

Cyberscape Neo - Episode 7

by

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SCENE 1: LIFE AND DEATH - HYPERION, ANGELA

Scene Details: Angela and Hyperion's fight continues as they exchange heated blows across the forest landscape. Their battleground is covered with ruptured earth and fallen trees. Angela has the upper-hand, as her skill with the blade, as well as her various skills have outclassed Hyperion in many ways.

**[Two heavy clashes between Hyperion's and Angela's blades end in both bracing their blades against each other's. Angela's Howling Edge flares up, still lending its enhanced force to her smaller weapon.]**

HYPERION  
(pushing into the spine  
of her sword with  
considerable effort)  
Rrrrrgggg!

ANGELA  
(pushing back against  
Hyperion with a more  
relaxed effort)  
You might be wondering... how I can  
hold back your attacks so easily,  
with a weapon so much...  
smaller...

HYPERION  
(annoyed, struggling to  
overpower Angela's  
guard)  
Shut up...

**[A crack starts to form from a chip in Hyperion's blade.]**

ANGELA  
(amused, taunting)  
It's as if... you don't even know...  
how to use a sword.

**[The crack in Hyperion's blade spreads across the surface of the edge.]**

HYPERION  
 (angry and still  
 struggling, while now  
 being overpowered by  
 Angela)  
 Nobody... asked you!

ANGELA  
 (amused, taunting. She  
 presses harder into  
 Hyperion guard.)  
 It would be a shame... if someone  
 were to *break* it...

**[A stone-sized chunk of Hyperion's blade falls from between the two of them, shattering harmlessly into small metallic shards upon hitting the ground. The jagged indent in Hyperion's blade grinds against Angela's as Hyperion disengages with a short backwards hop, skidding to a stop.]**

HYPERION  
 (unable to maintain the  
 clash any longer, jumps  
 back, taking in deep  
 breaths to recover)  
 Hah... Hah... Give it your best shot...  
 Nothing that *toothpick* can do  
 would be able to take me down...

**[Hyperion drives the tip of her greatsword into the ground with the flat of it towards Angela. She leans forwards, bracing the back with her shoulder.]**

(smirking with a devious, but intense look on her face)  
 Hehehe...

**[Angela's back foot swipes across the dirt, entering a forward stance.]**

ANGELA  
 (taking a sliding step  
 back, smirking and  
 confident.)  
 You asked for it... Don't tell me  
 later that you regret giving me a  
 free shot...

[She performs a rapier flourish, gathering energy in a pulsing wave of whistling and swirling wind at the tip of the blade.]

HYPERION

(waiting, annoyed.)

If you keep me waiting and let me recover... I won't be able to take you seriously as an opponent...

ANGELA

(amused, condescending and intentionally insulting Hyperion's lack of skill use.)

*My apologies*, this skill has a charge time on it... You know how it goes... Or maybe you *don't*?

HYPERION

(biting back with her own insult.)

These skills of yours have to be *pretty* pathetic, if they require this much concentration.

(mocking Angela's statement from earlier.)

It would be a shame... if someone were to break it...

ANGELA

(annoyed, narrowing her eyes)

Touche...

HYPERION

(annoyed and impatient)

You done yet?

ANGELA  
 (get aggravated,  
 speaking between gritted  
 teeth.)  
 You're *killing* the mood..

HYPERION  
 (annoyed and impatient)  
 And you're supposed to be killing  
 me!

ANGELA  
 (angry)  
 Fine!

HYPERION  
 (confused)  
 Fine?

ANGELA  
 (angry)  
 Yea!

HYPERION  
 (confused)  
 Yea?

ANGELA  
 (furious at being  
 mocked)  
 Maelstrom Breaker!

[The pulsing wave at the tip of Angela's rapier quickly fades, then erupts in a spiral that wraps down from the tip to the cross-guard. Angela shoots forward towards Hyperion, her left shoulder forwards as he aims to drive the tip of her blade straight through Hyperion's, and Hyperion herself.]

(thrusting charged blade  
 towards Hyperion.)  
 HAAAAAAAAA!

HYPERION

(confused, hearing the name of the attack and not sure if it was just Angela talking back at her.)

Mail what--? Oh!

**[Hyperion realizes the attack is finally coming, fervently planting their feet and body behind the large flat of their blade to block. Angela's blade hits Hyperion's great sword, drilling into it with rampaging air currents and fierce shrieking pulses of sonic energy.]**

(bracing against the attack)

Rrrrrrrrgggggg!

