Full Network Override

When the modder resistance fell it didn’t take long for the city taken over by the Stormy Virus to become the stuff of legends; modders, techheads, and others began to tell tales over message boards and virtual cafes that there was a program that was so malicious and corruptive that the government had to quarantine the entire system to keep it from spreading outside the city. Normally that meant the death of the city itself but somehow it was not only able to keep up its network but expand the node system, to the point where there were some that decided to go in and see for themselves. For most those who went in quickly found themselves relocating there permanently, some giving the excuse that the network was better there than anywhere else while others stated that they had been called by the Goddess to stay there. After the profound defeat of the military and the seizing of assets that had been used to try and combat the virus they had been keeping their assets away from the city and preferred to have every survellience asset pointed towards the city as a detection net in case Stormy attempted to slip the digital island they had created for it.

Those that lived in the city had come to accept that if they wanted to use the internet they would have to be weary of the skyscraper-sized wolf dragon creature that would occasionally come stomping around destroying stuff. Private notes were mostly safe, though occasionally they were infiltrated by those that were under the thrall of the Stormy Virus, a group they termed the Front. Most of them stayed surrounding the wolf in the main city hub and for those that hadn’t been corrupted by her it was a double-edged sort to be there; while the quality of the net had increased exponentially and became full of never before seen programs of immeasurable value if you happened to get caught when Stormy went on a rampage then you mostly like joined the legion of her glowing-eyed servants.

Though Stormy mostly stayed in her digital kingdom this time she was about in the real world. Just like in the digital landscape the rules were simple when it came to her, do not approach her under any circumstances unless you wanted to be corrupted both in the real world and the net. It wasn’t hard to avoid her, the horned wolf nearly fifteen feet tall at this point and completely covered head to toe in the nanite neoprene bodysuit along with her helmet. If that wasn’t enough to announce her presence there was also a slightly shoulder but still rather large draconic sabrewolf, his body covered head to toe in shiny black rubber with glowing green lines that traced down the entirety of his suit and up to the helmet he wore.

“It always feels strange being out here…” Stormy remarked as she looked around, most people giving her and her companion a wide berth.

“Why is that?” Serathin replied. “Feels too real?”

“No, not that…” Stormy stated as she looked up at the roofs of the surrounding buildings. “I don’t like things that I can see over, not when I can see over skyscrapers in the digital world. Just doesn’t seem fair in a way.”

“Well let me work on that,” Serathin replied with a chuckle. “You just keep doing what you’re doing… though I’m not sure what it is your doing that warrants us being out of the network in the first place.”

“I’m waiting for a few of my acolytes to meet us here,” Stormy explained. “I have a plan to help us get out of here and finally continue our rampage. Of course as you know if you or I attempt to slip the net either physically or digitally they’re just going to nuke whatever node that we’re trying to infect and quite possibly do the same to us in real life. Considering our sizes and relative power levels we can’t exactly sneak our way into such places anymore either.”

“Ah yes, the lament of the twenty-foot tall wolf kaiju,” Serathin smirked. “So what’s the plan then?”

“You’ll see…” Stormy replied coyly as she waved her hands, using her nanites to take the metal railings and posts to form chairs strong and large enough for the two to sit on as she stretched her muscular neoprene form. “For now how about a little friendly competition? See how well you can use those nanites I gave you.”

“Don’t forget that it’s my power that allows you to do it over a distance in the first place,” Serathin reminded her. “Though I will admit it’s impressive how much you’ve been able to expand your range since we did the code swap.”

The kaiju just nodded and scanned the area for a fitting challenge that was close to the edge of their ranges. Stormy had come a long way since having to touch something in order to interact with it, being able to interact with virtual devices even without having to be close to it. It was part of the reason why she was given some space, when she walked about in the real world since after she had manifested the power there were quite a few around her that had started to transform around her, shredding their clothing as they gained muscle, fangs, horns, and other monstrous features. After causing a bit of a panic she decided to keep that particular ability to herself, not wanting her playthings to leave the sandbox in fear that their Goddess would just start turning everyone.

But Stormy had some time to kill and with the Technomancer it would be interesting to see how far he had come as well. He had mostly preoccupied himself with the modder node they had taken over, using it to create all sorts of things to help create a more advanced city node she could stomp around in. He even had a few acolytes of his own, avatars that he morphed into his image that he called Sabredrones. Stormy didn’t mind sharing a bit, as long as it kept her neck deep in more destructive technology as she picked out a café with a few people sitting out front that thought they were outside their sphere of influence.

After a quick game of rock paper scissors to decide who went first Stormy could see Serathin scan the group of people, or more accurately the devices that they happened to be using. Despite the dangers of the public network many people continued to use it along with their augmented reality glasses. One in particular was a tiger that appeared to be watching some sort of show or at least listening to music as his head bobbed slightly up and down with a pair of headphones on. The technomancer’s eyes flashed and Stormy watched as the tiger suddenly froze, his back stiffening and his eyes twitching as the nanites that he sent his way began to infiltrate his mind and body.

