

# TROUBLE IN CYBORGIA

**NIGHT CRUSADERS SERIES**  
EPISODE 4

ERIC B

outskirts  
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press

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## SEEKING THE INSIDE INFORMATION

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**Following the departure** of Night Crusader Maria, my new friend Night Crusader Simeon wrapped his arm around my torso and propelled us both through the air. We were so high in the sky that there were a considerable number of air creatures and air vehicles to see flying quite a ways below us. This was by far the most exhilarating experience of my life.

Simeon landed us at a house he was boarding in the southeast outskirts of Georgia City. When he took me into the house, Simeon introduced me to his acquaintance and boardingmate Gaylon Mitchell, who was apparently some kind of financier for Simeon. The only thing he requested in return for providing money and resources to Simeon was for Simeon to make occasional appearances at gatherings of Gaylon's friends and colleagues.

At that time, Simeon decided he needed to disguise his true identity. Gaylon provided for Simeon dark khaki pants, an off-white button-down shirt, and brown business casual shoes. Simeon told me that whenever he was dressed in civilian attire, I should address him as "Drew Stevens." Later the same day, I purchased for Simeon a pair of glasses and a drab-looking casual jacket.

While still at Simeon's boardinghouse, I checked my phone messages and quickly discovered that my van had been impounded. Apparently while I was kidnapped by JALE Technotix, my time in my hotel room had expired. With my van still parked on the premises, the van was presumed to have been abandoned.

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As we said goodbye to his boardingmate, Simeon handed me a biker's helmet but would not tell me why. He just told me to bring the helmet with me. Simeon took me on a walk about six blocks west and led me into a junkyard. He did not say a word, but I wondered what he could possibly be looking for in the midst of all of the scattered mess that had been strewn about the place.

After a moderate search, Simeon spotted a severely damaged and broken motorcycle lying about the wreckage. I stood in stunned silence, wondering what could possibly be so appealing about that piece of junk. But when Simeon gripped the seat of the broken bike, energy radiated from his body to the dilapidated vehicle. Immediately the motorcycle became whole, and new, and shiny, and appeared untouched. Simeon hopped aboard, and without even using a key, turned the motorcycle on. I was shocked.

"What did you just do?" I could not resist asking.

But Simeon turned to me and said, "Come on, mount up."

I was still trying to figure out what was going on, yet I did what he said. Simeon told me to put the helmet on, and to wrap my arms around his torso as tightly as I could. I tried to assure Simeon that this was not my first time on a motorcycle. Nevertheless, he told me to do what he said. And so I did: I wrapped my arms around his torso tightly. A *VOOM!* or two later, and the bike began to levitate into the air. I was startled and caught off-guard, and began to squeeze Simeon's torso with all my strength. Good thing Simeon was no ordinary man or my hold might have been too much for him.

As we rode across the sky, I looked with wonder at all the sights around and below me, unable to believe I was actually riding on an airborne motorcycle. After about twenty minutes, we began to come in for a landing in what appeared to be a common impound lot, located in downtown Georgia City.

"Tom," Simeon mentioned, "this might be a good time to inform you that this is not an impound lot."

"Then what is it?" I inquired, curious.

"A chop shop." I looked at him bewildered as he continued,

“See?” and pointed my attention to a rundown building at the other end of the lot.

There was no one working there at the time we descended, and Simeon landed inside the lot. I only took a minute or so to locate my van.

At the same time, Simeon used his X-ray vision to spot a cache of keys inside a metal box hidden within a stockpile of tires. He reached into the pile to pull out the metal box. Then he brought the box over to me and said, “See?” as he pointed to “JALE Technotix” imprinted in very small letters on the box.

“What the hell are they doing with my van?” I belted out as I was adjusting to the shock.

“What the hell were we doing in their prison?!” I could not help conceding Simeon’s point.

Ripping open the box, Simeon was able to examine the keys with his eyes to tell which set was mine. He scored on the first try. He put his hovercycle in the back of my van and told me to start the van and follow him.

