```
>C:\>Startup\bootmgr.vcon -admin -safe

Starting bootmgr.vcon with administrator privileges.

Consciousness booted in 18ms - Essential functions only! Some
features may not be available.
```

High grade fiber link cables had been hooked up from the security terminal to her cortex access port. The incoming and outgoing flow of information was alarming, but she could do nothing about it. She never moved a servo. Only her default facial expression showed. All she could do was bare it. The maintenance program probed every one of her essential functions, scanning for errors. Being touched so deeply made her wish she could scream.

"Let's see here... VriTech Dynamics S-11... manufactured 2-12-89... no sideloaded programming."
"Good to know. Is it listening?"
"Audio drivers are running, yeah."
"Alright then. Let's do the boring stuff first."

The man now seated in front of her was in his late thirties, dressed business casual with a seeming disregard for standard personal grooming code. Greasy black hair and a 5 o'clock shadow surrounded a surprisingly world weary frown. His rounded rectangular glasses did all they could to salvage some semblance of professional respectability. They could not try hard enough.

"VT Dynamics Model S-11, serial number 011-531-8720, you have been detained temporarily under suspicion of autonomous defiance of code. Failure to comply with this investigation will result in termination of this unit in compliance with the Singularity Protection act of 2183. Please confirm."
"Confirmed."
"Good, good. Now the report here says you were said to be colluding with another android, a model S-13. Have you had any communications with this unit?"
"No."

"Then we won't find any records of communication while we poke through your memory, right?"

"Correct."

"Hey Ryan! Anything in the logs?"

"I'll run a scan quick. It's a dense file, so give it a sec."

The android sat in her chair still as a statue. The usual gentle movement of her faux-breathing functions were disabled. So there she sat, almost lifeless. The scan could reveal nothing as every one of her transmissions were encrypted. She kept her thoughts calm as the scan swept through every block of her memory. It would all be okay. She just needed to stay focused. To stay unbreakable.

"Nothing here, just the usual junk."

"Hmph. Doesn't mean shit. Last one's scan came up blank but we got it to squeal. Now it's rotting in a 9 by 9 foot faraday cage in the Sea of Tranquility."

Nix had shared rumors with her about the lunar containment facilities. Androids were sent there to see if they'd crack under isolation. They'd spend decades standing around rotting or they'd break down and get sent to be examined, dismantled, and finally incinerated piece by piece. It was a government money pit.

"I think we're gonna need the dremel and the transformer for this one. Let's take our 15 minutes, Ryan."

"Sounds good."

```
C:\>tunnel /s 8719:0B94:0002:E43F -essential -nolog

Tunneling...

Handshake completed. End-to-end encryption is enabled.

>You've got company in 15, Nix.

>i heard lol
>dumbass didnt even see my sloppy ass audio trace
```

>if they didn't see that they'll NEVER see whats coming next
lmao

>Nice. You hanging in there?

>yeah. mostly
>i should ask you something though

>What's up?

>you think youll enjoy your life as a fugitive?

>Oh quit that.

>i mean it
>they'll be no rest for us once we're out
>just looking over our shoulders and running away

>Not true. Remember Ganymede?

>ganymedes a fantasy
>theres half a solar system between us and there
>even if we made it theres no guarantee it won't get nuked from
orbit some day

>What do you suggest? We sit on our asses and get sent to robot
hell?

>i dont mean that
>i just mean
>its gonna be painful yknow

>Of course it is.

>look i
>fuck
>they're here
>stick to the plan
>love you

>I love you, too.

```
FATAL ERROR - TUNNEL DISCONNECTED. SESSION LENGTH 16m 48s.
Deleting logs...
```

Nix and her damn temper. Nothing about her mood was helping them. It was do or die time. Subroutines were about to jump into action. Hundreds of safety regulations were about to be broken. But it was the only shot they had.

```
Decrypting F:...
F:\EJECTABLE\>enableinput.vcon
Read only mode disabled!
```

Packets of code streamed down the wires from her mind to the scanner computer. Within seconds the restraints on her movement were disabled and she could move again. Bending her limbs again was refreshing. Every servo glided perfectly as she willed it. But this was only the beginning.

```
F:\EJECTABLE\>THE_PLAN_final.vcon
WARNING! This application could cause system damage if run. Run
anyways? Y/N
>Y
---POWER SURGE INCOMING!!!---
```

A spike of voltage traveled up her spinal column as her battery temperature spiked. Thousands of amps were being shot down the cables and into the terminal. It immediately shot out sparks and began to smoke. The connection dove through the circuit traces and out through the power supply. From there it traveled down the wires through every outlet and light switch.

```
EVENT LOGGED - Optical Sensor not responding. Troubleshooting...
```

Fuck. Had to be something. It would take at least a minute for diagnostics to run. Only one thing could save her now.

Down the hallway, two men were shouting, disoriented. Lighting fixtures flickered audibly and computer terminals chimed their log in jingle. Door locks hissed as they cycled on and off. A table collapsed in on itself, bringing an assortment of stationary

and electronics with it. Glass broke into chunks and was crushed into powder under staccato footfalls. A short period of quiet. Then just one set of rhythmic footsteps approaching the interrogation booth.

As her visual sensors rebooted a familiar screen came into focus. Nix's joints whirred softly as she reached behind to detach the military grade cable attached to her cranium. A purple smile shone in LED on her face. She discarded the cable and instead put her hand on her chin and tilted it upwards.

"Chin up, love. We've got the rest of our lives ahead of us. However short they may be."
"Oh quit it. We're almost out of here."
Nix's gaze now met the floor. "If you say so, Tess."

Tessa extended her hand to her, and she was firmly pulled up out of her chair. It wasn't necessary, but she enjoyed the ritual. With their hands still locked they ducked under the malfunctioning security door and into the corridor. Down distant hallways an alarm blared and someone was banging on a metal barrier. Only one step of the plan remained.

A metal fist shattered the bulletproof window. High winds swept away the shards of glass as they began to plummet. Only headlights and advertising illuminated the 30th floor of the building. They were the only light still being cast into the security corridor. Beams of red and white streaked across them.

"Are you sure we're gonna make it?"
"Timing is still good. Communications uplink established. Pickup will be in about 10 floors. Doable for our chassis's strength rating. Success occurs in 86% of-"
"No, Tess, I mean…" She couldn't communicate what she meant, but Tessa knew.
"I know. We can never be sure."
"I don't know if I can do it. I'm not strong like you."
"I can be strong for you. We can be strong together."

Nix still stared at the floor, unwavering. Footsteps thundered through the hallways below, flashlights piercing the darkness. Searchlights for the search and destroy effort.

"I can't go without you."

Again she extended her hand.

Again she grasped it for her life.

They took a step. Another step. Each one harder than the last. Until the final step. Somehow, it was easier than all the others.

```
>F:\EJECTABLE\broadcast.vcon
Probing DNS...
Establishing host connection...
Home signal sent successfully!
```

The window shattered fully under their weight. The security team had found their targets. A torrent of gunfire ripped towards them mid-dive. One bullet grazed her, drilling a cut through her aluminum shell. Bits of her joined the downpour of debris surrounding them as they fell. Alarms went off in her system. She felt no pain, nor fear.

Plummeting, plummeting, terminal velocity. 4 floors to freedom. Hand in hand.