

# CYBERIZATION

## CHAPTER 6

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Feeling apprehensive about receiving “free” upgrades from an unidentified benefactor—likely Sir Fuzzy, who wanted to use me for murdering... well, I didn’t know who—I shot a wary glance at C3-POS. “What sort of upgrades am I receiving?” I asked, my tone tinged with skepticism.

I noticed the robot’s eyes flicker for a brief moment before it spoke. “I have you scheduled for a military-grade ICE Shell, augmented with the cutting-edge HD Coating, and a 01-XPS. Additionally, you’ll receive offensive GM Weaponry and three combat-training simulation chips,” stated the robot, its gold-plated head tilting slightly, as if anticipating my inevitable follow-up questions.

“Care to elaborate?” was that said follow-up.

However, the robot’s only reply was, “Please follow me.” It then turned and began walking toward a door at the back of the store. I hesitated for a moment, contemplating whether to follow. But with any overly negative emotional thoughts dulled, curiosity won out over fear or apprehension, and I trailed after the stupid robot.

As I stepped into the back room, I was greeted by a large, futuristic machine that looked as though it could disassemble and reassemble an Iron Man suit. Adjacent to it was a table covered in what were clearly robotic body parts, the ones that I could recognize were pristine and polished white. Among them, I noticed a chest piece that appeared to have an A-cup. I won’t lie—I felt a twinge of disappointment. But what disappointed me most was the glaring absence of the most important feature—.

“Where’s the hair?” I blurted out.

Despite my growing sense of unease—albeit a dulled one—the robot ignored me and proceeded toward the large machine. “If you would step onto that platform,” C3-POS directed, gesturing to a spot at the center of the contraption. With a resigned groan, I stepped into the heart of the Frankenstein device, uncertain of what to expect next.

“I better not get struck by lightning,” I stated, giving the robot a flat stare. C3-POS paused and tilted its head from side to side, as if processing my comment. Then, without addressing it, the robot returned to its tasks.

After a moment, the robot spoke, “Caution, modification application is now starting.”

*//: REINITIALIZING FULL FIBER-MOTOR CONTROL OF SUBJECT.*

“Damn it, not this again,” I mentally swore as I felt control over my body ripped away.

//: *ACCESSING EXTERIOR OPTICAL VIEWING.*

My perspective abruptly shifted, and I found myself staring at... my own body? “*This is too trippy.*” I mused, watching what appeared to be a live video feed of myself. The machinery surrounding my immobilized form whirred into action. My body assumed an X-pose, making room for the mechanized arms to navigate. Even though I had never noticed bolts or screws on me, the sound of a rivet gun filled the air. I watched as I began to be disassembled with surgical precision, piece by piece. Adding to my annoyance, the robotic arms showed complete disregard for my clothing, tearing them to shreds in the process.

In a matter of seconds, my endoskeleton lay exposed for me to see. It resembled a black carbon fiber skeleton overlaid with a similar, fibrous muscular structure. For a fleeting millisecond, I thought I detected the faintest shift in its form. To my relief, I still had a face; I’d assumed beneath my previous white synthetic face lay a metallic skull. But this was different—it looked like what anyone’s face might appear as if you stripped away the flesh. Terrifying, yes, but the black carbon fiber material somehow softened the horror. However, not all parts of my body had this pseudo-muscular overlay; much of my skeleton was visible, especially around my rib area.

But let’s not kid ourselves—this was far from an organic visage. There were unmistakably android elements to my form. Chrome patches adorned the back of my head and chest, and neon lights pulsated subtly across various points on my body.

“*I look like the love child of Tron and evil John Connor.*” I chuckled inwardly. Though I should’ve been horrified, my dulled emotions leaned more toward fascination. My thoughts briefly halted as a realization struck me. “*Why are pop culture references easier for me to remember than my own past life?*” I mused, but no internal voice offered an answer.