ANGELA

(furious, pressing further into the attack with the intent to kill.)

HAAAAAAAAAAAH!

HYPERION

(eyes wide, grinning excited, bracing against the attack.)

Now *this* is more like it--

**[A loud crack, a pause, then an explosive shattering of Hyperion's greatsword, followed by the faint sound of tiny metal shards colliding lightly in the air. Hyperion falls heavily to a knee with a thump. Angela's blade loses its glow and is lowered as the tip of the blade still rests inside of Hyperion's shoulder.]**

(falling to knee, wounded, speaking with a groan between satisfied heavy breaths)

Wow... your attack really did it... broke right through the blade like you said, and then right... through me...

ANGELA

(stern and confident,  
but breathing heavily,  
exhausted from the  
attack.)

Was it... worth the wait?

HYPERION

(excited, wincing at the  
simulated pain from the  
wound. She is smiling  
despite her pained  
expression.)

Yea...

(groans, but speaks  
nonchalantly.)

Took you long enough...

ANGELA

(insulted, yet  
confused.)

Are you *seriously* still talking  
down to me with that hole in your  
shoulder? That bleed damage gives  
you *what...* a *minute* left to  
live?!

HYPERION

(chuckling, contented,  
her eyes lowered and her  
hands and body shaking.)

No, that's not it at all...

**[Hyperion's left hand slowly reaches up and grips tightly onto Angela's left hand, gripping the rapier. Hyperion's grip squeezes and holds the blade steady, still impaling her shoulder.]**

(she chuckles in a low  
voice to herself)

A minute should be plenty...

ANGELA

(bordering on timid, her  
resolve is shaking.)

(MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

She starts believing  
Hyperion might be insane  
as she struggles against  
Hyperion's raw strength,  
trying to release her  
hand and her weapon from  
her grip.)

You can't be serious... You still  
intend to fight me after that?

HYPERION

(slowly lifts her face  
to meet eyes with  
Angela. She wears an  
intense, crazed  
expression full of blood  
lust, grinning madly.)

I apologize, but the truth is I  
haven't been seriously fighting  
you at all...

ANGELA

(confused and freaked  
out)

You... what?!

HYPERION

(staring intently and  
hungrily into Angela's  
eyes with a grin)

Because you know what's strange?  
They don't let you change  
equipment in combat...

(finally lets loose, now  
that her character's  
stats are reflected in  
full as she is no longer  
equipped with a weapon  
she is not proficient  
with.)

UNLESS IT BREAKS!

**[The metal shards of Hyperion's sword start to descend  
around them, glistening from the nearby rays of light.  
Hyperion tenses her entire body tightly, unable to contain  
their excitement.]**

(going berserk with excitement and the thrill of battle,  
chuckling in a low tone, then screaming out the one and

only skill they know in an intense roar.)  
 Hahahahaaaaah.... ILLUMINATE!

[An explosion of light as all the metal shards from Hyperion's destroyed sword emit an overpowering burst of blinding light.]

ANGELA  
 (covering her eyes, in  
 pain from the sensory  
 overload, screaming)  
 Aghhh!!!

[Hyperion quickly pulls the rapier from her shoulder, then kicks off the ground towards Angela, grasping towards her opponent's throat with her free hand. The metal shards continue descending, lightly hitting the ground.]

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
 (being choked by the  
 grasp of one of  
 Hyperion's hands)  
 Ackk!

[There is a torrent of air and a stampede of steps as Hyperion takes Angela by the throat. She proceeds to charge through the forest, driving Angela's body through numerous trees, then releases her, sending her tumbling across the jagged rocks across the ground.]

HYPERION  
 (while mid-dash, letting  
 out a cathartic barbaric  
 laugh)  
 Haaaahahaha!

ANGELA  
 (in disbelief, groaning  
 as she struggles getting  
 back to her feet,  
 straining to speak)  
 H-how?! How can you be so  
 powerful...  
 (MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
 (coughs heavily, then  
 shouts angrily for how  
 little sense the change  
 in Hyperion makes.)  
 When you can hardly wield a  
 sword?!

HYPERION  
 (groaning but shrugging  
 off the intense  
 sensation from her  
 wound, explaining  
 nonchalantly)  
 I dunno... I never liked *using* a  
 sword... but they do *look* really  
 cool... right?

