed to get out, stretch his legs and unwind a little after so long on the road. Even the pursuit of justice had to stop and catch its breath every now and then.

After topping up the bike, he'd gone in to pay and buy some supplies for the trail. He hadn't been surprised by the lack of options in the store, nor how obvious that there was little traffic out here. And, for that matter, he wasn't surprised at all by the sound of the gun being cocked behind him.

"Took yer sweet time gettin' here," The voice behind him growled. "I'd have thought that even someone as dumb as you coulda followed the trail I left. Now put 'em up"

"Medium Dave McGraw," Dan replied with a sigh as he slowly raised his hands. "You know, I figured that you were leading me on. After all, not even you could be that stupid in making it obvious where you were heading."

"You shut up, boy," Medium Dave spat. "I've been waiting for this moment for a long time. You ain't gonna wriggle your way out of this one."

Dan took a breath and shook his head. "I don't suppose that we can talk about this like civilised people?"

"Time fer that's long gone," Medium Dave spat. "You done gone sent my gang up the river, and I've been fixin' to get even for you for that. Sides which, you ain't gonna give me no more bother when yer six feet in the ground."

"Look, Bigger Dave and Slightly Below Average Dave made their choices," Dan replied. "They shouldn't have gone and robbed that bank, and they shouldn't have tried to run and they especially shouldn't have tried to take me out. They're lucky they're both still alive. And if you want to stay that way as well, I'd strongly suggest putting the gun down."

"Yeah, but there's one big difference 'tween them and me," McGraw continued. "I got the drop on you, and I got a gun to yer back."

"True that," Dan admitted, "But there's one other difference that you didn't count on."

"An' what the hell is that?" McGraw snapped.

"Ninjas."

As Dan spoke, a trio of black-clad figures leaped off the roof of the service station, falling on McGraw.

"Told you," Dan smiled.

It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

"So here's the thing I don't get," Rick began as he and Dan entered the apartment. "I thought that you usually end up fighting ninjas."

"And this is true," Dan admitted, "However, there was something that Medium Dave McGraw hadn't counted on."

"Which was?"

"Not only did he and Sensei Kabuto have a past history, but Kabuto also owed me big time," Dan beamed. "So as soon as I knew that I was on to Medium Dave, I dropped him a line and set the whole thing up." Dan grinned. "Guy thought he was luring me into a trap and could get the drop on me. However, I was setting him up the whole time."

"So does that mean you and Sensei Kabuto are now good?" Rick asked.

"For the moment, yeah," Dan nodded. "I mean, I have no doubt that he'll be sending ninjas after me again sooner or later, but for the moment we're good."

"Dan, you lead a life that is equal parts fascinating and trashy," Rebecca considered as she and Tsuneo entered the apartment. "It is very impressive in its own stupid way."

"Well, I just make do best I can," Dan shrugged. "But I didn't become the best giant robot cowboy round these parts by being dumb. And if that means playing a little dirty every now and then, well, I guess so." He nodded to himself. "But I get results and pull in the big bounties, so I have to be doing something right."

"I'm just trying to figure out how ninjas factor into this vaguely high-tech but western themed milieu," Tsuneo considered. "They do seem to be oddly out of place."

"They're ninjas, man," Dan simply replied. "They get everywhere."

"The history of American comic books and tabletop RPGs would seem to support that claim," Rick added.

"See?" Dan nodded. "Really, they're just another hazard of the job. Outlaws, bandits, bushwhackers, claim jumpers, rattlesnakes, coyotes, mutant gerwalk bikers, giant robots and ninjas. All those sorts of things."

"Good morning everyone," the Voice crashed into the conversation.

"And speaking of bushwhackers, morning to you too, Skull Buster," Dan replied. "Though I think I'd rather have the ninjas."

"Do you ever fight cowboy ninjas?" Rick asked. "Like, you know, ones that blend genres and wear ten gallon hats with their black suits or carry revolvers and katanas?"

"Well that'd just be stupid," Dan shook his head.

"Before this degenerates even further," Tsuneo sighed, "What hurt do you have on the books for us today?"

"I sincerely hope it's not another crossover," Rebecca added.

"Well... it sort of is," the Voice replied, somewhat sheepishly.

"What do you mean, sort of?" She needed.

"So today I have a fic that is a blend of Harry Potter and Cyberpunk 2077," the Voice explained.

"Wait, somebody wrote a second one?" Dan blinked. "The first was dumb enough, but the thought of two existing is a bit much."

"I wonder if Harry will be a libertarian in this one too," Rick considered. "It seems to be a recurring trend."

"So how is it not a crossover?" Rebecca reiterated.

"Well this is less a crossover as it is an Alternate Universe fic," the Voice explained. "One where Harry Potter exists as a normal person within the Cyberpunk 2077 world."

Rebecca let out a deep sigh. "You know, I've been dreading reading this sort of a fic for a while," she finally admitted. "And at the same time figured that it was going to be inevitable."

"Can you think of anything positive to add?" Tsuneo asked.

"At least it's probably not s Coffee shop AU," Rebecca managed.

"What if it's a dystopian cyberpunk coffee shop?" Rick asked.

"In that case, it would possibly be the stupidest fanfic premise ever," she stated.

"So what is this fictive masterpiece that we'll be reading?" Tsuneo asked.

"It's called 'the Neon Lily of Night City'," the Voice explained. "And we'll be covering the entirety of it today."

"Short and painful," Tsuneo considered, before adding, "Is it complete or abandoned?"

"I'm... not sure," the Voice admitted.

"Well that bodes," Tsuneo sighed.

"So Rebecca, since you're the expert, what can we expect out of this sort of fic?" Dan asked as he took his place on the couch.

"Most of the time these sorts of AU are all about the author's preferred pairing," she explained as she and the others joined him.

"Then we can expect a lot of forced romantic dialogue about how these two characters are instantly in love with each other and how perfect they are," Tsuneo noted.

"Pretty much," She nodded.

"What about if its punctuated by Harry taking his pants off and T-Posing on the back of his motorcycle?" Rick asked.

"Then it would be a huge improvement," she added as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> A Neon Lily in Night City by OfficeSloth

Tsuneo: Note, sloths are not included in this fic

> Chapter 1: The Meet

Dan: Mmm, meat.

> Author's Note: I mentioned that something was coming in the latest chapter of Weathered by the
> Storm.

Rick: It was no ordinary storm.

- > This is a story I've been playing around with for a while now. It's a bit of fun with the
- > Harry/Fleur pairing in a Cyberpunk world.

Rebecca: I have many questions, most of which come down to 'why?'

- > Overall, it will be a relatively short fic, but I've learnt not to estimate exactly how long it will be.

Tsuneo: 38 chapters later...

- > I'm often wrong. On another note, The Focus of a Healer,

Rick: So the main tank?

- > and Weathered by the Storm will be updating soon.

Dan: With a title like that, I can only assume it's about craggy New England fishermen

- > Special thanks to: doenerkint; DarknessEnthroned; VonPelt, and Tahsky for their assistance in
- > making my work legible.

Rick: Before they got to it, the fic was nothing but 'tlp['

- > Be sure to check out their work.
- > If you'd like to say hi, I'm mostly active on DarknessEnthroned's Discord invite code hr4sBBwbqk

Rebecca: Any Discord that leaves an open invite on a fanfic is one you should avoid

- > I'm also on the Flowerpot discord,

Rick: Where they discuss Bill and Ben

- > invite code gS9EMw3N4P

- > The Meet

Dan: If this isn't a cold opening with Lenny Brisco investigating a corpse in a meat locker, I will be seriously disappointed.

- > Lizzie's Bar, Watson, Night City

Rick: Located between the Soylent Green factory and the toxic waste dump.

Rebecca: It is a cheesy Cyberpunk Dystopia after all

- > 23:00

- > "Green," called Jade

Tsuneo: Well that won't get confusing

- > over the loud music from behind the bar as she poured the man in question a
- > glass of whiskey.

Rebecca: Guaranteed less than 50% anti-freeze by volume.

- > "Have a look at this one."

> A dark-haired man looked up at the mention of his moniker and peered over his shoulder towards
> the entrance.

Dan: Yep, doors. Just as I thought.

> A lone figure stepped out from the reception area and left the large heavy doors to close silently
> behind her.

Rick: It's 11 PM and you can see clear across the bar. This place is dead.

> The flashing club lights glimmered as they refracted off her platinum blonde hair,

Rick: Her hair was literal platinum.

> creating a mesmerizingly psychedelic effect.

Rebecca: Hair does not work that way

> His deep-emerald eyes scanned her through the smoke of intoxicating perfumes in the space.

Rebecca: Don't know when this turned into a hookah lounge.

> He didn't have to think long about where she came from

Dan: His parents had given him the talk, after all

> and what she was.

Rick: Duh, gurl.

> Her face was immaculate, high-cheeked,

Tsuneo: She had impeccable face sliders

> with sharp eyes, unwavering as she strode forward. If her face and poise wasn't clear
> enough, her attire was a dead giveaway

Rebecca: Pizza delivery uniform and all

>...Business suit with gold trimmings? Expensive.

Dan: I wonder who she rolled for those.

> He could

> certainly appreciate the low-cut neckline which offered just enough of a view to be both seductive
> and yet strictly professional.

Dan: Duh, boobs. In a strictly professional sense.

> "A Corpo," he concluded curiously. "Don't see too many of those coming down here."

Tsuneo: Only every time somebody starts a new playthrough

> Jade bit her lip. "Corpo or not, that's a preem piece of ass. Think she'd be willing to star in a BD?"

Rick: The bad guy from Megazone 23? I mean, it'd be an odd casting choice, but why not?

> We'd be rolling in Eddies."

Tsuneo: Do you try and exploit all your new customers that way?

> He chuckled as he raised his glass to take a sip. "Tight-assed looking woman like that? In a
> braindance? Not a chance."

Rick: You'd just watch it in edit mode, get the one clue you needed and skip the rest anyway

> "You sure?" teased the pretty bartender, leaning forward over the counter. "Willing to bet on it? Get
> Judy out of her little den down below and see if Miss 'tight ass' won't bend."

Rebecca: Downstairs, Judy crouches behind her desk and hisses.

> Green frowned and leaned in until he could feel her breath on his skin. "I ain't falling for that shit
> again.

Dan: [Jade] Really? Wanna bet?

Rick: [Green] Sure, I'll go you twenty.

Dan: [Jade] Heh heh.

> I still haven't replaced that Omaha you won off me, was my favourite piece too."

Dan: It was his favourite D-Day beach

> "You haven't?" teased Jade smirkingly with a flick to his nose before straightening up.

> Always one to twist the knife,

Rick: Just assume she is and move on.

> she reached behind her and slid the Omaha out of a holster and

> began wiping it down with a cloth. "Pity..."

Tsuneo: I can only hope that wasn't loaded.

Dan: Or that there's nobody near the bar that she cares about.

> The glare she received in answer only made her smirk widen. Her eyes widened for a sliver of a
> second before she schooled her expression.

Rebecca: She sees another mug coming and the one at the counter's dry.

> "Eye's up, she's on her way over and got her eyes glued to you."

Rick: Have you tried using a solvent to get them off?

> Green checked the reflection in a glass liquor bottle on the shelf.

Dan: He couldn't see a thing. On the other hand, though, booze.

> His cybernetically enhanced eyes zoomed and focused the image,

Rebecca: Also rotate, enhance, et cetera.

> giving him a clear view of her approach. She moved with the grace

> of a dancer, light on her feet and confident. Now if only she didn't seem to be a woman on a mission

Dan: Her old police car was waiting out the front with the money for the orphanage

> and headed straight for him.

> A Corpo who wanted something?

Tsuneo: I mean, it's a bar. Have you considered that she just wants a drink?

> Those fucks usually spelled trouble; and he was having such a relaxing night.

Dan: The night is young. He can still see straight and hasn't been shanked in an alley.

> Jade offered him a sympathetic look as the woman stopped beside him.

> "Are you Green?"

Rick: No, I'm blue. [Pause] Da ba di da ba die.

> Her voice was accented, definitely European, but he couldn't place it exactly, not
> with only three words.

> Green turned his head, his green eyes meeting the blonde's ceruleans.

Rebecca: Well, at least the author didn't call them 'orbs'. Small mercies and all.

> Her posture changed slightly as she studied his features. He sensed... relief?

Dan: He's still alive, so it's a good start.

> "Depends," he replied. "Who's asking?"

Rick: [Woman] You've been served. Warrant for excessive creepiness.

> "Green eyes, a scar on zhe fore'ead, and dark 'air. You fit zhe description."

> 'French,' he realised.

Tsuneo: Of course she is French. Why else do you think she speaks with this outrageous accent?

Rick: Cheap shot, but it also fits.

> "Since you're so sure you know who I am," stated Green amusedly. "How about you take a seat,
> order yourself something to drink,

Rebecca: [Woman] A Ritz-Paris Sidecar. 19th century congac only.

Dan: [Jade] Honey, we've got two kinds of whiskey here, and this load just finished the good one.

> and tell me who you are and then what you want?"

> He watched as she glanced at the empty bar stool before placing her perfect behind on the offered
> seat.

Dan: He so envied that bar stool

> "Fleur Delacour,"

Rebecca: Passably defined but ultimately forgettable supporting character from one book.

> she introduced herself in a matter-of-factly manner.

> He wasn't sure, but he had a feeling there was a bit of false bravado there too.

Dan: She's beginning to realise that anyone in here would knife her for her shoes.

> Perhaps the unfamiliar setting had her trying to keep an air of importance?

Tsuneo: That and the obvious creep who was leering at her

Rebecca: You may be on to something there

> "Well, Fleur Delacour, do you want something to drink?" he asked, gesturing to Jade who stood with
> an open bottle of tequila in her hand.

Rebecca: [Fleur] No thanks, I have standards.

Dan: [Jade] You can't sit at this bar and claim that.

> As Green intended, his timely interruption seemed to mildly startle her, who only now seemed to
> notice the bartender.

Dan: A bar with a bartender? What will they think of next?

> She blinked as her eyes roamed Jade's form, absorbing every bit of her punkness.

Rick: She was so punk that she had a mohawk on her mohawk

> Not anyone could make the Mox look work as well as Jade did.

Rebecca: Most of them ended up looking like generic NPCs.

> Purple hair,

Rick: Her name's Jade and she has purple hair? Major failing of theme there

> piercings and tattoos visible through
> the ample cleavage offered by the tiny thing she considered a top.

Tsuneo: The fic would like you to know that boobs exist

Rebecca: I suspect it will continue to remind us of this fact

> Everybody needs a moment to take in Jade, he mused.

Tsuneo: Usually followed by a hasty exit.

> "Uh, Vodka please, Luvschenko."

> "Babe, this is Lizzie's, we have Bolshevik."

Rick: Not even a Menshevik or a Mezhraiontsy?

> The Corpo frowned. "It'll do."

Rebecca: The nose wrinkling is implied.

> Jade grabbed a bottle off one of the shelves, it was brown with a bearded, and horned man on the
> label.

Tsuneo: What could be better than Krampus vodka?

> She kept her eyes on her latest patron

Dan: Jade was convinced that Fleur was about to run off with half their stock

> as she unscrewed the cap and poured the clear liquid into a glass.

> She observed as the Frenchwoman raised the crystal tumbler to her mouth, pausing just a moment
> to breathe in its aroma.

Rick: Mmm, cat pee with a slight hint of roadkill. Delightful.

> Biting the bullet, she took a tiny sip and scrunched her nose.

Tsuneo: To her credit, she did not immediately choke.

> Green grinned into his own glass, hiding it from her sight.

Tsuneo: As he poured it into the potplant

> "Now that you have your drink,"

Rebecca: Which might have just been one of the most painfully drawn-out sequences we've ever gone through

> voiced Green. "Mind telling me what you want with a small-time merc like me?"

Dan: [Fleur] Someone disposable.

Tsuneo: [Green] Ouch.

Dan: [Fleur] No real need to be competent.

Tsuneo: [Green] Stings.

Dan : [Fleur] Preferably some hopeless dead-ender that nobody will miss.

Tsuneo: [Green] Okay, okay!

> Don't get me wrong, I never complain when a woman as beautiful as yourself comes

> looking for me,

Rebecca: Brief pause to throw the remainder of her drink in his face.

> but something tells me this is strictly biz."

Tsuneo: Actually she's here for the atmosphere. The combination of the awful booze, headache-inducing lighting and ample cleavage is just amazing.

> "Is there somewhere where we can speak in private?" she asked, giving the bar a searching
> glance.

Dan: Yep, four walls and a roof. Just as she suspected.

> He nodded and stood, grabbing his whiskey. "We'll be in room five," he said to Jade.

> "Call me if you need anything, and don't forget, there's always still time to get Judy up here,"
> suggested the bartender with a wink.

Tsuneo: Are you guys having a bet if you can lure Judy out of her room or something?

> "How could I?" chuckled Green

Rebecca: Its funny because they want to pimp her out.

> as he walked towards the back, not even checking to see if he was being followed.

Rick: Nope, nobody there but a cardboard box that smells of dog pee.

> As they entered a long hallway lined with semi-translucent doors and a couple of Mox members and
> stray clubbers,

Tsuneo: Stray clubbers sounds like what you get during seal-hunting season

> he could hear the tap of her shoes behind him indicating that she did in fact follow him.

Dan: He was just assuming she was coming with him to the meeting she had requested

> A particularly drunk patron sought to try his luck and get a little handsy with the stunning
> blonde. He turned to observe, curious to see how she would handle it.

Tsuneo: And probably hoping he could take a go at it next.

> The drunkard had barely said a word when Fleur slammed her palm into his throat with a force that
> sent him slamming into the wall.

Rebecca: Buddha Palm in response to a drunk? I did not see that coming

> He slid down in coughing fit, struggling to draw breath with a painful sounding wheeze.

Tsuneo: He had the Krampus stuff too.

> Without sparing a single glance, Fleur stepped over him and continued on her way.

Rick: We'll just leave him to die of the crushed throat here

> Harry grinned, that was far too smooth to be the first time she'd landed a strike like that.

Dan: Its funny because she hit him

Tsuneo: Hilarious

> They walked by several rooms, some were occupied by groups lounging on couches and drinking,
> while others had only one person inside with their heads leant back, a visor covering their eyes as
> they enjoyed whichever brandance had caught their fancy.

Rebecca: The guy in booth three is currently in the middle of a Regency-period tea party

Rick: And the guy next to him is in a brandance about being in a brandance. It's complicated.

> "In here," said Green as he waved his hand in front of one of the doors.

> A shirtless man with an array of cheap cybernetics marring his flesh

Tsuneo: He has cheap Taiwanese bootleg cyberware. Got a Bladivestian and a Berverk and everything.

> turned to protest the interruption but his scowl fell away as soon as his eyes fell on Green.

Rick: The fits of laughter that followed were not what Green was hoping for.

> She recalled the conversation she had with her intelligence contact.

Rebecca [Fleur]: Tell me about this man

Dan: He's Harry Potter

Rebecca [Fleur]: What?

Dan: I mean, it couldn't be more obvious if the author tried.

> The dossier had provided pretty
> much everything there was to know about this 'Green', bar his actual name.

Rick: It was actually Lancetaka Sollyarku Foo-Foo Cuddlypoops Asakura the third

> There was a detail explaining him having been raised by The Mox gang though.

Rebecca: He'd been found floating in a reed basket by a member of the Mox

> "Out," rasped Green, and with that the man and his group of acquaintances grabbed their things

> and left, with the door closing behind them.

Tsuneo: No, I'm sure Jade appreciates you scaring off paying customers.

> He gestured for her to sit

Rebecca: The colour of the couch being indistinguishable beneath the variety of sticky stains, she opted to stand.

> while he turned to a panel in the wall next to the door. He touched a spot
> on the wall which lit up and the previously transparent door became fully opaque.

Rick: Birds used to fly into it before they installed that feature.

> A notification popped up in front of Fleur's eyes,

Rebecca: A huge pile of red flags.

> visible only to her, it said she'd been disconnected from the network.

Tsuneo: How was she supposed to live-tweet this?

> Fleur was seriously impressed. She wasn't expecting a fully functional black room in some dump of
> a bar.

Rebecca: Think that's good? They have a full-blown Star Chamber downstairs

> The roguish merc removed a pack of cigarettes from a jacket pocket and lit one up with a small, and
> what Fleur would consider an antique lighter.

Rick: Mmm, transparent plastic green Bic. A classic.

> Green held the pack out towards her, clearly offering her a cigarette.

> She shook her head, "No, thank you."

> "You sure?" he mumbled through the tight lips that held his cigarette before taking it in between his
> fingers. "It's the real stuff. None of that synthetic, flavoured crap."

Rebecca: In the future they just skip the middleman and smoke raw asbestos

> "I don't smoke."

> "Suit yourself," he shrugged

Tsuneo: Now if he wanted to not be a total toolbag he would have asked before he lit up

Rebecca: I suspect we're well past that point

> before he removed his jacket and planted himself on the couch across
> from her, with his legs stretched out in front of him

Rick: Oh yeah, drink it in.

Rebecca: Lizzie's. Come for the awful drinks, stay for the man-spreading.

> in a manner that screamed comfort over conformity.

Dan: Oh wow, he is such a rebel. I bet he doesn't play by the rules either.

> He spread his arms, resting them atop the couch's backrest.

Tsuneo: [Green] Gotta see if I can occupy even more space here.

> Without his jacket, the holster that carried his Lexington was fully visible.

Rick: Fleur on the other hand carried a Broadway

> Fleur stared at him, before noticing his expectant gaze. A raise of an eyebrow later, she determined
> to end her treading of water and begin negotiations.

Tsuneo: This pairing won't force itself

> "I want you to 'elp me retrieve somezhing zhat was stolen from me."

Rebecca: Her dignity. You think she talks like this by choice?

> Green raised his brow questioningly as he breathed out slowly, savouring the taste of good tobacco.

Dan: Mmm, tastes like soap.

> "That's vague but... I'll bite. But why come to me? You're backed by far more... sophisticated
> people.

Rick: [Fleur] What, the suit? That's just a rental.

> Why bother with a small time merc such as myself"

Rebecca: Because you're cheap and disposable.

> Her face remained impassive, but a smile formed in her mind. "Using my own people would
> needlessly draw attention.

Rebecca: [Fleur] They've always got to do announcements for these things... It's really unnecessary.

> I need somebody who can disappear in a crowd, be seen but instantly forgotten.

Tsuneo: Which is why she hired the guy who does everything he can to draw attention to himself.

> I'll be zhe first to admit that we don't exactly do covert very well.

Dan: In as much as she's doing her level best to stand out.

> So, I 'ave to turn to someone who doesn't stand out but is still excellent at what they do."

Rick: He's the best at what he does, and what he does is sit in a room and smoke

> A smug smile formed on his lips as she provided a clear-cut explanation. "My, my, what an eloquent
> way of calling me a gutter rat.

Tsuneo: He's been insulted, but he seems to be okay with it.

> But that's fair, we can't all be the ones to sip on high-end spirits and laugh at bottom feeders,"

Rebecca: [Fleur] If you don't want the job, I can go dig up Neville.

> Green took a sip of his drink and peered at her over his glass, "But you
> still haven't really answered my question.

Rebecca [Fleur]: Pink, with little blue bears

Dan [Harry]: How did you know?

> There are plenty of small time mercs. Why come specifically to me?"

Dan: Because it wouldn't be much of a crossover otherwise

> Fleur sighed, "You were recommended by a friend, you saved her from Scavs a few weeks ago."

Tsuneo: You sleep in a dumpster and that will happen.

> "Hmm, fair enough," said Green, taking her word for it, he did in fact save a small group of people
> from a bunch of Scavs fairly recently.

Dan: Then shook them down for protection money, of course. Gotta make it worth his time.

> Though he wasn't alone on that gig, he'd worked with Jackie and V.

Rick: He liked that Jackie guy, and thought he was solid. He saw big things in Jackie's future, and looked forward to them spending many years together.

> But he'd leave it at that, no point in nit-picking.

Tsuneo: Fic, you're way too late for that.

> He took a drag on his cigarette before exhaling slowly, the smell of woody, toasted tobacco filled the
> air.

Tsuneo: The prompt coughing fit ruined his debonair image.

> It was a surprisingly agreeable smell, Fleur noted.

Rebecca: Spoken like somebody who's never been in the same room as a smoker.

> "Now, this gig," he continued. "Give me the deets, I won't accept anything until I know what exactly
> I'll be getting myself into."

Dan: Well, the author has a specific pairing they like...

> Fleur fished a shard out of her pocket and held it out for him.

Rick: [Green] Ma'am, that's a cheese wedge.

> Green downed the last of his drink, the
> whiskey sliding down his throat in a pleasant burn that warmed his chest.

Rick: It tastes like heartburn

Rebecca: That's probably just the cigarettes speaking

> He placed his empty glass on the table with a loud clunk before accepting the shard from her.

Tsuneo: At this rate, the bar will be closed before they're finished.

> "Give me a minute," he said and slid it into the slot behind his right ear.

Rick: [Green] Gotta clear out some wax first...

> Immediately, his eyes glowed as the world faded away

Dan: He had the same reaction when Fleur walked into the bar.

> while he viewed the information within, while he heard a voice-over by Fleur explaining.

Tsuneo: Fleur had a side-job as a tour guide.

> [The blueprints of an apartment building, an exceptionally large apartment. Three stories, big open
> area with a pool, tons of statues, four car garage, ridiculous amount of security.

Rick: They've got a little bell over the door and everything.

> Proximity sensors,
> armed defences, a network of cameras, heat and motion sensors, access points with biometric
> locks...]

Dan: Razorwire fences, trained attack dogs, towers with searchlights and anti-personnel mines

> "The 'ouse belongs to Felix

Rick: -the Cat. It's complicated.

> Kristiansen, an old family friend and fellow engineer at Biotechnica."

Rebecca: He works in the crimes against god and nature department

> [The scene shifted to display a black box, the kind used for precious cargo, far too big to be
> concealed, not without active camo cloth, even then moving it would be cumbersome.]

