

# Chapter 195: Software Products

I sat there with my eyes closed as the barber bot worked its magic around my head. It was one of the many purchases we made in order to allow our employees to have a comfortable life within our compound without leaving.

While some corporations mandated that they couldn't leave without reason, I'd rather use a softer approach. So far it mostly worked, but there were occasional adventurers given I hadn't banned leaving. That was when my monitoring implants came into full play.

In a way, I preferred this to jailing everyone, as it could let us discover any sleeper agents early. It was preferable to be taken by surprise when they turned coat. That was especially so when I was currently watching dozens and dozens of my new recruits in the middle of their field exercise.

Some of them even wore our power armor, which prompted me to consider the loyalty of my soldiers. These fears allowed me to understand why other corporations exerted such strict control.

However, that was a game I didn't want to play along with. When I was going through school to turn away from gang life, I had dreams about corporate life. Stable jobs, money, co-worker get-togethers, sports, travel, the entire book. I had hoped to get into a company that wouldn't treat me too badly.

Now that I was on the employer's side of the equation, I aimed to at least emulate some of those aspirations I had. I couldn't force it on people, but I could create the environment for it.

Of course, profits needed to be made, and I couldn't deviate too far from the norm. Not when I was such a small player.

The security field training soon ended, completing my main objective for visiting. I spent another day talking with various recruits, shooting with them, and speaking to various employees to get their opinions on where we were lacking.

After ensuring our logistics were in order, I retreated into the hidden base within the wasteland.

Since I was already here, I would be making use of the wasteland's bountiful resources, the mutants. My current coding project didn't require me to have access to fancy equipment or test subjects either. I simply needed to direct a call to Lanus if I needed my trusty AI's help.

I had everything I needed to spend the last few days of my trip out in the wasteland.

It was time to grind. In both senses.

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Game projects usually took several months at the minimum. There were a lot of different moving parts, with the coding, audio, writers, modeling, animation, etc.

However, I had a cheat. It was called Lanus.

Even after a round of upgrading, Lanus was still as hungry for hardware as ever. Nevertheless, it managed to complete several more projects concurrently. I simply had to input what I wanted done, and it would be completed in record time.

Leo and Lana had pulled through too, finding out some 3D artists and animators. I could have gotten Lanus to fill these roles, too, but the results would be too uniform. It would be easy for others to tell it wasn't man-made. In that case, I would have people wondering about the involvement of AIs.

When my SAID alerted me, I stepped out of my lab and went toward the elevator. It only took a few minutes of waiting until the doors opened and two figures emerged.

I didn't say anything and turned around. They followed.

We didn't speak until we were away from the fake background near the front.

"I'm getting a little excited. Can't say I expected us to make our own game so soon. Does this mean you'll be playing with us more, Rollo?"

I simply shrugged without turning back to Claire's question. I doubted I would have that much spare time, but I didn't think it was wise to give her an outright negative answer.

"Anyway, did the finance and legal department give the all clear yet? It's still in testing, but we could probably launch any day now."

"Yeah, yeah. We did similar paperwork when we set up the payments for the EchoHalls app."

"I would think micro-transactions would be more complicated."

"Nothing a few credits can't smooth over."

"Well, I guess we just have to polish the actual product then," I proclaimed as I held open one of the doors to a side room.

Inside were several VR pods and half the development team. They were busy monitoring various data from our current beta server, where our employees were currently testing our game.

There wasn't a lot that needed to be said, and we quickly found ourselves in our own pods. The neural link connection felt like I was hooking up to a power armor, but I was soon lured into the virtual world.

Before the game finished booting up, I already received Claire's invite to join her voice chat.

"What are you selecting? Both Thorne and I are stumped."

"What? I thought you two often played still?"

"Umm, not fantasy games like this. I've never ever heard of these races, gnomes, and orcs."

"Just pick whatever you want. We're just testing right now, anyway."

"That's not how that works! If we're going to play, we have to get things right on the first try. Isn't that right, Thorne?"

"Umm, sure?"

I shook my head as I got the character creation started. I quickly selected my race and class and loaded into the tutorial.

From my investigation into the game market of this world, I found that it lacked many familiar sights of my previous world. Most of the games focused on modern and sci-fi battles, utilizing guns. Some of them focused on the management of resources and personnel, like running a business.

While they had their fair share of sci-fi massively multiplayer role-playing games, the fantasy genre was absent. It seems the idea of orcs, elves, and other races wasn't common knowledge here.