“Not bad…” Stormy said, watching the tiger’s eyes go glassy as his lips twitched from his fang teeth slowly glowing longer until they had begun to stick out past his lips. “My turn…”

The wolfess scanned the patrons at the café, looking beyond the slowly transforming tiger in order to see if there was a further target to prove her superiority. A grin played up on her muzzle when she spotted another wolf actually inside the small coffee shop that was sitting at the counter in a suit. At first it didn’t look like he had any sort of virtual media interface on him, but as she scanned the area she detected a slight ping coming from the eyes of the man as he seemed to stare down at the counter. There weren’t many that had VR contacts, they were quite expensive and easy to lose, and with a thought she sent her nanites to interface with them in order to take control of the one using them.

Just as patches of rubber began to appear on the entranced tiger male’s face everyone’s attention was suddenly turned towards the wolf as he began to rub his eyes, then practically fell off of his stool as he let out a groan. Both creatures watched in amusement as the wolf’s clothing began to tear, the nanites beginning to integrate and augment the creature Stormy assimilated to increase his muscles. It wouldn’t be much, the combination of distance and it being the real world made turning others difficult, but it was enough to make his nice suit burst at the seams as he began to realize that there was another voice in his head besides his own. Several of the patrons of the café made a hasty exit while others just sat there in rapt fascination as he ripped off his suit, exposing the telltale neoprene being woven together by the microscopic machines as he began to sing his praises to the Goddess.

“Show off,” Serathin stated with a smirk, watching his own guy also start to cause his clothing to rip as his nanites converted fur and flesh to rubber. Though the newly converted wolf was definitely bigger, his technology-induced growth spurt giving him another foot in height as he flexed his neoprene-covered muscles, the rubberized sabretiger that had been created was certainly flashier as glowing green lines of circuitry traced across his new shiny skin and athletic physique. “Mine is prettier though.”

“That it is,” Stormy commented with a chuckle, watching the others in the crowd as they seemed to have a continued mixed reaction with one or two even going up to their latest assimilated until she spotted something out of the corner of her eye that got her attention. “Ah, it appears that we can get started with why we’re here. Let’s go Technomancer.”

The two got up as Serathin also saw the three figures moving towards them. The first was Daniel, the muscular fox was either fortunate or unfortunate enough to have a node next to Stormy and was also the first infected when she started her rampage. Next to him was the one known as Agent Frost, whom stormy turned into her inside informant after converting him and though his body type remained mostly the same to prevent suspicion his eyes glowed brightly with blue light. Finally there was Hal, the sabrewolf immediately recognizing the lemur modder that was recently turned so that Stormy could spread her influence over the entire city node in exchange for getting the growth and power that he had been lusting after for ages.

Once the three of them got over to them, bowing their heads to show reverence to the one that converted them, they walked into the building that Stormy had been sitting in front of it. It was a bank, one of the smaller branches that quickly cleared out when the wolfess gave a snarl and told them all to get out. Despite the high ceilings both her and the technomancer had to practically bend over to get inside, luckily the entire reason she had come here in the first place was in the same area as she took the teller counter and ripped it out of the floor. With the path clear she led the way into the vault with the others quickly following behind.

“Though I’m pretty sure you’ve figured out why we’re here let me make sure we’re on the same page,” the wolfess stated as she swung the heavy steel door shut. “You three have been the biggest help to me so far in my conquest over the network, and its time to set our sights higher then just this city node. Right now they have myself and Serathin pinned down like a butterfly on display, and if we move so far as an inch outside our protective sphere they’ll likely destroy anything and everything to get to us… and destruction is my job, not theirs.”

“What do you wish us to do Goddess?” the snow leopard quickly replied, all three males leaning forward to seeing what they could possibly do to serve their kaiju mistress.

“I’m going to unleash you on the world instead,” Stormy explained with a smirk. “You three are going to be direct conduits to me and through the chaos and destruction you sow in other nodes I will get the power you absorb through it. At this point all three of you have been identified as part of the Front, and though its unfortunate that it caused the loss of a few things like Agent Frost’s ability to gather intel I think it’s time to give you all the upgrade that is going to show just much of a force they’re dealing with.”

“After you’ve slipped the net of course,” Serathin chimed in, motioning to the steel walls around them. “That’s why you’re doing this in here, aren’t you? Making sure they can’t identify these new lightning bolts that you’re creating until after they’ve gotten out of the sight so they don’t suffer the same problems we’re currently having.”

“Give the sabrewolf a prize,” the kaiju said before beckoning the lemur forward. “Now I believe that I owe you a new form as per our agreement, now its time that you get to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Stand before me and kneel.”

The lemur was all too ready too do so, his body practically trembling with excitement as he took off the clothing he had been wearing to blend into the public and reveal the skintight blue neoprene bodysuit underneath. It was not one that Stormy had given him but she appreciated the symbol of loyalty, her own shiny hands rubbing against his still exposed head as she began to focus her power into her nanites. While the sabrewolf had guessed correctly that they were there to keep their activities a secret there was also another reason that she wanted to do this down in a vault surrounded by metal, it provided ample material to work with. The others looked around as they heard the doors of the safety deposit boxes falling to the floor, which had started to become pitted like someone had poured acid on it as Hal began to twitch.