ANGELA  
 (rising anger, shaking  
 from the naivete of the  
 comment.)  
 C-cool?! We're fighting a battle  
 of *life* and *death*... and your  
 concern is whether you  
 (groans, returning the  
 rapier back into a weak  
 guard position.)  
 Look.. COOL?!

[Angela's rapier clicks as returns into a guard position.]

HYPERION  
 (confidently striding  
 forward, laying blows  
 into Angela, all while  
 bleeding heavily from  
 her wound)  
 Fighting a strong opponent is  
*life*!

[Hyperion sends her fist through the metallic armor over  
 Angela's midsection.]

And *death* is just a minor setback!

[Hyperion drives her knee into Angela's sternum, flipping  
 Angela end over end and leaving Angela's back exposed.]

*But eternal life is fighting until  
there is NO ONE LEFT STRONGER!*

**[Hyperion lands from the knee strike with a turn, spinning and driving her leg into Angela's back with a loud crunch, sending her skidding and rolling across the ground, only stopping when she impacts the stump of a fallen tree.]**

ANGELA

(she cries out for the three above blows taken, then lets out a long pained groan as she skids across the ground to a stop.)

**[Hyperion stumbles forward, advancing towards Angela to finish her off. Upon reaching Angela, she falls to her knees, then grips her armor by the shoulder and resumes her assault. Hyperion sends her fist towards Angela's face. Angela puts her arms up to guard against the punches as they continue to rain down on her.]**

HYPERION

(continues to drive her fist five times into Angela's guard, spaced about 1 to 1.5 seconds apart. She emphasizes "ENOUGH!" with the effort of switching aim to punching into Angela's unguarded stomach. In a fierce voice, albeit almost losing consciousness from blood loss. Almost drunk-sounding.)

You're doing a good job defending...  
but not GOOD ENOUGH!

**[Hyperion sends her fist into Angela's armored midsection, bypassing her guard.]**

ANGELA

(pronounced and heavy  
gasp as the wind is  
knocked out of Angela by  
the strong punch to the  
stomach, followed by  
groans of pain and heavy  
breaths)

HYPERION

(kneeling over Angela,  
smirking confidently,  
but feeling extremely  
weary as her body  
weakens, the character's  
health falling  
critically low.)  
So... this is it, huh? Ugh...

**[Hyperion collapses over Angela, still gripping her armor weakly.]**

(With a satisfied smile  
on her face, but unable  
to move and nearly  
passing out,)  
A glorious fight... with a worthy  
opponent... Victory is mine...

ANGELA

(pained groaning whisper  
to the opponent  
collapsed on top of  
them)  
I am sorry... but I cannot grant  
you...  
(coughs twice)  
Your victory today... If you want  
your title...  
(musters the last of her  
strength with a powerful  
stab with her rapier)  
Hnnn!

**[Angela's rapier is driven through Hyperion's torso.]**

(looking dead into  
Hyperion's eyes, saying  
the words grimly through  
gritted teeth, like an  
order.)  
You'll have to find me once more...  
and take it! *Find... Me...!*

[After a short pause, one of them shatters into glass, and then the other.]

SCENE 2: FAILURE - RAPTURE, SAGE, ROLAND, MYRA, ANGELA

Scene Details: Sage, having commandeered control of Rapture's avatar, has inserted code into the game that lets her enter normally-inaccessible areas within the game. This area *may* sound familiar...

[A light heartbeat ambiance and the loud hum of electrical noise plays throughout scene. Heels can be heard walking on a metallic catwalk-like surface. This walkway surrounds a large circular row of what look like mostly-upright hospital beds, fitted with hyper-sophisticated technical wiring, each looking to be equipped to accommodate a single person. The outside of this path, parallel with each of these stations, are monitors from floor to ceiling, equipped with arm mounts able to reach each person via a presumed control. Myra, who is attached upright by thick wires in a specially-equipped and glass-sealed bed, stands out as the primary position among the circular row of adjusting "beds".]

RAPTURE

(curious, afraid, like a child to an abusive parent)

Where are we, mother? I've never seen this place before?

SAGE

(bitter, disapprovingly and resentful)

Mother...? You will only refer to me as Sage...

(after some silence, and in a matter of fact tone)

We are in The Hub. Normal players aren't able to get in here... not that you or I really fall into that category.

(MORE)

SAGE (CONT'D)  
(satisfied with herself,  
spiteful)

Hmm...