*No wonder that executive from SocialCorp took such an interest in some manga he found in the dungeons. The entertainment media must've been reset after the doomsday event five hundred years ago. And now I will be bringing it back.*

*Good thing there's a convenient excuse for how we came up with the ideas. I can just say I discovered it from old records found in the dungeons.*

"Wait, you picked already?" Claire's voice rang out once more.

"Yep. Troll mage. Hurry up or I'll be leaving you behind."

I doubted she would rush the character creation, so I had to give her a push. I wanted to get this product out as soon as possible. To be honest, I didn't know what to expect when creating this game. In the creative field, it was often hard to tell if you could make a profit from it. Even with perfect coding, free from bugs, it was hard to tell how the audience would react to it. This was especially true when I planned to introduce a new genre into the scene.

That was why we developed several games concurrently. In the middle of one of these projects, it even spurred forth an idea for another software product.

So far, this MMORPG we developed had different races that spoke different languages. In an effort to make that more realistic, we made real-time translation software for when the players unlocked that language.

It was an idea that had completely escaped me previously. Every place I had been to spoke the same language. However, when I was researching how to create the various fantasy languages, I found that there was a wide variety of languages in this world still. Most of that congregated in the Europa area, so I hadn't come into contact with it.

The translation software would have launched already if we weren't still in the middle of dealing with the legal paperwork. Europa was split into many city-states and small countries, and we were a newcomer to their market.

In the end, our games and translation software were scheduled to be launched in unison with the game.

"Rollo, what's your username?" Thorne asked. "I'm ready."

Before I could reply, Claire yelled.

"What? Don't leave me behind, you two."

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After another month of testing, our game was completed in time for our scheduled launch date.

On that day, I waited patiently in my underground lab, waiting for the sale to officially start. I checked every email in anticipation of any updates, and that was when I received a somewhat unexpected message.

The sender was named Polina Burges.

She was one of the female test subjects Nova Tech had captured. The one who I had nudged into escaping from their base. I had left her behind in Aegis, as I didn't have the leeway to pay for all of their tickets, and she declined my offer. She stayed behind with the rest of the former subjects to work for that fare.

To no surprise, her message indicated she had managed to muster enough funds for her trip home. She was scheduled to arrive tonight and invited me to find her when I had the time.

*She did say she would introduce me to her family.*

Having launched several products before, I knew it would take some time for our sales data to be gathered. I swiftly called the security department to prepare for my trip out.

Having memories of Polina resurface, I couldn't help but think about the bio-coprocessor chips we were developing as well. I gathered many know-how from Nova Tech and combined it with

my knowledge to create our own version. I had been holding back while I was working for them, but there was no need to do so anymore.

I just needed to develop a commercial and a private version where I could employ my full skill set.

Nova Tech had issues with managing the heat and electrical emissions from adding neural link technology to their chip, but I easily addressed those problems. With ten points in cybernetic engineering, fitting high-powered devices into the human body without producing any harmful effects was right up my alley. In fact, I had experience doing so with the Argus.

I knew Polina still had the experimental chip installed into her, so I debated getting her a more stable implant to replace her old one. However, it may remind her of those dark times, so I wasn't sure how to proceed.

I eventually decided to meet her in person first to get to know about her situation first.

Right as evening came, I had a small convoy of Wraiths, disguised as regular vehicles, escort me to the spaceport. For now, the VTOL was too high-profile, and we only had one of them. It made it easy for me to get targeted if I liberally made use of it.

Our vehicle disguises were only turned on while in city traffic, as we'd rather not antagonize spaceport security for no reason. It was still one of the most secure places I've seen, and there was no need for any misunderstandings.

I arrived just as Polina's shuttle landed. Before long, I spotted her blonde hair peeking out from the gates. It looked more lustrous than before, but her hallowed cheeks told a different story. She must've overworked herself back in Aegis.

"Welcome back home, Polina. I'm glad you made it."

"Rollo, it's all thanks to you."

"I don't think that's valid anymore. You worked your own way back here. It's easy to tell when you lost so many pounds since I've last seen you."

She shook her head as she smiled.

"That's just me losing the weight I've gained from idling in one place for too long," she chuckled. "That, and all the dock work they had us do in those flimsy EVA suits."

"EVA suits? That sounds like an exciting experience."

"Trust me, it's not."

"Uh-huh. Let's stop our conversation here and get going. I think you have a daughter to see, right?"

At my words, she beamed.

We quickly boarded our cars and returned to the city.

While we were on our way, I couldn't help but ask about her job in Aegis. My next plans involved expanding up there, and I could use as much info as I could get. Getting them from different perspectives was just what I needed.

*Let's hope our software projects take off and we actually have enough money to implement our plans.*