Dan: I can only assume that it's full of pirate treasure and buried on a desert island

> "Somezhing very important to me was stolen.

Rick: Her mint-in-box Giant Vamp [Ding]

> I don't know 'ow it was done and who did it, but I know
> zhat some'ow Felix is zhe culprit. 'E is not aware zhat I am onto 'im, but zhe nature of zhe package
> ensures zhat 'e will be attempting to move it soon. Zhe only consolation is zhat 'e does not 'ave a
> buyer yet."

Rebecca: Did any of that make a shred of sense?

Tsuneo: Not a clue

> [An image of Felix, rather short, with a trimmed goatee and side combed hair, he looked like a run of
> the mill Corpo Rat.]

Rick: He had whiskers, ears on top of his head and a bare, fleshy tail.

> "It's Felix's birzhday zhis Friday. I'm allowed a plus one,

Dan: He stole from you then invited you to his birthday?

Rebecca: Oh sure, he's a sneaky thieving little rat, but at least he's polite.

> and zhat is where you come in. 'E 'as a vault on zhe premise,

Dan: But you'll need a Pip-Boy to get into it

> and I 'ave zhe details regarding it."

> [Said vault's schematics appeared, underground, entrance is beneath his bed, password and
> biometric lock.]

Tsuneo: In short, she somehow has every last scrap of information that she needs already. I have many questions

> Green panned the diagram and searched for routes from the vault to an exit.

Dan: [Green] And you're sure we can't flush it down the can?

Rebecca: [Fleur] No, I already tried that.

Dan: [Green] ...ookay, moving on.

> It was far... He moved it around again and checked for windows, balconies.

Dan: It took him a while, but he realised that the balconies would be on the outside of the house

> He found two which were reasonable.

Rick: The others were in a French aristocratic style which completely clashed with the surrounding decor.

> 'Okay, it's not impossible,' he thought. 'Just fucking difficult...'

Rebecca: [Green] Okay, so once we've killed everyone inside... No?

> While he viewed the shard, Fleur took the opportunity to really get a look at him.

Dan: Two arms, two legs and a head. Just as she suspected.

> He was fit, with

> dark messy hair and green eyes. Though physical attributes could easily be changed these days.

Rebecca: But you had to edit your save game to do so

> It's why she took a special satisfaction in the fact that her appearance was entirely natural.

Tsuneo: She's not like the other corpo-rats.

> She thought of his name, Green, it was clearly tied to the eyes,

Rick: And a weirdly common thing to base his identity on.

> she wondered if his natural eye

> colour was in fact green, the colour suited him enough that it seemed plausible, if rare.

Rick: Kevin scoffs at him for how common his eye colour was.

> He dressed simply, dark synth-denim pants,

Dan: Synth-denim?

Tsuneo: Yeah, the world ran out of real denim after mass cullings of 501s in the Levis/Wrangler war.

> boots, sleeveless black tank-top which spelt Samurai,

Rebecca: You can't spell samurai without tank-top

> some old band if she recalled correctly.

Tsuneo: Actually it's his favourite type of feudal warrior-noble.

> The jacket which he'd discarded on the couch, when her scanner ran

> over it, was to her surprise in fact real leather.

Rick: It was made from genuine panda leather. This is a stupid dystopia after all.

> The detail about him that stood out the most to her was a tattoo on the inside of his forearm and

> another around the base of his neck and collarbone.

Rebecca: It's rare to see a mercenary with both Peppa Pig and Bluey tattoos. Usually they commit to one or the other.

> 'Lily flowers? They've been extinct for decades.'

Dan: People get tattoos of dinosaurs. Your point?

> Her thoughts were interrupted when Green removed the shard from his neck.

Tsuneo: [Green] Heh. Had the stupid thing in backwards.

> "Before we move any further." He waved the shard. "How reliable is this information?"

> "It's reliable, I 'ave my sources. Zhey don't make mistakes."

Rebecca [Fleur]: For example, they advised me to buy into Bitcoin

> "...Very well. Now, to clarify exactly," he said seriously.

Dan: [Green] This party. Is it an open bar?

> "You want me to enter as your date, sneak into the vault, and recover what it is that was stolen?"

Rick: Actually she wants you to dress up in a llama costume, abseil in through the roof and dance the watusi. It's a complex plan.

> To Green's confusion, Fleur shook her head. "Not exactly. I want you to enter as my date, you and I
> will sneak into zhat vault, recover what was stolen and get out."

> "Oh, woah woah, not a chance. This—" Green waved the shard around "—Is crazy enough as it is
> without a rookie tag-along."

Dan: And there's nothing worse than a protect the NPC quest.

> Fleur bristled at his dismissal of her skills. "I'm not some useless pretty face alright,

Rick: Just ask the guy with the crushed throat outside.

> besides, you'll need me," she insisted with a chill in her voice.

Rebecca: [Fleur] You'll never pass with that crowd. At least if I'm there, they'll think I'm slumming.

> "And why's that?" replied Green abruptly.

> "I may not be a netrunner, but I am capable of bypassing zhe encryption algorithms used on zhe
> vault's lock."

Tsuneo: To be honest, it's more and more sounding like she doesn't need him at all.

> Green met her eyes in a stand-off. Fleur stared back with a confident defiance, not backing down in
> the slightest.

> "Fine," relented Green,

Dan: His plan was to try and gnaw the lock open, so he'll give her that

> causing a triumphant smile to blossom on Fleur's face.

Tsuneo: She can see the price dropping by the minute.

> Green didn't say it, but he liked a woman with a backbone, and she was very beautiful.

Dan [Harry]: I like the way you plan heist now so pretty!

> "Do you have a plan for getting out?"

Rick: They dig their way out like Bugs Bunny

> Fleur shook her head, "I was 'oping you had an idea, getting us into zhe party and into zhe vault is
> my part, zhe rest I leave in your capable 'ands.

Tsuneo: Uh... Translation?

Dan: She's going to ditch him to take the heat.

> You are zhe professional, after all."

Rebecca: So far, that's for a very generous definition of professional

> Harry knew a challenge when he saw one. He met her eyes and stared before a grin formed on his
> face. "Very well, have to earn my pay.

Tsuneo: Not like his usual jobs. Difficult.

> Hmm, buildings like this will stop any aerial departures that aren't authorised, so an AV is out."

Dan: Turns out that people don't like heavily armed flying craft buzzing over them

> Green's eyes glowed as he pulled up a map of Night City.

Rick: He replaced his real eyes so he didn't need to use his phone for Google Maps.

> "I've already checked for exits. The
> package is far too large to move it through the party, unless you don't mind a very messy gunfight,

Dan: It all depends on what sort of party it is.

> and I'd rather avoid that.

Tsuneo: Fleur is strangely okay with that option.

> We'll 'ave to use a window or balcony, there are two which could work."

Rebecca: Odds are one of the balconies won't have drying clothes or cigarette butts all over it.

> He paused as he needed to look something up.

Rick: Obscure South American variant action figures. Nothing to do with the issues at hand, mind you

> Fleur watched on expectantly while she waited for him to continue.

Rebecca: All the excitement of waiting for you date to get off the phone.

> "The apartment block on the North side, the span is 120m edge to edge. City has it listed as on-
> going construction.

Tsuneo: It's a part of a future dead mall

> It'll be quiet at night, we can cross over to it. Set up a zipline... You are comfortable with heights?

Rebecca: In those heels, she'd better be.

> Because if you freeze, I will push you."

> "Don't worry, I'll be fine. But 'ow would we bring in a zipline?"

Dan: [Green] I'll hide it under my dress.

> "Easy, they're laser guided and remote operated, it'll be set up at the construction site, until we need
> it."

> Fleur got increasingly excited as they discussed,

Rebecca: Heist planning gets her all hot and bothered.

> with each decision made, and solution found, another layer of her misgivings fell away.

Rick: Still not sure why he needed to bring a ten gallon hat and a moose to the party, but she trusted the process.

> She glanced at the merc in front of her, she had heard that mercs were all about the money,

Tsuneo: People who fight for money are all about the money

> but the young man in front of her had not even mentioned it.

Dan: She was quietly hoping that he wouldn't until she left.

> "Now about my pay? 30'000, half up front, half at the end."

Rick: All in Yens.

Dan: Think of all the steak dinners he could buy

> 'Aaaaand there it is...' Fleur sighed internally.

> "20'000," she countered.

> "30."

Rebecca: [Fleur] 30 Eurodollars. Done.

Rick: [Green] Wait, what?

> Fleur shook her. "22, I've already done most of zhe legwork"

> "30," countered Green, without budging.

Tsuneo: This has been two idiots negotiating

> She opened her mouth ready to counter, when he cut her off. "Look, you're asking for a high-risk
> infiltration at a Corpo's estate which demands I make certain expensive preparations.

Rick: For starters, he needs to buy new shoes. His current ones are awful

> Now I usually also work alone or if necessary, with other mercs.

Tsuneo: [Green] So not... generally alone, I guess.

> You're a civie asking to be a part of it. That's an added risk, it's going to cost you."

Tsuneo: In her head, Fleur is quietly wondering if future Cyberpunk Cedric Diggory is still available
Rick: Isn't future Cyberpunk Cedric Diggory just Batman?

> "Fair, but trust me, I can 'old my own," she added with a confidence that couldn't be faked.

> "One more thing, we'll need a netrunner to bypass the building security.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] I have an invite and can open the vault.

Dan: [Green] Yeah, but I like to pad out my expense report.

> Now, a gig like this, they gotta be good, and they gotta be someone we can trust,

Rick: [Green] And they gotta make a mean mac 'n' cheese.

Rebecca: [Fleur] What has that got to do...

Rick: [Green] Trust me, it's vital.

> and there's only one I know who's both. Hamlet."

Rick: Netrunning is something he does in his spare time when he's not being the Prince of Denmark

> "You're certain they can be trusted?"

> "With my life."

Dan [Harry]: That's why Hamlet's got all my passwords and all my bank details

> The conviction with which he said that was enough to convince Fleur. But that left another question.

Tsuneo [Harry]: Who hired Akira from programming in the first place?

> "And what will that cost me?"

> Green shook his head. "It's included," he said, surprising her.

Rick: Plus sales tax, of course

> "There isn't much time for planning, so unless you have somewhere you need to be,

Tsuneo: [Fleur] After this place? Decontamination.

> it's best we bring Hamlet in now, netrunners are busy people."

Rebecca: Planet isn't going to hack itself

> Fleur nodded her agreement and watched as Green lifted the communications block on the room

> before staring off into space for a few moments, no doubt on a call to his netrunner.

Tsuneo: He said he would call his netrunner so he called his netrunner

> "It's a go, we're good on that front."

Dan: [Green] He called me a pustulous bubo on the backside of humanity, but that's just his way of saying hi.

> "Magnifique," smiled Fleur, it seemed everything was coming together nicely. "Do you 'ave
> everyzhing we need?"

Rick: Ninja sword, check. Rubber vomit, check. Unicycle, check. We're good.

> "Almost, I'll need to pick up a few things,

Rebecca: Do you know how hard it is to get weapons-grade plutonium at this time of night?

> and if you're serious about being involved..."

Rick: No, but her agent won't budge.

> She stiffened, expecting him to try and deny her again, but was pleasantly surprised when he didn't.

> "Meet me out front tomorrow, 9am."

Dan: She'll have time for a croissant and a cup of coffee and then to drive her 2CV down to the store to get a new beret and a string of garlic. She's that subtly French.

> The Street in front of Lizzie's Bar, Watson, Night City

> 09:15

Rick: Is it still Night City during the day?

> Fleur Delacour tapped her foot in irritation. Green was late.

Dan: Somebody had parked a car slightly out of place, so all the traffic in the city was backed up

> Her mind drifted to thoughts

Tsuneo [Deep]: The flowers in bloom

> of the mercenary and despite her current irritation, she had to admit something to herself.

Dan: He had lousy taste in booze.

> He was... interesting.

Rebecca: No, he was not

> She considered herself an exceptional judge of

> character, not just in personality or morality, but also in potential.

Tsuneo: And yet she went to this guy

> And if her instincts were right, which they usually are,

Dan: Soon the rainy season would start and it would be time to migrate

> Green was a true diamond in the rough.

Rebecca: She bases all this on the way that he argued with her plan and refused to lower his price.

> It also helped that he was very easy on the eyes.

Rick: In a nonspecific way

> Had her sister Gabrielle met him,

Dan: She'd be asking Fleur what the hell she's doing with her life.

> she would be head over heels within an instant. She could just see it...

Tsuneo: But that's another pairing, for another crappy fanfic.

> She shook her head from side to side, clearing her thoughts of the attractive merc

Tsuneo: We better buckle up and get used to it, because this is basically why the fic exists.

> and glanced around in anticipation. It wasn't often she found herself in areas such as these,

Rebecca: If she could ever possibly avoid it.

> mostly it was simply

> her driving through them, and usually at night, when a lot of the character was hidden.

Rick: The character liked to lurk behind bushes and under the bed.

> Watson, much like the rest of Night City, was nocturnal,

Tsuneo: Night City came out at night

> its people rested during the daylight hours,

Rebecca: Please ignore all the people on the streets and the open businesses during the day

> readying themselves for when the sun descended,

Dan: The sun's had enough of this, and is getting out of this joint.

> and the glow of neon illuminated the streets. She

> loved it, there was no place out there which had the same life to it as NC did.

Rebecca: No place has the same life as Night City, which is why a quarter of its population left last year.

> But now, out in the daylight, everything, the bones which the city was built on were laid bare for her
> to see.

Tsuneo: The concrete supports for the overpass were fascinating.

> Bits of litter lay piled up in random nooks and crannies.

Dan: The entirety of Night City is a redneck's front yard

> Screens in windows and on walls played their advertisements on repeat,

Rick: So she installed a mod to mute them. Problem solved.

> the same old nonsense meant to take one's mind off reality.

> Where she stood wasn't too far disconnected from the districts she frequented,

Tsuneo: She usually visited the better class of dystopian slum

> it was still Night City, only dirtier and with more unsavoury individuals milling about.

Rick: Like packs of 2d4 Orcs

> But she wasn't afraid, not in the

> slightest, were any of them to try anything beyond annoying flirtations. They would find out exactly

> what it meant to cross her.

Tsuneo: A strongly-worded letter from her lawyer.

- > Some commotion drew her attention, and she noticed one of NC's finest, the corrupt uniformed blue
- > arguing with some guy beside a car, something about said car had clearly not been to the officer's
- > approval

Rick: He didn't like the way it had flipped, flown into the air, landed and exploded.

Dan: That will happen when you drive in Night City

- > if the body language was to be understood.

- > A catcalling whistle sounded from the other direction, and Fleur suppressed a groan at yet another
- > passer-by who thought they stood a chance. At least most who attempted were driven off with
- > nothing more than a single focused glare,

Rebecca: She had death-ray eyes

- > reduced to grumbling as they swaggered off.

Tsuneo: Might it possibly be a typical day in the unseemly underbelly of this cluttered megalopolis?

Rick: Possibly, but we may need to reinforce it some more before we move on.

- > Right as she was about to be forced to deal with the unkempt man,

Tsuneo: Only solution is to crush his skull and hide the body

Rebecca: And you know the fic would fully justify it too

- > a motorbike came to a sudden
- > stop in front of her. It was red and sleek with the word YAIBA written across the side, and a familiar
- > lily flower etched into the paintwork.

Rebecca: And now we're getting into the creepy obsessive levels.

- > She caught sight of the same lily flower tattoo on the rider's
- > inner arm. It was Green, she realised, who had arrived on top of a heavily modded Kusanagi.

Rick: In case you missed it, that's Kaneda's bike from Akira

- > He raised the visor of his helmet and gave a wink. "Hey there."
- > Despite his obviously flirtatious greeting, her eyes narrowed down on him and gave him a sharp
- > disapproving stare. "You're late."

Dan: [Green] Yeah, sorry. Would have been on time, but I wasn't.

- > The stranger who had been about to hit on her paused in his stride, his eyes widened almost
- > comically, his lips pulled to a fearful grimace which he quickly attempted to school as he made a
- > sharp turn about and scurried off with his metaphoric tail between his legs.

Dan: She was almost assaulted by a Tex Avery character.

- > 'Again?' Fleur wondered.

Tsuneo: Well, last time it was someone from a Fritz Freling cartoon.

- > This had been the second time people had noticed the merc

Rebecca: Because when you're a career criminal who thrives on secrecy and discretion, you always want to be noticed

Tsuneo: He's maintaining a low cover by doing donuts in the middle of the street.

> and determined they'd rather be
> anywhere but within his crosshairs. Her gaze left the shrinking form of the stranger

Rick: Random leering street bum is my favourite character so far

Dan: He's certainly the least horny

> that had all but
> run away and returned to the alluring emerald eyes of the man she had sought out to help her.

Dan: Although what Lex Luthor was doing there was another matter

> She couldn't reason why he'd strike such fear in others,

Rick: For he was the terror that flaps in the night

> his file certainly hadn't alluded to anything.
> Dealing with him, he'd been nothing but amicable to her, despite the obvious general dislike for
> Corpsos,

Rebecca: And the undisguised leering.

> but that was more of a general consensus, Corpsos held somewhat of a stigma amongst the populace.

Rick: What with them being found in the blood of most vertebrates and all

Rebecca: Corpsos, not corpuscles

> "I had to take care of some things for the gig,"

Tsuneo: Get some new drums, hire some sound crew. That sort of thing

> he said, barely paying the departing urchin any attention.

Dan: He was a loveable street starfish

> He reached to the side of the bike and removed a stored helmet, the smooth black carbon
> alloy began unfolding, reconfiguring itself to be worn. He handed it to her, drawing a raised eyebrow.
> It was purple and featured LED cat ears.

Tsuneo: [Green] I would have told you to bring one, but I didn't.

> "It's Jade's and the only one on hand, now hop on."

Rick: He had another one, but he accidentally dismantled it for crafting components

> Fleur glared at him, something she realised she'd been doing an awful lot for a single morning.

Rebecca: This filthy street corner doesn't agree with her.

> She almost wished he'd been a bit later, tearing that last man a new one would have been therapeutic.

Rebecca: Murder him for his crime of leering. Fleur is an online twitter mob made flesh

> With a sigh, she slid the helmet onto her head, and found that it interfaced with her implants,
> connecting her vision to the built-in optic sensors.

Tsuneo: The helmet has an incredibly advanced interface that gives you the same functionality as a plastic visor

Rick: Brilliant

> She was impressed, it was almost as if she wasn't wearing a helmet at all.

Dan: Still messed up her hair.

> Climbing onto the bike behind him, he twisted his wrist and released the clutch to pull away.

> "So, what's with you and zhat bartender, you're together?"

Dan: [Green] Only for the free drinks.

> "Jade?" he answered with a hint of surprise in his voice. "Nah, nothing serious, she spends the night
> sometimes."

Rick: She needs a place to crash when she's not out taking photos of an alien conspiracy

> "Hm..." If he expected her to follow it up, he would be disappointed. Instead, Fleur merely allowed
> herself to relax and enjoy the ride. She'd never actually been on a bike,

Rebecca: And here was me thinking that she owned a chic little moped. You know, what with being French and all

> and she could certainly feel
> the appeal. The wind against her skin, the vibrations which coursed through her body.

Tsuneo: The fumes from traffic blowing in her face.

> The way
> people and buildings, and sounds seemed to come and go, left behind as they flew past. It was
> freeing in a sense, almost disconnected from the regular bustle of traffic that always served to
> irritate her.

Dan: Fleur had once killed a man for being slow at the lights

> She savoured the feeling.

> As she had her arms wrapped around Green, her breasts squished against his back,

Rebecca: Right, of course. Gone far too long since reminding us she has boobs.

> she could feel
> the strength in his form. Perhaps it was the adrenaline, perhaps it was her subconscious desire to
> be more adventurous.

Tsuneo: Perhaps it was light-headedness from the pollution.

> An idea formed in her mind, one which would certainly make the ride with him even more enjoyable.

Rick: They would stop to get Slurpees.

> She tightened her grip, pressing herself further into his back, melding her body to him and the bike.

Tsuneo: Smash cut to the bike at a mechanic, trying to separate the three.

> A bit of his tank top had ridden up on the side,

Rebecca: So she was getting a view of his buttcrack

> so Fleur took the opportunity to place her hand
> directly on his skin, rejoicing in the pleasurable shiver she'd felt pass through him.

Tsuneo: She'd never touched real skin before

> She could sense his coiled desire to let loose;

Dan: And kick off his Sunday shoes

> it was in the little motions, in the way his body twitched in the direction of an opening.

Rick: Steering turns her on.

> The way she felt his core stiffen when the road was straight.

> The way he'd pull her forward as he leaned into the bike.

> 'He's holding back.'

> It would not do.

Rebecca: She demanded death

> "You know," she said, her voice transmitting to his helmet. "You can ride faster."

> "Sure?" he asked, his head tilting to the side as he looked at her in his periphery.

Dan: [Green] I mean, there's no actual need to, since there's still speed limits and – oh, you're trying to flirt, right.

> There was no hiding the hint of excitement in his voice.

Tsuneo: Harry had calculated the odds of he and his passenger being killed in a horrific crash, and he was strangely fine with them

> "Mhm, I like going fast."

Rick: That's why she dated Barry Allen

> The seductive undertone was not missed.

Tsuneo: I wonder if she's like this with all the bland mercenary killers she hires.

> Green looked forward without another word and leaned lower into the bike. She felt the corded

> muscles in his leg shift as he tilted his foot down and dropped a gear. The bike screamed as the

> rumble coursed through her body.

Rebecca: No fic, you are not going to make changing gear sexy.

> She tightened her grip around Green's chest at the sudden change in speed.

Dan: Then they both took off their pants and T-Posed on the back

> Fleur wasn't lying when said she liked going fast. Though she didn't have a motorbike, she did drive

> a Quadra on the weekends.

Tsuneo: But only to church on Sundays.

> It wasn't a Rayfield, but it was still an extremely fast car,

Rick: It was as fast as a crappy panel van, a tiny pod car or a busted-ass rusty sedan

> and she loved

> it. Even if it gave her parents grey hairs whenever she got in behind the wheel.

Tsuneo: But since everyone in her family was a platinum blonde, nobody noticed.

> Though, it still didn't compare to the feel of the bike she was now a passenger on. She wanted one.

> "Alright back there?" asked Green, his voice loud in her ears, snapping her out of the feel of rushing
> past traffic in the synth-alcohol fuelled two wheeled monstrosity.

Dan: 'Synth-alcohol fuelled two wheeled monstrosity' also describes my grandpa in his wheelchair

> "Ow much for zhe bike?" she asked, drawing a rumbling laughter which she could feel pass through
> her. She liked it.

> "It's not for sale, but I'll help you get your own if you'd like.

Rick: He knows a place where one will routinely spawn

> I know a guy." He sounded boyishly excited in that moment.

> 'Men and their toys,' she thought. Well, she couldn't judge.

Rebecca: Given she explicitly said she wanted one.

> "Mhm, please," she answered, realising that she likely just raised Green's opinion of her significantly
> in that moment.

Dan: She likes motorbikes and has boobs. Must be his ideal woman.

> Well, it wasn't a ploy, she really did want one.

Tsuneo: She can't wait to show it off to all her rich corporate rivals.

Rebecca: And never once ride it.

Tsuneo: Oh, of course not.

> Despite the speed, which to some, would be considered outright suicidal.

Rick: Only thing to do now is jump over a row of school busses.

> She loved every second

> of it. This was far better use of her time than those nonsense Pilates sessions her mother dragged
> her to. Even if a single wrong move would likely mean their deaths as they were thrown face first
> into the nearest flat surface.

Rebecca: Though in truth, being killed in a horrific car accident is probably better than most Pilates courses

> Before she knew it, the bike began to slow, as Green flicked the shifter down, dropping gears and
> coming to a stop.

> "We're here." She could hear a grin in his voice.

Dan: [Green] Dunkin' Donuts. [Pause] Sorry, we were meant to be doing a job, weren't we?

> Fleur looked around the area as she climbed off the bike before him and removed her helmet. With
> an upturn to her lips that couldn't be hidden, she ran her fingers through her hair, and savoured the
> feel of the air against her skin.

Dan: Fleur had apparently never been outside before

> Storing the helmet, she was a tad ashamed to admit that she'd gotten so absorbed in the feel, the
> thrill of riding a bike at speed, that she'd failed to pay attention to their heading.

Rick: And now here they were out in the middle of the desert with no idea as to how they got there

> The area she ultimately found herself in, to her surprise, was one she knew.

Tsuneo: The back alley behind a local McDonald's. It's a long story.

> "What are we doing 'ere?" asked Fleur testily as she looked up at the apartment building where
> Felix stayed.

Rick: Along with Sergeant Calhoun and Qbert.

> "The files you gave me were great and all, but I need to see it in person.

Dan: [Green] I need to both show that I don't trust your intel and blow our cover by alerting the mark.

> You never know what you might find.

Rick: [Green] For example I found a spare curly fry in the gutter.

> It seems we're in luck too, the construction work—" He pointed towards the next building
> over. "—Happens to be halted on account of a salary disagreement."

> "Hm, zhat's... Convenient."

Tsuneo: Conveniently such

> Fleur leaned against one of the bare brick walls as a slight breeze ghosted across her skin, causing
> her hair to tickle her neck.

Rick: Light breezes turn her on.

> She took a deep breath and savoured the air. It always tasted cleaner with a bit of altitude.

Rick: The smog tastes so much nicer up here

> In front of her, Green was faced away as he canvassed Felix's apartment. She was impressed with
> the quiet seriousness with which he worked.

Rebecca: The quiet professionalism of his high-speed motorcycle rampage

> He may be 'small time', but he certainly operated like a professional.

Rick: Really?

Tsuneo: No.

> Though she doubted a real pro would be doing his observations while biting into a
> vending machine burrito...

Rebecca: It took him forever to get that. There was a girl in front of him wangsting over the pretzels

> She looked down at the still sealed Burrito XXL which dangled in one of her hands.