Simeon led me on foot to the entrance of the lot. The gates had been closed, locked, and electrified. He ripped the gates from their hinges and threw them on the ground. He was completely unaffected by the electricity, though the charge did run through his body.

Finally, he came into the van to ride shotgun.

A short ride down the road later, I could not resist mentioning, “You know, you didn’t have to rip that gate.”

“I didn’t?” Simeon asked, intrigued.

“Of course not!” I replied with a bit of surprise at his response. “Simeon...you...you could have...you know...grabbed the van and levitated us over the gate? Then they probably would have never had a chance to find out anybody was here!”

Grinning, Simeon said, “Yeah, I suppose we could have done something like that!” as he continued laughing.

Seriously, I inquired, “Well, why didn’t you?”

“Because I *want* them to come to the conclusion that a Night Crusader must have been behind the damage!”

“Don’t you guys operate under a mantra ‘Do the right thing no matter what the costs’?”

“I *did* do the right thing: I retrieved a vehicle that was appropriated and illegally detained by kidnappers!”

We decided to make a quick pit stop at the motel at which I had stayed in order to recover any possessions of mine left there that I still could. I discovered that my belongings had been collected and stored in a box in the motel’s “Lost-and-Found.” A few things were missing, although most of what I’d left in the motel was there in the box. Fortunately, nothing that was dear to me, or irreplaceable, was missing.

Gaylon knew of a rental house within a short walking distance of where he and Simeon lived for me to stay. The owner had been trying to fill a vacancy there for weeks. Gaylon even threw in the security deposit and a month’s rent for me. I was grateful to him both for sharing his valuable resource with me and for helping me get started there. I was moved into the rental house that very night.

Simeon recalled how during our time together in JALE prison, I’d mentioned that I was set to interview for a job with JALE. He figured I should go for the job as an obvious way to get on the inside and to investigate JALE. He used the tech-savvy he had developed over the years to arrange not merely an interview, but ready-made employment for me at JALE. This undertaking cost him only twenty minutes of time, which is not bad considering Simeon was hacking into the computer system of one of the province’s biggest and most well-known corporations.

And Simeon got me just the job I wanted: cybernetics research coordinator. He informed me that I would be meeting with Rich Baylor, who would be my orientation guide and give me the corporate tour.

Sure enough at 7:45 am on Monday, November 11th, I arrived the generically-named Plant #6, which was designated specifically to be the cybernetic research and supply center. Rich Baylor met me at the entrance. He handed me an orientation packet and

informed me that he would be my supervisor. He was charging himself with ensuring I learned all of the essentials on my first day on the job.

Less than an hour into my orientation, Rich introduced me to a curious fellow by the name of John Simmons, who would be the one to give me the rundown on exactly how things operated on a daily basis at Plant #6. He said John and I would be working closely together, and that if I had any questions or issues, I should direct them to John.

Yet I spent very little time with John on the first day, as Rich — the supervisor himself — was my shadow, the one to show me the ropes, for the entirety of orientation day.

I got to know John on the second day. He filled in some day-to-day business factoid holes in what was provided to me by Rich. As well, I got to learn some very intriguing information about the corporation from John. For example, John informed me that JALE Technotix was owned by a mogul named Rick Daley.

During lunch that day, John invited me to join him at a cafeteria table with some coworker friends. What I found interesting was that not all of these coworkers were of the same department nor even the same line of work. Apparently, John had made friends of workers of various occupations within the plant.

While we ate, I decided to probe further into Rick Daley. Quickly I would learn there was no shortage of coworker enthusiasm to address my inquiry.

“Daley’s ambitions are no secret,” Ted Brinkley mentioned. “You’re not from Georgia City, so you may be unaware of his schemes that are broadcast on local cyberspace channels with almost alarming regularity.”

“No kidding!” Abigail Dane replied.

“You see, Tom,” Amy Paletz said, “JALE Technotix Corporation is under the umbrella of CyberDOM Industries: North America’s leading defense contractor for the 26th century.”

“Seriously?” I replied in a shocked voice. “I’ve heard of CyberDOM, yet I had not the slightest inkling that JALE was

connected to them in any way, shape, or form!” Just about everyone at the table nodded with assurance as I continued, “Does anyone know who’s in charge of CyberDOM?”