Grow… that was the command that Stormy gave to the male in front of him. The lemur grunted and groaned slightly as the metal that was being taken from everywhere around him was being integrated into his body. Hal wanted a body that reflected his love of technology and that was exactly what the wolfess was going to give him as she put a hand directly onto his forehead. His eyes went wide before rolling back into his head as his short fur bristled and became a shiny metallic color, though in reality the nanites had taken each strand and infused it with the steel while doing the same to the rest of his body.

Tiny arcs of electricity jumped back and forth between the two as Hal soon had to adopt a kneeling position, not because Stormy had pushed him down but because his body had continued to grow. As more of his body was assimilated by the nanites his neoprene body suit struggled to contain the growing muscle, eventually shredding as the groans from the male became louder as a pair of metal horns slid out of his head and a line of spikes pushed out from his back. Eventually the lemur was reduced to snorts and grunts as he was on his hands and knees to keep his metal head underneath the hand of the one changing him while thick metal plates of draconic scale formed into a type of armor on his body.

When the cloud of disintegrated metal that had been swirling around them dissipating and the lights that had had gone dark flickered back to life the other three watched as a monster of a creature rose up where the lemur once stood. Though there were still a few vestiges of Hal’s former form he looked like a robot that someone had mostly dragon parts with a few bits of lemur thrown in as his eyes glowed with an electronic blue light. When he stood he was still much shorter then the wolf that had created him, the metallic creature around ten feet tall with a sculpted muscular physique covered in synthetic fur and scales. “Thank you goddess,” the lemur said as he bowed low, Stormy nodding and motioning him to go stand back with the others which made the other two look puny in comparison.

“Alright then,” the kaiju said as she rubbed her hands together with a devious smile. “Who would like to be next?”

A short while later three hulking robotic creatures walked out of the bank, the concrete cracking as the snow leopard patterned synth nodded to the other two before they split. Stormy had used the neoprene that all three of them had managed to destroy during their transformations and used it to form a pair of shorts for each since there wasn’t enough to cover their new bodies. Once they had left the kaiju wolfess and sabrewolf exited as well, Stormy destroying the doors and most of the entranceway of the building as she did.

“Well they’re certainly going to make a splash wherever they end up,” Serathin stated as he walked out behind her, avoiding the glass and debris that fell from the remains of the wooden façade. “Are you sure they’re going to be able tot leave this place without them noticing? While I appreciate the design it wasn’t exactly… subtle.”

“Al their eyes are on me,” Stormy said, closing her own eyes and holding out her hands. “I can feel it, sense that they’re watching to make sure that I’m contained. With so many others augmented as well they probably will lose them in the crowd even with their new sizes, or not care because they think that I have to physically push my way into another area to infect nodes. Thanks to our collaborative efforts however I gave that same gift to those three… and I can’t wait to see what they do with it.”

It wasn’t long before Stormy got her wish; even with the complete and total disconnection of her city node to the rest of the world there was enough people that had the ability to contact the outside world that they could stream in local news networks. What she saw put a smile on her face as within a few days of unleashing her creations into the world two of the three had already managed to move to other towns and infect their community nodes as well. Their transformations had translated over into the network in a big way as they were able to take down entire virtual buildings with one swipe of their hands while converting those inside. As she watched the carnage from the giant screen that took up a side of one of the few skyscrapers she hadn’t toppled over she could also feel the power filtering into her, causing her already huge form to grow even bigger to the point where when she leaned back to relax it took out nearly an entire city block.

The only thing that Stormy lamented as she watched the others run around and wreck new havoc was that she couldn’t do the same herself. While the technomancer had given her a few new toys to play with and she occasionally found the rogue node that she could crush there was nothing quite like going into an untouched city node and going on a mass destruction spree. Most of the avatars that still went into this city node had already been converted as well and there was something about eating someone willing that took some of the fun out of it. But at least she could live vicariously through her creations as she watched those that served her scramble to rub her neoprene feet.

As she watched the live footage of Hal punching through a building that represented the town’s communication node she was suddenly summoned to the real world by Serathin. Though she initially told him that she was busy he insisted that it was something that she would want to see, the Kaiju growling and getting up from her seat. Before she left she took her claws and used them to rend the skyscraper in front of her, hearing the satisfying sound of glass shattering and metal breaking as the display flickered off and the building toppled to the ground before she blinked and made her way over to where the technomancer had made his base in the real world.

After an hour of climbing stairs, the elevator unable to lift a huge musuclar wolf woman to the penthouse Serathin had taken over, she finally got to the door, which opened before she was able to knock on it. “About time you got up here,” the rubber-covered sabrewolf said with a smirk as he sipped a drink, his helmet retracted to show his smirking face.

“Well maybe you shouldn’t have made your lair on the top floor of a skyscraper,” she shot back, glancing over at the shiny servant and causing them to quickly bow and back away after closing the door behind her. “Or get an elevator that can actually hold my weight.”

“I’m not exactly someone that tends to get involved in building real, tangible things,” Serathin explained as Stormy walked over and took a seat, immediately getting a drink of her own from a different one. “My expertise is in the digital… though sometimes I can create something there that can help out here, like getting a certain monster wolf out of this place without being blasted into thousands of pieces.”

Stormy immediately perked up as she heard that, her thick tail swishing through the air behind her as she leaned forward. “You figured out a way to smuggle me out?” She said excitedly. “You managed to find a way to connect the city node back into the rest of the network?”

