

Michael Bradley

I sought refuge from the rain under the awning of a shuttered mom-and-pop shop. A glitching holo-sign was bolted to one of the security shutters. It was fighting a losing battle struggling to project the prices of kibble-and-synth vegetable supplements, sparking each rain trickled down onto it from holes in the awning. I took one final drag of my smoke stick before I dropped it and crushed it out under my boot.

I exhaled slowly and watched the vapour swirl and eddy on the cross breeze of the nearby hab-block. The media was having a field day with this deluge, it had hardly stopped raining in the past 2 weeks and the streets were awash with effluent as the cities drains clogged from detritus. The incessant downpour had flushed out everything hiding in the cavernous storm drains. Sanitation crews were working double shifts trying to dislodge the corpses of stim junkies who had wandered down and gotten themselves flatlined.

A message flashed up on my Chyron cyber-eye and I felt a spike of pain as the harsh orange text superimposed itself over my vision, damn thing had been giving me a headache all day and I made a mental note to drop in with my ripper-doc to take a look at it.

I hadn't been thrilled at the prospect of getting it but taking a right hook to the face from a dorph'd up booster with a pair of Arasaka gorilla arms had made the decision for me. I was lucky it had just been a glancing blow, if it had connected properly the punch would have taken my head off as surely as a mass reactive round from my Federated Arms X-9mm autopistol.

I glanced irritably at the message, the sender I.D. read "Cian Ryker", I didn't bother to read the content of the message as it would only make my headache worst.

I braced myself and left my the relative safety of my temporary shelter. By the time I had sprinted across the street to the holo-cordon, the rain had soaked through my synth weave coat, "rain proof my ass" I thought.

Two of the officers standing guard in front of the holo-cordon around the hab-block scanned my biometrics before allowing me to proceed inside, the process took longer than was necessary and I felt the cold embrace of my rain soaked coat starting to seep into my shirt. Not that the officers cared much. Both were decked out in foul weather gear but unless they were running some pain editor neuralware, there was no way to get rid of the sapping cold that crept into you body from the unforgiving concrete.