

“Oh shit!”

Ziv and Draco fall backwards as the elevator lurches down to the 13th floor, security alarm blaring. This was Ziv’s 129th attempt to hack the building’s computer system and trick the elevator into taking her to the Elect. “The Elect” refers to the highest floors of STEM, where the world’s most wealthy people live. One successful raid there would set up her crew for life.

It is 4010 CE. After nuclear warfare took out half of the human population, the rest were destroyed by radiation sickness. The survivors scoured the desolate planet for centuries, occupying a dangerous wasteland.

Then, in the late 3970’s, the global population combined resources to form a new society. Together, they built STEM, a self sustaining skyscraper, designed to protect humanity from the increasingly unlivable world.

The age of biohumans ended before the nuclear war. Humanity is now fully integrated with tech. Their brains joined with the Cloud, every mind plugged into a database. Only people whose brains the Cloud deemed eligible for The Upgrade are able to access the Elect floors of Nova. They live above everyone else in luxury and safety. No one knows why some people were eligible for The Upgrade and others were not. There are rumors of superior DNA, faster neuro circuiting, or random selection. But those are just rumors.

Since each individual is part of a database, everyone has a social credit score easily found in the Cloud.

Ziv’s score is about as low as it gets. She has a saying “If you got nothing, you got nothing to lose.” Her destitute rank gives her a freedom that she needs. She lives on one of the lowest floors, among pariahs and outlaws. It’s shady, but she has a crew that she trusts. Their mission is to break into the Elect. Ziv’s crew assumes she has the same motivations as them: wealth and power.

But Ziv has a secret. Her sister Vaeda was Upgraded, separated by force and taken to the Elect. And Ziv is determined to find her.