“Unfortunately no,” Serathin replied, shaking his head before raising a finger. “But, what I did figure out is a way to make sure that all those eyes on you can’t see you coming.” The sabrewolf gestured for Stormy to hold his hand, and as soon as she reached over and did so her eyes widened in surprise when she saw the neoprene shift to a shiny black metal that spread all the way up to her elbow. “You could say I was inspired when you turned Hal and the others into those creatures, what you see there is the same material that they use in stealth bombers in order to deflect radar signals.”

“Of course,” Stormy said as she wiggled her fingers and watched them return to their original neoprene form as her nanites absorbed the new coding into the rest of her body. “With a simple generation of an electromagnetic field around my body I can use the metal skin you gave me to become completely invisible to any radar scans. With the right frequency I can hide myself from anything, even the military satellites.”

“That’s… exactly right,” Serathin said in slight shock and mild amusement. “Seems that big brain of yours isn’t just for show. Now while you’ll be invisible to radar you still be a huge creature lumbering around, just one that happens to be completely shiny and black. While going at night will help I’ve also developed something that will keep those prying eyes off of you until the time is right.”

This time Serathin reached forward and Stormy felt the familiar injection of code, only this time as it was assimilated into her she started to see patches of… something spreading on her body. As she looked down at the biggest affected area on her stomach it was like she could see straight through it to the chair behind her, but when she tapped her finger against it she still felt her stomach. Eventually the entirety of her bulky frame was covered and it was extremely distorting not to be able to see herself. Her other senses soon kicked in to help but even then the surreal sensation of her vision floating above the chair without seeing her own body caused her to shiver.

“I’m not ashamed to admit that I got this one from a movie,” Serathin admitted as Stormy continued to move her nearly completely invisible limbs around and only seeing a minor distortion that her body caused. “When Hal made these nanites he definitely broke the mold with them; I was able to modify the little machines so that they would take a recording on one side and then send it to the nanites on the other side of your body to project it against your skin. With the combination of your powers they are able to feed each other information down to the nanosecond that provides you with nearly flawless cloaking… as long as you don’t bump into anything physical.”

“I’ll remember not to go through any buildings while it’s on,” Stormy snickered as she willed the nanites to stop and her powerful form returned to vision. “A body like this is made to be admired anyway. Anything else I should know?”

“Well you can’t have both on at the same time,” Serathin explained. “In order for the stealth radar technology to work you need to have the metal exposed and a current running through your body so naturally you can’t use the projection technology. Speaking of electricity and currents there’s another benefit that came with your body as well in that your body is now a hyperconductor and that the nanites are not only equipped to discharge that energy to provide your stealth but can be channeled in other ways as well… like mass absorption.”

“So eat electricity and grow bigger huh,” Stormy replied, still grinning. “How much bigger can I get if I overclock my system?”

“Much, much bigger,” Serathin answered. “But it’ll me mostly temporary gain, once your body has completely discharged the energy the nanites won’t be able to keep up with the extra load and you’ll revert back down.”

Stormy and Serathin continued to discuss her powers until the sun went down, waiting for nightfall so that the kaiju could start her path towards liberation. With her acolytes creating more destruction on her behalf it had also managed to take off some of the heat from this city while they dealt with this new threat. When the sky finally got dark and the moon started to rise over the horizon the wolfess thanked Serathin once more and went to the stairs to start her journey downward… only to have a thought pop into her head. All the discussion they had about her new abilities and the science behind it was still churning in her mind and suddenly things started to connect that opened up an entirely new possibility for her.

Instead of starting to go down the stairs she went up instead, busting open the roof access door and squeezing through it as best she could even though her body was quickly becoming too much for them. Eventually she popped out on the other side and was immediately greeted with the rushing wind that came from being so high up. With her helmet on it didn’t bother her at all as she continued to move forward, neoprene bodysuit rippling as she moved her way over towards the edge. Even with her size and weight she had to brace herself on a particularly strong gust but eventually she got to the side of the building and looked down at specks moving below, a view she normally only got when she was in the digital world.

She took a deep breath and carefully tested her wings, which up until that point had been mostly for show in the real world. Even creatures like the draconic sabrewolf could maybe get a decent glide out of them, and even then they wouldn’t be able to do so from this high up with all these buildings around. As she grabbed onto the railing and leaned herself over she became acutely aware that if she was wrong then the only thing that was going to happen was her leaving a very big crater in the street below… but she knew in her mind that she wasn’t. With one last deep breath she let go, flaring open her wings as the black metal of her stealth form materialized on her body.

The rush that she got, both from the fall itself and the adrenaline that it caused to course through her body, was unlike anything she had ever felt before. Her body spun around in the air a few times as she generated the electrical field around her body, charging the air particularly around her wings as her muscles strained to steady herself. She had flown countless times in the digital world and used that knowledge to help her as the windows of the building flew past her in a blur. Finally as the street was rushing up to meet her there was a loud flap as wind caught the neoprene just right and she went from falling to flying.

