

He didn't think he'd take so well to these new implants, but he was happy to have been mistaken. They might've taken a bit longer than expected in order to calibrate, but as soon as that was done it was almost as if they'd always been there with how *natural* they felt, truly some of the company's best work to date; the owl made a mental note to drop an extra-sizeable donation into their coffers whenever he had the chance to do so.

The previous mechanical augments he had installed on him were... *functional*, but not exactly to specification given what he had in mind for himself. Yes, they performed admirably and adapted to his body in ways that the first line never did, not to mention they provided a certain level of agility in flight that left him unmatched whenever he decided to take to the skies, but much like most cybernetic arrays of their sort, they didn't really *scale* well; they were designed and built to function within certain specifications, and though they did so wonderfully well, they had no capacity for adaptation beyond it, nor could they be changed or swapped out on the fly, requiring extremely work-heavy intervention on the part of the robotics company that built them, or a mechanist worth their salt and in possession of several million dollars' worth of advanced power tools. Given what Mephiston intended to accomplish, this just wouldn't do; his implants needed to be as malleable as his organic half if he was to accomplish his size goals.

For quite a while, the owl had intended to start working out properly, bulking up in order to achieve the sort of physique that he occasionally spent far too long looking at whenever he happened to catch a glimpse of it somewhere online. It had always been out of his reach though; being half-mechanical as he was, he couldn't really bulk up without having to constantly readjust his cybernetic parts, and that required so much time and resources that it felt like a daunting project purely on the basis of how high-maintenance it was. However, the very same company that had (effectively) rebuilt him had recently come out with a brand new line of augments based on bleeding edge (and highly experimental) nanite technology, designed to not only be fully modular like their previous lines, but able to be modified "on the go" via the use of specialized injectors delivering a slurry of automated nanomachines. It was nominally supposed to react to "semi-conscious" use input, allowing individuals with cybernetic augmentations to reshape themselves at will, assuming they allowed the nanites themselves to go through the several-week acclimation period within their bodies.

For Mephiston, this couldn't have come at a better time, as the owl was *dying* for an opportunity to make good use of that gym membership he had gotten a few months prior; it was important to keep in shape in order to keep up with his cybernetic half, but every time he had to stop short of actually improving himself it felt like a stab between the ribs at how much of a wasted opportunity it was... but not anymore. He signed up as soon as he heard about this new line of implants and, thanks to his record with the company, was fast-tracked as one of their "display models", so long as he agreed to show up every other week for a photoshoot in order to

serve as a living advertisement. The owl nodded along to everything the company requested; he had better things to do than waste his time with bureaucratic nonsense.

At home, he had something waiting for him, a special injector that he had acquired through less than legal means via the help of a “concerned friend”, so to speak. He wasn’t intending on making use of the proper nanites, nor was he in any way wanting to just *wait* for several weeks before finally grabbing hold of his destiny and moulding it to his liking. Instead, he had procured for himself an experimental line of nanomachines that were supposed to be extremely reactive and far faster-acting than the so-called “safe” alternative provided commercially; it wasn’t exactly available to the public, nor was anyone supposed to have them outside the walls of a very specific compound in the middle of the Arizona desert, but there was a vial in Mephiston’s home and he was going to use it properly. In fact, as he sat down on his bed, inspecting the brand new implants attached to him, he couldn’t help but tap his feet impatiently as he thought about what was going to happen, only kept back by the understanding that he had least had to *try* and give himself a full once-over before doing anything more drastic.

Still didn’t mean he couldn’t rush through it, giddy as could be at the prospect of finally bulking up and showing off some *muscle* for once; the injector was practically burning when he picked it up, sweat pouring down his brow as the dream of a lifetime was about to made a reality, no thoughts spared for how dangerous it was or how easily it could backfire on him. All he cared about was that mental image of himself as a hulking giant capable of tearing through walls without so much as a second thought, of his body going from merely athletic to so built-up that the mere mental image of it was enough to get [his mind to start wandering to very lewd places](#) and his muscles to clench, desperate to engorge themselves until reaching that dream size. He couldn’t wait any longer; with a swift motion of his left hand, he placed the injector into the correct port and pressed the right button to start the delivery of nanite fluid, holding it in place for as long as needed to ensure that every last nanoscopic machine was pumped into his body before yanking it out and throwing the autoinjector across the room, where it shattered into a thousand little pieces.

He didn’t have to do it, but he felt like he should; it fit the theme he was going for, the idea that he would soon turn into this enormous hulk of muscle mass that could barely control his own primal need to bulk up even harder, a tiny movie that he had conjured up for himself and had played inside of his head so many times that he could probably draw it all if only he had the slightest artistic inclination. Reality, however, was far more disappointing, refusing to give him what he wanted *when* he wanted; there was no glorious explosion, no sudden transformation into an incredibly muscular version of himself, no broken bedsprings or shattered walls, just himself, sitting on his mattress, staring down at a body that refused to change... and was getting uncomfortably hot now that he came to think about it.

It wasn't just his imagination either; his internal sensors were going off like crazy and warning him that his cybernetic implants were under extreme stress, practically shouting into his sensory cortex that something was dreadfully wrong and that "foreign bodies" had invaded the inner workings of his robotic half. For Mephiston though, things couldn't be any more right; this was a sign that his plan had worked, that the experimental nanomachines actually did what they were advertised to do, and that the small fortune he spent on them hadn't gone to waste! Immediately he got up, rushing to the bathroom where he kept a large mirror; if he was going to turn, he wanted to *see it*.

