

CHAPTER 9: EVIDENCE

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Location: Xanthe

Log note: In time all secrets are revealed

DR. MAZATL MAY HAVE BEEN CONVINCED that things were finally improving, but Victor did not share his optimism. Each day after work he went home to his apartment and brooded. Sometimes he tried to distract himself by reading a book, but he found it difficult to concentrate. He had a vague feeling that he ought to be doing something but nothing came to mind.

A few days passed. One evening Victor was startled by a knock on his door. It was late at night and he wasn't expecting anyone. As Victor put down the book he was reading and made his way to the door, he wondered who it could be. The SSF were all dead, so it couldn't be them. The probes were working as well as could be expected and there weren't any critical problems. Grimes wasn't teaching any classes at the moment, and Victor hadn't invited anyone over.

Curious, Victor went to the door and opened it. When he saw who it was his jaw dropped open. "Derek?" he exclaimed incredulously.

His tall, bearded neighbor nodded. "Yup." He handed Victor a chicken.

Victor had no desire to hold a chicken, but he found himself in the possession of one all the same. He looked awkwardly at the white bird in his hands, and then back at the scruffy-looking man who gave it to him. "I, um, don't understand. I haven't seen you in ages. I didn't even know you still lived around here. Why are you here?"

"Thanks," Derek said. He then walked away, leaving the chicken with Victor.

"Wait!" Victor called out. "I think you left something behind! This isn't my chicken!"

But Derek ignored him. He called the elevator, then entered it and disappeared. He never even looked back.

Victor looked down at the chicken he was holding. He did not like this situation at all. *What am I supposed to do now?*

As he started to panic, the door to the next apartment opened and Cynthia Glass stepped out into the hallway. "I thought I heard voices! Well well well. It looks like someone has finally found a friend!"

"Not for long," Victor said grimly. "There is no way I want a chicken in my apartment. He'd probably eat my books or something. I'm going to call the building supervisor and get rid of this thing. Where does Derek even get these chickens?"

"Don't you dare do that! The heartless super would just liquidate that poor, sweet thing. Let me have it. I'll make sure it finds a good home."

"Let *you* have it?" Victor said incredulously. "But we're not allowed to have chickens. I don't want to aid you in a life of crime."

"Don't be absurd. There's a zoo down on the 23rd floor. That's where I've been taking all of Derek's chickens. I'm sure it will be happy there."

"You've been tracking down Derek's chickens? Is *that* what happened to them? I haven't seen any birds around here lately. In fact, I hadn't seen much of Derek lately either. I kind of thought he had

died or something.”

Cynthia laughed. “You don't get out much, do you? No, Derek is not dead. He's just spending most of his time in a vault these days. Apparently the building supervisor in his virtual apartment lets him have all the chickens he wants. He's spending so much time there that he's not able to take care of his real chickens anymore, so he's giving them up. It's really a big improvement over his old chicken scheme.”

“That sounds kind of ominous. What did he used to do?”

“He would hide them. *Everywhere*. He would find some abandoned room, or apartment, or laboratory, or storage closet, and fill it with chickens. The public was outraged. There were meetings, and protests, and marches, and – is none of this ringing a bell?”

“Should it? How would I have known about this?”

Cynthia sighed. “You know, if you attended the monthly tenant meetings you'd learn a lot of things. Why don't you ever show up?”

“It just never seemed that useful,” Victor said vaguely. “I'm pretty sure the robots that run this place can do just fine without my input. I've never had any trouble so far. Well, except for this chicken here.”

Cynthia took the chicken from Victor. “The point is, if you attended the parties and socials that are held every week, you'd actually get to know people. Who knows – you might even make a friend.”

“Like Derek?” Victor asked dubiously.

“Don't be so hard on him! In a different age he probably would have been a chicken farmer. In fact, he could have been a chicken farmer in *this* age if we weren't all trapped in this blasted building. I can't wait for all the outsiders to move into Lane's vaults. Then we'll be able to go outside again! It will be wonderful.”

“It will be *dreadful*,” Victor responded. “The outside is full of all sorts of dirt, and insects, and other things that make life horribly uncomfortable. It's a terrible place. But that's a small matter compared to the lives of the vault-dwellers. Don't you realize that all those people are wasting their lives on fantasies? On *depraved*, wicked fantasies at that. What they're doing really shouldn't be allowed. Those vaults are going to doom the human race.”