Stormy let out a whoop of success as she used the field she was generating to create lift under her wings, allowing her to higher as she streaked passed the buildings on either side of her. Though there were some that looked up and noticed the black shape that rushed over their heads most were blissfully unaware that she had taken flight, save for her thralls that smiled and cheered in her passing. With the energy coursing through her skin everything that was pointed at the city to detect her was rendered useless as she passed through the outskirts and out into the open world beyond.

For a few hours Stormy merely enjoyed the freedom of flying through the air without a care in the world, not having to worry about the military or anyone trying to mess with her as she made her way to her destination. With her outside of the city node she had passed over control of it to Serathin while she was away, though she remained the primary beneficiary of the power. No doubt she would come back to all sorts of new buildings to crush… if he hadn’t done so before she got back. With Hal and Daniel also infesting their nodes still she was fed a steady supply of energy that she stored up for her next task.

The kaiju couldn’t maintain her flight indefinitely though, going down to areas in order to rest and refuel her physical form. Most of the time it meant staying in more remote areas to avoid connecting with a stray node to prevent the surprise of her escape from being known. Once or twice she did feast on a somewhat remote power line, her height allowing her to reach up and slice one with her claw before sticking it into her mouth. Though there was only a few seconds before she blew the breaker and caused the flow of electricity to cease she would get a jolt of pure blissful energy and a few more inches of growth before the effects wore off in flight.

With her added precautions to stay hidden it took half the night until she reached her destination, the reflection of the moon high in the night sky sparkling on the waters of the coastal city. It was at least five times bigger than the one she had taken over and consisted of multiple city notes with each one connected with a large connection that would allow her access. The city itself was also a major shipping lane with a lot of corporate offices, which meant a lot of dedicated access that reached all the around the globe. It would be next to impossible for the military to disconnect her from the network again, all she had to do was take it…

…and that was where the real fun was, she thought to herself as a grin spread on her face.

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Inside the city node the news continued to filter in of metal creatures that were part of the Front running into towns and infecting nodes with the Stormy Virus. “They got four cities already,” the cheetah watching the broadcast from his stall in the virtual street of the south city hub said, the gorilla next to him nodding as he filled a cup with virtual coffee that was being fulfilled by a machine in the real world. “Do you think we have anything to worry about?”

“I’ve heard that they’re migrating further south,” the gorilla replied with a small shrug. “From what I’ve read they only seem to be carriers of whatever virus brought down that other city and don’t seem all that powerful. Still, I don’t know if you’ve seen the aftermath of one of their attacks but it looks like a tornado went through it and it takes days to fix all the data assets that they corrupted.”

“I hear that if your avatar gets infected you can hear the virus talking to you in your head and you start turning into a monster,” another customer, this on a large shark in a business suit, said as he came up and bought the latest digital periodicals. “Not just from having it downloaded into your system either, if it causes a reset in your code like killing you then that’s enough for it to worm its way into your actual mind.”

“I hear that the virus turns into a giant creature and enjoys eating people,” the cheetah chimed in, drawing scoffs of rejection from the other two as the confirmed their purchases.

“Alright, I got to disconnect and get some work done in the real world while my coffee is still hot,” the gorilla stated, holding up his cup to the other two. “I’ll see you guys tomorrow!” The shark and cheetah nodded before continuing to converse, only to stop when they saw the other avatar standing there and looking at his arm in confusion. “What the hell, why am I being locked out?”

The shark and cheetah looked at one another before glancing at their interface menus that pop up when they turned their wrists inwards and saw that the option to log out was greyed out. As they started to look at one another in confusion they started to hear shouts and screams of people heading in their direction. Dozens, hundreds of avatars starting running down the street as the moon that had been shining on them this entire time suddenly turned to shadow. As the three turned around their mouths went wide and the gorilla dropped his coffee as the huge, thickly muscled wolf dragon kaiju stood up from one of the entry ports and let out a roar that went out like a shockwave and shattered every piece of glass halfway across the hub and caused the power to flicker

“Run!” another avatar shouted to the three as he passed by on the other side of the park. “Get to the downtown hub! It’s the only port out of here that’s still-”

The three suddenly fell to the ground as a huge neoprene paw came down and crushed the street along with all the avatars that were running down it. When it rose back up it had left behind a crater that glowed with a bright blue, the infected footprint spreading outwards like wildfire and growing over those that had been spared getting squished. Though the cheetah was quick to react and managed to avoid the corruption coming his way his two customers weren’t so lucky, the feline watching in horror as the two writhed and squirmed while their clothing shimmered and was replaced with a neoprene bodysuit while their muscles expanded. In a matter of seconds the two creatures grunted and growled as horns grew out of their heads and spikes appeared on their avatars, slowly turning and looking at the terrified avatar with fanged grins as their teeth grew…

Stormy let out a booming laugh as she once more felt a surge of growth that she hadn’t gotten since the takeover of her first city, the larger building she had put her draconic foot through collapsing as her toes and claws burst through the windows and walls while they expanded. While gained another few feet of height the biggest changes she could feel were coming from her sides, the wolfess Kaiju feeling her malware mutate once more and causing her to roar once more as two bulges began to grow. When she looked she realized what they were and a manic grin spread on her face when she realized she needed more energy to bring out their full potential. As her muscles continued to shift she went over to one of the few buildings taller than her, a giant cylindrical tower that she snapped in half like a dried tree branch.