Tsuneo: Huh. Where did that come from. I must have missed the two paragraphs of overwrought
description that introduced such a useless detail.

> She flipped it over to check the ingredients and winced.

Dan: Its well over the FDA limit in pork lips and rat tails.

> Nothing but preservatives, fake meats, and flavour enhancers.

Rick: It's even got artificial MSG.

> "Your sources missed something," said Harry without looking away from the building, and biting into
> his meal.

> "What is it?" she asked,

Dan: Guy has a lot of Funko pops.

> strategically tossing her burrito off the side of the building, ignoring the
> crash and curses from far below.

Rick: I can't tell if that was meant to be funny or if Fleur was meant to come off as a total jerk.

Rebecca: The fic's a lot like that

> "Kristiansen's apartment has security beams over the balconies and windows, and not the detection
> kind. The burns-like-a-bitch if you touch 'em kind."

Tsuneo: In short, he surrounded his apartment with lasers.

Dan: You get the feeling that he might be the bad guy

> Focusing her enhanced eyes, Fleur noticed several small circles at the edges of the balcony door
> and window frames.

Dan: Those are just the bird feeders. They get three foot long mutant pigeons up here.

> "Will zhey be a problem?"

> "No." Green shook his head. "Not by themselves. It's what they represent..."

Rebecca: He must have had one hell of a contractor to get those installed

> That's preem Militech gear. Expect more."

Rick: His apartment will be full of attack drones, sentry turrets and spiked pit traps

> Green quieted and Fleur realised he was on a call.

Tsuneo: Or just playing Fruit Ninja in his head.

> "Hamlet says we're still clear,

Dan: There's nothing rotten in the state of Denmark

> but since it's on a closed network. We'll have to jack into an access
> point and open a connection. I can handle that."

Tsuneo: Desperate to have some part in the heist.

> "Will I get to meet zhis 'Amlet?"

> As she asked that, the annoying sound in her head of an incoming call rang out.

Rick: Starving kids in Angola hate her ringtone.

> How she hated that

> noise, it was 2077 and they still couldn't change the tone from that horrific default.

Rebecca: Nobody in the world ever uses any other ringtone

> She didn't recognize the number, and there was no pre-registered name attached to it.

> "Âllo?"

Rick: Listen very carefully, for I shall say this only once

> "Good morning, Miss Delacour, you wanted to speak with me?" greeted a soft, smoky voice which
> surprised Fleur.

Rebecca: [Fleur] No, it was a rhetorical question.

> She didn't expect the mysterious Hamlet to be a woman, especially one who
> sounded so... alluring, and English...

Tsuneo: She thought she had a monopoly on silly accents

> "You are 'Amlet?"

> "I am."

> "I assume Green gave you my number?"

> "He didn't need to."

> Fleur frowned, the implications were worrying.

Dan: [Hamlet] It was scrawled o a bathroom wall.

> She checked her own status, and realised thankfully,
> that Hamlet must have found her number elsewhere.

Rebecca: Her mum had put it on all her clothes

> Her impromptu investigation had taken a tad
> longer than the pause usually done in conversation.

Tsuneo: Seven weeks later...

> "Is there anything specific you need me for?" queried Hamlet, breaking the short silence.

Dan: [Fleur] I mean, I could do with a milkshake.

> "Or were you simply interested in a courtesy call?"

> "..."

Rick: I agree entirely

> "Well, if you aren't going to ask—"

> "Non—Wait, are you sure you can 'andle zhe security? I need to know, or I'll be forced to use one of
> my contacts, and I'd razher not."

Tsuneo: Mostly because they're just kind of annoying to work with

> "It's nothing I haven't done before," came a serious response.

Dan: Oddly enough, in this very apartment.

> "But if you'd prefer, by all means, ask Harry."

Rebecca: Professionalism!

> She blinked and observed the mercenary who she'd known solely as Green.

> "So, he does have a real name..."

Dan: She thought that Green was his legal birth name

Rick: Guy must have gotten hell from Apple Paltrow and Moon Unit Zappa

> "He does—" and Fleur realised she'd said her musings aloud, how embarrassing.

Tsuneo: So is that "out loud" out loud or on her internal call out loud, or...

> "It's far better than that ridiculous alias he goes by," continued Hamlet, no doubt scrunching her

> nose wherever she was. "I refuse to call him by it."

Rebecca: I mean, when you think about it, naming yourself for your eye colour is a little silly

> "I appreciate zhe classics, but 'Amlet is not an improvement..."

Tsuneo: [Hamlet] Well, Henry VI part III was taken.

> "What's this? Are you defending him?" asked Hamlet excitedly.

> "Is someone interested in the sexy green-eyed mercenary?" she pressed. "He is something, I don't

> blame you."

Tsuneo: So to summarise, everyone in the world is horny for Harry

Rebecca: The fic was really subtle about it too

> "I am not," stated Fleur, though she did glance at Harry's form. He had a roguishness to him

Dan: In a purely 'schoolboy pranks' sense of the term

> that

> she couldn't deny she found very appealing, it was so unlike the stiff men she was used to dealing

> with.

Rick: Spend all day surrounded by Captain Planet villains and that will happen

> "Aha," laughed Hamlet. "Let's go with that"

Tsuneo: Do you actually have a purpose other than to force the pairing?

Rick: I'm going to say no.

> This Hamlet reminded Fleur an awful lot of her sister in that moment.

Rebecca: In as far as they were both female

> It was incredibly disconcerting.

> "Don't worry that pretty head of yours," continued the amused voice to Fleur's increasing irritation.

> "Harry's single."

Tsuneo: I'm guessing that I shouldn't ask the author how they feel about Ginny Weasley

> "...I didn't ask," grumbled Fleur, furrowing her brow. She was never good at dealing with teasing
> people, it's why her own sister often managed to one-up her.

Rebecca: At this point, Fleur's sister is the most interesting and best characterised person in the fic

> "I know, but it's the answer you were looking for."

> Fleur sighed, "If you say so." Best to just leave it at that, any further denial would only exacerbate
> her plight.

> "Oh, one more thing, since you're working together, and you seem like a perfectly reasonable
> individual, albeit in need of a loosening up.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] You know what, forget it. I'll use my own security people. At least they understand boundaries.

> Do you mind being a dear, and forcing Harry to eat
> something that doesn't come from a vending machine?"

Rick: Does it count if he picks it up from dead enemies instead?

> Fleur looked at 'Harry' again and the can of NiCola he was drinking. "I'll do my best..."

Dan: Cut to Harry pulling a vending machine down on top of himself while he tries to steal a Protein Bar

> "Thank you,

Rebecca: [Hamlet] Force it down his throat if you have to.

> you know, I think we're going to get on just fine.

Rick: [Hamlet] As long as you're a Harmonian.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Can I back away slowly from a phone call?

> Anyhow, that was all. Unless you have
> something else you want to ask of me? Mind you, I might not answer."

Tsuneo: [Fleur] You are incredibly useful, aren't you?

Dan: [Hamlet] Oh yes.

> "Non, nothing."

> "Well, you have my number now, it was nice speaking to you."

Tsuneo: Liar

> "Oh, same, Au Revoir—"

> The call ended.

> "Hamlet?" she heard Green, no Harry, ask.

Dan: [Fleur] Coriolanus, actually. Kept going on about his scars.

> "Mhm."

> "I hope she didn't say anything weird,"

Rebecca: Fleur cut her off before she started on her rant about the lizard people

> he leaned against a construction beam and crossed his arms.

> Fleur heard Hamlet's insinuations

Tsuneo: She insinuated that Harry was weird.

> as she eyed the way his toned arms which were on display flexed,

Rebecca: How he posed like it was a magazine shoot.

> the way it felt to wrap herself around him, with his skin beneath her fingers. She felt the heat

> build in her chest.

Rebecca: This whole fic needs a cold shower and a good lie down, and this is only the first chapter

> "Non, nozhing weird."

> Harry shrugged.

> "Are we done 'ere?" She glanced around them.

Tsuneo: No, I have a feeling we will never be done.

> He blinked in surprise. "Oh, yeah, there's nothing more we can see from here.

Rebecca: He said, staring at the apartment windows from the ground floor.

> I'll come back early Friday and leave some things here."

Dan: Harry's really into Geocaching

> "Bien," Fleur stopped leaning against the wall, and dusted herself off. She tugged at the waist of her

> skin-tight pants as she adjusted them ever so slightly. She noticed the way Harry's eyes followed

> the sway of her hips and grinned.

Tsuneo: Fleur wished she wasn't dealing with an underground mercenary so she could put in an HR complaint.

> She had a body to die for, and she knew it, whether people thought her vain was irrelevant.

Rebecca: Of course, she also lives in a world where people can change their entire appearance, so take that with a grain of salt

> "Come," she said, already on her way to the construction elevator. "We might just make it in time for
> lunch."

> "Lunch?" Harry stepped in line with her, "We just ate," he spluttered.

Tsuneo: Bold of you to call it that.

> "Oui," she lied smoothly, "But I am still 'ungry."

> "That wasn't half bad," said Harry as they stood outside a little restaurant in the Plaza area.

Rick: Sudden smash cut is my favourite restaurant

> Fleur graced him with a small smile, in a particularly good mood after eating one of her favourite

> takeout's.

Rebecca: She's a clearly wealthy, high-flying corporate exec. Why the hell is she eating takeout?

> She figured Harry would find that to his taste over one of the stuffier restaurants further uptown,

Rick: Besides, he'd need a makeover montage before they even let him in.

> where decorum weighed on your shoulders.

Dan: Harry strikes me as the type who rates restaurants by how long it takes them to throw him out

Rebecca: So you, basically

Dan: I've been ejected by the best, thank you.

> "I'm glad you enjoyed it," she responded. "Do you need me for anything,

Dan: Ooh baby ooh baby.

Rebecca: Yeah, we're pretty much at that stage.

> or are we done for zhe day? I do 'ave a few zhings to do."

> "We're done," he answered with a nod.

> "One last zhing," she trailed her eyes across his body.

Tsuneo: She'd never seen anyone get so stained in one meal before.

> "You'll need to get fitted for somezhing more formal. I'm sending you zhe details to my tailor—"

> He blinked, the notification appearing in his vision right as she said that.

Rebecca: As well as a good place for an acid scrub and an incinerator for your current clothes.

> "I've already spoken with 'im, 'e will be expecting you."

> Harry opened his mouth to protest.

> "Consider it a gift."

Tsuneo: She's already pissing away a small fortune on this job, so why not throw some more money on the bonfire?

> "Besides, I 'ave a reputation to up'old," she smiled,

Rebecca: One that probably would not be helped by turning up to a fancy party with a guy who looks and smells like a hobo

> daring him to argue, the stubbornness in her beautiful blue eyes were clear as day.

Rick: Dammit, you're going to look good and you're going to like it!

> "Pierre is a notorious gossip, news of my new beau would be known wizhin an 'our of zhe fitting."

> He knew she was right, he'd relent, best not to argue with this.

Dan: Up until this point his plan had been to steal a tux from a rental place

> "Alright then."

> "Meet me at my place on Friday, six pm?"

Rick: She leaves him waiting for fifteen minutes just to be petty.

> I'll 'ave a car ready to take us."

Dan: [Green] But I don't know where you live!

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Ta ta now. Don't be late.

> "Works for me. I'm going to review the building plans with Hamlet,

Tsuneo: And by that he means they're just going to play Cluedo

> six pm gives us enough time to

> run over things before leaving. That reminds me, take this." He removed a data shard from his

> pocket and handed it to her.

Rick: It's a recording of his band's demo. He's hoping that somebody will be interested

> "What is it?" She inspected the smooth shard in her hand, noticing a small emblem, 'Militech?'

> "Training shard.

Dan: It's a portable Tutorial Level

> Ideally, we should be in and out without having to fire a gun, but things don't always

> run as smoothly as planned.

Rick: Smash cut to Harry and Fleur riding a bathtub down the side of an arcology, chickens flying everywhere as they're chased by corporate goons in a cardboard box while Harry yells out 'I told you so!'

> Run through the drills on that shard, it'll get you up to scratch on handling iron."

Tsuneo: We'll make a smelter out of you in no time

> Fleur crossed her arms and tilted her head to the side. The angle exposing her collar bone, the bit

> of smooth skin on display caused his eyes to flick there.

Rebecca: Harry found the idea of skin to be incredibly arousing.

> Something she did not miss.

Dan: [Fleur] Seriously? Can't focus for a second?

> "I 'ave fired a gun before, just so you know. I recall mentioning zhat I am more zhan capable of

> 'andling myself," she said with a spoiled girl defiance that he couldn't help but find amusing and

> endearing.

Rebeca: He is such a patronising jerk

> Harry smirked, the light in his eyes betrayed his enjoyment. "Excuse me, but I'd rather be extra

> prepared.

Dan: [Harry] Me, I'm going to binge-watch the Land Before Time series.

Rebecca: [Fleur] Wait, how does that –

Dan: [Harry] Be prepared!

> Regardless, it'll help you shake off the dust."

> He could feel the heat in her eyes bounce off his skin.

Rick: What, did she have eye-beam lasers or something?

> "Consider it a gift from me," he grinned.

Tsuneo: Pirated software. How generous.

> Fleur continued to glare at him without response, he was throwing her own words back at her. A
> small smile began its tug on the corner of her mouth.

Rick: Being condescended to turns her on.

> Only a merc would consider a firearm training shard as gift material.

Rebecca: And the worst part is that she can't even return it for store credit

> "Alright zhen." She turned her head to the side in order to hide her smile. It did nothing to hide it in
> her voice though.

> "I'll see you on Friday."

> "You don't need a ride?" asked Harry as he climbed onto the back of his bike.

Rick: Oh, no. She's going right back into the restaurant to murder a steak.

> Fleur looked down the road and for a moment nursed the idea to call for a Delamain cab but
> decided against it after seeing Harry's expectant eyes.

Dan: Downside, cab is run by a creepy AI. Upside, it's not this horny idiot

> She shrugged and took the helmet she'd
> used earlier from the bike's storage. It unfolded from its flat, easy to store form and she slid it back
> on as she squeezed herself onto the back and slid her arms around him.

Tsuneo: Around his neck, that is.

> A shiver coursed through her slender form as the bike rumbled to life. She tightened her grip,
> revelling in the tingle as the power between her legs and within her arms begged to be let loose.

> She could get used to this.

Rebecca: In case you missed it, she's really, really horny and really, really dumb

> Chapter 2: Motivations

> Author's Note: It took me a while to get this down. Needed to figure out details regarding the story.

Rebecca: And deciding if it had one.

> I've got it sorted now.

> Special thanks to:

Dan: The many donuts without whom this would not have been possible.

> doenerkint, author of Hiding and Masking, please check out his work, it's really great. He's brilliant
> at sorting out my mess of writings.

Tsuneo: I dread the thought of what it looked like before the edit

> Tahsky, DarknessEnthroned

Rebeca: And Tara Gillespie, the greatest Harry Potter fanfic author to have never lived.

> "Speech done mentally through the net"

> "Speech"

> 'Thoughts'

> Motivations

Rick: Odd using a specific type for... Oh, that's the title. Right.

> Longshore S Apartments, Charter Hill, Westbrook, Night City

Dan: Just down the street from Chad Prossek's strip mall

> 19:34

> ~It's Info Flash! Despite the recent passing of her father,

Rick: And coming down off her celebratory bender.

> the head and founder of Arasaka; Saburo

> Arisaka, Hanako Arasaka will still be attending the upcoming Aratama-matsuri festival in Japantown.

Tsuneo: In a statement, Ms Arasaka said 'none of us really liked the senile old fart anyway'.

> Though, her brother, Yorinobu will not be."

Rick: Yorinobu was called away to more pressing duties, like a meeting of his train-spotters club

> As the new head of the Corporation, Yorinobu was quoted as saying, "I will honour my father's

> legacy by ensuring the continued growth and success of his empire."

Tsuneo: And with massive layoffs.

> If you ask me, that's the biggest load of sh...~

Rebecca: Also the world's last Koala died, an AI won an award for writing a novel, refugees are flooding Scandinavia and radioactive dust storms are threatening Turkey. Get used to these four news clips because you'll hear them until the end of all time

> "V, what the fuck did you get yourself into..."

Dan: Is V stuck in an infinite load screen again?

> grumbled Harry as he leaned against the back wall of the elevator on his way up to Fleur's apartment.

Rick: He had to bribe a doorman just to loiter outside the place.

> Even in the upper end of Night City, you still couldn't avoid the screens showcasing Ruth Dzeng.

Tsuneo: Even if you were in a lead-lined vault under the city they'd still find you

> 'Whatever,' he thought. If V needs his help, she knows how to find him.

Rebecca: Smash cut to V taking selfies with a J-pop group and a clapped out rocker.

- > The digital display beside the smooth polished dark-grey steel doors of the elevator stopped
- > counting as Harry felt himself slow to a stop, but despite his obvious arrival the doors before him
- > remained closed.

Dan: I can only imagine the elevator responding with a snooty English butler voice.

- > He wasn't surprised they didn't budge. It was one of those buildings where an
- > elevator led straight into the apartments.

Tsuneo: An arrangement that was both convenient and stupid

- > With a sigh, Harry mentally dialled Fleur's number and waited for her to answer.

Rick: All the while hoping that nobody on any other floor wanted to go anywhere

- > "Arry?"

- > "I'm here, mind opening up?"

Dan: [Fleur] It would be really funny if I said no, right?

Rebecca: [Harry] No. No it would not.

- > The call cut and a second later the doors slid open with a satisfyingly smooth motion

Rick: Harry writes a blog that reviews elevator doors. This is one of the best ones he's ever seen

- > and allowed Harry his first sight of Fleur's apartment.

Dan: He was immediately taken by the combination of deep shag orange carpet, floral flock wallpaper and vinyl sofa

- > Directly from the entrance, the hallway continued straight before opening to a large room with floor
- > to ceiling height windows, and a balcony on the other side.

Rick: And her pet tiger on the prowl.

- > The apartment itself was lit with a warm orange glow,

Rebecca: It's a great look if you want your apartment to look like the inside of a microwave

- > illuminating the stylish, yet minimalist furnishings. It was all very expensive, designer
- > couches in black leather with gold finishings, and a few pieces of artwork.

Rick: They were prints of Fleur's Deviantart commissions. Naturally, they were all Sonic the Hedgehog

- > The kitchen was open
- > plan with a black marble bar counter separating it from the rest of the room, and a dining table that
- > could seat maybe six comfortably.

- > It wasn't the biggest apartment out there, but for someone living alone.

Tsuneo: It was stupidly oversized

- > It was a perfect blend of luxury and practicality.

Rebecca: It was furnished out of a catalogue for someone who'd be gone within three months.

- > It was another piece of the puzzle that was Fleur Delacour.

Dan [Harry]: So she lives in an apartment. Interesting. I did not see this coming

- > He glanced towards the open-plan kitchen and took note of the small hydroponic countertop garden,
- > the clear UV light shining down on various small green herbs.

Rick: Fleur grew her own weed

- > He smiled in amusement. If there was
- > one thing he noticed his corpo partner was not willing to compromise on, it was gastronomy.

Rebecca: Because he knows so much about her through their many deep interactions so far.

- > Thinking of her, he couldn't help the direction his mind strayed.

Dan: [Harry] This place could do with a foosball table.

- > He had come to find out that once
- > Fleur was comfortable around him, she had become openly flirty.

Rebecca: He'd eventually noticed this despite the fact that it was blatantly obvious

- > She took pleasure in trying to
- > make him squirm, smiling triumphantly when she caught a hitch in his breath, or a wandering of his
- > eyes.

- > He'd lost count of the number of times he'd had to discreetly adjust his pants around her.

Rick: Because the elastic had gone in his waist

- > It didn't help that he was heavily attracted to the platinum-blond.

All: No!

Dan: Really?

Tsuneo: I mean, they've been awfully subtle about it so far.

- > Of all the women he'd dealt with in his life – and there were many in the Mox –

Rebecca: And it sounds like he's never met a woman outside the gang.

Rick: What about V?

Rebecca: He's convinced she's some form of rare earth.

- > she had managed to leave the strongest impression so
- > far on him. There was just something about her,

Tsuneo: Something to do with it being the author's preferred pairing

- > which became apparent once he'd stopped painting
- > her with the same brush as the average corpo.

Rick: She's a wealthier corpo.

- > She simply couldn't be more different from them.

Rebecca: Yes, and I'm sure she's not like the other girls too

- > "In 'ere!" called out Fleur from somewhere out of sight.

Tsuneo: Meanwhile, back in the scene...

> He followed her voice to a door that stood ajar. He pushed it open slowly and found himself in
> Fleur's bedroom.

Dan: He hadn't expected the jumbo sized Porg plush, but there you go

> It was dimly lit with the window shades pulled closed. Her bed was still unmade,
> with the dark maroon silk covers half on the polished wood floor.

Tsuneo: He's going to start sniffing those, isn't he?

> It was as if he had surprised her
> and she had just barely crawled out of bed in the nick of time of his arrival.

Rebecca: And straight into the panic room.

> His eyes traced breadcrumbs of motion toward another door in the room that was left half open and
> allowed light to bleed into the bedroom.

Rick: It made the bedroom look like a bedroom

> Steamy clouds of mist could be seen through the light rays
> and the sound of a hair dryer could be heard.

Tsuneo: [Falsetto] Oh dear, you caught me at my most delicate moment, tee hee, tee hee.

Rebecca: Repeat for another two chapters.

> "Take a seat, I'll be out soon!" called out Fleur again.

Rebecca: Three hours later...

> Harry nodded mentally and moved to glance around the space once more. The only seating besides
> her unmade bed was at the desk close to it. Her mirror was the sort that could turn into a screen on
> command.

Dan: In the future, instead of a mirror you will have an expensive flat screen that functions as a mirror

> It was currently displaying a user-interface but locked behind an authentication screen.

Rick: Frustrating hacking minigame it is

> And her chair, which looked to err on the side of style over comfort, was turned to face him, instead
> of being tucked under the desk.

Tsuneo: Fic, please don't spare us the details. What angle was the seat to the desk? Did it have runners or a flat base? What shape and size were the adjustment levers? We need to know these things

> With a fluid motion, Harry slid the backpack from his shoulder and placed it on the desk before
> dropping himself into the chair.

Dan: And immediately dozed off.

> He shifted in an attempt to find the best position in the – in his opinion – supremely uncomfortable chair.

Dan: Having once been a British schoolboy, he felt right at home

> He settled for leaning back with one leg crossed sideways and resting on the other

Tsuneo: Trying to be as nonchalant as humanly possible.

> and reviewed the plans in his mind while he waited.

> Frankly, the plan was pretty cut and dry.

> Get to the party. Follow the script.

Rick: Chose all the right dialogue options

> Retrieve the package. Nothing too complicated on either end.

Tsuneo: Because these things are always as simple as they sound and never suffer unexpected complications

> His alias for the night was ironclad.

Dan: Al Yankovic, professional accordion player

> Fleur had the groundwork already in place for it.

Rick: He's not sure why she cast him as a rodeo clown, but he was going to play it to the hilt.

> He'd go by

> 'Ethan Black', an independent contractor and cyberware field applications consultant.

Rebecca: His job was to deliver buzzword-laden presentations

> Glancing at the time, and then at the ajar bathroom door, Harry figured he had enough time to run a

> short diagnostic on his cyberware.

Rick: Only to get stuck as his robo-spleen wanted to install a service patch

> He'd already done a full inspection the day prior, but it was always paid off to be thorough.

Tsuneo: Alone in a beautiful woman's bedroom as she gets dressed just through a tantalisingly open door? Why not check the status of your drivers?

> His eyes took on the bluish glow that indicated his navigation of his implant's menu displays. He

> launched up the diagnostic software and watched as a series of progress bars

Dan: Thrill as Harry Potter updates his apps!

> filled as lines of code rapidly passed by.

> *Zetatech Self-ICE_V1...100%

> *Dynala VisualCortexSupportModule_Rev.2.3...100%

> *Kiroshi Opt_Mk.3...100%

> *Zetatech SynapticAccelerator_C2...100%

> *BioDyne Berserk_Mk.2...100%

> *Millitech_LP Mantis Blade...67%

Rick: Atomic batteries to power, turbines to speed

> ...

Tsuneo: Yes, that's exactly what I think of this scene.

> It was several minutes after the last diagnostic had run its course when the blow-dryer stopped,

Rebecca: Fleur having apparently decided to individually dry each strand of hair

> and a rustle followed as Fleur finally finished.

> "Désolé, I didn't mean to keep you waiting," greeted the statuesque blonde

Rick: [Harry] We agreed to meet at nine.

Rebecca: [Fleur] It's six in the morning.

Rick: [Harry] So I'm early.

> as she stepped out of

> her bathroom in nothing but a powder blue towel. Her hair was already done up in a half-braid which

> hung over her shoulder and just barely grazed the top of her mouth-watering cleavage.

Tsuneo: Harry had apparently never seen boobs before

> Though he'd spent the last couple of days getting used to Fleur's surprisingly flirtatious nature,

Dan: Still can't stop staring blankly at her chest, though.

> it was a stark contrast to the hard front she'd used in their first meeting,

Rebecca: No it wasn't. They'd practically been all over each other from the first instant.

> but then again, that was a negotiation.

> He stamped down the urge to swallow, keeping a tight lid on the effect she had on him. Even now,

> she continued the little game they'd been playing,

Rebecca: She was building roads all across Catan.

> her doing her utmost to get a rise out of him while

> he tried to ignore it. For the briefest moment, he was certain he caught disappointment in her eyes.

Dan: Of the 'oh, you're still here' variety.

Rebecca: Get that a lot?

Dan: I've learned to spot the signs.

> Where a gentleman would avert their gaze, he shamelessly kept his on her, enjoying the view, while

> wryly maintaining a semblance of propriety.

Rick: In short, he's a creep

> "Don't worry about it. Gave me enough time to double check some things," he replied

Tsuneo: Those things being her underwear drawer.