Despite my inward reflection, the machinery continued its work unfazed. It first reached for the new chest piece, which appeared slightly more advanced and sturdier than the previous one, and while slightly more feminine, it was still just as underwhelming in size. The rest of the exoskeleton followed suit, each piece manifesting noticeable upgrades in design. I saw larger devices inserted into my wrists and ankles, their purpose an enigma for now. Another significant device was embedded into my abdomen. Just before my facial cover was reattached, three small objects were installed at the base of my skull. As a finishing touch, a translucent film was sprayed over my entire form. As it dried, it became virtually invisible, as though it had never been applied in the first place. All in all, I looked much the same, yet subtly more advanced in ways difficult to articulate.

//: *TRANSFERRING FULL FIBER-MOTOR CONTROL TO SUBJECT.*

Just as my perspective switched back to my own viewpoint, I could’ve sworn my new white shell suddenly illuminated, highlighted by streaks of cyan light. I blinked a few times, still disoriented from the experience. A quick glance downward confirmed that I did indeed have various strips of cyan lights tracing streamlined patterns up, down, and around my new form. Overall, I felt mostly satisfied with my upgrade, though I had two major grievances: the lack of input I’d had in my own

customization, and the baby-doll face I'd been given—a feature common to those I'd woken up with on the space station—oh yeah, and the lack of hair!

As if reading my thoughts—which I sincerely hoped wasn't a feature—the robot finally spoke. “The ICE Shell has features that can be adjusted more to your liking. Should you wish to personalize your appearance, we have a holographic interface available.” As it gestured to a corner of the room, a translucent holographic version of myself appeared on cue.

“Thanks, C3-POS,” I replied aloud as I made my way over to the projection.

“That is not my identifier. However, for future business interactions, I have updated my database with this designation for you. You may use that label to address any android at a CryoCyber Solutions subsidiary to access your account,” the robot stated. I ignored him, as I continued to approach my holographic doppelganger.

I paced around it for a bit, frowning as I stared at the backside, a bit disappointed that it wasn't only my chest that was on the small side. As I came back around to the front, I glanced around for a control interface, or something, but found nothing. Uncertain what else to do, I poked the hologram's eye. To my surprise, a transparent interface sprang to life beside it, resembling a video game character customization menu.

With a tap of my finger—which passed right through the display—I watched the shape of the hologram's eyes morph. To my astonishment, each eye could be shaped and colored independently. My initial attempt resulted in one eye being a massive, round orb, a look that turned out to be more terrifying than intriguing. After some tinkering, I settled on almond-shaped eyes, which seemed more expressive. I was already fond of the cyan lights that adorned my body and was thrilled to discover that I could make my eyes glow the same captivating hue.

Next, I sculpted a strong, feminine jawline complemented by high cheekbones, creating an undeniably stunning look. I then opted for full, soft lips and a well-proportioned, somewhat narrow nose that harmonized perfectly with my other features. My new face was movie-star gorgeous, and I was smitten with it.

“Now, if only there was an option to address the glaring absence of hair,” I muttered.

“The HD Coating you have installed should be able to project a hairstyle of your choosing,” C3-POS said from over my shoulder.

I glanced back at the gold-plated robot. “What does that even mean?” I paused before adding, “And the same goes for that ICE thingy.”

“You've been equipped with an ICE Shell—short for Infiltration Combat Exterior Shell—along with HD Coating for Holographic Deception, 01-XPS for Explosive Personnel Shielding, and GM Weaponry for Gravity Manipulation,” the robot informed me, much to my astonishment. “Your HD Coating can holographically project any fashion, hairstyle, and appearance you've uploaded into your cybernetic databanks,” it added.

“C-Could you clarify,” I stammered, struggling to find the right words for a moment. “Does this mean the adjustments I’m making are for a holographic projection that I’ll be wearing?” I finally managed to ask.

“Negative, your shell has the ability to adjust its shapes, sizes, and proportions for enhanced infiltration capabilities. The holographic projection serves as an added overlay,” the robot clarified.

