

After Jackie and I got bored of sitting around, pretending to recover from our impromptu game, we took off the undersuits. They had worked perfectly, and other than needing a quick rinse, they were ready to use for our next mission. Which Jackie just so happened to have word on.

"So, Padre got in contact with me this morning," He said, sitting down on a crate in the corner of the garage.

"New mission?" I guessed, sitting down at the workbench and spinning around to face him. "Anything fun?"

"Well... He took my words to heart, at least," the Night City native responded, rubbing the back of his head. "I told him Kaytlyn and you were both joining us on missions now, so we were working with a crew of four."

"So he gave us something bigger?"

"Yeah. He located a scav hub," Jackie said. "One part distribution point, one part gang ripper doc, one part storage and drop off."

"That... sounds like a big deal," I said, leaning back in my seat in surprise.

"It is," Jackie admitted. "It's big enough that... Well, choom, before we tried out those suits of yours, I would have thought it was too much for us."

"Why would Padre give it to you then?" I asked, looking at him confused.

"I think he was hoping you would talk me out of it," He guessed with a shrug. "That, or I would pass on it and learn a lesson on asking for more than I could handle or whatever."

"...He clearly doesn't know you as well as he thinks," I said with a scoff. "What exactly are we looking at? Actually, hold on, let's get everyone together, then you can explain."

A quick shout-out of the garage brought Kaytlyn, Murtaugh, and Riggs to the shop, all of them pulling in chairs from the outside. I couldn't help but smile when Riggs and Murtaugh both sat down naturally. The need and desire to sit was something they didn't normally have, meaning that it was a newly learned idea. They were already developing, even if it was just mimicry to better fit into the role they were playing.

Once everyone was together, with Samwise surreptitiously listening as he "worked" on something in the corner, Jackie went over the gig, which we technically hadn't accepted yet. The target was a large warehouse just on the outskirts of Arroyo. Technically, it wasn't quite Padre's domain, but he had already cleared it with the appropriate people, so as long as we didn't go on a rampage outside the target, we would be in the clear.

The warehouse had three main areas. The offices, the ground floor, and the basement sublevel. The offices were a decent-sized building off to the side of the main structure. Padre assumed that that was where they kept their ripperdocs. According to the old man, they were

both installing cyberware for their workers and going over the incoming "product." The ground floor of the warehouse was storage, and what Padre suspected was some sort of gathering area. Above the ground floor was an upper level of catwalks and platforms. We would have to be careful of scavs up there, shooting down at us.

Under both of those was the basement sublevel. Padre's intel suggested that this was where the scavs victims were initially... harvested. There was a ramp along the back that had access to the basement level, and whoever was watching the place had witnessed several cars, vans, and trucks drive down the ramp, pulling back out not long after.

According to what Padre knew, there were anywhere between twenty and *thirty* scavs there at any time. He also warned Jackie that the people protecting the place would be seriously decked out with chrome, considering what they were guarding. I couldn't deny the logic in his assumption. If I were a psychotic group of mass murderers, a group almost universally hated throughout Night City, so much so that killing me was considered a public service, I would make sure my bodyguards had access to the best advancements I could provide.

They are guarding my body, after all. I want them to be fucking good at it.

When Jackie was finally done going over the information that Padre had provided, Kaytlyn let out a long whistle.

"That's a lot of fuck to deal with, choom," She said, running her hand through her hair. "I'm not saying we can't handle it... But it's a lot."

"I think we can handle it," I said with a shrug. "Between the element of surprise, Riggs being a walking tank, and the gear I've been making... I think we can handle it."

"I'm concerned they may have their own borgs to counter Riggs," Murtaugh stated. "He is tough but not invincible."

"I want to make him some custom guns to give him an edge against bigger targets," I volunteered. "A big slug thrower and a pistol that is better rated to his size. I also want to make some improvements to his overall strength. Assuming you want them?"

I looked over at the big AI, who met my gaze as well as he could with a helmet on. He nodded without hesitation.

"Yes, Sir," He answered quickly. "I would like the upgrades."

"Good. Jackie, how long do we have?"

"I still need to accept the gig, but Padre promised to hold it for the day," He explained. "But we should take care of it ASAP, choom. Scavs aren't gonna stop until we make them."

"Yeah, alright. Take the job. We can do it tomorrow night," I said, looking at everyone as they nodded in agreement. "I need to make a helmet for myself, some guns for Riggs, and an armored underlayer for you, Kaytlyn. That, plus the improvements for you, Riggs."