> as he

> watched her open her closet with her back facing towards him. His eyes travelled and caressed the

> nape of her neck.

Dan [Harry]: My god, she has a neck. I can hardly contain my arousal at the thought.

> "Good, I'd 'ate to zhink I was inconveniencing you." She hummed with a musical tone and dropped

> the towel.

Rick: Okay fic, we can come back when you're done.

- > Contrary to his best efforts, Harry's breath hitched. Every inch of her was without a single blemish,
- > her skin seemed to almost glow in the low light, highlighting her exquisite curves which made him
- > want to sink his fingers into.

Rebecca: If Harry had half a brain he'd realise how badly he was being set up right now

Dan [Harry]: Not think good you so pretty me horny

Rebecca: Never mind

- > His gaze travelled further south and stopped abruptly.

Tsuneo: He needed to top up his balance to continue.

- > A little detail made itself known that he had not seen before.

Rick: The gold edging on the table's inlaid pattern

- > Just above the crack of her heart-shaped ass and close to the right dimple was, to
- > his surprise, a small tattoo of a hummingbird.

Rebecca: Somehow her tramp stamp is going to be portrayed as classy.

- > Jade had joked about Fleur taking part in a BD and he'd laughed it off then.

Dan: Joked, sure.

Tsuneo: She was holding the taser under the bar in a funny way.

- > With what he knew of
- > her nature now, if he were asked again, he wouldn't be so sure of his answer.

Rebecca: Her saw her bottom, ergo he now knows everything about her

- > Perhaps, she would be willing.

Tsuneo [Harry]: Hey Fleur, I saw your bum. Would you like to have sex on camera so the experience can be relived by sad, creepy, horny guys?

- > "Is everyzhing ready?" asked Fleur casually as she slid a drawer open and retrieved a black lace
- > thong.

Dan: That's for him to wear. It's about to get weird

- > Without a hint of modesty, she bent slightly, pointing her delectable behind at him. The subtle
- > muscles in her back moved in tandem and drew new shadows across her form.

Dan: And yet, when I sit in a woman's room and watch her get dressed, I get arrested.

- > Images of his hand
- > moving across them, feeling every small incline and bend, of placing his hand at the small of her
- > back and pushing down danced across his mind.

Rebecca: Fic, I'm going to issue you a firm settle down

- > She then raised one leg and slipped one foot through her panties, and then the other, before she
- > pulled them up with a sensual shimmy of her hips.

Dan: It's her twerking practice

- > He watched with fascinated mesmerisation as the shadows moved and morphed in slow motion,

> hiding her most secret parts from him,

Rebecca: Valuable experience learned from communal locker rooms.

> taunting him to move forward and adjust his position in the
> chair. But he couldn't, not without letting her know that he had lost the game they had been playing.

Dan [Harry]: Okay, keep calm, don't embarrass yourself, play it cool

Rebecca [Fleur]: What was that?

Dan [Harry]: I have boner now so pretty!

> Harry swallowed and straightened on his chair like nothing had happened. "It's all in place.

Rick: [Fleur] I bet it is.

Dan: Bow-chika-wow-wow.

> We get in, open the door for Hamlet,

Tsuneo: And Horatio

> get inside the vault, send the package to the construction site, and return to the party

Rick: While Peter Sellers talks to a parrot

> while none's the wiser."

> Fleur was turned away from him, her face still hidden away.

Rebecca: So he can't see her stifling a laugh.

> "It sounds so easy when you say it like zhat."

Dan: [Harry] Nothing I haven't done before.

Rick: [Fleur] You've ziplined a package from a private safe to a construction site before?

[Pause]

Dan: [Harry] Yep.

> She turned slightly to the side, and he could register a brief jiggle. The swell of her breasts was
> visible from behind

Rebecca: The author's understanding of breasts begins and ends with anime waifus

> as she reached into her closet and sifted through her dresses.

Dan: This just in, Fleur has boobs.

Tsuneo: As if we hadn't been told a million times before.

> The only sound Harry could hear was his breathing becoming heavier.

Rick: Followed by his tongue unrolling like a red carpet while he hit himself on the head with a wooden mallet

> His inhibitions grew thinner with each passing minute, growing more fragile with each dying second.

Dan [Harry]: Excuse me, Fleur. I'm just going to another room to beat off. I mean, pack my meat. I mean, get a sandwich.

> She was teasing him despite the urgency of their schedule.

Rick: They're about to go from fashionably late to unfashionably late.

- > She cared enough to put the gig aside
- > and torture him in this chair, to which he was not even bound

Rick: And there wasn't even a guy hitting him in the nuts with a rope this time either

- > – except by his own work ethic.

- > It was not easy. He was tempted, he wanted to say, 'Fuck the gig' and spend the night hearing her
- > moan and feel her writhe against him.

- > He knew it. She knew it.

Tsuneo: Deaf and blind people on the other side of the world knew it

- > but neither of them said it.

- > Calming his mind, he swallowed again and crossed his legs, breathing in a steady, controlled inhale.

Rebecca: So to summarise, Fleur's plan is to get him incredibly horny before they go on a mission where he has to play it straight, blend in and keep his cool.

Tsuneo: I see some flaws in this idea

- > "If there aren't any complications, it could be."
- > She hummed and still did not turn to look at him. "Are there ever no complications?"
- > Harry paused and pondered his reply. "Not in my experience, no."

Dan: Last time Harry tried something like this he ended up escaping on a golf cart while wearing a llama costume

- > "And if there are?"

Rick: Guns blazing. Every time.

- > She glanced over her shoulder and met his eyes for a brief moment before
- > returning her attention to her search. The casual sensuality of her motions was something you
- > simply couldn't learn.

Tsuneo: We're talking George Costanza levels of serenity

- > He sighed. "We'll face them as they come. It's impossible to plan for every eventuality."

Dan: That's his excuse for not having a backup plan.

- > As he said
- > that, he remembered a small parcel in his bag. "On that, I brought you a little something as well."

Rick: It's a commemorative Mao Zedong tea set. He's not sure why, but it reminded him of her.

- > "Hm, you 'ave?" She retrieved a strapless black silk dress with the slightest bluish tint, and Harry
- > mentally approved. The colour would be far less conspicuous than say red, or silver.

Rebecca: Of course, Fleur looked like sex on legs and Harry was hornier than a cartoon wolf, but the dress was inconspicuous

- > Fleur put her feet in first, sliding the dress on from below. The way the silky material glided across

> her skin was like the softest whisper of air.

Dan: I kind of want the fic to skip to the action, but I know it's going to be as badly written as the smut.

> 'No bra,' he realised.

Rebecca: Harry's deductive skills were second to none. And by that I mean he was staring at her boobs

> "Do you mind?" asked Fleur, and Harry realised she sounded the slightest bit out of breath. Perhaps
> he wasn't the only one enjoying themselves.

> He snapped out of it, and realised she was holding her dress up at the front, keeping it in place
> against her breasts. She wanted his help zipping up.

Tsuneo: And to summarise the chapter so far: Fleur puts on a dress. Thank you for coming.

> Harry stood and walked over to her. His footsteps, though soft, seemed loud in the charged room.
> When he got to her, he paused briefly, taking in the sight of her bare back again, the top of her little
> tattoo peaked out from her dress.

Rebecca: I suppose now he's staring at her bum instead of her boobs. Um, progress?

> He took a hold of the tiny zipper,

Dan: I'm adding 'zippers' to the list of things that makes him unbearably horny. It's a long list.

> his fingers brushed lightly against her soft skin as he gently pulled it up,

Rick: Then it got stuck halfway, and he had to jostle it a bit and try to unstick it. Completely ruined the moment

> and were his ears not as keen, he might have missed the way her breath hitched.

Rebecca: Nothing to do with him. She just got her hair caught in the zip.

> "I wasn't expecting a show," said Harry, in a low timbre.

Dan: He was confused that the show turned out to be Bojack Horseman.

> Fleur shut her closet and turned around. She tilted her head up to meet his eyes. He'd never
> realised how tall she actually was, just the right height that their close proximity didn't make it
> awkward for her.

Tsuneo: The nine-inch heels probably helped with that.

> With the effect she was having on him, it took a monumental effort to keep his
> eyes from being drawn to her cleavage.

Dan: And again, for those who had missed it before, boobs.

> She leaned in closer, her chest pressed up his as she rose just slightly on her toes to whisper in his
> ear, her breath dusted on his neck.

> "If it all goes well tonight, I might give you more zhan a show."

Rick: She would give him a full interactive presentation with a follow-up Q&A session

> Harry put his hand on the closet door behind her and kept her trapped between him and the smooth
> dark wood. Her face gained a rosy hue, and her mouth parted with laboured breath. She looked

> absolutely stunning. He placed his free hand on her waist.

> Fleur placed a finger against his chest and trailed it up until she reached his chin, she shook her head amusedly.

> "Ah- ah. Work first," she said coquettishly and escaped under his arm.

Tsuneo: I'd say that Harry was just standing there like an idiot, but no. That's how he's been acting so far anyway.

> "You said you brought me somezhing?" she asked amusedly, as she sat down at her desk and reached for her makeup.

Rebecca: [Fleur] And if you say it's in your pants, I will throw you out.

> The mirror in front of her turned on automatically switched from being her computer's display, to showing her reflection.

> Harry shook his head at her antics. "I did."

Rebecca: He's entirely okay with the slow tease dressing, but a mirror? That's just too much

> He joined her at her dressers and retrieved a small package from his bag. It was a small box, about the size of Fleur's hand. He placed it on the surface in front of her wordlessly before he leaned against the wall and folded his arms.

Rick: [Fleur] A box. How, lovely.

Rebecca: [Harry] No, you...

> With her curiosity piqued, Fleur put down her mascara and opened the little box. Inside was a small knife, along with a sheathe. The blade was pitch black and clearly not made of any metal.

Tsuneo: It's actually made entirely out of reprocessed banana skins. It's amazing what they can do.

> She removed it from its case and felt how light it was. "Un couteau?"

Rick: Her English comes and goes with whatever the authour thinks is sexy.

> "That's not just any knife,

Dan: Anything to add, Crocodile Dundee?

> it's a stealth polymer. Not even Militech scanners can pick that up.

Rebecca: [Harry] But it drives racoons crazy for some reason.

> The sheathe strap is for your leg. I want you to have that, it's yours."

> When she gave him a quizzical look, he explained further. "Better to not need it and have it, than to need it and not."

Dan: [Fleur] Trust me, you won't need it.

Rick: [Harry] I wasn't talking about-

Dan: [Fleur] Sure you won't.

> Fleur smiled; she couldn't help but be amused. "First zhe gun lessons, and now a knife? You really know 'ow to give a woman gifts," she giggled.

Rebecca: He's teaching her to kill. It's so romantic.

> Harry chuckled. "Never say I'm not practical."

Rick: Which is why he travels by steam-powered velocipede

> "I don't think pratique is the word I would use, but I will carry it."

Rebecca: She strapped it next to her garter pistol and microgrenades.

> She laughed and stood, once more

> giving him an eyeful when she lifted her dress, exposing her nearly transparent little lace thong to
> him.

Tsuneo: There's laying it on thick, and then there's this fic which is pouring straight from the cement mixer.

> With nimble fingers, Fleur sheathed the knife and strapped it to her inner thigh. Harry couldn't help
> but find the sight to be one of the most erotic things he'd ever seen.

Rebecca: Last time he looked at a draw full of kitchen utensils he needed a cold shower and a good lie down

> "Zhere," said Fleur approvingly, as she tugged her dress back down. "Merci beaucoup, 'Arry."

Rick: Also, we're an hour late.

> "Don't mention it," he replied with a dry mouth before checking the time. It was already past eight in
> the evening now. "The car will be here any minute. We should get going."

Dan: But first, half a chapter of him getting changed for the evening.

Rebecca: There is considerably more grunting and scratching.

> "Mhm," she hummed in appreciation.

> "I'm 'appy you visited Pierre," Fleur suddenly commented on his attire, her eyes undeniably feasting.
> "It suits you."

Dan: She's not sure she would have selected the transparent plastic chaps and hypercolour blouse, but he made them work.

> He was wearing a black suit and couldn't be bothered to wonder what the material was,

Rebecca: It was made entirely from genuine baby seal fur.

> but it felt good and fit him very well.

> "Can't complain, although your tailor is a bit handsy with the measuring tape," said Harry, drawing a
> musical laugh from Fleur.

Rick: Last time he books an appointment with Dobby.

> "I can imagine 'e was a bit excited to be working wizh you. If I recall, I believe you are 'is type."

> "I'm glad at least one of us finds it amusing," deadpanned Harry.

Dan: Haha, sexual harassment

> Fleur laughed again, "Don't worry, Pierre doesn't bite." Her voice turned sultry. "Not like moi."

Rebecca: She'll rip bloody chunks off you first chance she gets.

> She finished the perfecting touches on her lipstick and smacked her lips together. She hurried
> herself, but it was likely unnecessary since her makeup was minimal in any case.

Rick: Although she has a skincare routine that would make Patrick Bateman blush.

> She used just enough to highlight her beauty, any more would only cover it up.

Rebecca: Unlike Harry who couldn't go anywhere without plastering on foundation.

> Harry thought of the upcoming task and of the risk of having his mind wander.

Tsuneo: I think we're a bit past that point

> "Fleur?"

> "Oui?" she replied, studying her mirror image in detail.

> "This little back and forth, this game we've been playing. Don't deny it, you know what I'm talking
> about."

Rick [Fleur]: 'ungry 'ungry 'ippoz?

Rebecca: Well done

> She had just finished the finishing touches on her makeup

Tsuneo: And put the cap back on the sharpie.

> when she replaced a soft brush to its holder and met his eyes through the reflection in her mirror.

> "I do," she said seriously.

> "Why?"

> "Pourquoi?" she shook her head in honest confusion. "What do you mean, why?"

> "Why do it?"

Rebecca: Because she's French. Next question.

> "Why not?" Fleur asked with a hint of mirth.

Tsuneo: Because it's unprofessional and putting the pair of you at risk in this operation?

Dan: Well besides that I mean

> He stared at her unblinking.

Rick: [Harry] Error. Abort, retry, fail?

> She sighed and went back to looking herself over in the mirror. "Is it so surprising zhat I find you
> attractive?"

Dan: Given his mangy coat and scruffy hair, yes.

> I do it because I like you and because I enjoy it."

Rebecca: And because it's the author's preferred pairing, which really is all you need to know

> The corner of her lips turned up in a little smile. "I didn't know what to expect of a mercenary, but
> you were not it."

Rick: She was expecting him to have a light machine gun, a smartgun link, wired reflexes and an ugly helmet-visor combo.

> The smile turned into her beautiful soft laughter. "For someone who steals and kills for a living, I find
> zhat you are remarkably 'onest, principled, and proud.

Tsuneo: He's a principled hired killer

> You 'ad prejudices but ignored it and formed your own opinion.

Dan: Or maybe he was just really horny.

> You care nozhing for all of zhis," she waved a hand around, gesturing to the room.

Dan: [Harry] It's the minimalism taken to far to the point of becoming impersonal. While there is an elegance to it, at this level it's too detached from the individual.

Rick: [Fleur] I meant my boudoir, you ninny.

> "It's remarkably refreshing. And..."

> "And?"

> "I want to see what it will take."

> "For what?" He prodded.

> Fleur met his eyes, and there was a fire burning in her deep blues.

Tsuneo: There's drops for that.

> They seemed to glow purely out

> of intensity. Very suddenly he felt no longer like the one in control. Instead, he'd become the prey.

> Her stare bore into him, nailing him in place.

Rick: [Harry] Are you trying to seduce me, miss Delacour?

> "For you to stop 'olding back and fuck me."

Rebecca: So what exactly is the appeal of this pairing anyway?

Tsuneo: They interacted perhaps twice in a single book

Rebecca: I thought so.

> Her challenge whipped about him. The air between them was electric,

Rick: Wait, that's just the static from the carpet. Never mind.

> the only sound was the quiet hum of the electronics in the room and their breathing.

Dan: At this point, I think Darth Vader would be quieter and less creepy-sounding

> Harry's gaze smouldered as he stared down

> at her. Her face and neck had the slightest flush, her breathing was laboured.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Whoah, I'm going to need a shower.

Rebecca: [Harry] But you just!

> He opened his mouth

> to speak but was cut off by a voice sounding from the apartment's speaker system.

> "Good evening, Miss Delacour. Your transport has arrived." The voice was smooth, and

> professional, but had that hint of digital modulation which was present in all AI assistants.

Tsuneo: Strangely enough, Harry found that to be incredibly arousing too

Rebecca: He and Siri have a complicated relationship

> He didn't move as Fleur stood, so she was practically right up against him. He grabbed her by the
> waist and made her face him. She stared at him with a sudden defiance that contrasted against her
> earlier openness. But he could see the cracks, the lust behind the facade.

Rick: Good to know that she's as dumb and horny as he is

> "We're going to finish this gig." His voice was deep, commanding. It sent a thrill up Fleur's spine.
> "Then I'm going to show you just how much you've bitten off."

Dan: [Assistant] Seriously. The driver's waiting.

> She leaned up and wordlessly placed a kiss at the corner of his mouth. It was her way of answering
> his promise.

Tsuneo: Their departure was delayed by Harry taking his sixth cold shower for the day.

> Ferris Blvd, Corpo Plaza, City Centre, Night City

Rick: Stop next to the apartment, jump over the nearby fence, jump on the dumpster, turn around and
look behind the air conditioning box. You'll find a pair of ugly trousers with legendary stats.

> 20:46

Tsuneo: Hooray. Maybe we can finally get the chapter started.

> "You know," said Harry mentally to Fleur as he climbed out of the self-driving vehicle

Dan: [Delamain] Thank you for using Delamain cabs. You will be the last to die.

Rick: [Harry] Wait, what?

> and looked up at the apartment building. "How does a Biotechnica Engineer afford this?

Rebecca: Unrestrained capitalist cyberpunk dystopia. Next question.

> Don't get me wrong, your place is nice,

Rick: In a 'zero effort, nobody lives there' way.

> but this is a class of its own."

Dan: I mean, he even has a better class of hobo out the front and everything

> "No offence taken. Felix didn't earn this, he inherited it all from his parents."

Rebecca: Unlike Fleur, who we already know came from a wealthy family. But that's completely
different

> Fleur stepped out after him and slipped her hand through his arm.

> "Why would he need to steal from you then?"

Tsuneo: Basic insecurity.

> "Hmm, so many questions tonight." Fleur giggled aloud before smirking.

> Harry shrugged. "You don't have to answer, curious is all."

Dan: [Harry] I mean, the background might be important to work through any unexpected complications. But no, keep me in the dark.

> "Felix stole from me, because everything you will see tonight, is all a performance.

Tsuneo: Says the person who just spent half a chapter on an elaborate cock-tease

> While 'e did in'erit zhe money, 'e did not in'erit 'is fazher's business sense, 'e wasted everyzhing.

Rebecca: Living the rich idiot son dream.

> What 'e did not lose in bad investments, 'e lost in gambling."

Rick: He blew it all on cane toad racing.

> "Do we know if he borrowed?" asked Harry with a frown as they approached the entrance. This is
> why he hated last minute gigs, you always missed something.

Tsuneo: Things that she probably should have said earlier

Rebecca: Instead of gratuitously flirting with him, you mean

Tsuneo: Funny that

> A man held open the door for them. An entirely unnecessary thing to do, but of course it was more
> opulent to have a person open and close the door than to use automation.

Dan: They could have gotten a robot doorman to do that

> Though from what Harry could see by his motions, the man was likely packing serious firepower.

Rick: They're really strict about the dress code here

> The doorway also doubled

> as a scanner, searching them for any weapons. Harry's Mantis Blade was shielded,

Rebecca: He claimed it was a medical prosthesis

> and would pass through unless he unsheathed it, and Fleur's new knife went fully undetected.

Tsuneo: If we don't have an extended gun check scene, I will be sorely disappointed.

> Fleur met Harry's eyes as they entered the foyer, realising where he was going with this.

Rick: I'm guessing to the elevator.

> If Felix

> owed money to someone, depending on who it was, it could severely affect how desperate the man
> was.

Rick: He's in deep to the surrealist mafia. They made him an offer he couldn't understand

> She mirrored his frown, "Non, we don't know, but it's a possibility."

> "Hamlet," Harry called out to the netrunner who had been silently listening in on their group call.

Rebecca [Hamlet]: You two are so stupid, you know that?

> "I'm already on it."

Rebecca: [Hamlet] Honestly, someone's got to do the legwork around here.

> The building receptionist looked up from her screen as she noticed their approach.

Dan: [Harry] She suspects something. Quick, pretend we're stupid horny for each other.

> The facial

> recognition already cross-referencing them with a guest list she'd been provided. "Good evening,

> Miss Delacour, your plus one will have to identify himself before you can proceed."

Rick: He's a plus one, but plus three against Orcs

> "Ethan Black," greeted the merc with a disarming smile. The receptionist's eyes glowed blue for a

> second as she logged his name.

Rick: [Receptionist] According to this, you're a previously undiscovered species of lemur. [Ding!]

> It was likely already being rushed through a background check. He

> wasn't worried in the slightest, his alias was ironclad.

Rick: His alias was the giant alien strongman member of the Champions?

Dan: No, that's a different Harry Potter crossover. [Pause] I can't believe I just said that

> Moments later, they were allowed to pass with a welcoming smile and well wishes to enjoy the

> party.

Tsuneo: As soon as they're gone, the receptionist rolls her eyes and adds them to 'the list.'

> As the elevator hummed to life and zoomed up to approach Felix's apartment, Harry took a deep

> breath to calm his heart. He always got excited during a gig, but for now he needed to be in control.

> Adrenaline coursing through his system would be an inconvenience.

Rebecca: Well as long as there's nothing there to distract him, he'll be fine

Tsuneo: What about the woman who was all but throwing herself at him just minutes ago?

Rebecca: Well, yeah...

> Fleur, who hadn't let go of his arm, felt the shift in his torso.

Dan: [Fleur] Is that a gun in your pocket?

Tsuneo: [Harry] Yes, it's a polymer composite pistol designed to evade scanners.

Dan: [Fleur] And yet, I'm somehow not disappointed.

> She peered at him curiously for a second, before attributing it to nerves.

> The elevator came to a stop and pinged a smooth chime before sliding open. The sound was the

> first thing to make itself known. Neo-Classical music

Rick: By such composers as Robot Beethoven and Cyber-Mozart

> served as the backdrop for the multitude of

> socialites and businessmen who laughed and chatted away. In between the throngs of partiers,

Dan: And the occasional llama, for some reason.

> hired staff moved and offered them champagne and little bite sized morsels of what passed for food

> in one of these events.

Tsuneo: If it doesn't come from a vending machine, he doesn't want it.

> Hors d'oeuvres as Fleur would call them, he mused.

Dan: Call them what you want. He's going straight for the buffet table

> "Champagne?"

Dan: Oh yes.

Rebecca: Not you.

Dan: Going for it anyway.

> asked a member of the catering staff in his pressed uniform, as he held out a tray.

> His focus was entirely on Fleur.

> They grabbed a glass each, with Harry thanking the man, to which he didn't acknowledge.

Rebecca: He can smell the poverty on Harry.

> An action

> which was turned around when Fleur took her glass without giving him a glance, much to his weakly

> hidden disappointment. Harry snickered internally at the waiter's despondent retreat.

Rebecca: It's funny because she teased the minimum wage staff

> "Fleur! I'm so glad you could make it!" exclaimed an enthusiastic man's voice with a hint of a

> European accent.

Rick: Possibly Freedonian

> It was Felix, who was quickly making his way to them through the partygoers.

Tsuneo: Vigorously elbowing through the crowd.

> Their mark, in the flesh, looked every bit the poncy corpo as his file had shown.

Dan: [Harry] If there's one thing I hate, it's corpos flaunting their wealth.

Rick: [Fleur] Excuse me?

Dan: [Harry] You're different, you've got boobs.

> With his hair slicked

> back, and a goatee which was clearly meant to make him appear older, but still sophisticated.

Rebecca: I think the fic undersold him. Maybe have him kick a puppy to get the point across.

> "Felix," greeted Fleur with a brilliantly convincing false warmth. She could certainly act, mused

> Harry.

Dan: Why, she's fantastic at literally everything she does

Rick: But how are her parfaits?

> She stepped in, allowing Felix to greet her properly with those little air cheek kisses the

> Europeans were so fond of.

Rebecca: It's a European thing like mopeds, wine at every meal and liking David Hasslehof.

> "Zhis is for you. Bon anniversaire." She handed over a small gift bag. Harry didn't bother asking

> what it was she'd gotten for him;

Dan: Just what the blast radius would be.

> it was likely just an expensive little bauble anyway.

> "Thank you, you really shouldn't have."

Tsuneo: A cursed Aztec gold coin. How nice.

> "Non, ma mère would never forgive me if I went to a birthday without a gift."

Dan: He's already planning who to re-gift it to.

> Felix chuckled, and only then did he notice Harry who had simply watched the interaction.

Tsuneo: [Felix] Seriously, you could do so much better.

> It looked

> like any old meeting between old friends, or at the very least acquaintances who were cordial with

> one another.

Rick: Or maybe even relatives who had to pretend to be nice to each other.

> But once you knew more and could look beneath the surface. You'd notice how the

> smiles never fully reached the eyes, and how the body language was a bit too guarded.

Rebecca: Wow, it's almost like they're used to keeping up appearances in a professional environment!

> Harry also didn't miss the hungry gleam in the man's gaze as he took in Fleur's appearance.

Dan: We already know that everybody in the universe is horny for Fleur, but here's one more person who's horny for Fleur

> 'Hm,' Harry mused.

> "Oh, désolé, this is my boyfriend, 'Arry."

Rebecca: Immediately blowing his cover identity. Nice work.

> Fleur took a hold of Harry's arm, gently saddling up to his side.

> Felix skilfully hid his frown, but he failed to mask the quick tensing of his jaw.

