Chapter 202: Eventful Day

I watched the feed from my Nyes spread around the area as I snuck up to the door. There were many others like it as I was currently on the sixty-fourth floor of a megabuilding. It was a routine exercise I did almost every day. Except sometimes, we would test out new gadgets at the same time.

After observing our surroundings, I had my SAID relay my orders to Thorne.

“Thorne, time to try out our new toys. I see the adjacent unit is empty, so let’s start from there.”

His outline nodded, and we moved over to the door. We simply had to place a hand on the terminal beside it and we were soon able to unlock it. It was part of the software update I installed on the power armor. It was large enough to host a whole bunch of nanomachine connectors, so we wouldn’t have to find a port and clumsily plug into it anymore.

We swiftly moved in and closed the door behind us while I kept watch on the movements of our targets. I didn’t even need to watch the feed anymore as it would relay that information to my optics right away. It allowed me to see various people walking around in the unit next door despite there being a wall between us.

“Okay, you give it a try.”

At the urging, Thorne walked straight to the wall and took out a small knife the size of a pen. Unlike a regular knife with sharp edges, it was mostly hollow. That was because it didn’t rely on a sharp edge to cut, but on high-energy particle beams to melt through it.

It was a lot of work trying to keep it discreet. The heat caused whatever it cut to ionize or it may even produce plasma if the setting was high enough. It made bright lights to alert anyone nearby, so we had to fine-tune the frequency, the wavelength, and employ some ingenuity.

I watched as Thorne held out a tip and stabbed it lightly at the base of the walls. A tiny spark lit up for a second, but we made sure there was no one in the room on the other side. Even if they were, it wasn’t so easy to notice when we made the incision near ground level. Furniture could block the sight.

After a small hole was made, it sent in several nanomachines that were similar to the ones we used in our Shades. It was capable of deploying holographic projections to prevent any further light from escaping while we cut.

Thorne did just that.

The particle beam knife easily opened up a hole to the other side. It was one of the alternatives we came up with in order to conquer our weakness of the door.

We crawled through the newly made hole and entered into the adjacent unit. We found ourselves inside an empty bedroom, so we let ourselves out. We were monitoring everyone within the place, so it was easy. The only challenge was the booby trap they placed on the front door. If we had opened it carelessly, it would've set off explosives.

Once we got in, the rest was routine pickings. We did as we always, going around to neutralize the harvesters in the apartment. Under my instructions, Thorne would tail me throughout the infiltration mission as I monopolized the experience points.

We were so used to our system that we could converse casually while I finished off our enemies.

+10 EXP
+10 EXP

"Talking of our nightly hunting trips, I can't believe you thought I was in contact with someone else when we are together like this every time," I teased.

+10 EXP

"That doesn't mean I could monitor everything you do. Look."

He gestured toward my outreached hand that was currently holding onto a dagger that was plunged into my victim. The body was between us, so it somewhat obscured my hand.

"I don't know what's happening when your hand is blocked from view. You could've retrieved some secret data chip several times a night for all I knew."

"Right, right," I narrowed my eyes, despite knowing he couldn't see it through the power armor. "You'd think I am capable of such elaborate and subtle back-channel communications, but not inventing everything myself."

"Really? I'm pretty sure everyone in the companies knew you had some secret regarding where you sourced our products. The spending of our R&D department is way too low compared to others and was a literal one-man army of a department. That's just not realistic, especially over several products."

I blew out the frustrations of everyone looking down on me by firing my Suri. It silently dispatched my foes, and I rushed in to catch them as they fell to the ground.

+10 EXP
+10 EXP

I debated replacing my trusted Suri with a new particle beam weapon, but in the end, decided against it. It was a lot of work creating a stealthy version of particle beam weapons. They had the issue of ionizing whatever it hit to worry about, so the time I would need to invest to create something comparable didn't make sense. For an ambush weapon, the level of discretion was the most important criterion. The Suri worked just fine.

"Hey," Thorne called out. "Shouldn't we be wrapping it up? Leave the cleanup and rescuing to our team. You need some rest before tomorrow's big event."

I took another glance at the people who had fallen victim to this harvest den and ensured they were in decent shape.

"Fine, let's go."

While I tried to keep things unchanged, it couldn't be helped some things were different. Our company was scheduled to be promoted to D-Class tomorrow. Every part of it had grown a lot these past several months. This included my security detail.

We even had a specific team that was meant to deal with my mess during these hunting trips. One for urban environments and one for the wasteland. One specializing in zero-g environments would likely be established soon as well.

Besides protection, they came in handy when I was low on time. After all, many things would be happening tomorrow. Our first test flight of the aircraft I designed. The promotion to D-Class corporation. Then a party with Joey and my other partners for the promotion.