"Okay, I'll give Padre a call," Jackie said, standing up with a smile. "This one is going to be fun, Genio!"

I chuckled and shook my head, watching as everyone, but Samwise cleared out of the garage, which was good because I now had a lot of work to do and not so much time to do it.

"Sam, can you work on making an armored underlayer for Kaytlyn?" I requested, the AI nodding in agreement. "After that, let's come up with a modified version of the framework that the warden armor uses. I want to replace it with a beefier, thicker version of the muscular system using the improved artificial muscles. We should be able to fit close to fifty percent more fibers and drastically increase the kinetic output Riggs is capable of."

"Very well. What will you be working on?" He asked, already hooking himself up to the second computer we set up at my workstation.

We would have two separate stations, but he is still pretending to be a particularly advanced robot, not an AI.

"I'm gonna take a crack at redesigning some weapons for Riggs," I explained, already opening up my design software. "I want to put him in a new weight class with the upgrades, then let him punch up beyond that with even better weapons."

We both got to work, with me on the new weapons and Samwise resizing an armored underlayer for Kaytlyn. We were about thirty minutes in when Samwise brought up something about our ally and her new gear.

"Sir... are we sure that giving Kaytlyn an armored underlayer is a good idea?" He asked, not looking away from his screen, controlling the program through his cable. "The underlayer is a significant advancement beyond current tech levels. My research indicated that no armored suit exists that is so lightweight, efficient, and potent. If it were to get into teh wrong hands..."

"I... You're not wrong," I admitted, chewing the inside of my cheek. "I don't fully trust her yet."

I stood and walked toward the open bay, peaking my head out of the door to see Riggs standing guard, leaning against the building. I gave him a thumbs-up and confirmed Kaytlyn was over by the BD Shack talking to Jackie, before walking back inside.

"Put a locator beacon into the spine of the underlayer. Make it a strong one, but keep it off and isolated from the rest of the system," I explained. "Could you have it turned on if it receives a signal? Maybe a random radio message or something? That way, we could blast that, and the beacon would respond with a pulse. Oh, and give it a mini E-node to keep it powered forever."

"Yes, I believe I can do that," He agreed. "It will delay the creation by a few hours."

"That's fine," I assured him. "We can finish whatever we don't get done today tomorrow morning."

"I will complete the raw components for Riggs' upgrades tonight," He responded. "You can then install them tomorrow morning."

"Yeah, that works for me," I agreed, sitting back down at my workstation. "Thanks for the hard work, Samwise."

"I enjoy it, Sir," He said, a hint of emotion leaking into his artificial voice. "It is mentally stimulating, and I would grow bored if I did not keep busy."

I nodded in understanding before focusing on the task at hand. Currently, Riggs' loadout consisted of a mag pistol, a mag rifle, and my plasma shortsword. All of these worked fine, but he was capable of handling so much more, so why not give it to him? My first instinct was to just upsize everything he was currently using, but the [square-cube law](#) would prevent that from working. I also decided to just leave the sword alone. It was mostly Alien Alloy, so it could withstand most of what he threw at it. As cool as it would be to build him a plasma buster sword or something, that was just too impractical.

I started with the pistol, disassembling it virtually and studying the parts. I had learned quite a bit about material sciences with Titanfall, and made several advancements in electrical systems, precision engineering, and several other fields. Even if I wasn't looking to make something completely new, I could have upgraded my base pistol design by a not-inconsiderable amount, just by applying what I had learned.

"Dammit..." I said, trailing off as I leaned back in my chair. "I learned so much with that branch. Now, I want to go back and apply it to everything I made from XCOM."

"Why?" Samwise asked, looking over at my computer. "Are your design not sufficient?"

"I mean, yeah... But I could get a good ten to fifteen percent increase in power from the mag weapons alone..." I explained with a frown. "I could probably even remove the need for Alien Alloy with some of the advanced metal alloys I learned about..."

"Sir, upgrading all of your technology with every subsequent branch will only become an exponentially increasing problem," Samwise pointed out. "Eventually, you will unlock production capabilities powerful enough to keep up with that, but for now, you would likely hold yourself back considerably."

"Yeah, I know. It still sucks using tech I know I can make better," I said, letting out a long breath. "It's fine, though. I can handle it."