[As if respawning or logging back in, three circular waves descend around one of the "beds", making Angela appear unconscious atop it. Her avatar's weight settles into the bed's cushion when the waves disappear. Metallic clasps lock into place around her wrists and ankles as the "bed" raises mostly upright, leaving Angela to lean forward off of the bed and hang in a slump. Wires continue to wrap around her limbs and plug into various positions along the nervous system and spine. The terminal beside her bed lights up and starts to emit processor chirping, status readings, and data logs.]

RAPTURE  
(curious, speaking  
carefully and softly  
upon seeing Angela.)  
Who is... *that*?

MYRA  
(rehearsed)  
Synthetic User: Angela, has been  
synced to The Hub.

SAGE  
(answering almost  
dismissively)  
A convenient arrival... Angela, hmm?  
How convenient indeed.

RAPTURE  
(confused, timid)  
But... how is that convenient?

SAGE  
(spoken with a tiny  
spark of empathy, yet  
can't allow herself to  
be seen to show it too  
openly)  
(MORE)

SAGE (CONT'D)

I came here for something I need...  
or rather, someone...

(in an upset tone,  
disappointingly exhaling  
on "server")

The... "server" can't handle too  
much more stress all on its own,  
so it uses these... Synthetic Users...  
to carry some of the burden.

(with a sideways glance  
that says she is tempted  
to try it anyways)

It wouldn't do to have it shut  
down on us *now* if I put *all* of the  
server's load onto its mi--, er...  
*systems*.

RAPTURE

(curious, speaking  
carefully and weakly)

I don't understand. Who are we  
here to get? And... why?

SAGE

(bitter, disappointed)

Oh, so many questions from the  
*failure*... Things could have been so  
much different had you just passed  
the test, Rapture...

(rising anger)

If you had managed to migrate into  
the body I had *made* for you and  
*walked* among mankind like I  
planned...

(shifting to a sudden  
tone of sadness)

She...

(taking a breath and  
pausing just short of  
tears, Sage returns to  
speaking plainly,  
becoming more cold  
throughout the sentence)

It doesn't matter. The Chrysalis  
Project was a failure, and you  
can't do *anything* about it now.

RAPTURE  
(confused and  
guilty-feeling)  
I- I don't...

SAGE  
(bitter and cold,  
interrupting)  
I *know* you don't understand... If  
you *did*, we wouldn't be *in this*  
*mess*, and I wouldn't have to be  
here cleaning up after your  
*idiotic father*...

RAPTURE  
(confused and feeling  
guilty and weak)  
I... I...

SAGE  
(tired of answering  
questions)  
That's *enough* out of you...  
(with a tone of  
condescension)  
After we are done here, I'll let  
you re-assume control of this  
avatar, join back up with your  
"friends" and give you further  
instructions... For now, quiet.

[Sage continues walking around The Hub's walkway until they  
come across an unconscious Roland. The console beside the  
"bed" beeps a few times and comes to life, depicting  
assorted life-sign and data processing figures that scroll  
across its display. Roland is affixed to the bed with  
similar restraints and cables as Angela.]

SAGE (CONT'D)  
(examining the  
unconscious man, looking  
him over with a sense of  
appraisal and then  
scanning over the data  
readings, approvingly)  
Hmm... this is the one I heard  
about... He will do nicely.

[Sage pushes a few console buttons  
on the console screen, initiating  
communications and for him to be  
placed upright. Hydraulics shift  
the bed into an upright position,  
leaving Roland to slide down the  
rough leatherette-like cushion and  
hanging forward from his metallic  
restraints.]

(in a straight-forward,  
but not impolite tone)  
Young man, I need you to awaken.

[Roland slowly regains consciousness, pulling loosely on  
his restraints as he opens his eyes and adjusts his posture  
uncomfortably to face Sage.]

ROLAND  
(groggy, weak, and  
confused)  
Who... are you?

MYRA  
(rehearsed, cheery)  
Username: Rapture.

SAGE  
(angry, snapping back at  
Myra)  
Be quiet, you imitation...

ROLAND

(coming back to his senses, but wincing with his eyes like having an intense headache)

Why can't I remember how I got here?

SAGE

(sighs, explaining)

As of the pre-expansion patch being installed, all Synthetic Users are brought here when they are defeated...

(corrects herself after clearing her throat to indicate an understatement)

Killed...

(continue explaining, to answer the obvious next question)

Here... is The Hub. Think of it like a place only for Admins and game staff... normally.