“Huh... What do you mean by appearances I’ve uploaded?” I inquired, still grappling with all this new information.

“If you encounter any attire or styles that appeal to you, you can scan them. Doing so will enable your HD Coating to project those appearances for future use,” the robot explained. “Your cybernetic database already contains two wardrobe options and ten hairstyles. You can also project standard flesh tones, which come as a default feature of the coating. For nonstandard flesh tones, you’ll need to either scan them or purchase the projections from a CryoCyber Solutions subsidiary. Just be sure to use the designation you provided.”

Without much thought, I clicked the ‘confirm’ option for appearance alteration. Almost instantly, I felt a tingling sensation spread across my face. Curious, I reached up and touched it, realizing that my sense of touch had significantly improved. I ran my hands down from my head, tracing between my breasts, and down to the indent where a navel would typically be. Astonishingly, I could feel it all. My entire body was now capable of sensation.

My holographic doppelganger shifted again, this time offering options for attire and, most excitingly, hair! I immediately began flipping through the hair choices. Much like in video games, there were three options that were clearly male, three that were clearly female, and three that were unisex. The tenth option was just bald, prompting me to shoot an annoyed glare at the robot.

“That shouldn’t even count as an option,” I grumbled.

Ultimately, all the choices were less than ideal, but I settled for a long, slicked-back look. It wasn’t great, but it was the least terrible of the lot. What really irked me was the lack of any cool visual effects for the hairstyles, like the ones I’d seen on Robo-Punk and Silica. No, my hair was just black, and I wasn’t happy about it.

Next up was my attire. To my annoyance, the clothing that had been shredded during my disassembly and reassembly was one of the two available options. That earned C3-POS another disdainful glare. The other choice resembled a janitor’s jumpsuit. I opted for the look of my original mushroom spider outfit. Before confirming my selection, I paused to scrutinize my reflection, feeling that something was either missing or not quite right. Unsure what it could be, I revisited the hair options. With a reluctant groan, I removed the hair entirely.

“I can change my appearance anytime I want?” I asked the robot.

“That is correct. You can perform such actions at your Maintenance Station,” the robot responded.

I paused for a second, racking my brain to figure out where my Maintenance Station was. Then it hit me—the upright coffin that Silica detested, also known as my charging bed. With a nod, I clicked “confirm.”

“Would all these new features affect my battery life?” I inquired after my thoughts had drifted to the charging bed.

“Your quantum nano battery does not require any charging,” it stated, as if I should have somehow known this fact already.

“When did you install a quantum nano battery?” I asked, recalling that Silica had mentioned they were something only the military and extremely wealthy could obtain.

“I did not install one; it was already installed with your combat endoskeleton chassis.”

I was at a loss for words. While I might not have fully grasped what was going on, I was pretty sure CryoCyber Solutions wouldn’t have accidentally given me a military-grade body. This made me wonder even more about who Sir Fuzzy was and how much trouble I’d be in if he realized I wasn’t the top-notch assassin he had mistaken me for.

Considering my options, I was about to ask the robot another question when its eyes started flickering rapidly. It didn’t have eyelids, so the glowing light within them flashed on and off like a strobe light. The machine even swayed for a moment before snapping back to attention, its posture more rigid than before.

“Greetings to CryoCyber Solutions subsidiaries. How may I assist you?” it greeted.

“Um, I’m here for an appointment... I’m Obsidia,” I replied, feeling a bit apprehensive and confused.

The robot tilted its head for a moment before responding, “I have no record of that name. I must ask you to leave the back of the store immediately.”

“O-Okay,” I said, nodding and feeling somewhat baffled by the glitchy robot’s memory loss. As the oblivious robot escorted me out of the store, a sudden realization struck me about what had felt off when I was editing my appearance. I glanced down at my small chest, saddened that I had forgotten to alter my body proportions. I was still flat-chested, flat-butt, and bald. All in all, it had been a productive experience.