> "Harry Evans," he offered his hand, which Felix shook. "Lovely place you've got."

> "Thank you, I did all the interior designing myself."

Dan: And by that he means he just selected a skin from the customisation menu

> "You see," interrupted Fleur. "I told you, Felix 'as a great eye for details." She hadn't told him

> anything of the sort, but Harry played along.

Rebecca: [Harry] It's way nicer than your apartment, dear.

Rick: [Fleur] You're sleeping on the couch tonight, dear.

> "You were right—Sorry," he added at the end to Felix. "Fleur's had nothing but praise for you."

> Felix preened visibly. "What a fucking idiot..." Harry transmitted mentally to Fleur accidentally.

Dan: He accidentally texted her

Rebecca: Makes you wonder who that was really for

> Fleur's lips twitched as she hid her amusement at his comment.

Rebecca: [Fleur] Maybe try not to get us killed the moment we step in the door.

> Before their host could puff his chest, his eyes widened as looked at something over their shoulder.

Dan: [Felix] Oh, and look at that, the ice sculpture's on fire again. Happens all the time.

> "I'm so sorry," he apologised hurriedly. "I need to leave you. Please, enjoy the party.

Tsuneo: Or at least do a passable job of pretending

> I'll try and find

> you again if I get the chance. But in case I don't, it was good meeting you, Harry," he lied and

> offered Harry his hand for a second shake.

Rick: It's somehow gotten greasier in between.

> "Likewise," Harry said cordially, glad to put the annoying posturing behind him.

Dan: Its like Trump's meetings with Kim Jong-Un, only with slightly less stupid people

> "Fleur," Felix stepped in and placed a quick, friendly peck to the blonde's cheek, "I really am glad

> you came."

Rick: [Felix] I've got so much to show off to you.

> "Wouldn't miss it."

> Felix nodded and then rushed off to meet whoever it was who had just entered the party.

Dan: It's his old college buddy Adam Smasher, and he's wearing a tux.

> "That was fun," deadpanned Harry.

Tsuneo: My review of the fic so far.

> "When I said 'e was an old family friend, I meant 'is parents were old family friends.

Rebecca: [Fleur] They tried to get us engaged. I had to pretend to like hopeless street losers to put them off.

> 'E 'imself 'as always been very annoying."

> "Well, I don't need to be his friend to know he wants to put you flat on your back."

Rick: He runs a tanning salon, you see.

> "Who doesn't?

Dan: [Fleur] Him, you, the barmaid where I met you, the receptionist downstairs, the robot cab we arrived in...

> Tell me somezhing I don't know." She shrugged.

> Harry chuckled, and they both quieted and observed Felix welcome a pair of newcomers. A Latino

> man and woman, the husband or boyfriend

Rebecca: You can't just assume those things. They could be business partners or each other's
beards, for example

> was in the upper end of middle-aged, with a cleanly

> shaven face and short hair, while his partner was beautiful with deep black curls and a bright red

> dress.

Tsuneo: But if she wasn't falling out of it while trying to jump in his shorts, then Harry didn't want to know about her

> "Interesting," said Fleur, as they watched Felix's exuberant greeting.

Dan: Gee, I wonder if these two will be plot relevant.

Rebecca: Given that they're the only people who've been described besides the horny idiots and Felix?

Dan: You might be onto something there.

> The man appeared polite and took it all in stride. But his eyes held a cruelty to them, this was a
> cutthroat. The sort who would wrap you in a hug and use the opportunity to drive a knife in your
> back.

Dan: Harry has been sneaking a look at the author's notes.

> Felix appeared to be currying up to him, doing his best to impress the man. If Harry didn't already
> have a poor impression of their host, watching him brown-nose would have been enough.

Rebecca: Harry hates social niceties

> "Recognise him?" asked Harry.

> "Non."

> "Hamlet?"

Rick: Macbeth? Othello? A tale of two cities?

> "..."

> "..."

Dan: This is the best exchange in the fic so far. Treasure it.

> "Romano Diaz, he's a businessman, he's been in and out of brushes with NCPD. They've tried to
> charge him several times, but nothing ever sticks. Missing evidence, witness disappearances...

Rick: And he has so many unpaid parking fines too

> Feds believe he finances the Valentinos. Whether he's an active member is not confirmed."

Tsuneo: He's more of a passive member. He's a part of the gang but never does anything with them

> "Zhat solves our little mystery," said Fleur aloud before she took a sip of her champagne, as her
> voice returned to the call.

> "I zhink we know who Felix owes money to," piped in Fleur.

Rebecca: Or at least a baseless assumption.

> "Zhese Valentinos, tell me about zhem."

Rebecca: They stand around in clumps and wait for the player to murder them

> "They're a bit different to most gangs,"

Rick: They button then zip

> answered Harry. "At least on the surface, they're hardliners
> about honour and loyalty. But don't think they're noble or anything, it's all about control. They're
> about as ruthless as you get, and they like to get creative with how they kill—

Dan: They're kind of like Wile E. Coyote in that regard

> have a punishment in place for just about anything.

Rebecca: Don't ask what they'll do if you cut one off in the buffet queue

> Most gangs just put a bullet between your eyes. These gonks, nah...
> Ever since their leader was put behind bars, they've been off the rails. Only group worse than 'em
> now are Maelstrom,

Rick: So they're not as bad as the insane murder cyborgs. Got it.

> even the Scavs usually just knock you out and then cut you up."

Dan: How gangs kill you. Polite dinnertime conversation.

> Fleur frowned at the description and re-evaluated the smartly dressed man, she made a mental
> note to be extra cautious.

Tsuneo: You're already doing something deeply illegal with the aid of a hired killer, but be cautious

> "One other thing," mentioned Harry. "If he's anything like the rest of the Valentinos, then he's got a
> weakness for women.

Rebecca: All Valentinos are horny men, including the women

> We should avoid him and get started, or he'll be pestering us all night, and I'd
> rather avoid having to off the cunt.

Dan: Or he could be a misunderstood gentleman trying to smooth out a mistaken arrest and you're making a lot of assumptions.

> Wouldn't be able to do it quietly."

Rick: And he'd hate to get blood all over this tux.

> "Oh," Fleur had an amused smirk upon her lips. She leaned closer, the fruity smell of their
> champagne on her breath. "Do I hear a hint of possessiveness in your voice?"

Rebecca: It's not just that Harry's a creep, but that she's actively encouraging it

> Harry growled. "Let's just get that access point before you get noticed."

> Fleur bit her lip playfully in response but Harry let it be. It was all business now.

Dan: Maybe we can finally get to the heist?

Rebecca: But we haven't detailed the hors d'oeuvres yet and had three pages of Fleur seductively eating one.

> All he needed was to jack into one of the apartment's interfaces. Whether the program could open
> the connection their netrunner needed was a different story. Harry found one of the small wall-
> mounted consoles

Rick: Why he kept his Xbox hanging on the wall was another matter.

> beside a painting of some weird blend of colours and lines that was supposed to mean something.

Tsuneo: That's the old pipes screen saver.

> He'd never understand art.

Dan [Harry]: Who do these Dutch Masters think they are anyway?

> "Found one, but I'm going to need you to cover me, play along."

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Could you have found one in a less conspicuous location?

Dan: [Harry] I mean, yes.

> The crowdedness of the room at least offered some cover to what he was attempting to discreetly

> do, but it was not enough. Harry casually manoeuvred them in place with Fleur between him and

> the wall. He placed one hand behind her back,

Tsuneo: Oh look, a convenient excuse for him to touch her up.

Rebecca: What a shock that was.

> making it appear as if he were holding her against

> him, but in actual fact he'd jacked into the console behind her.

Dan: That's probably not the only thing he's jacked tonight

> To any who chose to observe, it would simply appear as if they were flirting with one another.

Rebecca: It would simply appear that they were flirting while he was running a cable to something hidden behind the painting. Completely normal.

> Harry accessed the shard in his neck and ran the daemon. The console's interface flickered several

> times before a progress bar overlayed on top of it.

> *Running exyn_ver.1

> He watched with bated breath as the bar filled.

Tsuneo: Intense progress bar action!

> The fact that no alarms went off was already a major reassurance.

> "Almost there," he whispered, his breath on Fleur's nape.

Dan: The exhaust port's in sight.

> Not even a second after the bar hit 100%, did Hamlet speak. "I'm in. You're as good as ghosts to the
> system now."

> "We're on," said Harry mentally to Fleur,

Rebecca: The fake Linux commands and mouse click are assumed

> removing his jack from the console.

Tsuneo: And yet the console remained unsatisfied.

> He slid his hand down her back and cupped her ass. She pressed herself against him, "Your place,

> it's closer," he stage-whispered,

Rick [Stage Whisper]: Hello, we are not being suspicious at all in the slightest.

- > just loud enough that anybody around them would hear. If anybody
- > searched for them, they'd likely believe the pair have left.

Dan: Or at the very least were having a quickie in the bathroom

- > Fleur pushed Harry back before leaning up to place a kiss on his lips. She slipped her hand into his
- > and proceeded to lead him from the area. The pair were very aware of the eyes on them which
- > followed until they'd lost them in the crowded party.

Tsuneo: They were being followed until they weren't.

- > "Wait," instructed Hamlet.

- > The pair slowed, and a moment later the TV at the far end of the living room area turned on, its
- > volume was at full blast, distracting the room and allowing them to move unnoticed.

Dan: Everyone was fine with the TV spontaneously turning on for no apparent reason.

- > Harry and Fleur
- > didn't waste the opportunity and quietly escaped into the hallway which led to Felix's room, and the
- > vault within.

Rick: Wait till they find out that's just where Felix keeps his Pogs

- > If it weren't for Hamlet, they wouldn't be able to simply walk down the passage as freely.

Dan: She gave them the timing for the swinging axe traps.

- > The netrunner was actively wiping them from the surveillance system. If anyone were to
- > review the footage, they'd see nothing but an empty hallway.

Tsuneo: Which would be suspicious, given the number of guests who were already passed out in the hall.

- > As soon as they were out of sight, Harry started a timer which counted down at the edge of his
- > vision.

- > [08:59]

- > [08:58]

- > ...

Tsuneo: My thoughts exactly

- > The door to Felix's room was closed, and to their surprise, not even locked. But then again, who
- > locks their room in their own home.

Rebecca: Someone who has valuable stolen property that he needs to get out of hock to the murderous gang, perhaps?

Rick: You may be on to something there

- > Once inside, Harry had to admit to himself. Felix might be a tool, but the Swede had serious taste in
- > décor, the room was light, softwoods, greys, and even a full wall fountain, which ran down into
- > pebble stones.

Dan: Sure it looks great and all, but he keeps needing to pee in the middle of the night.

- > It was a very refreshing bedroom, quite a contrast from the opulence of the rest of the apartment.

Rebecca: It was opulent, but refreshingly such

> While Harry had been distracted by the room, Fleur had eagerly rushed to a painting. She felt
> around the base until she grinned victoriously.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Aha, it's a print! He's a cheap bastard after all.

> Harry rejoined her. "We've got a little under eight minutes. Have you found it?"

> "Oui." She quieted as she overrode the biometric lock.

> That's the thing with biometrics. Even in 2077, people believed them to be safe but like any
> passcode, it was still in the end just that and could with the right tools be bypassed.

Rick: All you need is a bobby pin and some patience

> Seconds later, the water flowing down the fountain wall stopped, and a portion of the dark stone
> shifted and retracted, unveiling a black metal door, with a small panel where a handle usually would
> be.

Tsuneo: This is the sort of setup that you have when you're a James Bond villain

> "Hm, your data said the vault was beneath the bed?" Harry asked suspiciously.

> "Misdirection," was all the answer Fleur gave him in her excitement,

Dan: [Harry] Sure, that makes me feel better.

> as she bounded past Harry to
> the door. He frowned but decided not to interrupt her, since getting the vault open was entirely within
> her hands anyway.

Rebecca: So far Harry hasn't done anything for the heist that she couldn't have done herself. What's
he even here for?

Tsuneo: Well, who else is she meant to be horny at? [Pause] Wait, don't answer that.

> While she worked,

Dan: Harry had never so much wanted to be a vault door in his life

> he checked the timer, 'little more than six minutes left.'

Rick: So, six minutes and one second.

> "Everything still clear?" He asked Hamlet, keeping the conversation private, to not disturb Fleur.

> "Harry." Hamlet's voice sounded worried.

> "What?"

> "I don't like this;

Rebecca: You and me both

> it's going too smoothly."

Tsuneo: [Hamlet] The plot's too boring. We need a twist in here now.

> He let that sink in before replying. "I agree, but there's no turning back now."

> "Just, be careful. Please." Hamlet cautioned him.

> As if on cue, Fleur screamed as a current of electricity coursed through her body.

Dan: They hid a joy buzzer in the door. Cunning.

> She spasmed as she fell to the ground, disconnecting her from the panel.

> Harry knew the jig was up, he rushed to Fleur, who was struggling to stand back up and slipped an arm under her, lifting her to her feet.

Tsuneo: [Harry] At last, another reason to feel her up. It's been whole minutes.

> She breathed heavily and wobbled before leaning into him for support.

> Suddenly he felt his throat burning and his vision darkening, a notification from his biomonitor
> implant began flashing.

Rick: It was telling him that he needed to pee.

> [Unknown Contaminant]

> *BioDyne DetoxV06: [Purging]

> **[Unknown Contaminant]...1%

Rebecca: 1% nerve gas by volume

> It was followed by his vitals spiking, as adrenaline coursed through his body in an attempt to keep
> him conscious.

Dan: It still can't help him with a hangover.

> "We need to go, now!" He gasped out.

> Fleur, who was in a worse condition than himself, opened her mouth. Whether it was to agree or
> protest, he didn't know, but regardless the door to the bedroom was pushed open forcefully. Three
> individuals entered, all with rebreather masks on.

Rick: What sort of a guy has a nerve gas trap in his own bedroom?

Dan: Someone with a weird sex life

> It was Felix along with a malicious glint in his eyes
> and a gun in his hand, followed by a calm Romano Diaz and his female companion.

Tsuneo: The feared gang enforcer, the plus one.

> "Hamlet!"

> "Are you there!?" He grit his teeth.

Dan: Hamlet cut and run at the first sign of trouble.

> Only silence answered him, he was cut off. In his rush for Fleur, and his panicking biomonitor, he
> must have missed the alert.

Rick: Hamlet had been trying to message him all day, but he 'accidentally' put her on silent.

> "I must confess," began Felix in his slimy drawl, his voice distorted by the mask. "I had hoped I was

> wrong. I'm so very disappointed in you, Fleur." Felix shook his head mockingly.

Tsuneo: Of course, he's still wearing the gas mask so his villainous monologue came out as 'mrrfl mrrfl mrrfl.'

> "You thought you were so clever, didn't you, but you've merely been dancing to my little tune.

Rick: [Felix] It's an elaborate tango, but it tested well with the focus groups.

> Romano here's had people watching you.

Dan: Well maybe if you didn't hire the most stupidly obvious man in the world this wouldn't happen.

> I was certainly surprised; I did not expect you to hire a merc, especially some nameless fool.

Tsuneo: [Felix] You could at least brought someone with some class.

Dan: [Harry] Hey!

Tsuneo: [Felix] I mean, someone at least half-way famous.

Dan: [Harry] I'm right here!

> But no matter, he'll be dead soon, Romano's boss will have his money, and you'll be

> mine. Two birds, one very effective stone."

Rebecca: All you needed to do was steal something from her, let her know that you'd stolen it, ensure that she got the information about its location, assume that she would hire somebody to come after it but also come with them in person no less, assume that she would do it during your party and hope that she, her partner or anyone else that was supporting them wouldn't notice the traps that you had put on the safe or bring breather masks or any other form of protection and you were good.

Rick: Doctor Medford approves of this plan.

> Fleur, who was still not fully recovered from the electrocution and was severely struggling against

> the gas, glared at Felix. "Bâtard!"

> Felix's expression morphed into a manic one for a split second. The man was unhinged.

> "You don't get it, do you?" He snarled. "I've been planning to make you mine for years, but there

> was always something in the way. Circumstances... My parents...

Rick: Brick walls, the curvature of the Earth, the inevitable march of entropy and time...

> William."

Dan: Not William!

[Pause]

Dan: Who's William?

> Fleur's eyes widened at that. Harry felt her stiffen and try to free herself from his grip.

> "You!?" The hatred in her voice was palpable as well as the shock of realisation.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] Not my hamster!

Dan: [Harry] Wait, all this is about a hamster?

> "Correct. Well, I might as well just tell you. Yes, I had your dearly beloved killed.

Rebecca: And as you can see, she was so devastated by his death that she immediately started flirting with the first semi-attractive man she came across.

> I'll leave the why of it to your clever mind.

Tsuneo: [Felix] Because really, my motivation is threadbare as it is.

> As for my parents, mother and father, they regretfully found out about my...
> How did they put it? My obsession with you. They were beside themselves with shame

Dan: They were upset that he was attracted to the rich, beautiful and successful woman

> and did what all
> parents do, they wanted me to get help. I could see it in their eyes. It was eating at father from the
> inside, he had even considered discussing my devotion for you with your parents.

Tsuneo: Did they consider sending him to therapy instead?

Rick: Just think. One decent shrink could have prevented this whole fic.

> Of course, I
> couldn't have that. So... I stopped them. It was the single most difficult thing I had to do but it was
> easy too, imagine my surprise.

Dan: [Harry] Um, look. I'm sure this is important to you and all, and clearly you and Fleur have got things to sort out, but I'm late so something so if you guys don't need me here...

> A bit of clever tampering with the security programming, one car
> accident later, and there I was. Poor orphaned Felix." He chuckled darkly. "It was tragic really."

Tsuneo: Good thing he's so chatty. It means the fic doesn't need to establish... well, anything, really.

> Harry could feel Fleur's struggle to speak. "Zh- was--"

> "Years ago? Mhm, nobody suspected young, innocent, naive Felix capable of murdering his
> parents.

Dan: His friend Tommy Elliot put him up to it.

> Yours were so sympathetic, inviting me over for all those special occasions. Such a loving
> family. How could I not love you?"

Rebecca: There comes a point where your villain crosses the line into cartoonish evil for the sake of it. Felix here passed that long ago.

> Fleur was barely conscious now,

Rick: I'm falling asleep myself.

> and Harry himself was struggling to keep upright. His mind was
> racing, he did not like where this was going,

Tsuneo: Probably to another expository monologue.

> and he was too far to be effective with his mantis blade, not without risking Fleur.

Rick: Besides which, he knew that there was a gas tank nearby that he would inevitably hit.

> But still, he needed to try.

> He prepared to release his blade and rush. But Felix was far more dangerous, and far more
> observant than they'd given him credit for.

Tsuneo: In that he can see the guy on the floor in front of him.

> His gun was trained on Harry almost instantly, preventing his attempt.

Rebecca: He wanted to save their lives, but he couldn't be bothered

> Harry clenched his jaw, grinding his teeth, everything they knew about the guy was an act. A
> persona for the public, and it worked. He'd had everyone fooled, even Fleur.

Tsuneo: At this point I don't think outwitting her is the accomplishment the fic thinks it is.

> They severely underestimated him.

Rick: Well, maybe if they'd done any kind of investigation beforehand.

> "And you?" He addressed Harry now. "Street trash thinks he can waltz into my place, rub his filthy
> paws all over what's mine!" He glanced towards Fleur with a sadistic and lecherous grin. "Only I get
> to do that."

Dan [Felix]: Only I get to touch my stuff.

> "I'll kill you," ground out Fleur in a gasping breathlessness before she finally succumbed to the gas
> and passed out.

Tsuneo: After you with the nerve gas, Fleur.

> "You'll try." Felix stared at her unconscious form.

Rick: Wait, you're going to let her? You're dumber than I thought, and that's an accomplishment.

> "What do we do about the merc?" asked Romano coldly, his eyes unflinching as he watched Harry
> struggling to stay awake while still holding Fleur.

Rebecca: Well the logical thing would be to kill him while he's out cold and dump the body. But again,
he's stupid evil so we can't do that.

> "Anna can have him."

> "Can I?" There was no hiding the woman in red's excitement.

Dan: We'll assume for the sake of argument that she's Anna.

> Felix' face formed a look of masked distaste but nodded at the question.

Tsuneo: He's just lured a rival into his own home and gassed her. He has no right to be disgusted.

> "I'd rather not get my hands dirty with street trash blood. He's all yours."

> The last thing Harry saw as his vision faded to black was Fleur's unconscious form being thrown
> over Diaz's shoulder as the dark-haired woman practically vibrated

Rick: That's just her phone going off. Settle down, fic.

> as she stared manically at him.

Dan: The worst part was when he woke up, he was sitting at a table with a pink tea set on it.

> *BioDyne DetoxV06: Purging [Unknown Contaminant]...100%

> **[Unknown Contaminant] – "Catalogued" [Nerve Inhibitor A17]

Dan: All the neurological damage of Inhibitor A16, but half the calories

> ***System: Conclusion – "Resistant"

> [System Reboot]

> **2%

Tsuneo: If the rest of this chapter is just a count-down until he reboots, I will be perfectly fine with that.

> The smile that marred Anna's face would be enough to send chills down the spine of any half sane individual with the slightest semblance of self-preservation.

Rebecca: Well that rules out anyone in this fic

> It was just her and her toy left in the room.

Dan: She'd finally gotten her hands on a Turbo-Man doll.

> She couldn't help it, she practically buzzed with excitement.

Rick: Wait, that's just the swarm of angry bees that have invaded the apartment

> The gas had already been cleared, so she removed her mask and slipped one of her fingers in her mouth

Rebecca: Savouring the cherry-flavoured nail gloss.

> as she stared at Harry pondering how to go about her fun.

> Harry, if that was even his name, was laid flat, face down on Felix's floor.

Dan: This would have been a familiar experience for Daniel Radcliffe

> The slight movement of his torso as he rhythmically breathed was the only sign of life.

Rick: The opossum module had failed him.

> Anna frowned, she wanted to see his face when she got to work. See his terrified expressions when he couldn't move as she cut him open slowly.

Tsuneo: Hoping the red buzzer on his nose doesn't go off.

> She shuddered and licked her lips before slipping her foot from her high heels so she could use it to turn him over.

> **34%

> "There," she purred. "That's better."

> Anna straddled him, her short dress rose up and exposed her bare ass, she wore nothing beneath the tight red number.

Rebecca: Every part of this fic sounds like it's being said by a sweaty creep

> She ripped his shirt open and felt her breathing get heavier at the toned body.

Dan: See, this is why you have to vet your murderers for hire.

Rebecca: Oh yeah, you want someone professional. Someone who knows what they're doing but doesn't get too involved. Treats it like a job, not a hobby.

Dan: Exactly. [Pause] Got a lot of experience on that end?

Rebecca: You know I'm not going to answer that.

> He had several scars, some from injuries, others she recognised were from cyberware surgeries,
> they had the clean lines of a skilled Ripperdoc.

Dan: Harry goes to only the best illegal back-alley surgeons

> "Oh, I'm going to enjoy cutting into your skin."

Rick: She's going to make it into a jaunty hat, and that's still not the creepiest part of this.

> She all but moaned and ground herself against him. She hoped he could feel it all.

Tsuneo: Harry meanwhile is reading his mantis blades' operators manual to pass the time.

> "You're so much stronger than the last man I played with." She shook

> her head disappointingly. "He broke so easily;

Rick: He was no longer mint in sealed box

> a few cuts and he was already begging. I punished

> him for it. You see, I got to play with his wife too, she was so much more fun to break. It's really a

> shame that Felix wants that blonde for himself. Her skin looks so soft, and her voice..."

Rebecca: If you had replaced the entire fic with 'Harry and Fleur are horny and everyone is horny for them' it wouldn't make any difference

Tsuneo: And it would be less painful to read as well

> Anna shuddered again.

Rick: She's just buffering

> **77%

Dan: Number goes up.

Rebecca: Sadly for Anna, that's the only thing.

> "He has so many plans for your friend. I told to just take her, but no, Felix is such a romantic.

Rick: So romantic that he gassed her.

> He

> won't force himself on her, he wants her to want him. But of course, that's never going to happen."

Rebecca: The sadistic murderer is more realistic than our villain.

> She chuckled. "Not without playing with her mind a bit. A modified doll implant and she'll be riding

> his cock like it was made for her pussy.

Tsuneo: She'll be using his anatomy for its evolutionary purposes

> I was impressed, really."

Dan: So impressed that she had to exposit about it

> **86%

> "Maybe a little taste." The nails on her hand sharpened, the edges rivalling razor blades.

Rick: Sure it's impressive, but it's really inconvenient when you're trying to arrange a cheese platter.

> Anna

> trailed her index slowly across his chest, drawing a paper-thin line of red, which began to ooze red.

Tsuneo: The red line was red

> The sadistic woman leaned down, licking the blood in one long motion. She sat back up, the heat

> between her legs

Dan: She was sitting on the electric blanket

> rivalled only by the heat of his blood on her lips. She used her finger to rub up

> some more and licked them clean,

Rick: [Anna] Hmm, yes; iron, plasma, notes of... Grape? What have you been eating?

> seemingly uncaring that her nail was sharp and risked cutting her tongue.

Tsuneo: She was really, really stupid

Rebecca: So like everyone else in this fic then

> "Hmm," Anna savoured the taste. "I'm going to have to thank Felix. I haven't had one as delicious as

> you in decades."

Dan: He tastes like skunky beer and desperation

> She rocked herself back and forth, picking up the pace and releasing little gasps every so often.

Rebecca: But soon the mechanical bull threw her off.

> Even if he weren't hard, she could feel the size of him through his pants.

Rick: Wait, that's just his Pez dispenser. Never mind.

> "You're bigger than Romano,"

Rick: But not bigger than the biggest ball of twine in Minnesota

> she said breathlessly. "Maybe I'll let you feel what it's like to be inside of me

> before I kill you. You'd like that, wouldn't you? You can tell me how it compares to blondies."