A few avatars fell back down but most of those still inside the gaming tower were trapped on all the floors, though that wouldn’t be the case for long as she took her tail and jammed it inside. She thinned the appendage so that it wouldn’t break the outer shell of the data asset, using her coding in a rare instance of reinforcement of the steel and windows as it busted through each floor. It didn’t take long for her to see the tail tip burst through the roof, wiggling in the air for a few seconds before quickly retreating back through the hollowed-out building. Once it had completely withdrawn she took a look inside and chuckled, the noise reverberating through the structure as she saw the hundreds of avatars that were hanging there desperately attempting to log out.

“You don’t know how long I’ve been waiting for this,” she said to them as she tilted her head back and rose the building above them. “I’ve been craving fresh data for so long, and you all are going to make a fine snack!”

She could still hear the tiny echoes of their screams as the took her muzzle and sealed her lips against the bottom of the building, then shook the structure vigorously. Those that were still inside that hadn’t fallen out or gotten crushed when her tail pushed in slid down the tube and straight into her maw, Stormy shuddering as she felt their avatar data get almost immediately assimilated. She continued to shake and slap against the building until she was sure she had gotten as many as she could, then took the building itself and removed her protections on it to crunch it like a soda can. Just as she was about to toss it aside she looked at one of the taller buildings further in, the flat side of it facing her as she got an idea and began to channel her corruptive code into the building.

Those that were in the huge skyscraper had been shifting around in a panic, some attempting to back up their data while others were just attempting to leave as they saw the giant monster on the other side of town. Several had stopped and looked out their window as she had appeared to stop for a few seconds, her hands practically glowing as the tube-like structure in her hands began to collapse on itself and glow with a similar blue light. It didn’t take long before it looked like she was holding a lit-up javelin, the thing completely indistinguishable from the building she had been holding before. The avatars still standing at the windows suddenly let out shocked gasps and screams as she seemed to look directly at them with an evil grin on her face…

Stormy took the spear of pure malware she had created and threw it at the building itself, racing towards it like a beam of light before it hit with a satisfying crunch. Though the skyscraper remained standing the area around the data spike began to corrode and dissolve, debris falling off of it while more of those pulsing blue veins quickly grew out of it. She let it do its work as she jumped and stomped around, aquiring assets at an exponential rate as she arched back and roared once more, partially in victory and mostly in the sheer ecstasy of destruction as the growths on her sides grew into a second pair of neoprene arms, flexing with bulging biceps as her chests thickened to accommodate them. It was unclear how much she had grown at this point but she knew it was significant as she was almost eye to eye with the tallest building in the city note… or at least she was until she took her four hands and ripped it apart at the seams.

When she got to the other side of the note however her fun was cut short as she attempted to link into the downtown node to find her access denied. She frowned and looked down at the access port and found that it would have been big enough even to support her massive amount of data but somehow they were keeping her out. Thankfully she had gotten enough secure data networks to make a call, pausing as the skyscraper she had spiked finally degraded to the point where it collapsed on itself. She sat down with a thud behind her and caused several buildings around her to fall over as she managed to finally get a connection.

“Hey Stormy,” Seathin said cheerfully. “Saw you made landfall on the news, looks like you took everyone by surprise.”

“Not surprised enough I guess,” Stormy replied back as she kicked at the connection port, which remained closed even as the structure that represented it was practically pulverized. “Even though they have a dedicated hardline between the city nodes I can’t get into the downtown one and every second my influence isn’t there more people are escaping. Not even my converts can get in, though its not for the lack of trying.”

Stormy glanced over at the connection port and watched as those that had been corrupted were practically clawing to get into the downtown node to no avail. “It sounds like they implemented a pinch,” Serathin stated. “It’s a means to prevent brute force hacks and stop DDoS attacks, basically the pipeline is still there but they’ve bottlenecked the data to the point where you would have a faster connection using dial-up. The good news is that pinches have to be deployed in the network node and nothing can get in or out except for avatars, so if you just wait them out eventually they’re either going to have to let all the data in their degrade or open up one of the valves to let in new updates.”

“I’m not going to wait around and give them a chance to formulate a plan with all that data just sitting in there waiting for me,” Stormy growled, staring daggers at the port before her face lit up in realization. “I think I may have just figured out how to get past the pinch, but I need to you to mobilize the forces that are in the city dome and keep this connection open on your end. I have to do a little shopping.”

Back in the real-world people were in just as much of a panic; those that had managed to escape the node had taken to destroying their VR tech while others were just trying to evacuate the city. With her already infesting the Southside node Stormy didn’t even need to be in the streets herself in order to do what she had planned next, using her ability to jack into electronics remotely to help her pinpoint what she needed. It didn’t take her long to find quite a few targets for what she needed, watching in the network note as a number of car systems headed towards downtown.