“Truthfully, Tom,” Harold Lewis said, “I’m not sure any of us knows that.”

“I do,” Amy said. Everyone at the table looked at her, intrigued, as she continued, “Marty and Elise Sanderson.”

“Oh yeah, of course, Amy!” Harold blurted out as though this had just occurred to him. “How did I not know that? Marty and Elise Sanderson had been famous for decades for their contributions to CyberResearch Systems and CyberSystematics Corporate. Hell, they may even have ownership stake in those companies as well!”

“I wouldn’t be surprised!” Ted pointed out.

“Anyway,” Amy continued, “CyberDOM Industries searched in vain for someone to assume ownership of JALE Technotix after the previous owner died, and none of his heirs desired the responsibility. Instead they cashed out, selling the ownership back to CyberDOM.”

“Yeah,” Ted added. “Apparently, CyberDOM was known for buying small ‘techie’ companies and growing them into huge conglomerates. Anyway, one fine Thursday morning, Rick Daley walked into CyberDOM’s main headquarters in Tulsa, Province of Texas, with a suitcase full of cash and high ambition for Georgia City.”

“Less than a year after Daley took ownership of JALE Technotix,” Harold mentioned, “Georgia City had already become unofficially known as ‘Cyborgia.’”

“Why’s that?” I inquired.

“From the beginning,” Harold replied, “Daley’s top ambition via JALE was to transform Georgia City into the cybertechnology hub of the entire province of Kellum.”

“That’s how Georgia City became defined more by cybernetics than its own local culture,” Ted felt compelled to add.

“And now Georgia City has no culture anymore,” Amy said. “It’s nothing more than a cold and lifeless robot...a big, giant, city-sized robot.”

While I was learning the ropes at my new job, Simeon decided

to revisit the dungeon in which he and I were recently prisoners. When he arrived at the site where fellow Night Crusader Maria freed us, Simeon saw that the hole she had drilled was now covered with a titanium sheet. The first thing Simeon did was rip the sheet off the hole.

Before entering, Simeon thought what might be best would be to stop and watch to see if he could ascertain what exactly the droids were being sent to do. He just laid down on his stomach and observed the activity through the hole in the ceiling. He spent almost six hours watching and observing. He mostly saw JALE robots coming in and out of the dungeon, but he did notice the occasional human employee.

Using his tech-savvy, Simeon hacked information from the central operating system using the wireless handheld device he had brought with him. As a result, Simeon uncovered something very disturbing: that JALE was using energy from living beings as an alternative power source for the city. Upon this discovery, Simeon realized he had seen more than enough.

Incidentally, Simeon had insulating gloves and body armor that he had brought with him. He did not wear nor even bring his duster for this particular mission.

Simeon tore, reshaped, and placed the titanium sheet underneath his clothing to protect himself — very similar to how we normal people protect ourselves with bulletproof vests. He wore the body armor over his clothing. With his bare hands, he enlarged the hole in the ceiling by chipping away at the rocks. The noise he made doing this aroused the attention of the prisoners.

“Do not worry,” Simeon said as he slowly descended. “I’m gonna get you all out of here!” He slipped the gloves on.

Upon landing, one-by-one, Simeon ripped every single present prisoner’s chains apart. Almost everyone fell straight to the floor with extreme weakness. He snapped the shackles apart from their wrists with his fingers. Afterward, he began flying prisoners out of the dungeon ceiling hole two at a time.

More than once, one JALE Technotix robot or another spotted

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Simeon and opened laser fire on him. But their firepower could not penetrate Simeon's titanium shields. Simeon's counterattacks always resulted in decimated droids.

Once the last of the prisoners was freed, Simeon attacked and destroyed the central operating system, which caused the remaining machines to go offline. The human employees who witnessed this escaped, and Simeon could not afford to pursue them, as he had to leave the dungeon in order to ensure his strength was not drained.

Simeon contacted ambulances, fire departments, and law enforcement to tend to the victims as well as investigate the dungeon.