“So they like to live out their fantasies. Are you really that different, though? I mean, you don't have to live in a vault in order to isolate yourself from the rest of the world. You've managed to do a pretty good job of that without any futuristic technology. You're about as reclusive as they come.”

“That's entirely different!” Victor protested.

“Is it? You say that you want to save the world, but you're never willing to interact with it. Like, at all. Derek might have a strange fascination for chickens but at least his chickens are *real*. That's more than I can say about your bizarre belief in the Stryker Twins. In my opinion, Victor, you've got Derek beat. You're way crazier than he is.”

“That's preposterous!” Victor exclaimed. “You're out of your mind.”

“Am I? Let's see. Derek is fascinated by something that *actually exists*, whereas you are obsessed with something completely delusional. Derek has spent a great deal of time interacting with all sorts of people – usually about his chickens, but even so it's something. All you ever do is sit at home and read books. Derek *actually had a life*.”

“Which he has given up to live in a vault,” Victor pointed out.

“At least he's getting outside the building. When is the last time you did that?”

“I've had quite enough of the outside, thank you. Nothing good comes from being outdoors. I

guess I'll just take my antisocial behavior and my delusions and head back to my lair. Have fun with your chicken."

Victor retreated into his apartment and closed the door behind him.

"That's not what I meant!" Cynthia called out. "I wasn't trying to make you *more* reclusive!"

But it was too late. Victor could not hear her.

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Victor spent the following day brooding. He was certain that he wasn't crazy, and it bothered him that Cynthia had accused him of being crazier than Derek. He knew that her opinion shouldn't matter to him, but it did all the same. *Is that really how people see me? Is Derek the sane one? How could this have happened?*

After spending far too much time thinking about it he decided that he wanted a second opinion – preferably one from a person who did not spend his free time hanging around chickens. So after work he took the subway to Star City University. By the time he reached the school and stepped out of the subway, night had fallen. Nights on Xanthe were always very dark, because the sky was utterly black and starless. However, the campus was well-lit and looked quite beautiful. The only thing missing was students. At this time of the day there weren't even any robots to be seen. The campus was magnificent but deserted.

The software developer made his way to Old Main and walked up to Professor Grimes' office. The professor was not a difficult man to find – he was always in his office. If he wasn't writing a paper then he was reading a book or preparing a new lecture series. The man was always working on something. Victor sometimes wondered how he found the motivation to keep working when so few people paid any attention to what he had to say. *Maybe he's an obsessive crazy person. Or maybe he just believes in his work. But given the circumstances, is that any different from being crazy?*

He gingerly knocked on the door. Grimes immediately called out to him. "Come in, Victor!"

Victor quietly opened the door and stepped inside. "How did you know it was me?"

"It's quite simple. You see, no one else ever comes to visit me in person. The few people who wish to speak with me do so via holoscreens. Personal visits take more effort than people like to expend."

"It's really not that much work," Victor commented, as he sat down in front of Grimes' desk. "Besides, the campus is beautiful. It's a pity more people don't see it."

"It's also a pity that more people don't take advantage of the learning opportunities that this facility offers. There is so much wasted potential here! This school could serve as a beacon to the entire galaxy – a center of knowledge in a dark age. Well, you know, I suppose it *does* do that, in spite of what its detractors say; it's simply a beacon that is being ignored. Ah well. So how can I help you?"

"Well, I've got a couple things on my mind that have been bothering me. I know everyone loves the vaults and thinks they're amazing, but I really have doubts about them. Dr. Mazatl says that they're actually going to make things better for everyone and I shouldn't worry about it. Personally, though, I think this situation calls for a *lot* of worry."

"That's not quite his opinion," Grimes replied. "I have talked to him about this issue as well. The problem is that mankind has leached off the Diano Corporation for two centuries now, demanding ever more from the company while giving nothing in return. The board has grown very tired of dealing with outsiders, and sees the Vaults as a way to escape the unfair obligation that has been placed upon

it. Now that the outsiders only care about Vault life, they're ignoring the Corporation. It's true that the people are as far from God as they ever were, but Dr. Mazatl has felt for years that they are a lost cause. All he really wants to do is find some way to get them to leave him alone so he can finish his work – and thanks to Lane that is actually happening.”

“But there are bigger issues!” Victor protested.

