

Chapter 20: Testing

First thing in the morning, I ventured to an electronic store I found online with positive reviews. There was an entire street dedicated to electronics with only pedestrian access, and it was crowded even this early in the day.

Disembarking from the car, I watched it drive off to auto park itself in a nearby parking lot.

Taking in the crowd of people, I couldn't help but note the cybernetics people had, as it was my current field of work.

I slid past the crowd while following the GPS. I soon arrived at my destination: a large electronic store that spanned 10 floors of an entire building.

I made my way to the floor for the components that were on my shopping list and marked down everything I wanted to buy. I would then submit the list when I left to checkout and they would prepare the products for me.

The last item I wanted to buy was on the top floor of the store where there were much fewer people. The entire floor was enormous and felt a little empty compared to the other levels. There were even more staff than customers on this floor.

With the signs clearly labeled, I made my way to the section I was looking for and saw rows of metal boxes that ranged from the size of a microwave to the size of a bedroom.

I compared the description information of the first few that caught my eye. I started getting a little lost, as there were many specifications and technical jargon that made no sense to me.

"Hello, sir. How may I help you today?" I looked up to see a young woman walking up to me with a smile.

"I'm looking for a 3D printer for some personal tinkering. Can you go over some models and their differences?"

"Why definitely, please follow me to the demo terminal."

The woman walked with an exaggerated sway at the hips while she brought me toward a corner of the floor where a large terminal lay. With a few commands from the woman, a hologram shot out from the terminal and displayed a particular model of the boxy printers, similar to the ones I just examined.

A few different models soon popped up beside the first one, then each one began printing a similar figurine. There was a featureless person operating each printer, showcasing how it was operated, and also served as a benchmark to determine the sizes of each machine.

“Sir, I have these models here suitable for beginners and experienced people alike and have the versatility to print with most materials. These should satisfy most personal workshops unless you have something specific in mind.”

“I’m mainly looking to work with electronic parts and apparel.”

“Hmm...” The woman took a moment to go through the terminal in front of her, “I do have a few that specialize in those areas, but do note that complex and sophisticated electronic parts like CPUs cannot be printed unless you use a specialized industrial model we do not carry here.”

The previous models disappeared and were replaced with new models that were a few sizes larger.

“That’s fine. Explain to me the differences between these models you have here.”

“Of course, all the models here have various systems that allow for electroforming, chemical etching, electrochemical machining, and laser cutting, on top of all the usual features of a standard 3D printer. You should be able to work on the vast majority of electronic parts and apparel you requested. The main difference between these models from the previous ones would be the speed of printing, build volume, and resolution. Please feel free to filter the options on the terminal as you please.”

Taking a closer look at the hologram that projected each model along with their specifications, I saw that the prices and sizes of the printers varied quite a bit.

I filtered the size to the smallest possible but was still efficient at printing human-sized apparel. This was the approximate size I needed, working with cybernetics and equipment. Any larger would be mostly overkill, and I didn’t have too much cash remaining since I invested it all into the clinic.

I decided on one that cost just over 10,000 credits and finalized the order before returning to the clinic to set it up while I had time before the clinic opened in the afternoon.

“I got all the cameras set up around the perimeter. How’s it looking on your end?”

“All clear, Sir.”

“Okay, let’s rendezvous by the car.”

Since he was all the way on the roof, I made it to our meeting spot first, allowing me to watch as Thorne approached with unnaturally quiet steps.

“How is it? Everyone working fine?”

“Yes, it feels fine. I tried jumping and running while I waited too and it still worked.”

“Okay, but if anything goes wrong, I want you to sit out and just stay out of sight.”

“Understood.”

After confirming that there wasn't anything unexpected on the cameras, we made our way to a back alley. We headed straight for the door between two dumpsters. There was a camera looking down from right above the door, though I had already breached it earlier when I was setting up surveillance to keep a lookout for any unexpected guests.

The door had similarly outdated security, which meant we easily bypassed it as well.

The lights were still on inside, giving us to clear view of the kitchen area that the backdoor had led us into. No one was inside, so we made our way through toward the dining area. In the dining area, we spotted a man and a woman sitting in the bar seats. They both had their eyes glued to the screen on the wall while they enjoyed a drink.

My optics zoomed in on their neck and identified the distinct tattoo of a spider that was the same as the one in the dossier I received from Fitel.