> **100%

Tsuneo: Now patching.

Dan: [Harry] D'oh!

> "I think I'll pass."

> It happened far too quickly for his would-be torturer to react.

Rebecca: But then again, she seems to have the situational awareness of a stunned rock.

> Within a second, Harry's mantis blade

> was released from his forearm and shoved straight through her torso.

Rebecca: Premature impalement

Dan: It happens to everyone

> She gasped and he could see the strain on her face as pain wracked her body.

Dan: See, this is what's going to happen if you don't vet your killers.

Rebecca: Yep, always vet your killers.

Dan: Always.

- > She coughed and Harry felt specks of blood hit his

- > face, before she trembled and looked down, her eyes wide as she saw the source of her agony.

Tsuneo: It took a while for it to register

- > With a snarl on his face, he twisted his arm, and with it, the blade. Her eyes scrunched close, and

- > she looked sick from the pain.

Rick: It turns out that getting impaled hurts. Who would have thought?

- > When she opened them again, there was a glint of determination that was not present before.

Dan: I'm going to give her a lot of credit given that she's got a blade going straight through her chest

Rick: It's the little things that get her

- > With a desperate effort, she tried to use her sharpened nails to claw his throat, but he leaned his

- > head back, causing her to miss.

Rebecca: She missed stabbing him in the head when he is literally under her

Dan: Again, blade through the chest

Rebecca: Okay, I will give her that much

- > She yelled and pushed off his chest, the mantis blade slid out of her with a sickening shlick sound.

Rick: Felix is going to be so mad that she's leaking all over his floor.

- > Her own enhancements were the only reason she was still alive.

Tsuneo: And people thought getting an artificial appendix was a waste of money

- > Before she could orientate herself, Harry was already lunging for her. He aimed low, catching her off

- > guard, his blade sliced into her bare thigh and elicited a yelp from her as her leg lost strength,

- > bringing her down to her knee.

Dan: She has a bad leg. Also a huge gaping hole in her chest, but it's the leg that get her

- > She swung, her claws caught his upper arm, cutting through his sleeve, but only grazing his skin.

- > Even so, her nails were diamond sharp. Four cuts in his arm began to soak his sleeve.

Tsuneo: Harry's beginning to regret renting that tux.

- > He didn't let

- > it slow him down, her swing for his arm had left her side wide open. His left arm's mantis blade

- > rapidly unfolded

Rebecca: Harry has flat-pack cyberware

- > and began its path to ending their fight.

- > Her eyes widened in fright, she tried to avoid it in the only way possible. By falling back and

- > hopefully turning an impalement into a slash. It worked, his blade sliced across her stomach, cutting

- > a half inch deep gash across its length.

Rebecca: Which is really only a lateral move at best

> Harry didn't stop there, his right hand's blade was already coming around, its tip pointed downwards
> in an overarm swing. As soon as Anna's back hit the floor, the blade entered her right shoulder,
> going clean through her bone and fixing her to the floor.

Rick: And he just had the floorboards done! Felix is going to be mad.

> But while she was stuck in place, so was he.

Rick: In truth, this plan seemed a lot better in his head

> She arched her back and screamed her rage as her remaining hand aimed for his throat again.

> To her utmost shock, Harry caught a hold of her wrist, her mind raced as she tried to figure out how
> he could have done so that quickly.

Tsuneo: She's been impaled multiple times and that's what's bothering her?

Rebecca: It's the little things that trip you up

> That's when she saw his blade, which he'd used to impale her
> shoulder, had detached from his forearm, freeing his hand.

Rick: Harry's a big fan of Snap-On Tools

> Harry pulled her wrist, extending her arm. He sliced upwards with his remaining blade and went
> through the weak point at the joint of her elbow, right behind the hidden mechanisms which
> operated her bladed nails and plated forearms.

Dan: And straight to the gooey caramel centre.

> Her amputate limb was tossed without a care to the side.

Rebecca: Aww come on, he can recycle that.

Tsuneo: That's just wasteful

> Harry had no mercy, even in his 'unconscious' state, he could hear what she said, feel what she
> planned on doing to him.

Dan: She was going to go clothes shopping and ask him how every outfit looked

> He grabbed her by the throat and pushed her down. With his free hand, he
> jacked into the raging Anna, running an interrogation daemon over the thin cable to the small socket
> behind her neck.

Rick: [Harry] Hold on, wait... I'm USB-C, and that's a micro-USB port. You don't have an adaptor, do you?

> "Now, you're going to answer me, truthfully. Lie and I'll gut you right here.

Rebecca: We're already well past that point

> Where did you take Fleur?"

Tsuneo: [Anna] I'm right here, I didn't take her anywhere.

> His words were calm, steady, not even the slightest bit winded. He spoke with an iciness
> that contrasted with his breath which felt hot against her now clammy face. She was losing blood,
> and fast.

Rick: And you know Felix was going to charge her for cleaning.

> "Ple—ase." She rasped out.

> "Where!"

> "Th—ey'll ki—"

> "I'll kill you! Where!" Harry growled and tightened his grip before easing it. She coughed more blood.

> "Heywoo-d... Cathr—al."

Dan: Heywood Cathral! I should have known!

> The interrogation program gave him the green light. She was telling him the truth. Harry removed
> the jack.

> "You're being honest. Thank you."

Rebecca: He brutally stabbed her multiple times, but at least he's polite about it

> "Pl—ase—"

> He retracted the blade, and she fell to the side, blood pooling beneath her. Harry stood, his jacket
> and shirt hung open, stained red along with his chest.

Rick: The dry cleaner was going to have a fit.

> The thin cut on his chest stung like a bitch.

Tsuneo: You've run her through and taken off her arm. You'll live.

> With a stone-cold glint in his eyes, he crouched, fixing his gaze on her wheezing form

> "Pl—ase," she begged again.

> "This is Night City," he said as nonchalantly as if he were merely talking about the weather. "Ain't no
> place where karma's a bigger bitch."

Tsuneo: Our hero, ladies and gentlemen

> Moments later, Harry closed the door behind him and walked through Felix's empty apartment,

Rebecca: Apparently the entire party had up and left while they weren't looking

> leaving behind the cold, lifeless eyes of Anna Ortega, the red of her dress blending with the red of
> her lifeblood pooling from her abdomen and her sliced throat.

Rick: Well, he'd been meaning to redecorate anyway.

> He received the ping as soon as he'd left the communications dead zone and watched as dozens of
> notifications from Hamlet all came through at once.

Dan: Just like turning on your phone after a long flight, only with slightly less desperation

> "Hermione," he called out through the Net

Rick: Wait, Hamlet is Hermione? And here was me thinking it was Pius Thicknesse all along

> as he zipped up the jacket he'd grabbed from Felix's closet.

Tsuneo: Conveniently, they are both exactly the same size.

> It would not be in his best interest to get stopped because he was covered in blood.

Dan: He was basically fine with the untreated wound

> "Harry! Oh my god, are you alright!? I've bee—"

> "Hermione!"

> "..."

> "How long does the surgery for a doll implant take?"

Tsuneo: Questions you definitely need context for

> "Wha— A doll implant? Why— Fleur. Oh. Shit. Wait."

> Harry entered the living room of Felix's apartment and found a man chilling on the sofa, watching
> TV. He had a gun which was left on the small side table.

Dan: Yep, I need that when I'm watching the playoffs too.

> Felix's room must have been

> soundproofed, preventing the man from hearing the commotion. Harry approached with silent

> footsteps masked by the TV's noise.

Rebecca: If this is meant to be a security guard, then he basically deserves to be splugged by mantis blades.

> At the last second, the man seemed to sense something was wrong, he tried to stand and reach for
> his gun. But the blade travelling through the air was already too close. He sputtered and let out a
> wet gurgling sound as his hands grabbed at his own throat. Blood spilling between his fingers. He
> stared at Harry in an expression of pure shock and horror before he fell.

Dan: I was just here... to clean... the carpets...

> "Six hours. The surgery itself takes at least three, but there's a primer step."

> "The stuff that helps things show up on brain scans?"

Tsuneo: [Hamlet] Sure, if you want to get technical about it.

> "Mhm"

> "Perfect, then I have time."

Rebecca: I mean, she didn't say how much time or anything. For all you know, it could only take a couple of minutes

> Without a care for the dying man. Harry picked up the handgun from the side table. The henchman's
> fading eyes tracked the movement.

Dan: [Guard] I left the safety on.

Rick: [Harry] Thanks.

> "I'm sorry," said Harry with no emotion, before pointing the gun at the man's face. Right before firing,
> he flicked his eyes towards the TV, mentally raising its volume to cover the coming gunshot.

> A single bullet, drowned in the cheers of Foreign League football.

Dan: He died as he lived, not understanding the rules of soccer.

> "Send me everything you can find on Heywood's--"

> "Cathedral," She cut him off. "I know.

Tsuneo: [Hamlet] I'm the actually smart one, remember?

> I've been tracking them. It's what I was trying to say when you interrupted me."

> "You're really going after her, aren't you?" she asked after a short pause.

Rebecca: [Harry] Nah, I thought I'd head back to my apartment, kick back, catch up on my shows...

> Harry remained silent as he entered the elevator and hit the button for the ground floor.

> Hermione sighed. "At least get some help. Heywood's Valentinos territory. Call V."

Tsuneo: Huh, I genuinely did not see that coming. I thought it'd be another Harry Potter character.

Rick: You mean like Kingsley Shacklebolt?

Tsuneo: Sure, let's go with that.

> "V's got enough on her plate,"

Rebecca: What with trying to blow up parliament while making allusions to musical theatre

> countered Harry stubbornly as he stepped into the elevator. He

> wasn't lying, he'd seen the news earlier, and he knew V was involved in something big.

Dan: She was working on the balloons for the Macy's thanksgiving day parade.

> "Harry. Please. If you don't, I will."

> "Fine."

Rebecca: She's not going to stop him from going off on a suicidal vengeful rampage, she's just going to make sure he doesn't do it alone.

> Valerie, or V, as everyone knew her, nursed a killer headache, courtesy of the rockstar, slash,

> anarchist who now resided in her head.

Rick: And who was loudly demanding room service.

> She raised her ice-cold whisky tumbler and held the glass to her temple.

Dan: Whiskey. You're doing it wrong.

> The lights of Night City filled the world from her favourite spot on the roof of Viktor

> and Misty's shop.

Rick: Its where she works when she's not out on the foggy moors with her cat

> She ran her free hand through her shoulder length dark hair and closed her violet eyes, her brow

> furrowed as she dealt with throb in her skull.

Tsuneo: Johnny Silverhand is like having a hangover that won't go away.

> The ringtone of an incoming call echoed through her weary mind, startling her.

> "Fuck!"

> There was nothing worse when you had a headache than that incessant sound.

Tsuneo: Although after thirty seconds of talking to Johnny she was willing to offer a second opinion

> She was tempted to answer solely to tell whoever it was to choke on a fat one. Until she saw the
> caller ID. He never called unless he was up shit's creek.

Rick: Damn you, Jake Armitage. What have you gotten yourself into this time?

> "Harry?"

> "Hey, V. I need your help."

Rebecca: And so does the prince of Nigeria. Your point?

> END CHAPTER TWO

> Chapter 3: Two Mercs Walk into a Church

Rebecca: I already know the punchline to this one

> Special thanks to:

> doenerkint, author of Hiding and Masking

> Tahsky

> DarknessEnthroned author of A Cadmean Victory Remastered.

Tsuneo: And Capcom all staff

> Without their help, you'd likely be unable to make sense of my ramblings

Rebecca: They failed.

> "Speech done mentally through the net"

> "Speech"

> 'Thoughts'

> Two Mercs Walk into a Church

Dan: The preacher tells them that absolution can only go so far.

> Desamparados Cathedral, Vista del Rey, Heywood, Night City

Rick: Located between Los Santos and Santo Ileso

> 21:42

> Harry adjusted the suppressed D5 rifle hidden beneath his jacket

Rebecca: He's hiding an assault rifle under his jacket. That must be really bulky outfit he's wearing

> as he walked through the crowded sidewalk and checked the time.

Tsuneo: Turns out it was 9:42 at night. Who would have thought.

> He frowned; it had taken longer that he'd liked for V to arrive with his gear.

Rick: Presumably by that we mean his wand, broomstick, invisibility cloak and potions.

Dan: That assumes Harry Potter content fic in this Harry Potter fic.

Rick: Silly me.

> Hermione did say the surgery required preparation

Tsuneo: Mostly filling in insurance forms.

> but that wouldn't stop Felix from getting impatient.

Rebecca: And to think, a book of crossword puzzles could solve everything.

> He hated the wait but going in with nothing but a handgun and no backup would have
> been absolute suicide.

Rebecca: Harry couldn't just assume that the bad guys would patiently let him stab them multiple times

> He was just glad that V had agreed to help out.

Tsuneo: He's lucky he caught her between raiding gang hideouts and going out of her head.

> She always did come through when he really needed her.

> "We doing this the quiet way, or the easy way?" asked V as the pair walked the last stretch after
> leaving the car parked a road away. He glanced at the bluenette with her messy bob cut walking at
> his side.

Rick: V apparently took time out to restyle her hair before coming in for this urgent rescue

> V looked excited at the oncoming assault, there was a gleam to her grey eyes that only
> someone born into this line of work had.

Tsuneo: A look that said she was going to loot the bodies

> Harry frowned for a second as they neared their target. Though it was well into the dark of night, the
> City never was. The surrounding neon signs, the lit windows and passing cars illuminated the large
> building with the old Gothic architecture.

Rick: I can only assume that Batman is lurking on the roof

> It was a stark contrast, an old sacred piece of history in a city of the corrupt present.

Dan: Naturally every inch of its walls is covered with graffiti.

> At one stage, it had served its purpose as a house of worship but these
> days it catered only to gangsters.

Rebecca: I am just surprised that it hasn't been turned into a club yet

> The Valentinos had claimed it for themselves, spreading their
> roots from within to the rest of Heywood for years.

Rick: Valentinos are an invasive pest species

> "Sneaking in's one thing, we don't know what state Fleur's in.

Dan: Quick cut to Fleur playing cards with the bad guys

> We'd be fucked if we need to carry her and fight our way out.

Tsuneo: [V] I didn't take those talents.

> Besides, it's a cathedral, not an office building.

Rebecca: Cathedrals rarely have activity-based workplaces

> Take the guys out on the outside silently, then—"

> "Front door? It'll be bloody." V practically buzzed with excitement.

Dan: She already had a pre-emptive murder boner.

> "Front door, kill anything that moves." It was ruthless, but he was in a supremely pissed off mood

> and every minute wasted was a minute Fleur didn't have.

Tsuneo: Just assume everyone in there has done something bad and deserves to die and move on

> He stopped at the corner of a nearby

> apartment block. He pulled something small from his pocket and held it in his palm.

Dan: He has some gum on him at all times. It relaxes him before his murder sprees.

> V noticed it was a mini drone, it was barely big enough to encompass his hand.

Rick: Coming from his pocket, it was plastered with burger wrappers and lint.

> It turned about and with a near ghostly quiet hum, lifted off.

> "We need eyes inside. Hermione," he said to the drone.

Rebecca: In order to preserve operational security they say each other's real names as often as possible

> It flew close to V's face as the notification to connect to it appeared in both their fields of vision.

Dan: [V] Hold on, try again. My spam filter killed the request.

> "Hey V," they heard the tell-tale British accent of their netrunner in their minds as they accepted.

> "Hey babe," greeted the merc flirtatiously, drawing a giggle out of the drone. V could have sworn the
> little bot shook with the sound.

Tsuneo: V had realised that she was working with a pair of utter morons

> "You know I don't swing that way."

> V shrugged with a grin. "That's because you still haven't had a piece of this. Don't know what you're
> missing out on here."

Tsuneo: We'll just add V to the list of people in this fic who are dumb and horny

Rebecca: I just assumed it in the first place

Tsuneo: Entirely fair

> "Sure, I do but let's table that conversation for another day." Hermione could sense Harry's irritation.

Dan: [Harry] Do you two mind? This is about me getting laid, not you.

> The call suddenly switched to video feed and both Harry and V could see through the drone's eyes.

Rick: [V] Oh, wow. My pores are huge.

> It flew up and began its aerial reconnaissance of the cathedral and its surroundings. A tall fence
> which had replaced what used to be a wall surrounded the plot.

> There weren't many people outside of the building, overall. It was fairly quiet. A few pimped-out low-
> riders

Dan: Glad to see that the Valentinos are very nuanced and restrained in their depiction and not lazy ethnic stereotypes in the slightest

> and flashy chopper style bikes

Rick: And bike-style choppers

> were parked out front and around the back, the majority of
> gang members hung out around their rides, smoking while music blared from one of the cars' open
> trunks.

Tsuneo: They're hoping if they get a few more speakers that a rave will spontaneously form.

> The space was well illuminated with lights fixed to the building's walls.

> The drone made quick work of tagging each person with a 'last known location' marker

Rick: This guy's last known location was the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Huh.

> and scanned them for weapons. To their lack of surprise, it was all of them.

Tsuneo: Everyone in the gang of blood-soaked killers had a gun.

> With the outside surveyed, Hermione
> manoeuvred the little drone into the cathedral through an open window.

> The inside was a mix of a house of worship and whatever else the Valentinos needed it to be.

Rick: It also had a ping-pong table, a metal press, an extensive library, a hazardous waste disposal furnace and grove of orange trees.

> There
> were church pews arranged haphazardly with most of the open area filled by several scattered
> tables and couches and with gang members either lazing about, fiddling with whatever weapon they
> were trying to mod or just going about their business.

Dan: Two of them were engaged in a deep debate about the association of beauty with morality.

> Everyone present was clearly a member, with their pre-collapse era Chicano style,

Tsuneo: A description that we have no context for whatsoever

> all flashy gold cyberware and jewellery to boot.

Rick: As well as newsie caps, yellow workboots and giant spiked shoulder pads.

> That's the thing with having a distinct style, it helped to create a
> sense of camaraderie,

Dan: You don't shank someone for showing up in the same outfit, for example.

> but it also came with the downside of being easily identifiable. Something the
> gangs of Night City had in common, they were about as inconspicuous as a twitchy dick in a
> miniskirt.

Rebecca: A comparison that both JK Rowling and CD Projekt Red endorse.

> "Hermione," Harry voiced, "can you take control of the alarms, cameras, lights?"

> "Get the surroundings as well, while you're at it," added V

Tsuneo: While you're at it, why not ask her to balance your accounts and call you a pizza?

> as she slid a pair of jet-black knives from her belt.

Dan: V spends more on her knives than on her haircut.

Rick: Those knives are her haircut.

> Her jacket which was bright yellow began to darken until it matched her blades.

Rebecca: She at least can accessorise

> "It's Heywood, not Kang Tao... Give me a minute," Hermione noted with a smug tone to her voice.

> V laughed. "Never change"

Dan: Was that supposed to be funny?

Rick: I can only assume so

> Harry and V disconnected from the drone's feed and blended into the pedestrians still walking
> about. One thing you could count on with Night City, there was always a crowd.

Rebecca: Although most of them weren't badly hiding assault rifles. [Pause] Most of them.

> The gate to the cathedral was closed but it wasn't left unguarded. A camera was mounted right
> above it along with a goon just leaning up against the wall.

Dan: I can tell that this guy is going to have a long and happy life

> "I'm in, lights out in ten seconds," said Hermione seriously.

> "Let me." V sounded excited as she zeroed in on the unaware criminal.

> "Have at it," Harry shrugged.

> An instant later, the lights in the block went out, leaving only the headlights of passing vehicles.

Rebecca: Alerting all the Valentinos to the imminent attack.

> Most of the crowd walking came to a sudden stop, as if the switch was flipped on them too. The few
> who kept walking collided into others,

Tsuneo: Apparently they were now all in pitch blackness with no lighting at all

> resulting in some stumbling and curses being thrown around.

> Harry's eyes had already adjusted to the dim light, and he could see the guard who'd been lazing
> before was now looking around in alert confusion.

Rick: You could tell he was alerted because there was an exclamation mark over his head

> "Open the gate," instructed Harry mentally to Hermione as they approached.

> The sound of metal sliding on railings had the guard turn around, likely expecting another Valentinos member.

Rick: {Valentino} Well hey, that was quick. Hadn't even called the electrician.

> He never saw V's knife until the hilt stuck out of his neck.

Dan: Oh hey. It's a knife sticking out of my neck. Wonder how that got there?

> She twisted the blade for good

> measure and grabbed a hold of his now limp body, using her momentum to push him through the
> open gate, into the courtyard. The gate immediately closed right as Harry stepped through, already
> unfolding his rifle's stock.

Rebecca: It folded down to a convenient pocket size

> V dropped the body against the wall, out of sight should the lights turn back on. She stood with her
> knives out

Tsuneo: Ready to serve tea to Christopher Plummer.

> at her side in a reverse grip.

> "Come on," said Harry, his eyes on the grouping of gang members who were busy turning on their
> car headlights to see. They'd neglected to turn off the music, which only served to deafen to their
> mounting doom.

Dan: In short, they were very, very stupid

> "Leave the two at the back to me." V separated from him, moving like a ghost in the night's cover.

Rick: [Harry] Great. I'll get the other thirty.

> Harry wasn't as big on the whole sneaking thing. His idea of clandestine was to slap a suppressor
> on it and kill everyone

Rebecca: Which makes the suppressor redundant when you think about it

> before they could get a shot off, and that's exactly what he did.

Tsuneo: He planned to kill everyone so he killed everyone

> Without stopping, he raised his rifle, rested the stock against his shoulder and fired at the nearest
> Valentino. The poor guy had just climbed out of his car after flipping the lights on.

Rick: Did I park too close to the line? Will the guy next to me be able to get out? I should check and –
aaaah!

> He'd barely stood

> up when the whistling bullet, masked by the loud music, ripped through his skull in a shower of
> blood and bone..

Rebecca: I see the fic is as subtle in its descriptions of violence as it is with the flirting

> Blood sprayed as his body landed on its side; the other Valentino's took barely a handful of seconds

> to process it all before they realised they were under attack.

Rick: Hey, someone just shot Bob in the head.

Dan: Huh, they did too.

Rick: Do you think that we might be under attack?

Dan: Could be.

> But it was not fast enough, Harry lined

> up target after target, a single shot each from his rifle tore through skulls and chests.

Tsuneo: [Valentino] Aim assist! No fair!

> The only two

> which would have been out of his ability to kill in time were already dead with V standing over their

> still forms as she wiped the blood from her knives.

Tsuneo: You just bloodily murdered a bunch of guys, but there's no need to be messy about it.

> "We still in the clear?" Harry asked Hermione, knowing she still had the drones feed of the inside.

Dan: [Hermione] Beats me, I was watching the cricket.

> "You're clear," came the answer through their com-link.

> "Front door?" prompted V excitedly when she saw him remove a grenade from within his jacket.

> "M-hm" he nodded.

Rebecca: They're remarkably casual about the massacre

> "You know, times like these, you get real quiet..."

Rick: V on the other hand likes to sing show tunes as she murders. Helps take the edge off.

> "Keeps me from getting distracted." He twisted the cap on the grenade to set it to remote detonation

> before sticking it to the cathedral's large door.

> He grabbed another, this one a cluster flashbang. "Flash shields," he said, but it wasn't necessary

> since V had done so the second she'd seen what was in his hand.

Rebecca: [V] Yeah, but I'm not sure how your Spongebob plushie is going to help.

> He glanced at her in one final

> check, his eyes glowing a pale blue, the same as V's.

Rick: That means his Bluetooth is enabled

> Without another word, he took a position to the door's left while V mirrored him on the opposite side,

> one of her knives was replaced by a beefy handgun.

Dan: Her handgun was made out of a slab of meat.

> He met her eyes and she nodded, so he

> triggered the explosive on the door. It was blown to pieces, some bits still hung on by the hinges.

Rick: Hey! That was heritage listed!

> In

> the dust and chaos, he threw in the flashbang. A second later he breached the open doorway with V

> right as the room filled with blinding white flashes.

Rebecca: They'd walked into the Valentinos' disco

> The people inside were either dazed from the initial blast, yelling out, or covering their eyes in pain.

Dan: One guy managed to sleep through the whole thing.

> Once Harry and V opened fire, the handful who were more resilient tried to retaliate. Harry couldn't
> move as fast as V, her lithe form had gotten behind one of the men within an instant,

Tsuneo: She is a world champion at musical chairs.

> her arm around his torso with her blade impaled in his chest.

Rick: Oh hey, there's a knife in me too

Dan: You too bro? That's harsh.

> She used it as leverage to hold the gasping

> man as a meat shield, she fired over his shoulder, the bullets tore through a girl's throat as she tried
> to reach for her gun.

Rebecca: Good to know it's an equal-opportunity massacre.

> While V moved around the room, killing as she did. Harry was like a stone bastion; he used the
> concrete pillars for cover

Tsuneo: He was like a stone statue in as far as he used cover

> as round upon round was fired from his rifle. One man tried to rush him,

> only to stumble when Harry bashed him in the face with the butt of his rifle, before splattering his
> brains across the floor with a single shot to the side of his skull.

Dan: [Valentino] In retrospect, I could have thought that through better.

> The interaction did leave him open, he looked up right as an enraged gang member roared

Rick: So Harry hit him with Tranquilising Shot

> with a

> shotgun pointed at him. Harry was already moving to the nearest pillar and had just barely made it
> when the bang of the double-barrel blew bits of concrete and stone dust into the air.

Dan: The guy had mistook Harry for a Wascally Wabbit

> A whistle and squelch were followed by the sound of a body collapsing. Harry checked through the
> missing piece of the pillar

Tsuneo: He blasted a hole through a concrete pillar and somehow Harry survived?

Rebecca: Sure, it just wasn't the pillar he was hiding behind. Guy was a lousy shot.

> and saw V with her hand held out, the knife in the gang member's neck

> vibrating before flying back for V to catch.

> "You're bleeding," commented V, pointing to his left arm with her knife.

> Harry inspected it and found a small tear in his jacket sleeve. "Hm..."