“I bet it would surprise people how much technology is integrated into this world…” Stormy mused as she shrank herself down so that she could actually see the data that she was meaning to integrate with. It didn’t take her long to figure out what she needed to do in order to enact her plants, her arms grabbing into the icon of the car and channeling her power into it while instructing her nanites in the real world to find the car she had just pings. “This one is about to find out just how much…”

The car that was connected to the system Stormy had just infected caused the screen in the car’s dash to flicker and sputter, the cobra driving it looking over with a frown on his face. “Oh come on,” he said as he tapped the dash to try and get back up the directions he had been following. “Don’t tell me that this virus business is affecting direction systems too…”

Though the cobra driver had been in the Southside area when the Stormy Virus hit he hadn’t had his VR device connected to it, which the serpent assumed meant that he had been spared the possibility of being destroyed or eaten by the wolf or whatever the malware was represented as. Other people weren’t so lucky… the entire reason he had abandoned his route to head towards the downtown area was watching people who had been online suddenly freeze, then start to grunt and groan as literally started to grow bigger. Though physical changes had been reported to happen in people most people thought it was something like eye twitching or convulsions, not growing muscle or fangs and horns.

That was enough to cause most people to try and leave the infected sector as soon as possible and was the reason why everyone was currently sitting idle in their cars on the freeway that led into the downtown area. As he waited he tried flipping through the radio but all the channels were either reporting on the data breach or, with increased frequency as time went on, began to praise someone they called the goddess and calling on everyone to join them. It was enough for him to turn off the radio, the last thing the cobra needed at that moment was listening to the babbling of some crazy person. Just as he turned off the radio however the screen went blank as well, but just as he was bout to groan and push the dash an entirely different image appeared on it.

“What the hell…” he said as he looked in confusion, seeing the head of something that looked like a wolf crossed with a dragon that looked like it belonged in one of those monster movies. As the camera zoomed out it became clear that it was the virus, or at least something that looked remarkably like a neoprene-covered kaiju creature with four arms and fangs. “Uh uh, no way…”

As the cobra went to open the doors and leave the locks suddenly engaged, causing him to bang on the door for a few seconds before trying the windows and finding them locked as well. “No need for all that,” Stormy said through the car’s speaker system. “I merely need you in order to get into an area that they’re trying to foolishly keep me out of. While I don’t need to necessarily corrupt you or your avatar for that I couldn’t think of a better way to thank you for your service…”

The cobra felt his heart racing as he tried to get his car moving, hoping to maybe crash it when he found that his power steering and auto-braking system had completely locked him out. He found himself pulling off his tie as he began to pant, feeling like the heat was rising in his car as he tried to figure out what to do. It was becoming harder to think of options as his thoughts grew fuzzy, each breath he took infusing his body with more of the nanites that had filtered in as he felt his VR device switch on. He had to get out… he thought as his fingers moved to remove his shirt, only to have the buttons pop off as his increasingly muscular chest heaved, he had to… go… get to…

He had to get into the range of the downtown city node, his hijacked internal monologue said. His eyes glazed over as he tried to force those thoughts out of his head, shaking in his car as his teeth grew into fangs and his tail thickened. If he still had the capacity to look outside he would have noticed others thrashing about as well, one of them even putting his fist through the window as the bicep rippled with growth. Soon the cobra stopped moving completely for a few seconds, then sat up and opened the door that had been unlocked for him.

The serpentine creature’s pants ripped right down the seams as he and a dozen others got out, each of the new converts looking at one another with glowing blue eyes before walking down the highway. Others watched from their car as they moved around their cars, staring straight ahead and not even regarding the honks and shouts from the others. The goddess needed them to get to their destination, they all thought in unison. Not for their avatars, but merely for the access that their avatars gave her as the group began to swell in numbers…

Back in the downtown node a group of avatars were all huddled around a device that looked like a water pump, holographic displays cycling through information as they continued to mentally interface with it. “We’re going to need to get pinch five on-line soon,” one of the group, an elf taur with the body of a dragon said while shifting data on her display that had a map of the node. “The avatars from the southside are putting a lot of pressure here and I want to ease the strain as much as possible.”

“Why don’t we just pull one off of the East bay sector?” another avatar, this one merely a floating ball of iridescent light, suggested. “So far it appears the virus is fixated in southside, maybe it’s stuck in there because of the pinch?”

“Or it’s just really fixated on coming in here,” the elf taur replied. “Either way we just saw how fast it took down a city node, if it decided to go after the other city nodes first and try and overwhelm us the last thing we need is it getting through because we didn’t put enough pressure on the data stream. All we need is to hold the line until the remaining pinches can be brought on line and then we can start to figure out how to push back.”

As they continued to work furiously to contain and data leaks the taur noticed something unusual pop up in her data monitoring, something she hadn’t expected to see. While most people were fleeing from the node, either going off-line or hoping into private access points, it appeared that someone was trying to come in. While it might be someone just trying to preserve their avatar in a safe space it wasn’t something that she was willing to risk and with a quick message had the entry permissions of the node disabled. She watched the portal disappear from her screen and she was about to get back to work when another one suddenly popped up, then another one, and another until at least a dozen portals had been opened from private networks that bypassed their security including one a few feet away from them.

“Breach!” the taur shouted, the others looking up just in time to see dozens of infected avatars pour through the created portal. It was like a tsunami had just broken on the shore as the monstrous creatures spread out and began to corrupt anything that they came across. The elf taurs and the others quickly set up a force field to try and protect the pinch as the horde flowed around them, the almost rabid creatures clawing at it before continuing on. Those avatars that had not managed to get into the protective circle were immediately pounced on, thrashing about as blue veins of light quickly infested them from the download of the neoprene-covered creatures.