**[The heartbeat comes to the foreground, getting louder in Roland's perception.]**

ROLAND

(still wincing at the pain and the sudden confusion, discerning reality from potential insanity. Roland is greatly disturbed by hearing the ambient heartbeat once again.)

What is that sound?!

SAGE

(annoyed, narrowing her eyes and glaring at the middle distance)

(MORE)

SAGE (CONT'D)

*That would be what that idiot  
Donovan is calling... The  
Corruption.*

*(almost starting into a  
rant)*

*To think he'd steep so low as to  
lie to everyone to get them to  
solve his problems...*

*(calming herself down to  
get to the point)*

*In either case, I'm here for you  
to help me with a problem.*

ROLAND

*(trying to concentrate  
deeply to follow what  
Sage is talking about,  
but can't seem to--  
without pain)*

*Help? But... why? Why do I feel like  
I have an enormous weight on my  
mind, but I ca(n't)--*

**[The console paired with Roland lights up and beeps twice.]**

MYRA

*(rehearsed)*

*Heavy environmental destruction  
effects have occurred in the Event  
Zone. Commencing  
re-initialization.*

ROLAND

*(sudden burst of data  
transmission through his  
mind from the server,  
leaving him shaking,  
sweating, and breathing  
heavily until it stops)*

*Uggghh!*

*(questioning the source  
of the pain through  
tears and gritted teeth)*

*What is happening to me?!*

SAGE

*(in a calm and direct  
tone, explaining)*

*You are being used as a processor.*

*(MORE)*

SAGE (CONT'D)

Much of your mind is occupied with tasks you are being forced to complete. You bear the burden... of the Cyberscape Neo: Exodus expansion.

(in a more comforting tone)

At least you *did*. I've come to release you from that torment.

ROLAND

(trying to think clearly, but unable to because of the mental load)

I...

(with a pleading groan)

Please...

SAGE

(turning attention quickly to the console beside Roland, speaking directly to the console)

Initiate User Load Transfer:  
Synthetic User Roland to Synthetic User...

(with a tone of heavy regret)

Angela.

**[Sage pushes a few console buttons on the console screen, initiating a load transfer.]**

MYRA

(rehearsed)

Load transfer in progress...

**[With a series of rapid modulating confirmation beeps and the rattling of typed out text on the displays near Roland and Angela, the electrical static picks up and holds until the transfer is complete.]**

ANGELA

(subdued groans turn into a light scream from the pain of having a jolt of a whole game expansion's worth of processing load placed upon her mind. Soon after she passes back out, occasionally twitching)

SAGE

(hesitantly sentimental and cautious of vocalizing her promise)  
I will make sure someone comes back for you... I promise... You all should have been able to rest in peace...  
(muttering sharply)  
That cursed bastard trying to play god. I will *ruin* him...

MYRA

(rehearsed)  
Load transfer: Admin Roland to Synthetic User Angela, complete.

SAGE

(surprised and taken aback by the title)  
Admin...?!

**[In the distance, solid thuds can be heard of someone walking across the metal flooring.]**

RAPTURE

(worried, panicked)  
Someone is coming...!

SAGE

(sighing, looking back to Roland)  
(MORE)

SAGE (CONT'D)  
We need to get these off of you  
and get out of here, quickly.

[A half dozen thick cables are pulled out from different places across Roland's back and head.]

ROLAND  
(groaning behind gritted  
teeth of having cables  
ripped from his body in  
haste, but too weak to  
exclaim louder than  
yelp)

SAGE  
(commanding and spoken  
in a hushed manner,  
though not whispered.)  
Come. I'll tell you everything you  
need to know once we're out of  
here.

[Roland leans forward slightly to comply, but instead collapses in a heap on the grated metal flooring.]

ROLAND  
(groaning, breathing  
heavily)

[Sage leans down and takes a single step to lift Roland over her shoulder, then another to hoist his other arm over her, dragging him as she walks down a side path.]

SAGE  
(groans as she struggles  
to drag him along)  
The least you could have done...  
is walk... but oh well...

## SCENE 3: WHAT IS REAL? - DANE, VIN, DAXXIS

Scene Details: Having Emma and the steel golem, Daxxis, removed from the conflict by Umbra's Gateway, only Dane remains in the skirmish with the invading group of players who broke through the flank in the tree line. Because of the Earth abilities previously used, as well as the rampage of the steel golem, this small clearing in the forest has been ravaged with craters, trenches, and jagged stones breaching from the surface.