“I quite agree with you. After all, if mankind dies out then who will inherit the probe worlds? Dr. Mazatl claims to be building the probes to help the civilization of tomorrow, but he has trouble seeing the civilization of today. The good doctor does not see the danger because he is focused on his work to such a degree that nothing else matters to him. For his entire life he has worked on the Nehemiah probes. The Vaults are not tempting to him – and since they do not tempt him, he thinks that they won't tempt most other reasonable people either. He believes that only fools will use them and that the wise will disdain them. After all, that's what happened with the ZPEs. He doesn't see this new technology as being any different.”

“But this *is* different!”

“Quite so. The ZPEs had significant limitations, but virtual reality does not. This technology promises outsiders that they can have *everything* they have ever wanted, for the rest of their lives, in a world in which they are gods. It takes remarkable strength of character to refuse that offer and live and work in *this* world, which is deeply unsatisfying and beset with problems. I think that very few people will resist. This very well could end civilization.”

“So what should we do? How can we combat this?”

“I think, for now, we need to wait,” Grimes replied. “You and I have both made attempts to put an end to this problem before it grew, and we have not been taken seriously. I think the problem will have to become a great deal more obvious before the Corporation will take any action against it. For the moment the new technology is still imperfect and the wait to use the Vaults is long. Lane has a long way to go before he achieves his goal of fully replacing reality with his fantasies. Right now if a person wants to use his technology he has to get in a line and wait for it. Frankly, it's difficult to refute the notion that visiting the Vault once every few days represents a significant danger to society – especially *our* society, which is little more than total anarchy. Once it becomes possible to live in them, though, the game changes. That is when we can begin our realist movement in earnest and argue that reality trumps fantasy.”

“Wait?” Victor said uncertainly. “Are you sure? Doesn't that just allow the danger to grow?”

“It certainly does, but there is nothing to attack right now. At the moment we appear to be cranky old people who don't like new technology. Isn't that how Dr. Mazatl treated your objections? At the very least, we need to wait until there is something to actually object to. It's very difficult to argue against a purely hypothetical danger – which is what we are doing right now.”

“I guess. I just don't like the way this is going.”

“Neither do I. Now, I won't lie to you. I think the only way we can possibly win this battle is to take all the remaining sane people and move them a thousand light-years away from the colonies, and then keep them there for the rest of time. We need to physically separate them from Vault technology and ban it on that brave new world. If the temptation isn't there then it won't be an issue. Any world that allows Vaults technology is going to be destroyed by it. There's no argument we can make that will keep people out of them. It's a lost cause.”

“That seems kind of extreme,” Victor remarked.

“Absolutely! The Bible says we should run from temptation. Make no provision for the flesh,

you know. It's a perfectly valid technique – and in this case it is important. It would make a tremendous difference. No alcoholic should ever take up residence in a liquor store.”

“But how could we persuade the Corporation to do that? Why, I can't even get Dr. Mazatl to publicly oppose what Lane is doing. In fact, the company is actually *funding* him! Dr. Mazatl is *definitely* not going to relocate the company to another planet in order to fight it.”

Grimes smiled. “There is more than one way to achieve the desired ends, young man. Dr. Mazatl has been using this University's library to research his replacement for SOLOMON, and I have been assisting him. During the course of our work I pointed out that it would be dangerous to build the new artificial intelligence on this world, because it is so close to civilization. Since Dr. Mazatl hopes to build a system that can maintain the Nehemiah IV network for thousands of years, the replacement should be constructed far away from mankind – well out of reach of any potential problems that might arise.

“However, the creation of this new artifact will be a very large project – one of the largest the company has ever seen. In order to accomplish this goal the company will need to bring many thousands of people to that distant world, and keep them there for decades.”

“Oh,” Victor said slowly. “I get it. And you think that once they arrive, they will never leave. There will always be some new feature to add or something. It will become a permanent colony.”

“Exactly! And as long as the Vault technology is not brought with them – and I am sure Dr. Mazatl will see to that, since he will not want his workers to be distracted – they should be fine.”

“That's very clever. I like your strategy. Do you think he's going to go for it?”

“He seemed very amenable to the idea. I believe he is giving it some serious thought.”

Victor nodded. He then paused for a moment to think it over. “You know, I admit it's a great idea. It's certainly worth a try. But isn't it doomed to fail? Don't we already know that it's not going to work?”

“What do you mean?” Grimes asked. “How could we possibly know that it is going to fail before it has even been tried?”