Thorne is right. There's so much to do tomorrow. Why did we schedule everything for the same day?

I got up nice and early, at the break of dawn. I had to be up in time to observe our flight test for the day. While the end goal was to create our own spaceships for our future space expansion, we had to start from somewhere.

Spaceships and aircraft were quite similar. The environment they were designed for differed severely, but you couldn't discount how one stemmed from the other.

My aerospace engineering only dove into the spacecraft knowledge over the later levels. It wasn't surprising, given the complexity of a proper space-worthy vessel.

At first, it may sound easy due to them sailing through the vacuum where weight wasn't as much of a concern. You could have a chunk of hollowed metal and it would float around fine. However, for it to be safe for humans to stay over a long period of time, there were many complex considerations that had to be addressed.

For one, space was a harsh environment. Radiation protection, advanced life supports, propulsion, navigation, supplies, and more were all things that needed to be accounted for. Otherwise, if something went wrong, it would go *really* wrong.

Then you also had to account for its combat-worthiness, livability, and miscellaneous functions such as the capability to mine asteroids.

Designing a ship that addressed all these things would cost a lot of money and time. Actually, building it costs even more.

Thankfully, the R&D going into our new aircraft wouldn't be disappearing into the void. In-atmosphere aircraft still had numerous uses. Not only could it replace the VTOL I had bought from AeroDynamics, we could also build up an air fleet for our logistics company.

The wasteland may not be traversable, but there was a high demand for logistics to and from Elevate City. As the commercial capital of the world, it wasn't a secret that huge amounts of items went in and out of the city. There was an inexhaustible demand waiting for our company to exploit. It was practically a seller's market.

It may not be quick money, but it was stable work for those who could afford to get into it.

With that in mind, I stepped into my office and engaged the holographic projector. I quickly found myself inside a virtual command center. Near the head of the table, I spotted Vin already there.

"Morning Vin, did you guys finish drawing up the new routes in time?"

He shook his head before taking a sip from his cup.

"No way we're finalizing anything when we don't even know if our birds are reliable. We also need to test its load capacity and speed first."

"I sent those to you guys last week."

"Yeah, theoretical numbers won't do. It's why we're doing this test today, right?"

"Fine, take your time, then."

I put up a front of being irritated, but I didn't really mind the delay. He was right. We weren't in a rush, but I found his lack of trust in our data amusing. I had worked so hard and set up the simulations with Pino, the mathematical genius from Aegis.

Maybe it's too much to ask for others to put in the same amount of trust as I have.

While we talked business, the test soon got on the way. The test pilots I had met yesterday could be seen on the screens. They were doing their final checks before takeoff.

As the first aircraft I designed, I kept it simple and made it similar to existing designs. The only areas I took liberties in were the stealth materials and its navigation software. All the other components, such as its armaments, were unchanged, while I focused on cost effectiveness and gaining experience for myself. A transport didn't need to be armed to the teeth, anyway.

The new VTOL resembled our old one, but navy blue. It swiftly took off without any trouble. We watched the pilots circle the city on the predetermined flight path, and it took the whole morning to finish recording all the results.

Ironically, once the tests were done, I was guided onto our only aircraft in active service myself. We flew directly to the space elevator.

"So sure you brought all the documents?" I asked. "It'd be a story all right if we had to send you back during our promotion meeting."

"Oh, would it hurt you to have faith in me?" Claire retorted. "Of course I have everything. In the first place, if I didn't have everything, they wouldn't have even approved the promotion and we wouldn't be heading out to the consortium today."

I took a peek out the window toward the ever-looming tower that symbolized corporate authority.

"Okay, okay. I was just making sure. We'll be staying there all day today, so I didn't want to have to do an extra trip for no reason."

"Oh yeah, what was that about a representative from Ferrumus Corp last night? You said you knew him? Fill me in so I know what to expect."

"Hmm, that guy. All I know is that he was a security personnel the last time I saw him. A powerful one at that, but I don't really know anything else about him. Ferrumus Corp, on the other hand, has been working with Joey pretty often. He should know more. They're still receiving a share of our profits for their agreement to hold back High Gate Group's backers."

"I don't think I'd be able to butt into your conversation with Joey too much during afternoon tea. Just tell me what you know. Particularly why they would want to join in on our celebration party so much."

"Optimistically, they're just here for closer cooperation after learning some things about my guardian angel. Pessimistically, they are bringing news of new troubles. I guess we do have to plan for the worst-case scenarios. These meetings create so much work for us!"

"You mean for *us*! Do you have any idea how busy our gaming department has been recently? I just hope none of this will affect our operations. We're making a lot of money, but we need every credit of it."

We used the time over the short ride from our company to the space elevator to come up with contingencies. The only thing we could do for now was to prepare and pray.