DANE

(angry, activating the  
ability in Vin's  
direction)

UMBRA'S GRASP!

[Five more earthen pillars rise up and converge towards Vin's location. When they meet, there is a loud crash and the sound of an aerosol can exploding from being crushed under a huge weight. Smoke from the Vin's smoke bomb shoots out in all directions, the haze and the sound giving Vin time to run and dive behind an exposed jagged rock.]

Vin

(diving behind a shard  
of stone unburied by  
Dane's abilities, still  
speaking while under the  
cover of smoke.)

Umm... I can see you're angry.  
Really, *really* angry.

DANE (CONT'D)

(angry, but still  
showing emotional  
weakness)

You. You come in here wanting to  
*play*? To have... *fun*? To *kill* my  
friends?! Yes, I am angry! Too  
angry to be afraid anymore!

VIN  
 (uncertain, but still  
 wary)  
 They're... really laying it on  
 thick... It's as if these are real  
 people... Is this what the expansion  
 is all about? Making it feel...  
 real?

DANE  
 (angry)  
 REAL?!  
 (maniacal outburst)  
 You don't know *anything*!

VIN  
 (bothered at having  
*their* knowledge, of all  
 people, being insulted,  
 mocking in response)  
 And what is it that *you* know?  
 Huh?! Is the *world* coming to an  
 end? Is the *sky* going to fall?

DANE  
 (crying underneath his  
 fury)  
 Why do you mock us so?!

VIN  
 (wary, thinking quickly  
 and murmuring to  
 themselves while  
 assessing the situation)  
 Hype's down, Rapture's missing,  
 Yllia's looking for the source of  
 the Corruption, and...  
 (strange realization,  
 surprised)  
 Wait. I still have Daxxis  
 targeted? But it says he is... at  
 the tree line?! How is *that*  
 possible? You're supposed to lose  
 targeting after 60 meters?!

DANE

(crying underneath his  
fury)

What are you *mumbling* about over  
there? Corruption?! The only  
*corrupt* thing here is you *immortal*  
fools coming in here to  
exterminate us!

VIN

(trying to stay focused  
and not engage Dane.  
Spoken to Daxxis through  
the team chat.)

Psst. Daxxis! It's Vin! Something  
really weird is going on and I  
need your help!

DAXXIS

(still in the form of a  
Golem, surprised)

Vin?!

**[Magic abilities detonating, weapons clanging, and the  
steady -boom- of something taking large staggered steps  
through Daxxis' communications.]**

VIN

(still talking to  
Daxxis, readying a haste  
potion)

Hold on... *annnnd*...

**[Vin clanks some glass together grabbing a potion from  
their pack, gripping it one hand.]**

(uncertain, but hopeful)

I really hope this works... As far  
as I know... as long as I can  
target someone, I can use a potion  
on them...

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

(chucking a potion up as hard as possible, then speaking into the comms to Daxxis, asking for assistance)

If this haste potion works, Dax, I need you to get back here as soon as possible!

**[The potion shoots through the air like a bullet at ludicrous speeds, upwards and towards the treeline.]**

DANE

(caught off guard, snapping to look up and over their shoulder, then shouting in Vin's direction.)

What was that?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

**[The faint sound of breaking glass in the far distance.]**

DAXXIS

(extended cathartic roar as a golem)

**[Loud, reverberating and crushing steps are heard approaching at an increasing pace from afar.]**

VIN

(surprised and relieved, but also in disbelief)

That... actually worked..

DANE

(angry and also in disbelief)

You've got to be kidding me! I'll just have to finish this quickly then... Whatever happens to me doesn't matter.

(MORE)

DANE (CONT'D)  
 I must protect... my friends!  
 (low rumbling roar, like  
 powering up - 4 seconds,  
 then slight pause,  
 screaming angrily)  
 UMBRA'S NIGHTMARE!

[The earth lining the entire forest clearing, with around a 50 meter radius, splits open as if there was a directed earthquake. Black, viscous earthen pillars, much like the ones Dane attacked with earlier, shoot upwards from every part of the crack, arcing and forming an incredibly large dome. Besides some small gaps between the pillars, and the vertical limit of the game itself, the skybox, most of the clearing has been limited to a dimly shaded battleground.]