I took a moment or ten to push the idea of upgrading my base pistol design out of my head and got to work designing what I was already calling my heavy pistol. The process started slow, as I was specifically designing something that would be best served for people with a lot of cyberware or some serious enhancements. Jackie would be able to handle it with his armored underlayer on, and I would probably be able to avoid hurting myself if I was wearing mine, but otherwise, it would be too much recoil and too much weight.

I started simple, building off of an AA barrel, looped with spiraling coils of electromagnets, woven with advanced techniques developed in Titanfall. While they preferred gunpowder weapons in that reality, that didn't mean I didn't pick up some applicable concepts.

When the primary system was done, I started working on the supplementary components, like the E-node power source, the magazine feed, and several other mechanical features, like a removable power pack in case of power system malfunctions, the ability to eject the chambered slug to empty the pistol.

When I was done, I used the CAD program to color most of the pistol black so I could get a better idea of what it would look like.

Where my first [pistol design](#) had been sleek, leaning a bit to far into form over function, [this one was all function](#). It looked much more like a real firearm, something you would see in a soldier or police officer's hand. The powerpack was under the mag barrel, with a pull block in the back that would let you empty chambered projectiles. The magazine held twelve rounds, which didn't sound like a lot until you realized how large the rounds were. Each of them was nearly an inch and a half long, arrayed inside the magazine at a slight angle to fit.

It was also fucking *gigantic*, easily bigger than a Desert Eagle from back home. It was built for people like Riggs, and not much else.

That increased size was almost completely dumped back into the potency of the weapon. It contained nearly one and a half times as many mag coils as my original pistol, as well as a solid bump in energy generation and storage. The weapon was a monster, and it would likely be nearly impossible for a baseline human to shoot accurately.

Once I was finished with the design, I got the parts printing, using the small molly-maker since Samwise would be using the big one to make Kaytlyn's armored underlayer. While that was running, I got to work with Rigg's primary weapon, a replacement for his rifle.

Now, Riggs was almost always going to be on the frontline. In fact, if he ever wasn't, chances are something had gone really wrong with whatever plan we were following. He would also be tasked with taking down heavy targets, mostly borgs. His new pistols reflected that, and when I was finished designing him a shotgun inspired slug thrower, his primary weapon would as well.

Rather than build him a machine gun, I was going for a high-powered, large-caliber, wrecking machine. I wanted something that Riggs could use to take down *vehicles*, never mind borgs. In some ways, his load out would be reversed. He would use his pistol for most fights, and pull the high-powered slug thrower when shit needed to get done, and there was a couple inches of armor in the way.

I started working through my idea, rough sketching the outline of the weapon before starting the design process. The barrel, as well as a good chunk of the frame, was not just AA, but generously applied AA. The barrel had fins running along the side, six of them, just to add even more support. All of this was to handle the more than several dozen electromagnetic

accelerators lined up between all of the support fins. This was significantly more than my previously highest amount, which had been the sniper rifle. Without the extra thickness and supporting fins, the forces I was hoping to generate with this weapon would have torn a lesser barrel to shreds,

I seated the finned barrel in a protective cylinder, then started to build the rest of the gun from there, working outward. As I was doing some of the math for just how powerful the weapon could be, primarily so I could design the appropriate projectile, I ran into the first issue. The forces I was dealing with would tear apart a standard magazine. I could reinforce it with AA, but then I would need to reduce the amount of shots. Plus, this weapon was already using a ridiculous amount of AA, I really didn't want to build the magazines, which would inevitably get left behind at some point, out of it as well.

It took me nearly an hour before I finally puzzled the problem out. It wasn't a perfect solution, but it worked well enough that Riggs wouldn't lose any functionality in the weapon. Rather than a magazine, he would reload an entire cylinder mag. The cylinders were big, but with twelve shots each, carrying three, with one already in the weapon, would mean forty-eight shots.

That may not sound like a lot, but each projectile was only slightly smaller than a fifty BMG round from back home. Not the bullet, the *entire round*. Forty-eight was more than enough to deal with most situations.

The real benefit of the cylinder mag was its extra size, which I could use to fill with a lot of extra material, letting it withstand the forces involved with firing one of the projectiles, all without using AA.

Once I settled on a solution, the design process only took about another hour. While Samwise was using the large maker, I set the parts to get printed out on what was now the medium-sized one. By that point, the pistol parts were done, as were a few mags and ammo. I called Riggs in so he could get a feel for the weapon.