Noticing a third drink on the seat beside them, we waited a little longer and soon spotted three people coming out from the corridor adjacent to us.

“Only managed to convince these two shitheads to join us, so who's dealing?”

The two seated people got up and followed the others to a larger table. The women then whipped out a deck of cards and started dealing.

I looked over to Thorne and whispered, “We're dashing behind the bar to where those new guys came from. Match my timing. We're going when they have their attention on their cards when the round starts.”

Thorne nodded back in acknowledgment, and we waited patiently for the gangsters to start their game.

Once the cards were dealt, we silently opened the door and dove behind the bar. The corridor we were aiming for was on the other side of the bar, so we ducked behind the counter and smoothly made our way to the other end.

Before we dove out, we waited for the next round before we dashed out from behind the counter, down the corridor.

We passed by the washrooms and storage room until we found a door that led to the basement cellar.

We made our way down to find an open area set up like a communal living room and an open kitchen. There was no one in sight, so we confidently strode down the hallway that led further in.

Silently entering the first room, we found a bunk bed with two lumps visible on each bed. Exchanging nods with Thorne, we each headed toward a target with me going for the upper bunk. With our targets fast asleep, we effortlessly disposed of them. On my way back down, I plunge my knife into Thorn's prey as well to get the extra experience points.

+10 EXP
+10 EXP

Thankfully, he stopped asking about my strange behavior after the first few weeks we worked together.

After the first room, we continued clearing out the entire hideout, but with Thorne holding the hallway in case someone left their rooms or the people upstairs came back down.

In one room, a bright lamp was on with a man sitting by the desk, cleaning what seemed to be a disassembled gun. He was completely focused on his work, allowing me to sneak behind him.

+10 EXP

Just as I was exiting the room, I heard metal clanging, followed by a soft hiss from the hallway. Rushing out, I spotted Thorne staring down at a body with his gun aimed at it, and his knife on the ground.

"Sorry, Sir, the guy reacted better than I thought and caught me off guard. I had to shoot him." Thorne glanced downward and retrieved his knife.

His pistol wasn't a coilgun like mine. It was a more economical traditional firearm with a clunky suppressor, and even then it was louder than my Suri, but still enough to remain quiet in an enclosed space.

"Don't sweat it. Treat it as a learning experience."

I continued going from room to room, and soon we managed to clear the entire basement.

This time we left all the valuables and cybernetics intact as requested to send the message they were targeted. In the living room area, we brought out a can of spray paint and drew a symbol the client requested onto the wall.

"I think we're all done here, and I don't think we forgot anything. Just have to go up and finish off the last stragglers, right?" Thorne said, as he cleaned up.

"No, we lure them down here first. The client is looking to take this bar back, so we don't want to risk damaging anything."

“...With all due respect, sir. What a pain in the ass.”

He had a point. It would be much simpler to just sneak up and shoot them. What could even lure them all over?

“...You take this opportunity to try luring them over. I'll wait behind them upstairs to prevent any from getting away.”

What a great opportunity we have here for Thorne to gain some experience! Definitely not because I can't come up with any good ideas.

I snuck my way back upstairs and took shelter in the washroom. I waited for a few minutes before I heard a door slamming open, followed by the sound of something dropping down the stairs.

With my ear against the door, I soon heard a set of footsteps coming from the bar that walked past the washroom toward the basement.

“You okay?” A female voice yelled out, “Bloody hell, hey you boys, one of you come give me a hand, this idiot fell down the stairs.”

Another set of footsteps approached and passed me again, so I informed Thorne of the situation.

Just two are headed your way

Within a minute he responded, *They're taken care of. Are the other three budging?*

I took a peek out of the restroom door and listened intently.

“Let's call it a night, boys. They're taking their sweet time, so let's go see what's going on.”

Yeah, they're coming. I'll follow them down.

Once I counted three sets of footsteps that went by me, I softly opened the door and followed behind the trio. Just as they were starting to get confused at the top of the stairs, as they looked down at the three sprawled bodies below, I lifted my feet and stomped as hard as I could onto the back of the person in front of me.

The man instantly tumbled down the stairs, bringing the other two with him. Before they could recover, Thorne came into view and finished them off.

Once he was done, he made his way up and I grimaced at the creaking noises as he ran up the stairs.

I guess the boots aren't perfect yet, after all.

“Okay, good job. You can write the review for the shoes tomorrow, after some rest.”