Over the course of a week, former JALE prisoners got medical attention, and victims' loved ones filed lawsuits against the corporation. And the building that housed the dungeon was condemned, and soon after demolished. But there were no arrests, and no one was held liable for the damage done to a great many innocent citizens — kidnapped and imprisoned by JALE —and/or their families. Many people found this fact to be inexcusable. Night Crusader Simeon was one of them.

Simeon sought out employees of the site in an attempt to find answers. But every time he successfully tracked one down, he found the employee murdered.

At about noon on Thursday, November 14th, Simeon landed near a vacant lot bordering an abandoned commercial building and a few trees on the west side of the city. Upon landing, and as he walked forward, his eyes were fixed upon a young woman he saw seated on his bike. She was 27 years old, professionally dressed, with light brown skin and elegant brown hair. He observed her watching a video on her phone.

Simeon slowly approached her in an attempt not to alarm her. When the young woman looked up and saw the attire of the man approaching her, her eyes lit up.

"Well, you must be one of those Night Crusaders!"

"I am."

She held out her hand and said, "Nice to meet you. I am Crystal Spencer of *Georgia City Daily News*."

“Good to meet you,” he said as he shook her hand. “I am Night Crusader Simeon.”

“Wow, I can’t believe I actually met one of you guys in person!”

“Well, that’s how it is with ‘us guys.’ Is there any reason you are sitting on my bike?”

“Well, I figured a Night Crusader wouldn’t be going too far without his Night Crusader hovercycle! Know what I mean?” she said as she giggled.

“Nice assumption. But you should know...there is not really any such thing as a hovercycle.”

“Of course there is. You Night Crusaders are famous for hovercycles!”

“Of course there is *not*! A bike is just a bike. It is the energy from the body of a Night Crusader that makes the bike capable of flight.”

“Really?”

“Really! Therefore, if a Night Crusader is not riding it, it *cannot* fly. Hence, if I can make a bike fly, I don’t need the bike to fly. Ergo, you could have potentially been sitting here for an eternity waiting for a Night Crusader to show up and claim this bike!”

“Well I certainly am grateful...that you rescued me from such a fate!”

Simeon smiled and moved closer as he said, “Well, I’d never leave a pretty young lady like you to such a bother.”

“You’re so kind, Mister,” she said as she dismounted. “Would you...grant a lady a bit of your time?”

Simeon stared into her eyes for about thirty seconds, then said, “What would you like to ask me?”

Crystal called her camera crew out of hiding and had them set up. While this was happening, she observed the ambiguous expression on Simeon’s face. So Crystal rushed over to Simeon and threw her arms around him.

“Please don’t fly away!” she said desperately.

With his right hand, Simeon grabbed her arm and pulled her — spinning her around — to lying her back upon his left palm. He looked down into her eyes and said, “Crystal, don’t worry.” He

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rubbed her hair, and she looked up at his eyes. Simeon rubbed her cheek and said, "I'm not going anywhere!" Then he laid a passionate lock upon Crystal's lips. More than one crew member was upset that no one caught this on camera.

Crystal needed a moment to recover from her elation, for she could not believe she was just kissed by a Night Crusader. Yet she tried to hide this feeling from Simeon.

Samuel Dennison, Crystal's producer, helped her as she tried to pull herself together. He had the makeup crew hurriedly fix her up. In less than five minutes, Crystal was ready.

Crystal probed Simeon's purpose for investigating JALE Technotix Corporation. Simeon told her what he knew about the corporation and its nefarious activities. He mentioned his stay in JALE's dungeon, and made sure to include revolting details about the squalid conditions therein. Simeon accused JALE of launching a campaign of terror and assault against innocent civilians in a sordid endeavor to make its mark upon the city. And he denounced the local government, condemning its willingness to tolerate JALE's villainous activities.

Crystal and her crew were very pleased with the information shared by Simeon for their recorded broadcast. Crystal tried to get Simeon to provide her a way to contact him in the future, but he instead assured her that *he* would contact *her* should there be a need to do so in the future.