

CHAPTER 17

PLACEHOLDER

-PLACEHOLDER

An alert of an incoming call, immediately picked up.

“Speak.”

“It’s done,” came the voice on the other side of the line, distorted through so many different quantum scramblers it was doubtful even the MIND itself would have bothered trying to scrub the audio clean. “We expect the the next portion of the payment wired within twenty-four hours.”

“It will be handled shortly. How will I access the system?”

“Remotely. A remote program will be provided to you in the Arena. The south end woman’s bathroom. On the left wall of the third stall.”

“The wall? Then anyone will be able to—”

“No, they won’t. The remote is a single-molecular-thick script film the size of a fingernail. It goes over your NOED, and is programed to provide a display that is *only* visible to you so you can find it. If you choose not to retrieve it, even the cleaning drones won’t notice it’s there, and it will be ionized at end of day.”

The question of *how* exactly, the data required to program such a device to a specific NOED wasn’t asked.

That answer was one best left in the dark.

“Understood. As agreed, the final payment will be made after the event.”

It would have been preferable to pay the caller and their group off then and there, and be done with the lot of them, but such was the way this sort of business was conducted.

As expected, the line went dead without another word exchanged.

With a sigh, Salista Laurent sat back in her seat, unsure if she should feel proud or guilt—as was a common confusion of emotions for her. Setting the debate aside with easy familiarity, though, she turned to frown out the window of her flyer. The sun was setting, but it was hard to see the beauty of the sight beneath her, distracted as she was. Even when the day's fading light caught against the steel and class of the oblong towers of Ganos, the city growing larger and more distinct as she descended.