Rebecca: [Harry] And that was my favourite arm.

> "Want to take care of that first?" V held out a small haemostatic spray cannister.

> "Thanks, you mind?" he let her deal with his cut, and suppressed a wince as she did.

Rick: Nice of the Valentinos to pause for their banter.

Dan: They may be murderous thugs, but they're very considerate.

> "We should keep going." He tested his arm. "Forty feet of stone and dirt should've stopped any
> sound from travelling,

Dan: [Harry] And I'm pretty sure my grenade took out the doorbell.

> but odds are one of these choombs got a message out."

Rebecca: Well maybe if you hadn't rushed in there all gung-ho and just mowed down everyone...

> "Hmm. How do we get in? Don't see any signs pointing to 'secret underground tunnel' around here."

Rick: Time to check for secret doors then

> Harry walked over to a corner near the back wall where a statue of the Santa Madre

Dan: The patron saint of easily murdered goons

> stood in an alcove, with her arms open and her palms up.

Rebecca: [Santa Madre] Hey. Lay some skin on me.

> He put his rifle down and felt around the side of the statue.

> "Padre's info showed the entrance was over here— Ah, found it. You know, ten years of taking gigs,
> and I still come across some weird shit."

Dan: Like the time that he came across that talking cat that sounded like R. Lee Emery.

> "That's NC for yer', the old man must've charged a pretty eddie for deets like these," said V with
> amusement

Rebecca: [V] Hah hah, he took you for a chump.

> as she watched the statue's podium begin to rotate with a rumble of stone grinding on stone.

Tsuneo: These guys are gang members, not supervillains. You don't need to go that far, fic.

> Once it had turned around completely, a dark stairway leading down was revealed with a
> reinforced door at the bottom with a digital lock.

Rebecca: Presumably there was a pit trap and swinging axes behind that

Rick: It's about where we're at

> "Cost me everything I'd be making on tonight's gig and more..." grumbled the green-eyed merc.

Tsuneo: Good thing that he and Fleur have such a well-developed relationship.

Rebecca: Lifelong friends and all that

> "Ouch, think we'll find Dracula down there?"

Rick: Or at least Ed Wood's dentist.

> deadpanned the smaller merc, drawing a shiver out of Harry.

> "Don't even joke about that."

Rick: [Harry] Ran across Dracula back in '74. Had a hideout in a Biotechnica facility, living off cloned blood. It was a whole thing.

> His mood seemed to be improving now that they were making actual progress towards rescuing Fleur.

Rebecca: He's still irritable and murderous, but at least he's happier about it

> "What? Scared?" she laughed right as their little drone flew down the stairs and jacked itself into the door console.

> He didn't look at her as he replied, instead kept an eye out for any surprises. "No, but I met this crazy babe once. Red eyes, pale as fuck, had her teeth changed. Even went and called herself Vampirella."

Rick: Hung around in a graveyard with Tor Johnson and everything

Dan: That's two Plan Nine jokes in quick succession

Rick: I worry

> "You're fucking with me. For real?" V coughed out incredulously.

> "Have I ever lied to you?" asked Harry simply, now facing her.

Rebecca: [V] Well, there was that thing about the Nigerian astronaut.

Tsuneo: [Harry] Hey, I lost my shirt on that too you know.

> She stopped what she was doing and turned to meet his eyes challengingly. "I don't know. Have you?"

> They stared at each other in silence, until V's lips quirked up in amusement.

Tsuneo: Weren't you two racing against the clock to save someone's life?

Rebecca: There's always time for painfully unfunny banter

> "Fine, fine, so, what happened next?" she prodded eagerly.

> He shrugged. "Had a few drinks, ended up at my place.

Dan: You invited her into your house? Bad move

Rick: Better have your holy water handy

> Made sure to keep her mouth above the waistline."

> V snickered. "Smart move, can't think it'd be a good idea to let a chick with fangs and a vampire fetish put her mouth anywhere near there."

Rebecca: Remind me, why are we meant to like this version of Harry?

Tsuneo: I can't think of a single good reason at all

> "She still bit me too." He showed her his collar bone, where two small circular scars could be seen.

> "You can't say it was unexpected," she teased him with a smirk.

Dan: Meanwhile, Hermione has cracked the door, tapped into the underground lair's cameras, tagged all the goons down there, fried their cyberware with a spreading contagion hack, separated Fleur from their network and called a cab.

> "So... This corpo chick," V continued, heading into a different topic. "One we're saving."

Rick: Wait, we are? I thought we were here for the dumb vampire jokes

> "Fleur," Harry answered.

> "Fleur," V nodded, tasting the way the name rolled on her tongue, "Lots of work getting her. I know
> she's your client and all, and the whole 'joytoy mind jacking' shit's fucked up,

Tsuneo: Say, where are you up to in Judy's personal storyline anyway?

> but I mean, come on, facin' down an entire gang to get her back.

Dan: What can he say? He found herself with a quiet Saturday night.

> Most men in our line of work would'a cut their losses,
> and I know you ain't 'most'," she added defensively,

Rick: He's not like the other mercenaries

> "but still doesn't change it much."

> "What's your point?" He frowned, meeting her eyes.

Rebecca: [V] All I'm saying is there better be a bonus in it for you.

> "You and her together? Am I third wheeling Night City's latest hot gossip?" inquired V curiously,
> twirling one of her blades.

Tsuneo: Something Harry had to consider before answering.

> Harry paused with a contemplating expression, before shrugging. "Hmm, yes, no, who knows."

Dan: [V] Okay, I'm going to ask you again and you either give me a straight answer or I stab you.

> "You are interested in her though?"

Rebecca: No, that chapter of painful flirting was entirely platonic

> He thought of the stunning woman he'd spent so many hours around in the last few days. She was
> an enigma, pure corpo on the surface,

Rick: She'd been fired while in a bar and shackled up with her best friend Jackie like every other corpo

> but with a taste of that rebellion which came so readily to streetkids like himself.

Dan: Rebellious in that she adheres to her wealthy corporate lifestyle.

> Prideful, but wise enough to defer another when she's lacking in expertise.

Tsuneo: Its like she's a bare minimum functioning adult.

> As beautiful and delicate as her namesake, but with thorns prickly enough to draw blood.

Rebecca: She was a collection of entirely informed traits

> He could go on and on... "I'm interested, won't deny that. She's... intriguing."

Dan: Or, to put it another way. [Coughs] I like the way she look so pretty!

> "If by intriguing, you mean sex on legs with more than two brain cells and an accent that has all of

> your blood go south, then yes, she's 'intriguing'," Interrupted Hermione.

Tsuneo: We haven't mentioned how hot Fleur is for whole minutes. Need to fix that.

> V grinned like the cat that caught the canary. "You alright there, Hermione?"

Rebecca: [Hermione] After listening to you two?

> Sounds like she gets you all hot and bothered too,

Rick: Wait, that's just the chilli dog he scarfed down on the way here

> something I should know?"

> "Please... Blondie could seduce her way through a nunnery. Tall, dark and gloomy over there never
> stood a chance."

Rebecca: It's not saying much for Fleur given that Harry was basically drooling all over her at first sight

> Harry spluttered.

> "I'm kinda jealous now, defos need to meet this chick," chuckled V good-naturedly,

Dan: I mean, that is kind of the point of this operation.

> glancing down the stairs towards the door as the drone continued its work.

> "Ah ah, hands off," scolded Harry.

Rebecca: [Harry] My shiny thing. I found her first.

> V pouted. "Killjoy."

> "Hopefully, you'll get your chance pretty soon," said Hermione as the access panel turned green.

Rebecca: Haha, we have such fun. [Pause] You know, we probably should get back to saving her life.

> V took a small mask from her jacket pocket and handed it to Harry, before placing another on
> herself. It was a simple looking thing, fitting over his nose and mouth. He'd asked V to bring them
> since he'd already been gassed once,

Tsuneo: Once tonight, although you get the feeling it was far from his first time.

> and while he was now immune to that specific mix,

Dan: But if they added even a hint of pine then he'd be in real trouble.

> he wouldn't put it past the scumbag to try again.

> Harry and V took their breaching positions again. V looked at Harry and she spoke with her voice
> slightly muffled by the mask. "So, ten eddies they're waiting for us."

Rick: Fifty says they have a party clown.

> "That's a suckers bet, but fuck it, sure... Have to make my money back somehow."

> V just smirked and shrugged. "Come on, open it."

Tsuneo: Save us from the badly written banter with some badly written violence.

> Harry hit the command on the access panel with his elbow, the door had barely slid open when
> gunfire hailed through.

Rick: To be fair, that's a normal reaction to Harry in this fic.

> Moments before

> Fleur Delacour felt like death. There was something about waking up after being knocked out which
> left your head throbbing.

Dan: She found it to be mildly unpleasant

> It wasn't like sleep, you didn't feel rested, the opposite really. With an
> unprepared effort, she slowly opened her eyes and then immediately squeezed them shut as the
> bright light of an overhead surgical lamp pointed directly at her face with enough lumens to give her
> a sunburn.

Tsuneo: She was beginning to regret the 'pale blonde' thing now.

> A second attempt, albeit slower and with a few strained blinks, allowed her to see clearly.
> There was a steel desk in one corner with two monitors, one was running the N54 News,

Rebecca [Fleur]: How much time has passed? What's going on? Maybe I can get some clue from the news...

Dan: In other news, the last Koala in Australia has just died again-

Rebecca [Fleur]: Oh god damn it!

> and the other had what looked to be the schematics of a cybernetic implant.

Rick: It was a penile implant. She was suddenly very concerned.

> She tried to lift her hand to wipe her eyes and found she couldn't move. Panic set in when she
> found her arms and legs strapped down, in what she realised was a ripperdoc's operating chair.

Dan: Not any other sort of chair, that one specific type of chair

Rick: She's a chair expert, no doubt

> She
> tried to move instinctively, tugging at her restraints, but they wouldn't budge. She was terrified, she
> could feel her heart beating in her throat.

Rick: And her kidneys working overtime.

> She opened her mouth, intending to call out for help but caught herself.

> 'Breathe, Fleur, breathe,'

Rebecca: Her daily reminder

> she told herself as she swallowed, squeezing her eyes closed while she
> brought her breathing and rampaging heart rate under control.

Dan: [Fleur] I am fine. Serenity now!

> 'Look around, find something, anything.'

Rick: She found an empty soft drink can, a pencil and a spinosaurus skull. Does that help?

> Her eyes opened again, and instead of confusion, there was determination. She inspected herself

> first.

Rebecca: She opened her character page and accessed her inventory

> She felt a wave of pure relief wash over her when she found herself still clothed in her dress,
> and her underwear was in place.

Dan: Not for the first time she was thankful for her choice of granny panties.

> Rubbing her thighs together, she thanked her lucky stars that Felix
> hadn't taken any liberties while she was unconscious,

Rick: Unless they'd used her for some Weekend at Bernie's-style antics

> at least none she could feel, she trailed off with a sick feeling.

> Fleur's eyes widened in shock when she felt the knife still strapped to her inner thigh. That
> confirmed it, Felix hadn't done anything to her.

Tsuneo: Not even check her for weapons because he was extremely stupid.

> Harry's gift would've been taken away. Harry?

Rick: Harry.

Dan [Nods]: Harry.

> 'Harry!' Worry flooded her system, washing away her fear of her own perilous situation.

Rebecca: If anything had happened to him, she'd have to... I don't know, find some other low-rent mercenary in a dive bar or something.

> She tried to
> raise her communications but flinched when a sharp pain arced through her skull from the port
> behind her ear.

Tsuneo: For some reason they'd plugged her in to the air conditioner

> She could feel it then, something was jacked into her, preventing her from calling out.

> "I wouldn't try that again," a man's Latin-American accented voice

Rebecca: With how nuanced this fic is, I'll just assume he sounds like Speedy Gonzales

> spoke from somewhere outside of
> her line of sight. She startled at discovering that she was not alone in the room.

Tsuneo: Despite their previously established intelligence, their captors had not left her alone and unguarded in an unlocked room.

> She could hear steady steps, until the speaker walked around her chair.

> He was short, wearing rubber overalls,

Dan: He was in his waders to go fishing

> the kind more suited to a butcher than to a surgeon. He had
> a fish-eyed glaze that made her shiver in disgust.

Tsuneo: With how subtle this fic is, I'm surprised he doesn't have an eyepatch and hook-hand

> "You're awake, and right on time," he said with a sickening calm, "Romano and your friend?" he
> inclined,

Dan: [Fleur] Bill Weasley?

Tsuneo: Bill Weasley? What are you talking about? What do you think this is, a Harry Potter fic or something?

> "Mr. Kristiansen will be here any minute now." There was a beep from behind him.

> "Ah," he suddenly looked over his shoulder, "Speak of the devil."

Dan: Please allow me to introduce myself.

> The secure door slid open to reveal the aforementioned pair. Romano had a frown which contrasted
> greatly with Felix's smug grin.

Rebecca: The look of a man who had just realised that his business partner is an utter moron

Rick: That must be how the Twitter board looks all the time

> Behind them walked a third unknown man who was carrying her box,

Rick: Inside of which was her shadowless holographic Charizard

> the whole reason she'd been in Felix's apartment and gotten caught to begin with.

Tsuneo: It was your basic McGuffin

> "Fleur!" Felix greeted with a joviality that suited someone as twisted as he was.

Dan: Did I mention that he's evil because he's evil

> "Come on," he shook his head at her glare as he dragged a steel chair over

Rick: Then used it to hit the referee while they were distracted

> and spun it around before sitting on it with his arms resting on the backrest.

Rebecca: He's a cool, hip cheesy villain who relates to the kids

> "Smile, you're so much more beautiful when you smile."

> Fleur spat in his face.

Dan: [Felix] Well yes, I suppose I deserved that.

> He quieted, with barely concealed anger betrayed by his stiffening and

> furrowed brow. With a slow motion, he wiped his face and backhanded her across the cheek. If he

> expected her to cry out, he was to be disappointed, as Fleur simply licked speck of blood from her

> split lip.

Tsuneo: Sadly it was not followed by a Bruce Lee level arse kicking.

> "No worries," Felix's voice was low and cold now. "I could have taken you when you were

> unconscious,

Dan: [Felix] Taken you to Arby's, that is. They've got a two-for-one deal on tonight.

> but where's the fun in that. No, in—" he paused to check the time, "—little over three

> hours, you'll be mine."

Rick: At that point her car turns back into a pumpkin

> "Are you certain this is what you want Mr. Kristiansen?" cut in the ripperdoc, drawing Felix's
> attention.

Rebecca: He may be a dodgy back-alley butcher, but he still needs Felix to sign a waiver.

> "A permanently active joytoy implant comes with risks, she'll be borderline cyberpsychotic
> within two years."

Tsuneo: You get the feeling he'd only find that exciting

> Felix shrugged, "It's enough. For now, my sweet—"

> "Enough, you can speak later," cut in Romano. "The only reason I helped you get the bitch is so that
> she can open this,

Rebecca: That one jar who's lid he can never get unstuck

> and I'd rather not risk her mind getting fucked." He gestured for the third man to
> bring the box forward.

Dan: [Muttered] Can't carry his own damn box, don't know why he needs me here...

> "I've never failed before," defended the ripperdoc, mildly insulted.

Tsuneo: All of his surgeries have been technically successful

> "Well, I'd rather not risk it."

> Felix sighed. "You heard the man, be a dear and open the stupid box."

> Fleur clenched her jaw. The contents of that box were the culmination of her life's work,

Rick: In her field of whatever it is she does anyway

Dan: It'd help if the fic gave us any clue whatsoever

> the thought of it in their hands infuriated her.

> "I—I'll need my 'and," said Fleur, tugging at her restraints.

Tsuneo [Romano]: And what?

Rebecca [Fleur]: You 'eard, my 'and

Tsuneo [Romano]: I know that, and what? What is it you also need?

Rebecca [Fleur]: My 'and, you moron!

Tsuneo [Romano]: And what? Stop cutting off before you answer me!

> Romano nodded towards the ripperdoc, but before he could release her, the third man, the one
> who'd carried the box in, paused, before frowning.

> "What is it?" asked Felix.

> "I don't know, the call barely lasted a few seconds."

Rick: Long enough to know that it was just a scam call anyway

> Romano turned away; Fleur suspected he was trying to make a call.

Tsuneo: She'd made a call, so he suspected that she had made a call.

> He grew agitated after a few short moments.

Dan: [Ripperdoc] Look, can we get on with it, I've got a kid's birthday party in a few hours.

Rebecca: [Felix] What kind of a kid's birthday party needs a back-alley ripperdoc?

Dan: [Ripperdoc] It's for my niece, you insensitive jerk.

> "Tu puta madre," he cursed under his breath, but loud enough for them to hear. He noticed the eyes
> on him and explained.

> "Anna is not answering, she should be done by now."

> Felix didn't seem bothered. "There's a communications blackout over the apartment.

Rebecca: For no reason whatsoever

> She's probably taking her time playing with her new toy."

Tsuneo [Felix]: Who certainly hasn't easily disposed of her and is definitely not now on his way here
on a blood-soaked rescue and revenge mission

> "Hmm..." Romano didn't sound convinced.

Rebecca: Romano has this scene's token brain cell.

> Fleur began giggling. It was so out of place that the ripperdoc immediately checked his displays to
> ensure nothing had gone wrong with the neural mapping.

Dan [Doctor]: And this squishy bit is the brain, right?

> Her giggling had gotten to Romano who pushed past Felix.

Rick: [Romano] Ah hah, it is funny when you think about it.

> He grabbed her face and turned it towards him, even so, her amusement didn't stop.

> "What's so funny?" he snarled.

> "You left 'Arry alive? Zhe bitch iz dead." She couldn't mask the satisfaction in her voice.

Rebecca: She knows this because she's spent so much time working alongside him

Tsuneo: The pair of them are basically assuming everything about each other at this point

> Romano raised a hand, but it was grabbed by Felix.

> "Your mercenary isn't coming for you," Felix spat out, cutting her off. "He's dead, and you're here."

> As if the world was trying to spite Felix by proving him wrong, Romano suddenly stiffened and
> stared into space like someone on a call.

Dan: Or maybe someone who's just smelled a fart.

> "Carajo! Matar al hijo de puta!" He cursed aloud in anger,
> despite it being unnecessary for his caller to hear him.

Tsuneo: Sorry. Wrong number.

> The auto-translate feature of everyone's implants in the room immediately translated it.

> [Carajo! Matar al hijo de puta!.... Fuck! Kill the son of a bitch!]

Rick: They had subtitles turned on

- > Fleur didn't know where all her bravery was coming from, she grinned.

Rebecca: At this point anything that annoys Felix is a bonus.

- > Romano pushed the ripperdoc out of his way and turned one of the displays at the ripperdoc's desk,
- > Fleur was able to make out some of it in the mirror's reflection.

Dan: If it's good enough for Deckard, it's good enough for her.

- > She could see what looked like a fairly narrow passage from the angle of a CCTV camera.

Rick: It had a bunch of generic adventurers in it looking for treasure

- > The screen showed a passageway, it was stone with steel reinforcements

Dan: Rick, I think you might not be too far off

Rick: I roll for initiative!

- > and lit with the head-achingly bright light of industrial grade fluorescents.

Tsuneo: Okay, so they're bad guys. But at least their villainous lair is well-lit.

- > Some Valentino members were using the
- > corners of side passages as cover, one even laid down in the centre of the path with a rifle pointed
- > down its end,

Rebecca: He was really, really stupid

- > where a heavy reinforced steel door stood shut. She could almost feel the intensity,
- > the heavy air, everyone in that passageway was on a hair trigger.

- > The door slid open, she couldn't see who shot first,

Rick: It was probably Han.

- > but within a second, the display was filled with
- > the flashes of gunfire, the sound was so great, she could hear it from where she was.

Rebecca: [Fleur] Better than pay-per-view.

- > Eventually, one of the men shouted and raised his arm, stopping the gunfire.

Rick: [Valentino] Pizza's here.

- > They watched and waited for the dust to clear, Fleur noticed something, just barely,

Dan: Romano's My Little Pony tattoo

- > it was small and appeared to be flying. It shot
- > through the dust, fast enough that her enhanced eyes barely caught it.

- > 'A drone?'

Rebecca: Probably owned by some jerk who's using it to spy on his neighbours

- > It released a pulse which fried the lights, plunging the passage into darkness, before reaching the
- > CCTV camera and killing it too.

Dan: [Romano] So much for that. Switch it over to the game.

> She couldn't see anything now, but it was not over, because the
> sound of gunfire pierced the heavy silence of the surgery room she was in.

Rebecca: It's at this point that Felix realises his villain lair doesn't have a secret escape tunnel, or even a fire exit.

> "Are you alright Felix? You look a little pale."

Tsuneo: [Felix] Well, my doctor did say I need to get more sun – Wait!

> Fleur's voice sparked that manic nerve, Felix grabbed her face with a rage. "You think you won,
> bitch!? There's two dozen men between him and us!"

Tsuneo: Spoken like every generic villain ever

> Her eyes stared at him over his hand, there was no fear in them, only amusement. He shoved her
> and screamed in frustration. "You!" he barked at the ripperdoc. "Get her ready to move! We're taking
> her out the back."

Dan: The loading dock should make for an adequate emergency surgery.

> The ripperdoc opened his mouth to protest but shut it when he saw the craziness in Felix's eyes.

Rebecca: [Ripperdoc] Good thing I got paid upfront.

> He did the smart thing instead and began grabbing things that he needed.

Rick: Like his big leather suitcase and his garment bag and his tenor saxophone and his twelve pound bowling ball and his lucky lucky autographed glow-in-the-dark snorkel.

> "Where are you going?" Romano stopped to face Felix with a fierce glare. "That hijo de puta killed
> my Anna."

Tsuneo: Who'd have thought that leaving her alone with the dangerous mercenary and just assuming that everything was okay could have ended badly?

> He left along with the other man. Felix swore and chased after them, the ensuing argument was cut
> off by the steel door sliding closed again.

> "You don't 'ave to do zhis," said Fleur when the ripperdoc came to disconnect the cable from behind
> her ear. "Let me out, and we can go our separate ways."

Rick: And soon they'll be worlds apart

> "I can't do that. I'm sorry but I'm going to have to put you under." He didn't sound sorry as he left her
> to retrieve a vial.

Dan: A sample of his home-brewed artisan beer. It's what he does when he's not committing crimes against god and nature

> While Fleur didn't appear panicked outwardly, her mind was racing a mile a minute.

Rick: [Fleur] Okay, so first I've got to update my Linkdin profile, check my emails, get back to Roger about the meeting notes, probably should let Harry know I'm alive... No, too busy.

> She blinked when the notification of an incoming call appeared in her vision and answered before
> even giving the identity of her caller a proper glance.

Dan: [Fleur] No madam, I am not Cutts the Butcher.

> "Am I glad to see you in one piece." Hermione's voice was filled with relief.

> "Où suis-je? Où est 'Arry? Comment peux-tu me parler?" Fleur asked hurriedly, before realizing her
> blunder.

Rick: Hermione is French-Canadian and found her tone deeply condescending

> Hermione was not bothered though, having already translated.

> "Harry's here, he's a bit busy at the moment.

Dan: Goons won't effortlessly murder themselves

> You're beneath Heywood Cathedral, Valentino's have converted this place into a nifty hidey-hole.

Rebecca: [Fleur] Excuse me? They have me hostage here and you're calling it nifty?

Tsuneo: [Hermione] Come on, they've got the works. Hacker cave, machine shop, massage room, even a spa and sauna.

Rebecca: [Fleur] That does sound pretty nice, actually.

> I've got eyes and ears inside. I'm connected through the

> local network, straight through that jack in your neck."

Rick: [Hermione] Also, you really need to clear out your internal storage some time.

> Far away from where Fleur was trapped, the drone which Hermione controlled was stuck to the side
> of a network terminal where it was jacked in.

Rebecca: Night City has an incredible amount of unsecured network ports just lying around.

Tsuneo: I can only imagine it's a huge part of the city's infrastructure budget

> "Wait, beneath? I'm underground?"

Rebecca: [Hermione] No, the dingy bunker with the slab-stone walls is a penthouse. What did you think?

> "That's right, there's a very old network of tunnels and rooms."

Rebecca: Kale's dad had them dug into everyone's homes.

> Fleur frowned. "Can you unlock my bindings?"

Dan: I mean, it'd be completely stupid for them to be connected to a remote-accessible network and all

Rick: So yes, then

Dan: Oh, totally.

> "I'm already working on it. It's taken me a while to trace the hardware address. Give me a minute."

> The door to the room opened with its signature hiss,

Rebecca: [Romano] Can someone check that thing, it is way too loud.

> revealing some nameless Valentino woman with a harried appearance.

Rick: Her name was 'Extra'.

> Her jacket was filthy with stone dust and a cut on her cheek had left her
> face smeared with the pasty mix of dirt and blood.

Rebecca: She's with their daycare staff.

> She was heavily armed, with a shotgun in her
> arms and a handgun tucked into a holster that hung under her jacket.

Tsuneo: Not sure why they're bothering, she'll probably be dead in seconds.

> "Maria," the ripperdoc greeted, barely looking up from the syringe he was filling.

Dan: She got a name, now they have to pay her more

> "Daniel," she was a touch out of breath. "That Felix conejo says hurry up. These fuckers are killing
> us like fucking dogs, man. They killed Mateo," she choked up.

Rebecca: [Ripperdoc] Oh no, not Mateo! [Pause] Which one's Mateo?

Dan: [Maria] Honestly, I don't remember either.

> "I'm working as fast as I can, that pendejo doesn't know what he's asking!"

Rick [Doctor]: I mean, does he even know how hard it's going to be to get a goat at this time of night?

> "Ermione," Fleur urged mentally.

> "Almost there," was her rushed and distracted reply.

Dan: Stay on target...

> The newcomer turned her attention to Fleur, and she could see the hatred take root in her eyes.
> "And it's all for this puta!?"

