

Cyber Punked

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM ENTRANCE - EVENING

BILLY (15) sticks a shaggy head out into the hallway. Middle class vibe with grunge pretensions, evident on his face...

He glares at TIM (14), gangling nerd clad in an AOL tee.

BILLY
AOL? No wonder you're so fucking
slow. I said "hurry over", Tim. Scoot
your skinny ass in here. Now!

He yanks Tim in by an arm, so fast the teen seems to fly.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM

Inside, Tim *almost* face plants. Billy stops his stumble, sets him down.

TIM
(breathless)
You wouldn't tell me on the phone...

Billy points to his own right ear, impatient and annoyed.

BILLY
How'd you pass kindergarten? You
gotta show *before* tell. Can you see
this, or not?

Tim leans forward. Squints. Cleans off his glasses on his shirt. Sidles closer, squints again.

TIM
I got nothing. Your hair's in the
way. Lemme guess - you got an
earring?

BILLY
Hell no, that's for goths. Look
harder. It's soooo cool!

Billy sweeps hair aside, angles his neck at Tim. Who sees "it" now. He double takes at....

A small metal port, embedded under Billy's ear.

TIM
Holy Hannah! Is that-

BILLY
A state a' the art cyberjack. All
mine. In the flesh!

Tim recoils. Billy chuckles.

BILLY
"In the flesh"? C'mon. Don't you at
least get the joke?

TIM
I do, but...
(squints closer)
That looks kinda red. Painful, too.

BILLY
Big whoop. This ain't no nose
piercing. Complex stuff like this
takes time to heal! The guy asked me
if I wanted anesthesia, I said no.

TIM
You... stayed awake? That's crazy!
How come?

BILLY
When a guy's getting his cyber-cherry
busted, sleeping through it's for
losers. Better to experience it all!

Billy beams at Tim. His enthusiasm isn't reciprocated.

BILLY
I know we ain't been that close since
third grade, but I thought...Dude,
you're the computer wonk. If anyone
would get off on this, it's you.

TIM
Does your mom know about this, uh,
experiment?

BILLY
Shit, no! And she won't. But check
out these awesome perks!

Billy runs to a LAPTOP, turns it on.

BILLY
Eyes on the screen. I had to pay a
little extra, but MY implant comes
with Wi-Fi!

Billy stares at the gadget. The arteries in his neck bulge.

The implant oozes - a little bit. He waves his hand for dramatic effect. Eventually...

The cursor on the screen moves - seemingly on its own!

It toggles a browser. As if powered by invisible - and internet savvy - elves, *Google* seems to surf itself!

Rotten Tomatoes loads up next. The TRAILER for a horror flick plays.

Next, *Pornhub*...

Tim lunges for the laptop, slams the top down.

TIM

Yuck!

BILLY

"Yuck"? How old are you, twelve?

TIM

No - I mean... ew, stop!

He swings around to Billy, eyes widening at a thought.

TIM

Did, did you do that yourself?

BILLY

The porn? Well, sometimes a guy gets lonely, do...

TIM

No, that thing in your neck! You operated that laptop with your mind?

Billy shrugs, a modest "yeah."

TIM

Where'd you get that implant? That stuff's major cutting edge. Expensive, too!

BILLY

I woulda asked you, but you weren't around. So I "contracted" out some help.

He taps the implant with one finger.

BILLY

This sweet piece of tech hooks me
directly into the web and anything
with a hotspot: computers, my cell.
The TV, too. If I wanna stream
movies, I can cut out the cable
middle man, and download 'em straight
to my brain. I can *broadcast* signals,
too.

Billy unlocks his cell. Concentrates on it, then flips the
screen towards Tim.

On it, the horror flick from *Rotten Tomatoes* loops.

Awestruck, Tim stares at the video.

TIM

Wow. That's -

BILLY

Godlike. Ain't *that* cool?!?

TIM

Well, I would have said scary. But
sure: "Godlike", too.