"So, what do you think?" I asked, watching as he handled the pistol for the first time.

"Fits my size a bit better," He said, double-checking that the weapon was cleared before aiming it at the wall. "It's got weight."

"Samwise is going to be working on an upgrade for the warden armor overnight," I explained. "By tomorrow morning, you will have two new weapons designed to hit harder than anything you can buy on the market, at least for their size, and the strength to wield them."

"...Why focus on me, Sir?" The large AI asked simply, lowering the large pistol.

"Because you have a very specific role to play as the tank and heavy," I explained. "And as you were, I wasn't sure who would win in an even fight, you or a chromed-out psycho. When we are finished with your upgrades, there won't be a single doubt."

He nodded in understanding before grabbing some of the ammo I had made for his new weapon. He left the garage, and I followed, watching him as he tried out the pistol, firing a few dozen shots at one of the wrecked cars parked in the parking lot across the street. Just as with the smaller pistol I had at my hip, the only sound the weapon made was a whipping sound, followed by a crack as the projectile broke the sound barrier.

I watched as each shot easily punched through the metal paneling on the exterior of the wreck. They often plowed through the other side and slammed into a concrete barrier when nothing substantial stood in their way. When he had used all the ammo, he once again double-checked to make sure the weapon was clear. Together, we moved to inspect the target, walking around the rusted-out car. The bullets had done an incredible amount of damage, blasting through quite a bit of metal and polymer. It had certainly done better than my first attempt at a custom pistol would have. The large AI nodded in appreciation at the damage before turning around to face me.

"I like it," He stated simply. "I would prefer two."

"Two? I... you know having two guns slows your reload by a lot, right?" I asked, the AI nodding a single time.

"Can that not be fixed?" He asked simply.

"I... probably?" I responded, a few ideas already floating to the surface of my mind. "Yes, I can definitely do something-"

"Then please, I would like two."

I studied the large AI robot for a moment before letting out a sigh and shrugging.

"Alright, fine. I'll come up with some sort of easy reload rig and print you out a second pistol," I said. "I'll make some holsters for you as well."

"Thank you, Sir."

I nodded and gestured for the large pistol back, taking the large weapon and heading back into the workshop. I got a second pistol added to the schedule, along with a quick form of a holster that we could fuse to the warden armor.

After a moment of debate, I decided that Riggs' quick loading system could wait until tomorrow, as I wanted to complete my helmet design. That was something I needed versus something that somebody else just wanted. I sat down at the computer, pulled up [Jackie's ogre helmet](#) design, and got to work. I wanted to look comparable to his since we would be working together, and team cohesion was always cool. I pulled apart his design, reinforced and altered the main framework, and then saved that as the starting point for future helmets. Then, I spent an hour adding layers of polymer paneling, AA, and Kevlar, creating a helmet that was similar to Jackie's but with a different cut. It was very much still Ogre-Oni-Demon-ish, but much sleeker and less bulky.

The biggest difference was the back of the helmet. Where Jackie's had decorative straps that kind of looked like hair, my paneling continued in the open, giving the illusion that he had "hair" and I was bald.

When I was done with my helmet, I quickly put together one for Kaytlyn. I knew I would never convince her to shave her head, and I was pretty sure her hair wasn't detachable, so that meant a full helmet was out. So, instead, I made a mask she could strap to cover her face. It also looked ogre-ish, but with what I hoped was a distinctly feminine look, made by shading and cutting the jawline and brow. When I was done with that, I pushed away from the computer.

"Okay, Sam. I'm heading to bed," I said, stretching and yawning. "There is a queue set up for everything I made, so if you could get an MRVN unit to pull everything out, it will continue on its own."

"Of course, Sir."

"Thanks for your hard work, Sam. Let me know if you need anything."

I waved as I left the garage, exiting through the door rather than one of the large bay doors. As I walked back to my trailer, I waved to Murtaugh as well, who was making the rounds, a pair of specters walking with him.

The next morning, I arrived back at the garage relatively early, ready to install Rigg's upgrades. Kaytlyn's armored underlayer and helmet, which Samwise had taken the liberty of coloring purple and gold, were set to the side. Front and center of the garage was a large array of artificial muscle, the good Titanfall stuff, ready to install on Riggs' frame. The AI himself was there as well, with Samwise and a MRVN unit slowly removing the warden armor.