Mephiston could feel it on the way already, even if it was just subtle enough that he had to pay attention in between steps to make out what was happening. He felt heavier, more heavysset even, as if his body had suddenly grown denser and harder to move around, and yet rather than dragging himself each inch of the way to his destination, he found that not only was he perfectly capable of doing so, but that it was *easier* to move around than it had been before, like his whole body had been oiled up and given a tune-up, or like the air had simply grown more rarefied and less resistant to his motions. By the time he arrived in front of the mirror, the reason for this became obvious, enough that his eyes widened and his beak opened wide in equal-parts shock and unbridled joy, because he had *finally* gotten what he wanted.

It wasn't even just a slight adjustment, not merely his musculature becoming more well-defined and eye-popping as he dreaded would happen, but something more entirely: he had genuinely *bulked up*, gaining muscle mass in far greater quantity than he really expected in such a short notice, almost as if his many, *many* hours of unspent gym hours had suddenly taken place and his physical form readjusted to this new alternate timeline he created for himself. He couldn't help but look down at himself, at his rock-solid abs, at his bulging pecs, at his powerful arms and the incredibly thick biceps that only grew thicker when he decided to flex them; his was an Adonis-like physique that would make even the greatest of bodybuilders jealous purely from gazing upon it, and it had only been... a minute since his injection, perhaps even less? The owl could still feel the heat coursing through him, his internal sensors still shouting at him that something was wrong and he should do something about it as the nanite fluid continued to wreak havoc across his cybernetics, modifying them to match this new body of his. It didn't occur to him that this shouldn't have taken place until the transformation happened again, this time right there in front of him, and by that point he couldn't really bring himself to care about how the nanomachines were deliberately messing with his living half in addition to his mechanical one.

It started off with his robotic parts, with them bulging out as if being inflated from within, appearing bulbous and semi-organic for just a few seconds before the extra mass was distributed and settled in a far more natural manner, making his body look significantly lopsided after his cybernetic right side became sturdier and *quite* a bit larger, enough to force him into an uncomfortable leaning position for the second or two before the rest of his body caught up to the

newest growth spurt... and what a way it caught up to it as well! If his mechanical section was impressive-looking with how natural it looked and how well it adapted to its size, then his proper body, his meat-and-bones physical form, became something of *legend*. Mephiston instinctively leaned down once he felt himself rise up towards the ceiling, hoping not to bang his head against it from how quickly he was ascending, every inch of his organic self *burning* with flames that left him feeling even more powerful than before, a raging inferno that made him want to scream out towards the heavens, that all may bear witness to just how *good* it felt to be transformed into a hulking giant capable of bending steel with his bare hands. Everything, from the sheer state of how sculpted and pristine his brand new form was, to the vascularity, even the (positively alarming) fact that the dividing line between his feathers and his mechanical augments had effectively been erased by the nanites fusing his two different halves together in a seamless merger of man and machine, *everything* contributed to leaving him feeling like a true god among his lessers.

He turned around, needing to see how he compared to the door after already having had some trouble squeezing through it on the way in, and was delighted to find that his head was now over the top of the frame, and his torso had become wider than the damned thing itself, leaving him unable to use it properly, and probably on the way to it becoming even more pitifully undersized now that he felt the by-then familiar heat begin to build up inside of him again. He wasn't even thinking straight, not when the alarms going off inside of his head had begun to shut off one by one, replaced by a brand new voice that he didn't recognize, the collective chorus of the experimental nanites telling him that everything was fine, everything was ok, and his job was now to push his body to its limits and show off to as many people as he could, to *assert* himself as a half-mechanical deity of raw power. With his eyes half-lidded, Mephiston's hands grabbed the sides of the door frame, and with so little effort that it left him legitimately surprised for a few moments, pulled the whole thing off the wall, crumbling a large section of it in the process! The owl ended up with broken bits of wood in his hands and a growing hole leading into the hallway outside the bathroom, and while he had initially envisioned himself walking out the front door and onto the streets below, it was quickly becoming obvious that it just wouldn't happen that way.

It couldn't, not with what he was feeling welling up inside of him. That warmth, that sensation of pressure, the knowledge that he was about to burst free of even this new and engorged form of his that he had dreamed of for years, the certainty that he was about to become something even greater and damn the consequences, damn the whole building and whoever happened to be in it! All he could feel, all Mephiston could think about was how the nanomachines inside his body were singing to him, soothing him with sweet nothings as they multiplied endlessly within his mechanical components, forcing them to grow larger and more misshapen before they once again settled into a greater, grander form, one that broke through the roof above his head and only failed to collapse the floor because there was nothing but solid

foundation underneath it... a new form that would be mirrored on his organic half as soon as the nanite fluid was injected into his bloodstream, effortlessly augmenting his cells, muscles and tendons, turning them into better and more resilient versions of themselves.

Why should he worry about such paltry things as walking through façades and strolling down the street lifting cars and bending light poles into odd shapes when the very building around him was about to crumble underneath his growing magnificence? He could already feel the top of his back and shoulders pushing up against the second floor above him, screaming coming from his upstairs neighbor as they quickly hurried out of their own bathroom and ran down the stairs thinking it was an earthquake. Mephiston could feel as the structure containing him broke down once he stretched out his arms, flexing them and breaking through walls, both in his home and the ones around it. He could feel as the surge of nanites grew stronger, consuming the rubble and debris created by his ascension and transforming it into even more usable mass for his body to burgeon with.

He could feel it all, rushing into him and making ever stronger, ever larger, ever more muscular and colossal.

And he wouldn't stop.