Tim's eyes focus on the implant, concerned.

TIM

That's not legal, is it?

BILLY

Duh. Wetware's only available if
you're twenty one. I'm sixteen. Do
the math, geek.

TIM

Uh, sometimes with parental consent -

BILLY

Don't be such an idiot. We both know
the answer's "no". I got this black
market, over on Hull Street. This guy
I know... knows a guy. Cut rate work,
he calls himself Mr. Wright. That's
not his real name, of course. Or his
place, either. He rents it by the
hour, like a hotel.

TIM

Hull Street? Was it even sanitary?

BILLY

A few cockroaches. But who cares? It only took thirty minutes. Super quick. I was in and out!

Tim's fidgeting increases. He's visibly shaking now.

TIM

A thirty minute brain implant? That's probably infected. Billy, let's go talk to your Mom!

He turns to leave. Billy grabs his collar, spins Tim around.

BILLY

Don't you fucking dare!

TIM

I have to. For your own good!

BILLY

My GOOD is you respecting my right to privacy. And being happy for what I got here.

Billy pulls him closer.

Tim flails - but his punches are wild, super weak. But... One slap lands on Billy's ear by accident. Who roars.

BILLY

Ow!

And shoves the teen away.

BILLY

Fine. I'll test drive this bad boy alone. But if you breath one word to my Mom-

He bristles . Tim tiptoes backward, scared to tears.

TIM

I'm just saying - please be careful? I mean, that's *black market* gear you've installed. If you goof around, who knows what could go wrong?

BILLY

You think I don't got street smarts? If that guy was shady, I'd be the first ta know.

Billy's implant starts to bleed. Tim points at the wound.

TIM

He didn't even suture that enough.
God knows what your temporal lobe
looks like now...

Billy balls fists. Snatching SCISSORS off a desk, he snarls.

BILLY

You're ruining my buzz. Get out!

Tim jumps. Squeaks. Scampers out the door. Billy yells as he departs.

BILLY

Lemme know if you want a referral,
dweeb. Maybe my guy'll implant you a
new spine!

No response.. Tim's hightailed for home.

Chuckling, Billy turns back to his laptop. Cracking his knuckles, he settles into a chair.

BILLY

Let's explore. Hmmm - where to first?

Onscreen, the cursor floats. Points the browser towards...

Pornhub, of course.

The screen fades to black, overlaid with text: "Downloading to unknown wetware server. Buffering."

Billy leans back, closes his eyes - smiles.

INT. BEDROOM - BILLY'S MENTAL POV

A WOMAN in lingerie sashays towards him, caresses his unseen cheek. The caption below her reads: "Sultry Sophia."

SULTRY SOPHIA

Oh....

The image FREEZES. Text flashes alongside Sophia: "Input name for customized experience"?

INTERCUT BETWEEN DOWNLOAD AND BILLY'S BEDROOM

In his chair: Billy scrunches his face in concentration. As he mentally "types": "Billy Skaggs"... his tongue pops out a bit.

The text beside Sophia changes. Blinks. "Age"?

Billy mulls that over, lies. He mentally "types": "Twenty One. Duh."

Hastily deletes the "Duh."

BILLY

Oops.

The video reboots. Sultry Sophie gazes deep into Billy's unseen "eyes" and purrs.

SULTRY SOPHIA

Oh Billy, you're so manly. Come to me!

In his chair: Billy keeps his eyes closed. Moans.

BILLY

Man, so life like! This is better than VR!

HOURS LATER

Billy snores in bed. Enjoying good dreams, apparently. His smile hasn't disappeared. Until...

A SCREECH jolts him awake. He snorts, bolts upright. Clasps hands to his ears to block out the noise.

And accidentally whacks his new implant.

BILLY

Shit. Ow, that hurts!

He pulls his hand away, sees... blood.

The screeching just won't stop.

A woman's voice echoes up unseen stairs. MOM.