“Because of the future. I mean, we know the Artifact project will succeed because one day it will go back in time to get the Twins. But the reason it does that is because mankind is gone and the Twins are the only ones who can help. If the colony survived then the Artifact would never have needed to resort to time travel. Something must have gone wrong.”

“But what evidence do we have that any of that is true? The legend of the Twins has been around for centuries, but I've never seen any actual proof to back it up. I will admit that it is a fascinating story, but without any evidence it is simply another conspiracy theory. History records that the Stryker family died when the Spanish Empire destroyed the *Sparrow* back in 1867. There is no evidence at all that indicates otherwise.”

Victor hesitated. “That's the other thing I wanted to talk to you about. You see, there actually is.”

“Oh? And what evidence might that be? And why haven't I heard of this before?”

“It's supposed to be a family secret,” Victor explained. “You know – one of those things that is passed down from father to son. Only I don't have any children, so if I don't pass it on to *someone* then the secret will die with me. I don't think Timothy Stryker would have wanted that. It was never supposed to be told outside the family, but someone needs to know – just in case the Twins ever show up and need help.”

The software developer pulled a small electronic device out of his pocket and pressed a series

of buttons. "The file is kept on a secure server in the Diano Building. It's actually been there for about five hundred years. Timothy was the one who set it up, and only true Strykers have been granted access to it. Even Dr. Mazatl hasn't seen this."

Victor finally found the file he was looking for and beamed the video to the holoscreen above the professor's desk. "This was recorded on December 9, 1867 – two days *after* the *Sparrow* was destroyed. Tim Stryker's apartment had a security system installed. This is what it recorded."

Victor played the video. At first the screen showed nothing in particular – just the interior of Tim Stryker's rather messy apartment. Then two teenagers suddenly appeared from nowhere. The girls had dark skin and long black hair. One of them reached over to the light switch and flicked it on.

"This place is a disaster!" one of the girls exclaimed. "Does Natalie Foster realize that her husband-to-be lives like this?"

"I'm pretty sure he wasn't expecting company," the other girl replied.

The first girl lifted up a hand but the second one stopped her. "Don't you dare clean this place up! We really shouldn't touch anything until we talk to Tim."

"Don't be silly. Somebody's got to clean this place up, and I'm sure not going to live here for weeks and not do anything about it! All of this trash has got to go."

The two girls continued to talk as they cleaned up Tim's apartment. "They actually spend a whole hour cleaning," Victor said. "It's super boring, and they don't say anything interesting. Let me fast-forward a bit."

Victor pressed a button on his phone and the video jumped forward. The two girls were now sitting on the sofa.

"So is there anything good on?"

"Not really," Amanda replied. "Just a lot of boring sports shows. But I did find this." She reached over onto the coffee table and grabbed a silver disc, which she tossed to her sister.

Amy's eyes lit up when she saw what it was. "Oh my goodness – it's Night of the Werewolves! I had no idea that was out yet! We have got to watch this."

Amanda sighed. "I just don't see what you see in those movies. They're ridiculous."

"I can't help it if you don't have romance in your soul," Amy sniffed. "They're a touching portrayal of complex relationships."

"If you say so," Amanda replied. "I'll go make some popcorn while you get it started."

"This is fascinating," Professor Grimes remarked. "I thought that awful movie was just a legend. Do they actually watch the whole film?"

"No, they get interrupted," Victor said. He fast-forwarded again. The video now showed the two teenage girls deeply engrossed in the movie. As they watched it Timothy Stryker opened the door and stepped inside. As he looked around his apartment a shocked look appeared on his face.

"What's going on here?" he called out. "Who's in my apartment?"

Amy shrieked at the sudden, unexpected noise and involuntarily threw the bowl of popcorn in the air. Amanda reached out and froze it in midair, leaving popcorn kernels suspended in space. She then grabbed the remote and paused the movie.

"Amazing," Professor Grimes commented. "Note her use of the remote. I would never have guessed that defying physics was easier than working a video player."

"Tim!" Amy shouted. "Don't scare me like that! What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here?" Tim replied, astonished. "How did you two get into my apartment?"

"We just walked through the door," Amy replied. "But you're not supposed to be home for hours! Don't you have a date with Natalie tonight?"

"That's been moved to next week," Tim said. "She had to work tonight."

"And you didn't update your calendar?" Amanda asked.