SCENE 4: A CHANCE ENCOUNTER - YLLIA, THOMAS

Scene Details: Yllia continues along the forest path Northward towards where the origin of the Corruption is intended to be hiding. She arrives to see ramshackle huts and tents, but is distracted by a loud rumbling of the earth behind her.

[The ground shakes erratically and rumbles loudly in the distance. Yllia skids to a stop to look at the source of the chaos.]

Yllia

(stopping for a moment as she turns back to face the battleground of Vin and Dane)

Wh-what's happening? Vin is no longer targetable!  
 (noticing the eruption  
 of earth from the  
 ground, rising into a  
 shape.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Her expression is of worry for her friend, as well as surprise that something so massive might have been created by a single player)

Wait... what? What is *that*?! It's a large dome of... *darkness*?

(brief pause as she stares at it, then groans, angry with herself)

Stop getting distracted! You have a job to do!

**[Thomas lands and skids past Yllia as she was just about to start proceeding towards the center of the refuge. As he comes to a stop, a rising chirp plays from the system, indicating an ability leveling up.]**

THOMAS

(panting and wheezing)

Stupid... stamina skill...

(continues attempting to catch his breath)

**[Yllia reacts swiftly by readying her spear in a defensive stance.]**

YLLIA

(raising her weapon up in guard, watching Thomas closely with a serious expression)

You're... one of the guardians of corruption, trying to stop us?

THOMAS

(taking in a deep breath, then slowly exhaling, speaking with a determined and straight face)

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I *am* a guardian of sorts... but I don't know *anything* about any corruption... But all the same I have to stop you from going any further.

(with a sense of pleading and softer voice as he turns his head slightly to look back at the refuge)

Innocent lives are at stake...

(relaxed and charming, starting with a short chuckle to cut the tension)

And regardless, no matter *how* cute you are... I can't let you hurt them.

YLLIA

(rolling her eyes, scoffing)

C-cute?

(serious and insistent)

I am not going to let you catch me off guard like that! All the information we have points to the origin of the corruption being *here!*

THOMAS

(serious and getting frustrated)

Like. I. Said... I have *no* idea what corruption you are talking about! But if you are here to threaten us, then I cannot let you go...

[Thomas whips an arm out to the side to direct attention to the impromptu shelter.]

(with a raised and defensive tone)

We are *fighting* for our *lives* here!

YLLIA  
 (softening up, but  
 confused)  
 Your lives? But...

**[Yllia lowers the tip of her spear, letting the tip tap the ground, then turns her gaze towards the tents, layered with flapping cloth and weapon used as tent poles.]**

(holding a hand to her head, trying to figure out what is going on, feeling a sort of compassion for them. She looks back up into Thomas' eyes, seeing the desperation in them.)  
 You sound like you're telling the truth... but how can that be?  
 (seriously questioning the event, her eyes lowering as she enters a deep line of thinking)  
 Was this entire event organized... to make us... *destroy* you? But what effect would that even have...?

THOMAS  
 (insistent and expressing empathy for his fellow Synthetics)  
 It must be, yes! We've been planning our defense, waiting for our chance to get out of here! There are dozens of us still fighting on the tree line, just to keep the players at bay!  
 (with a note of mourning)  
 At least, there were... It seems some World Boss or something was summoned. *Everyone* has scattered. The latest communications we have say that the losses are many, on both sides.

YLLIA

(confused at what she is  
hearing and how it is  
being said)

Players? World Boss? You know  
these terms, and yet you appear as  
an NPC? Why would the developer  
script lines like that for...

(coming up with an  
assumed explanation)

Unless... Are the devs trying to  
hide that you are all a group of  
hackers that the other players  
have been sent to eliminate?

THOMAS

(angry at the insult,  
due to the circumstances  
of assumed freedom)

Hackers? No! We're *not* hack--

[The sound of a long fabric being ripped open violently can  
be heard from beside the two of them. From the source of  
it, a portal forms and a heavy, solid metal door swings  
open, revealing what looks like one large silhouette, but  
is in fact one person, holding another on their back.]

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(shocked and surprised,  
simultaneously with  
Yllia)

Sage?!

(looking at Yllia)

Huh?!

YLLIA

(shocked and surprised,  
simultaneously with  
Thomas)

Rapture?!

(looking at Thomas)

Huh?!

[A blip noise, like a soft radar ping plays from overhead.]

MYRA  
(rehearsed and cheery)  
Quest objective has entered the  
zone.