Rebecca: That's the only word of Spanish the author knows

> "Ermione!

> *CLICK*

> Maria barely had a chance to widen her eyes in shock, when Fleur, in one smooth motion, grabbed
> the small blade from her inner thigh and lunged at her.

Rick: [Maria] You know, in retrospect we really should have checked her for weapons.

> The Valentino woman's reflexes were fast,
> but it wasn't fast enough, as the razor-sharp blade embedded itself in her throat.

Dan: All the members of this gang have the reaction times of stunned sloths

> The brief scoff of pain was transformed into a choking gargle as her hands tried to stem the flow.

Rebecca: Well, you were right.

Tsuneo: And yet, I feel empty inside.

> Fleur didn't stop
> there, in a desperate move, she managed to wrap her hand around the grip of Maria's pistol, as the
> woman collapsed backwards.

> "Maria!" screamed the ripperdoc, who Fleur now knew was named Daniel.

Tsuneo: This one detail had greatly enriched her life

- > He rushed Fleur in the
- > hopes of overpowering her, but she'd already trained the gun in his direction. He slammed into her,
- > knocking her over the chair she'd been previously fastened to. As they tussled, she squeezed the
- > trigger, again and again and again. He was dead by the time she hit the floor, banging her head in
- > the process Fleur groaned and felt sick from the dull ache in her skull,

Dan: It's like a hangover from cheap plonk.

Rebecca: Excuse you, she probably only gets smashed on the finest of Champagnes.

- > it didn't help that she was
- > practically upside down, with her legs still caught up on the chair, and the dead weight of the
- > ripperdoc on her.

Rebecca: I'm trying to figure out the physics of that scene and it's giving me a headache

- > She struggled to push him off, but her awkward position made it difficult.
- > She spent a minute just laying there as she caught her breath.

Dan: Some days you've just got to roll with it.

- > "Fleur?" Hermione called worryingly.
- > "Fils de pute! Bitch fucking merde, fucking son of a bitch!"

Tsuneo: She's so classy and sophisticated

- > "...Fleur?"
- > "You know," she began, out of breath and annoyed. "This is not what I 'ad in mind when I planned
- > for zhe night to end wizh a man on top of me..." She trailed off.

Rebecca: Settle down already

- > A barking man's laugh rang through the call as Hermione sputtered. Fleur recognized the voice as
- > Harry's.
- > "...Uhm, the night's still young?" offered Hermione ludicrously, but Fleur ignored her to focus on the
- > other voice in the call.

Rick: Hahaha ha ha

Tsuneo: People have been gruesomely killed

Rick: Hilarious

- > "Arry?" With a heavy push, she got out from beneath the dead ripperdoc

Dan: It wasn't the first time this had happened to her, and it probably won't be the last

- > and shakily made her way to her feet.
- > "Hey, I'd chat, but I'm a bit preoccupied. Hermione'll guide yo— Motherfu—" The connection was
- > lost.

Tsuneo: This is how most of her dates go.

- > Worry weld up within her for a second before she squashed it down.
- > "Ermione?"

Dan: [Hermione] Oh, don't mind me. Just doing all the real work around here.

> "I'm watching him, he's fine. When you leave the room, take a left. Corridor's clear, practically
> everyone's out gunning for Harry and V."

Tsuneo: Say, what is V actually adding to this fic?

Rebecca: She's stupidly horny for Fleur

Tsuneo: I thought so

> Harry was most certainly not fine, unless fine constituted being tackled into a stone wall by a
> behemoth of a man with enough heavy dermal armour that it felt like being hit by a delivery truck.

Dan: I mean, he could be fine with that. We don't judge

> *Ooph!*

> The air was knocked out of his lungs

Rick: And he went-

Tsuneo: That's the stomach, not lungs

Rick: Fine. Ruin all my fun

> and pain flared throughout his back and torso. He had mere
> moments to react as his assailant pulled his arm back, ready to pound his face in with his bare
> hands. Harry could see the metallic plating of his reinforced knuckles.

Rick: Sure they're great for cracking people's skulls, but they really get in the way of his gourmet cooking.

> A hit to the face with his head against the wall and he'd be done for.

Dan: All Harry could rely on was the "not in the face" defence.

> Thankfully for Harry, the motion of lining up the oncoming punch had opened just enough space
> between their bodies for him to move his arms. A small message flashed in the corner of his vision.

> *Zetatech SynapticAccelerator_C2: [Remaining...T: 00:04]

Rick: Patching... Please wait.

Tsuneo: Great. Killed by a service pack.

> Harry felt the world slow down as his vision gained a blurry blue tinted hue to it.

Rebecca: Meanwhile the rest of the world were standing around, wondering why they were moving in slow motion and now blue-tinted

> He didn't have time to waste as he watched the oncoming punch moving at a snail's pace.

Dan [Harry]: Hm. I wonder where he's going with this.

> He formed a fist, sending an
> uppercut while mentally commanding his mantis blade to unsheathe, it sliced through his jacket as it
> emerged.

Rick: He ruins more jackets that way.

> His own fist was slow as well, even if his mind and synapses were supercharged, his
> body could only move so fast.

Tsuneo: His pack a day habit didn't help either

> *Zetatech SynapticAccelerator_C2: [Remaining...T: 00:02]

> He could see the man's eyes widen in panic as his irises shifted to focus on the blade right before
> his head began to move backwards. 'Figures,' Harry grumbled mentally, 'Fucker's chromed to the
> teeth.'

Tsuneo: The other guy's taking this time to compose a letter to his mother.

> The mantis blade missed its target, the soft tissue beneath the jaw, an area that can't be reinforced
> without visible plating, which was not present. It wasn't an entirely wasted effort, the blade still sliced
> up across the thug's face, nicking his left eye.

Rick: Pfft, Razor would have put both of them out at once

Rebecca: And then made some dumb quip while standing with her legs splayed and her back bent at
an impossible angle

Rick: This is also true

> *Zetatech SynapticAccelerator_C2: [Remaining...T: 00:00...Runtime Expired]

Dan: Please pay 25 EuroDollars for the next ten minutes.

> A grunt which barely qualified as a scream escaped the thugs throat as the pain and shock of losing
> an eye forced him to let go of Harry,

Dan: [Harry] Thanks for that.

Rick: [Valentino] AAAHHH!!! MY EYE!!!

Dan: [Harry] Awfully obliging of you.

> who staggered on his feet as a blinding headache shot through his skull, it was gone as fast as it
came.

Tsuneo: He had a headache, but then he didn't

> It was the reason Harry hated the C2 Accelerator,

Rebecca: Took a star off his Amazon review.

> it was fast as all hell, but the aftereffect sucked.

Rick: The headache, he means. The way it distorted the fabric of time and space was just fine.

> Harry blinked as he recovered, faster than the Valentino behemoth who was still stumbling back
> with one hand over his heavily bleeding eye socket. With a lethal smoothness, Harry ducked into
> the thug's range, his mantis blade already coming around in an underhand swing. There were a few
> areas that were almost never armour plated, unless you were a cybernetic eunuch like that psycho,
> Adam Smasher.

Dan: Of all the human parts he missed, his wang was the one he missed the least.

> It was a dick move,

Rebecca: Speaking of.

> but you weren't exactly spoiled for choice of weak spots when facing off against
> a fucker who was more tin-can than human.

Rick: As opposed to Adam Smasher who you could just hit with a rolled-up newspaper

> And there was no way he'd let some arbitrary
> gentleman's honour stop him from sliding all sixteen and a half inches of mantis blade through the
> bastard's bait & tackle,

Rebecca: Well this is incredibly Freudian

> all the way into his internal organs.

> A choked cough of blood left the thug's mouth as the mantis blade reached all the way to his lungs.
> He fell back, dragging Harry back with him as he spasmed in the last of his death-throes.

Dan: [Harry] Okay, so you're going to die messily but could you at least not bleed on my jacket?

> Harry took
> a deep, much needed breath as he tried to pull the blade out, but it was stuck, likely wedged in the
> pelvis bone. He gave it another tug, but no luck.

Tsuneo: Whoso pulleth this Mantis Blade from this thug's pelvis is rightful crowned king of England

> "HARRY, MOVE!" V yelled.

Dan: [Harry] Well, I've been thinking of upgrading, maybe find a nice apartment downtown... Oh, right!

> He didn't try to find the source of her urgency, and immediately disconnected the blade from his arm

Rebecca: Harry's so inconsiderate, he keeps leaving blades in thugs all over the city.

> before pushing himself from the floor and half diving, half scrambling to move to safety. It was right
> on time, as a volley of gunfire just missed him as he made it behind some heavy-duty storage
> containers.

Dan: People keep trying to kill him wherever he goes. It's getting quite annoying

> "Phew..." Harry exhaled. "That was real fucking close."

> "You good over there!?" V yelled once more.

Tsuneo: [Harry] Oh yes, having a fantastic day.

> "Peachy!" Harry could see her now; she was taking cover behind a support pillar at the other end of
> the large room. Just went to show just how far the big guy had pushed him in that tackle.

Rick: And now the Valentinos need a new linesman for their team.

> "Not for long," growled a third voice. One that Harry recognized

Dan [Madam Z]: So who wants some stew?

> as belonging to the sleaze-ball from Felix's party.

Rebecca: Well, time to thin out the cast.

> "What are you doing?" asked Hermione as she watched Fleur pause.

> The stunning blonde had just realised that in Romano's fury, he'd forgotten the box.

Rebecca: It's only the thing that's the point of this entire turgid mess.

> 'Well... That's convenient.'

Tsuneo: Fic, don't point out your own narrative flaws. It's not helping

> Romano was right in that he needed Fleur to open it, she'd set it with a pretty intensive failsafe. Any
> detected attempts to break into it and the contents would be fried beyond recovery.

Rick: She was okay with protecting her life's work like this

> That didn't mean it was impenetrable,

Dan: Because it'd be pretty stupid if it was

> only incredibly difficult and risky to attempt opening.

> "I need what's in 'ere."

> "What is it?"

Tsuneo: It's the missing last clause of the founding constitution of the Earth Federation.

Dan: I thought you were going to say the loot from Reservoir Dogs.

Tsuneo: I mean, it's the same thing.

> "My life's work." Fleur touched her palm to the top of the chest, which lit up, outlining her hand. Her
> eyes began to glow, as the access codes were transferred.

Rebecca: [Hermione] The access code had better not be "password" or something like that.

Tsuneo: [Fleur] I mean...

> "Veela,"

Rick: You mean... that one never explained part of her backstory that's ultimately irrelevant to the rest of the Harry Potter narrative?

> she said aloud, and the chest released a hiss before unlocking.

Rick: There you go, it really is a Mint in Box Giant Vamp [Ding]

Tsuneo: Good callback.

> Inside was a shard, one V, were she there, would find rather similar to Arasaka's relic.

Rebecca: Does it have the digital ghost of another Keanu Reeves character on it?

> Fleur appeared cautious as she removed it.

> "A cyberdeck shard?" queried Hermione.

Rick: That shard contains the last known copy of Heavymetalhooligan's works. No wonder everyone wanted it

> Fleur took a deep breath, before sliding the shard into the slot behind her ear. She choked and fell
> to her knees as the contents began writing themselves to her neural implants.

Tsuneo: I'm sure this is entirely necessary at this point in time and not an overreaction at all.

> "Fleur!" Hermione called out in worry.

Rebecca [Hermione]: I am deeply concerned about you now for no reason at all.

> Her eyes were scrunched close in pain, and then, as fast as it began, it was over. She gasped out a
> shuddering breath, her lip felt wet. She wiped it with the back of her hand and found blood from a
> nosebleed.

Rick: [Fleur] Okay, add that to the list of side effects.

> "Fleur?"

> "Une moment," answered the blonde,

Tsuneo: Being remarkably casual about her head exploding

> still getting her breathing together. Hermione waited, and

> despite being unable to see the netrunner, Fleur could sense her desire for answers.

> Before she could explain, the door hissed and opened to reveal another Valentino's member.

Rebecca: And here comes our test subject.

> "Mari—

> "The man stopped in surprise as he took in the state of the room, along with the two dead. His eyes

> zeroed on Fleur with a snarl, he lifted his gun, but it was too late.

> Fleur was already in the process of demonstrating just what it was she'd gained from the shard.

Dan: The complete Naruto archive from Fanfiction.net

> She met his eyes, and watched as he froze, his jaw clenched as he strained against her control.

Tsuneo: [Valentino] Uh hey... I'm just here to take out the garbage...

> "Kill yourself." Her voice sounded odd, ethereal and melodic, hypnotic.

Rebecca: She'd been taking lessons from Lady Jessica.

> His face was a contorted mix of panic and strain, as he stiffly raised his gun to his temple. "Do it,"

> she ordered firmly, ignoring the desperate plea in his eyes.

Tsuneo: I mean, you could just order him to go to sleep or tie himself up.

Dan: Yeah, but the others have been murdering all night long, and she's got a lot of catching up to do.

> A squeezed trigger and a thunderous bang had him crumple to the floor.

Rebecca: Well that was... incredibly stupid, actually.

> "That... was not what I expected," commented Hermione.

Dan: [Hermione] I mean, I could have just used a short circuit quick hack...

> "How's it work?"

> "Subliminal messages, directly affects the motor cortex. It isn't perfect, you have to hold eye contact

> and say the commands aloud."

Tsuneo: You also need to stand on one leg while patting your head and rubbing your stomach.

> "Hypnosis?"

> "Oui, the same principal." Fleur gave the room one last look.

Rick: So she can sell it as a novelty stage act. Well worth all the effort

> "It's not as effective as a suicide daemon,

Tsuneo: She made someone blow their own brains out. What more do you want?

> but vastly more versatile. I'm impressed." Hermione reasoned before giving her opinion.

Rebecca: Hermione wants the power to decide who lives and who dies.

> "Merci. Now—" Fleur stepped over the dead man and opened the door, bloody dress and gun at the ready. "Show me 'ow to find 'Arry."

Dan: Just follow the maintains of dead bodies

> OMAKE

Tsuneo: Oh no. You just know this is going to hurt

> Earlier in the evening on route to the cathedral.

> "We should get moving, we're wasting time."

Dan: They would have been there earlier, but Harry had to stop for a bucket of fries.

> Harry adjusted his rifle's strap and made for the street with V quickly following.

> "What the fuck is that?" he stared at V's little car in horror. It was a bright red, cutesy, two-seater
> Makigai MaiMai.

> That is my baby, say one bad word about her and you can fuckin' walk."

Rick: From this we can deduce that this V is not a Nomad.

Dan: I bet she's even wearing the Simurai jacket too

> V circled around the

> miniscule car to the driver's side. Harry stared at his own door, which lifted, revealing a severely
> cramped interior, with beige upholstery. It taunted him with its beige-ness,

Rebecca: Harry despises beige

Rick: A manila envelope killed his parents

> and its little-ness.

> He wanted to comment, but knew V well enough that she'd actually leave him there,

Tsuneo: So why not just summon his bike like everyone else does? It'd be faster and we don't need to read this

> so he bit the

> bullet and stuffed his bag behind the seat before climbing in. It was a tight fit, his knees were bent at
> too sharp an angle, while he had to keep his arm out of V's way and kept shifting in an attempt for
> comfort. V simply ignored his plight as she settled in behind the wheel and started the car.

Tsuneo: Getting in this car would be almost as painful as reading about getting in this car

> Harry shivered when a musical note followed by a kawaii voice greeted them from the speakers.

> "Ohayou-gozaïmasu!"

> Before he could speak, V, with both of her hands on the wheel, turned her head and stared directly
> into his eyes. "Not. One. Word."

Tsuneo: Well that was...
Rebecca: Suicide-inducing?
Tsuneo: About that.

> END CHAPTER 3

> The Omake would have been a part of the scene but DarknessEnthroned said no no.

All: Thank you

On that final comment, the big screen turned off, converting the world back into prose format. "And that was the long series of porno setups that was the Neon Lily of Night City," Tsuneo considered. "A fic that could have used a cold shower and perhaps a long walk."

"And more ninjas," Dan added abruptly.

"But doesn't everything?" Rick asked.

"I mean, we've read some pretty horny fics," Rebecca considered, "Including some with actual explicit badly written sex in them. However, that has to be the horniest fic we've seen so far."

"No arguments there," Dan nodded. "Harry and Fleur were basically ready to rip each other's clothes off and start boning like mad bunnies the moment they met. And it never let up from there."

"I went into this fic expecting lots of really forced and really awkward pseudo-romantic dialogue about how amazingly in love these two were, and how perfect they were for each other," Rebecca admitted. "But by the time it was done, I think I would have preferred that over what we actually got."

"I have to agree," Tsuneo nodded. "And I think the worst part of it was that the fic did not let up at all. Instead, it was constantly hammering us with the horny at every step of the way"

"And I get that this fic was written for the pairing," Dan noted. "After all, it was in the author's notes at the start, and that's what AU fics are usually about. But I mean, like, could they have let up on it for just a little bit?"

"It'd have been nice," Rick nodded. "But really, the whole story felt somewhat threadbare and padded throughout. Like, it could have been a lot shorter and had huge chunks of it excised without really making any difference."

"Like the entire 'Fleur getting dressed cocktease' scene," Rebecca noted. "All it added was to restate that the pair of them are super horny for each other."

"Right," Rick nodded. "Or, for that matter, V. She didn't have any reason to be in the fic, added nothing to the story and it feels like the author forgot that she was there after introducing her anyway."

"All she added was being horny for Fleur and Harry," Dan noted. "Which means that she's literally like every other person in the cast who were all also horny for the pair of them."

"I think a lot of it comes down to the reasons why this fic exists," Tsuneo considered. "The author had a preferred pairing and as such, had to write a fic that's about their preferred pairing. However, instead, they ended up feeling the need to keep hammering the point home in case the readers didn't get it."

"In some ways, I think it'd be better if it actually was a porno fic," Dan noted. "At least then there'd be an excuse for how dumb and horny it is."

"So here's the question; did this count as a crossover or not?" Rick asked. "I mean, it featured a pair of 'in name only' level characters who were well outside their normal setting and character"

"Three," Rebecca noted. "Because we also had sight unseen dumb, horny Hermione as well."

"I mean... technically it is," Tsuneo considered. "I mean, yes, it is an AU and yes, they are in name only level, but at the same time, the intent was clearly there to use the characters from one setting in another setting."

"And we've had that level of crossover in past," Rebecca added. "Where it really does turn into that sort of 'why is this a crossover in the first place' level of shallow."

"If anything, the presence of V in the fic makes it more crossover-y," Dan offered. "Which is weird, given how redundant she is to the whole thing."

"A strange situation indeed," Tsuneo considered.

"On an unrelated note, is this fic meant to be finished or not?" Rick asked. "Because it finished its story, but it seemed like the author had more in mind."

"We may never know," Tsuneo finished. "And that's probably for the best."

"Well I can see you're all really excited for the fic," the Voice cut in.

"Yeah, but not in the way the author intended," Rebecca simply replied.

"In that case, I'd love to hear your reviews," the Voice continued, not missing a beat.

Tsuneo nodded his head and began. "My main problem with the fic is the main characters. And it's one of those fics that hangs so heavily on its leads that they make or break the whole thing. And boy, do they break it. Harry and Fleur are breathlessly shallow characters who can do little more than leer at each other all day long and agree with the first thing each says. They're given traits, but they're shallow affairs as well, more informed than anything else. Fleur is supposedly a genius and Harry stuffs himself with junk food. That's about it.

"What they are is hopelessly, distractedly horny for each other. Much of the dialogue is painfully bad flirting, even and especially when they're meant to be planning or enacting their heist. Even Fleur's breakout at the end is infested with smutty innuendo that only serves to lower the tone of the life-and-death struggle. But I suppose they hadn't mentioned how horny they were for a couple of pages, so it had to be done.

"Worst part is, this is meant to be a romance. These aren't effective romantic leads, as there's no appeal in them. Neither main character seems to have any life beyond the immediate situation, and unfortunately most of the immediate situation is trying to get each other naked. The author harps on about their sexual attraction but at the same time demonstrates no actual romantic chemistry. It's the sort of situation where the inevitable hook-up defuses any appeal, and would leave the story and leads floundering to find themselves. And I'm sorry, but I need more from a romance than two people being horny at each other."

"So we've established that Harry and Fleur are dumb and horny," Rebecca noted, "But here's the thing; they're not actually Harry and Fleur. They're actually a dumb horny merc and a dumb horny corpo who just happen to be called Harry Potter and Fleur Delacour who have some surface level traits of those characters that they're based on, but are so different otherwise that they might as well be different characters."

"Both of them have been stripped of any elements that actually make them who they are," Rebecca noted. "Not just have they been taken out of their original setting and genre, but they've also been deprived of their own character traits. This fic's Harry is a smug, self-important tosser who pretends to be smart but yet gets suckered by the first pretty face to front up to him. And while the original canon Fleur was not the deepest of characters, at the same time she wasn't a horned-up sex bomb and supposed genius at whatever the hell this character was meant to be doing."

"The most telling thing is that you could change the names and make them entirely original and it wouldn't make any difference at all. You have Green the merc who has a lily tattoo because and, I

don't know, Yvette the sexpot corpo with a fake French accent and it wouldn't make any difference at all. Getting rid of Harry's scar, which is a single line, would do in any remaining similarities. And, in many ways, doing that would make it a better fic."

"There's a lot more to it than that," Dan said. "I mean, really I had to keep reminding myself that this actually was a Harry Potter crossover. That the lead character is somehow meant to be the Boy Who Lived, and not some random guy who happened to share his name. Mostly that's because, well, there wasn't really a crossover beyond the leads."

"Aside from those two and Hermione, it has an almost entirely original cast. It basically doesn't use any Harry Potter elements beyond the leads. There was definitely potential to do so, even if it's just pasting over names and likenesses onto other characters. Make Felix into Viktor Krum, the Mox bartender becomes Hannah Abbot and the Valentinos are lead by Blaise Zabini or someone. Makes it feel like there's some actual effort made to appeal to the Harry Potter side of the readership, since the setting and story use nothing from it at all."

"In a way, V and Hermione are the worst parts of it. They make a distinct clash between the Cyberpunk and Harry Potter sides of the story. It's odd that Hermione is the only other character to be carried over into Cyberpunk, with Ron being left behind. Heck, Ron could easily be Harry's pal from the massive Weasley nomad clan that he calls on to help save Fleur. That would have made it feel more like a crossover. Or actually like a crossover at all."

"So putting aside all the AU-ness of it and how pointless it is, we're left with the fic's plot. And boy, is it dumb," Rick considered. "Furthermore, it hits that point where not only is everyone in it very stupid, but it basically requires so many moving parts to come together for it to actually work. At its most basic level, it's a heist which actually turns out to be a trap, but when you break it down there's so much more going on that makes it so stupid."

"Felix's plan is to steal something from Fleur, lure her to his apartment to get it back and then capture her once she's there," he explained. "Except he has to assume that she will come for it and that she will come in person and that she will do it at this one specific event when the apartment is going to be the most crowded. At no point does he consider that she might hire someone to break into the apartment at a different time and take the loot while she's off having her dozenth shower for the day."

"Of course, Fleur obligingly does just that because she is as dumb as a bag of rocks, with the pair of them walking into a trap that was so obvious that it might as well have had a sign advertising 'free bird seed' hanging over the safe. But then of course Felix does the whole 'incapacitate Harry, leave him with an underling and just assume he's dead' thing for no reason, and then has the nerve to be surprised when that doesn't work out for him. All in all, the plot is bad, and is made worse by the fact that everyone just goes along with it anyway."

"So there you have it, Voice," Tsuneo concluded. "We have a dumb and horny fic about a pair of dumb and horny people who are surrounded by other dumb and horny people who need to constantly remind us all of how dumb and horny they are. However, in doing so, it actively sabotaged its own premise and reason for existence in the first place."

"Thank you all for that," the Voice beamed. "Once again, your reviews are very helpful in the selection of future reviews."

"As long as they're not as horny as this one," Dan sighed. "Because it was more tiring than anything else."

"So we're done for now?" Rick asked.

"We are, yes," the Voice confirmed. "As always, I'll see you all next time."

"And as always, I will live in fear," Rebecca finished.

"Well I'm done," Tsuneo sighed. "I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm getting out of here and trying to forget just how stupid that was."

"I'm with you there," Rebecca agreed as the pair of them stood. "I think now is time for a drink or two and maybe repeatedly bashing my head into the wall to get the fic out of my mind."

"Sure," Rick nodded as he joined them and then paused. "Hey Dan?"

"What's up?"

"Don't you, you know, normally fight ninjas?" Rick asked. "So how did you end up with a master ninja owing you."

"Well that," Dan finished as he stood, "is a very long story..."

Author's notes:

I am genuinely surprised that we haven't done a fill-blown AU fic so far; even then, this one is actually somewhat outside the normal range of AU fics. However, it still hits a lot of those key AU notes, most importantly being all about the author's preferred pairing. Honestly, I stick by our assessment that this would have been a better fic with an entirely original cast in the Cyberpunk 2077 setting, but then that fic wouldn't exist seeing as its only purpose was to support the author's preferred pairing. It's strange how these things work out.

As far as I can tell, the fic has been abandoned. The first three chapters came out quickly, but it's not moved since then. At this stage, I figure that it likely won't go any further.

Next time, we digitally add the author's pet OC to existing scenes

Harry Potter copyright Time-Warner

Cyberpunk 2077 is copyright CD Projekt Red

The Neon Lily of Night City written by officesloth

Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)
Tsuneo Tateo and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Magical wasteland lunatics? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

The Elmer Studios Blog
<http://elmerstudios.blogspot.com.au>
Elmer Studios MSTings, commentary, random thoughts and other stuff

Elmer Studios!
<http://www.heavens-feel.com/elmer/>
All of Elmer Studios' Classic MSTings, random DELTA Invasion Episode Generator and other stuff in one spot

- > There were a few
- > areas that were almost never armour plated, unless you were a cybernetic eunuch like that psycho,
- > Adam Smasher.

- > It was a dick move,