"Why would I do that? We only moved it one day – we're going out tomorrow instead of today. It's not a big deal. But what are you two doing here? The Sparrow didn't make it to Xanthe – there were no survivors!"

"Actually the Sparrow is fine," Amy replied. "Nothing bad happened to it. Everyone survived."

"You can't be serious! We just had a memorial service yesterday for all of you. Everybody was there – even the governor and all the leadership of the Rangers! And you mean to tell me that nobody died? Then where have you been all this time? Why didn't you let us know?"

"That's kind of complicated," Amanda said.

Professor Grimes listened, fascinated, as Amy and Amanda told Tim about the Sentinel and the Artilect. The girls explained that the Sentinel had traveled back in time to bring them into the future, in order to save mankind from disaster. Next, the twins began telling Tim about the Poneri. He found their story a bit difficult to believe.

"Then show me," Tim replied. "I want to see this supposed portal to Poneri land."

"All right," Amy replied. She stood up and then held up her hand. "Just a second... wait for it..."

A moment later the three of them vanished, leaving Tim's apartment empty.

The video stopped and Victor spoke up. "According to Tim, his sisters transported him instantly to Alpha Mensae – just like that."

"Remarkable! So *that* is why the Strykers have always believed in the legend of the Twins. I must say that this is rather compelling."

Victor nodded. "That's why I think the Artilect colony is doomed. Sure, they'll succeed in building their AI, but then something will go wrong. After all, if everything worked out then the Sentinel would never have gone back in time in the first place."

"But perhaps things will play out differently this time. Do you have any more videos or any additional information about the Twins?"

Victor shook his head. "This is all there is."

"Then there are many possibilities. If the Twins are traveling through time then perhaps they will appear and prevent this unknown disaster from ever happening in the first place. Perhaps they will save Dr. Mazatl's colony. After all, if the Sentinel rescued them in order to save the future then it's quite likely they will intervene to prevent mankind's destruction. They certainly seem to be beings of great power.

"Given how little we know about the Sentinel's plans, I think it is unwise to assume that the future is lost. There is always hope, Victor. Darkness will not win forever – and it may not win this battle either. We have a plan and I believe we should put our plan into practice. We cannot take responsibility for what will happen years from now, but we can do something about the present. That should be our focus."

Victor nodded. "That makes sense. Thanks for the encouragement."

"And thank you for sharing that video with me," Grimes replied. "It is a much more thoughtful gift than the chicken I received yesterday. I promise I will guard this recording with care and discretion. Is there a way that you could grant me access to view it? I'd like to study it, if you don't mind."

"Sure," he replied. Victor pressed a series of buttons on his phone. "There you go – you've

been granted access. I've also sent you a link to the file. You can use it to access the video."

"Splendid! Thank you – and thank you for coming. I always enjoy your visits. You're more than welcome to return anytime."

As Victor began to leave the office, he stopped to ask one last question. "What did you do with the chicken?"

"I put my barbecue grill to good use," Grimes remarked. "Grilled chicken is quite excellent, and fresh chicken is extremely rare. There are few meats that are not improved by the strategic use of charcoal."

"So you set it on fire," Victor said.

"In a manner of speaking, I suppose," Grimes replied. "It was quite tasty."

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Adrian Garza proved to be a very adept administrator. On January 1, 2420 – just a year after the very first Vault was opened – Adrian brought nine more Vaults online. There were now ten operational vaults on Xanthe, with a total capacity of 4 million people. Thanks to the improvements that Lane's team had made over the past year, it was now possible to spend eight hours at a time in the virtual worlds. Since the Vaults could be used in round-the-clock shifts, this meant that people could go to the Vault, stay for their eight hours, and then come back the next day. Instead of waiting for weeks they could now make daily visits.

It was a huge improvement, and the people of Xanthe loved it. They could now spend more time than ever in their virtual worlds, living out their fantasies. But word of the technology had spread far and wide, and now people were coming from other star systems in order to experience the technology for themselves. Thousands of people arrived every day.

"Demand is only going to grow," Adrian told Lane one evening. The two of them were in Lane's apartment in the Diano Building, reviewing some projections that Adrian had created. "The Vaults are the most popular thing in the galaxy right now. If we don't start exporting this technology to other worlds then it's going to cause a huge wave of immigrants. Eventually everyone from every other colony in the galaxy is going to move into Star City. This city just can't handle that kind of strain! It's in incredibly poor condition."