Soon it was just he elf taur and two others that were left, though it appeared for the moment that their protections were enough to hold back the smaller creatures. But as more and more of Stormy’s army flooded out larger creatures began to step through, especially when they heard an explosion as one of their pinch stations was destroyed. These creatures were ten, fifteen, maybe even twenty feet and no matter what their avatar was they were all heavily built with glowing blue eyes and a mix of lupine and draconic features that gave away their infected nature. One of those immediately pounced another station, practically crushing the force field and overloading the pinch program.

“Well, everyone…” the elf taur said as they watched bright blue cracks forming in their shield. “We tried our best, it was a pleasure working with all of you…” The others nodded and the second the force field broke the elf taur made a break for it, using her power of flight to attempt to escape the infected creatures that had gotten to the streets. Already the landscape of the area where the portals had opened looked almost alien in comparison to the rest of the node, though she didn’t have long to look at it as something shot through her wing and caused her to tumble back towards the ground.

Though she landed outside of the quickly growing infected zone she knew it was too late for her, watching as the corruption began to spread through her damaged code towards her central avatar. Behind her she heard several more explosions as the creatures systematically wiped out their remaining pinches, causing the data to flow freely once more into the downtown node. Even though she already knew what was going to happen she accessed her menu to attempt to log out, only to find that it had been disabled. Her eyes began to glow as the scales of her lower body became laced with similar blue markings, neoprene spreading out as she laid there.

As the sounds of screams from the overrun city continued to rise the elf closed her eyes just as the ground beneath her began to shake. She didn’t need to open them to know what had come, or that the one known as Stormy had managed to get through into the downtown node. The fight had been lost, soon the kaiju would sweep through the like the walking apocalypse it was and when she was done there probably wouldn’t be a single one of the magnificent structures that people had spent years coding left standing in her wake. Her mere presence had already rapidly increased the data corruption rate, assets being claimed for the virus in an exponential rate as the elf taur got to her feet.

“It is probably better this way,” she said softly as she opened her eyes that shined brightly in the darkness like those around her as they moved through the crumbling city to worship their new goddess…

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Meanwhile in the basement of a military base Frost pried open the metal doors that led to the server room, his electronic eyes glowing with a bright blue as he continued to make his way forward. While he had been stealing intel for Stormy before he had become one of her synths he had discovered a top secret project being worked on that had originally been made to stop the technomancer before he had been captured. Though it had been scrapped and the team dismantled to work on other things the technology was still there… technology that could help his goddess continue her spread throughout all the nodes in the world.

It had taken quite a bit of traveling but finally he had made it, breaking through the rather laughable security of the base and assimilating the avatars of the soldiers on it. Given the distance from the city Stormy had originally infected they probably hadn’t allocated the resources to bolster their defenses, even with Frost and the others terrorizing areas outside of the city. Once he had finished with the personnel he attempted to access the area that contained the project, only to find that it was held on a separate server that was completely disconnected from the node. It was probably a last-ditch effort to hide the project, Frost thought to himself as his nanites disabled the security system before he got there and opened the last door for him.

A blast of cold air greeted him as he walked inside the server room, his eyes scanning the servers until he found the area with the least amount of firewall protection. He walked over and looked at the ports that were normally made for a device to plug into, which was what Frost intended to do as he extended his claws and had the metal morph into the same shape. “Authorize admin entry,” Frost said, the lights on the server turning blue as he injected Stormy’s code into it. “Assimilate project files.”

It didn’t take long for the rush of downloaded information came into him, but as he quickly scanned the files something seemed… off about them. It was like when he was around Stormy, his body twitching slightly as whatever it was seemed to be pushing its way into systems that it shouldn’t have had access too. Was this the project they were working on, Frost wondered as strange foreign data continued to filter into him through the download. It was such a familiar feeling, like it had happened before… it took the metallic snow leopard a few more seconds before he realized what was happening and let out a gasp, looking down at his hand and seeing his glowing blue lines pulsating as a red light had begun to filter into them.

When Frost decided to pull the plug he found his hand unresponsive to his commands, and as though it sensed his realization the passive corruption in his systems suddenly kicked into overdrive. He attempted to take his other hand and use that to pull out but tendrils of black metal snaked out and bound him into place to keep the connection to the server despite his frantic pulling. “Goddess, help!” Frost shouted as the metal of his arm turned black, spikes pushing their way out as his nanites were being converted. “Hal! Daniel! It’s taking me! It’s trying to… find… Stormy… and…”

With the basement built like a faraday cage and no node access the snow leopard’s pleas fell on deaf ears as his struggles quickly ceased, his eyes closing as his head bowed down. The synthetic creature continued to stand there for a while longer as shiny metal of his body blackened and thickened, becoming jagged like dragon scale with glowing red underneath it as his form continued to convulse and shake. When the server finally let go of the robot’s hands they had grown wicked talons that pulsated with a whole new type of corruption. The head of the snow leopard slowly lifted up once more and when his eyes opened again they glowed with a pulsating red light.

“Target sample acquired,” the possessed creature said as it began to move out of the room. “Begin search and destroy of Stormy Virus.”