"Good morning, everyone," I said as I entered. "Are you ready for your upgrades, Riggs?"

"Yes, I am, sir."

"Great, let's get the rest of that armor off and we can start putting the new artificial muscles on."

The Titanfall synthetic muscles were considerably more advanced than what the Cyberpunk world had to offer, beyond just having the ability to become rigid on command. It was stronger, thinner, lighter, and more durable, making it utterly superior to the best artificial muscle this world had to offer. Not only that, but the muscle I had used to make the warden armor originally had been of middling quality at best. This replacement and addition would drastically increase Riggs' strength.

The first step was reinforcing the skeleton that the warden system used to anchor the muscles. While technically the Titanfall artificial muscles didn't need it, the armor was built around them, including the plating, so we decided to keep it. It wouldn't reduce the effectiveness of the muscle and would keep the armor stable. After that was done, we started layering in the artificial muscle.

It took an hour to get everything set in, locked into place and properly attached. We stopped then to admire our work and do a quick series of tests to make sure everything was functioning properly. The [original design](#) of warden armor musculature had strands of artificial muscle connecting across an Alien Alloy frame. Even that was pushing the line of AA's strength, as even the impressive metal was no match for the unfavorable leverage needed to move the suit. Now, with the Titanfall fibers able to tense and support the form, the AA was all but completely hidden, as every inch of the frame was covered with bulging synthetic muscles. He looked like a behemoth, a 'roided out mass of gunmetal gray fibers, all of them shifting and moving as he confirmed he still had a full range of motion.

He looked a lot like the [nanosuit](#) from Crysis, but with a lot more refined strands, rather than thick cords.

Once we were done with the tests, Samwise and an MRVN unit started putting on Riggs' last layer, the AA armor plating, while I got to work on his quick reloader. I was a bit worried that I would have to build something complicated, but in the end, I built a simple clipping system that would hold his full mags around his hips. The ends of the spare mags were set out in a way that he could hook his empty mag wells on them, tilt them to the side to snap them free of a locking clip, and then slam them home, all in one quick movement. I got six of them printing out on the small molly-maker, before looking around the workshop. Riggs was standing at the garage entrance, fully armored up, his two pistols now stored in his newly attached holsters.

"Riggs, your quick reload mag holders are printing," I explained. While we wait... you wanna try your new rifle?"

I turned back to where I had stored it the previous night, pulling it out of a black bag. Riggs pushed off from the wall and stepped closer, hands twitching in excitement.

"Riggs, I present to you, the [Mag Cannon](#)," I said, holding out the weapon for him to take. "Twenty-four and a half pounds of Alien Alloy, advanced polymers, and miscellaneous metals, the mag cannon fires a four and a half inch round at fuck your target, and everyone behind them speeds. It reloads using a replaceable twelve-round cylinder, and yes, we have clips for them, so you can carry a few of them around with you."

Riggs took the weapon from me and stared at it, turning it over in his hands to study it from every angle. I spent a few minutes describing how to fire it before I gestured to the outdoors.

"Cmon, let's go shoot that thing."

Riggs nodded before following me out of the workshop. We stopped at the edge of the road, facing the parking lot across the street.

"You're currently loaded with steel and lead rounds, built for blowing chunks out of borgs," I explained. "I also have tungsten and steel rounds that should make a decent play at taking down vehicles. Go ahead and fire whenever you're ready. Aim at one of the cars."

Riggs nodded in understanding before stepping up and shouldered his new weapon, activation lights all reading green since the system was fully charged. He held the weapon steady, aimed down the simple sights and pulled the trigger.

The usual whipping sound of a mag weapon was replaced by a much harsher, deeper sound, followed by the same crack of the sound barrier breaking. Riggs, the newly upgraded behemoth that he was, was rocked back by the rifle, though he almost immediately recovered.

Across the street, the bullet punched through the side of a car, denting it inwards like someone had slammed it with a sledgehammer. The hood of the car exploded upwards, shrapnel and shards of engine block blowing through the metal hood. For a moment, we were both frozen before we both quickly crossed the street to inspect the damage. When we arrived, Riggs wrenched the hood of the vehicle open to see inside. Smoke and dust rose from the engine housing, the bullet having punched through most of the engine. It was utter destruction.

"Well... maybe the tungsten rounds are for armored vehicles then," I commented, before looking at Riggs. "Do you like it?"

"Hell yes, Sir."