"It doesn't have to handle anything," Lane replied. "Our Vaults are self-sufficient. All we need is enough capacity to hold everyone. The Diano Corporation is giving us everything we need to expand our capacity further."

"But why not export it? Why not have Vaults on every world? Isn't that part of your dream?"

"Absolutely not," Lane said firmly. "Yes, I want to put an end to civilization's long decline. Yes, I want to end the riots and the vandalism that go on outside every day. Yes, I want to replace the physical world with my synthetic worlds. But I don't think everyone deserves paradise, Adrian. I think that only the worthy should be allowed in. This is *my* technology, after all. None of these people are paying for it."

"I don't understand. Aren't you allowing *everyone* into your vaults? In what way are you keeping out the unworthy?"

"I'm not doing anything yet. Right now we're still developing the technology, so I don't mind having a lot of test subjects – the more the better. If I've learned anything from working on the Nehemiah IV probes it's that you really can't have too many tests. I want this technology to last

forever, and I want it to be vastly better than the physical world. If more people use it then we can cover more possibilities. But one day that will change. One day we will be able to live in the vaults forever. When that day comes I will only allow the deserving to enter into Vault 37. Only those who have not been a plague on the Corporation will be allowed to enter. Those who are murderers, or vandals, or criminals will *not* be allowed in. They will have to use other vaults.”

“Is that all you're going to do?” Adrian asked, surprised. “That doesn't seem like much of a limitation to me. I don't think they will care what vault they get assigned to as their new home. To them one vault is as good as another.”

“It will seem that way at first, yes,” Lane agreed. “People will be welcomed in with open arms and will settle into their new, *permanent* homes. The vault doors will be sealed shut – to prevent vandalism, we'll say. The opportunity to enter the synthetic worlds will end, and people will begin living out their dreams. But what the people will *not* know is that only one vault will be built to last forever. In one vault people will be able to live for all of eternity in their dream worlds. The other vaults will have a very different fate.”

“You're going to kill them?” Adrian gasped.

“I don't have to do anything that brutal. All I really have to do is just not save them. If I install life-extension technology – which doesn't exist yet – in Vault 37 and not in the others, who can complain? They're still getting a lifetime of fun, and it's all free. Yes, some people may be getting more years than others, but no one is being shot in the back of the head. I don't see how any of them can demand anything from me. It is my right to give an endless life to those I believe are worthy.”

“I suppose,” Adrian said doubtfully. “I guess if you think about it, no one can claim to *deserve* a spot in your vaults. And you are letting them live out their natural life.”

“Exactly! So we understand one another. But we have a long way to go until we get to that. The suspended animation tech is promising, but it will be months before we have something that's ready to deploy. In the meantime we need more capacity.”

“I'll start the construction of ten more vaults,” Adrian promised. “That should buy us more time. But how much more time do you think you will need?”

“I wish I knew. This isn't easy. The problem is that the suspended animation technology works far too well – it puts the body to sleep entirely. *Everything* is shut down, which means you can't dream and you can't experience the virtual worlds. What we're trying to do is modify it so that the mind stays awake while the body sleeps, but separating the mind from the body is hard. If the mind is awake then the body has to stay awake to some degree in order to provide the brain the resources it needs to keep working. If the body's awake, though, it's not suspended and so everything falls apart.”

“Is it a solvable problem?”

“I think so. I believe we can shut the body down and use nanites to keep the brain operating. In theory it should work, but the nanites weren't designed to do that. It's a pretty big change and there is so much we don't know. But we'll get there.”

Adrian nodded. “I'll plan on building out capacity for 10 million people. That will provide a spot for everyone on the planet – although it won't do much for any new immigrants who might arrive. If you complete your work by 2421 then we'll be ready; if not then we'll have to wait for the nanite upgrade.”

“Exactly. We might as well create our total target capacity now. When the suspension technology is perfected it will just be an upgrade to the nanites, which isn't a part of the Vault hardware itself. The Vaults themselves shouldn't need upgrading.”

"I'll get started on it first thing tomorrow," Adrian replied.

Lane smiled. "You know, I don't know what I would have done without you. None of this would have been possible without your help. I'd still be floundering around, working on this by myself. I probably wouldn't have gotten anywhere."

"It's been a privilege to be of assistance. You are ushering in a bright new future for humanity – and I am proud to be playing a role. The future is quite exciting."

"It certainly is," Lane agreed.