MOM (O.S.)

Billy? What in heaven's name is that ruckus?

BILLY

Uh, not me. I swear!

He looks around, frantic: and spots his laptop - still open.

Bold text blinks on a red warning screen:

"ALERT: We have detected a virus in your Cyber interface. To prevent the loss of bio-files, please type your credit card here. A charge of \$2,500 will apply..."

Billy darts over, fumbles to find the laptop's volume key.

Downstairs, Mom yells more:

MOM (O.S.)
Billy? It's three AM! Do I have to
come up there?

BILLY
No!!!

Billy finds a mute button. Smashes it several times. The laptop falls silent. Success!

The teen growls, types furiously - two finger style.

"Fool, go phish in someone else's pool. This PC can't get infected. I had MacAfee installed!"

The text scrolls upwards. Pauses.

BILLY
(snickers)
Yeah. Run away, you cowards. Stupid
Nigerian hacking wannabes.

New text types back. Slowly. Ominously.

"Billy Skaggs, you are hereby informed we have downloaded a copy of your 'Sultry Sophia' Session. Provide your credit card information, or we will be forced to transmit copies to all your social media accounts."

Billy laughs; an ugly sound.

BILLY
Challenge accepted, losers! What's
wrong if all my friends see it?
They'll just be jealous I'm a stud.

The cursor "considers". Blinks. Types:

"And your Mom?"

Billy's eyes widen. His fingers tremble as he scrambles for his phone.

And texts "Tim":

"Tim, R U there? Pick up!"

The cursor on the laptop keeps typing: an even worse threat.

"You have 15 seconds, Billy Skaggs."

A countdown starts: 15, 14, 13...

Thankfully, Tim responds:

TIM
(texting)
Billy? Do you realize it's 3AM?

BILLY
(growls, speaks)
Yeah, that's what Mom said, too.

Realizing he has to text, Billy glances down at his phone. Fingers fly.

BILLY
(texting)
I need you to hurry over.

TIM
(texting)
The last time you said that, it ended
with you throwing me out the door!

The laptop countdown continues, like the virtual "bomb" it is: 10, 9....

Billy's texting grows more frantic. Sloppy.

BILLY
(texting)
The way I remember, you left on your
own.

TIM
(texting)
Does "get out" not mean what I think
it does?

BILLY
(testing)
OK, you're right. I'm sorry.

TIM
(texting)
Sorry? You called me a dweeb. And
threatened me with a lethal weapon.

BILLY
(texting)
You're whining over scissors? Gimme a
break! Tim, you gotta help me. I
think my implant's been hacked!

TIM
 (texting)
 Gosh, what a shock. Good luck with that.

An eye-roll emoji, then... nothing.

Billy dials Tim directly. Just gets voicemail.

The screen countdown zeroes out. 3, 2, 1...

The cursor blinks politely: "Credit card number, please?"

Billy howls at the machine.

BILLY
 Fuck you. AND MacAfee!

Images on the screen, an avalanche of the same Sultry Sophia video - uploading to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram...

SULTRY SOPHIA
 Oh Billy-

And emailing to: June-Skaggs@AOL.com.

Billy turns ghost pale.

BILLY
 Mom? No way!

He grabs his laptop. Smashes it to pieces against the wall.

Downstairs, his mother's worried voice responds.

MOM (O.S.)
 Billy, dear - what's going on?
 (to someone else)
 Honey, someone just emailed me - at this hour? Maybe it's the neighbors, wondering about all this noise.

Billy face palms. He grabs his phone and dials.

A MAN'S face fills the screen. The ID reads: "Mr. Wright".

Billy sighs, momentarily relieved.

BILLY
 Man, I'm sorry for calling so late.
 To tell the truth, I'm kinda surprised you're even up.

Mr. Wright shrugs, his voice silky smooth.

MR. WRIGHT

No worries. I was expecting to hear from you about this time.

BILLY

Yeah, well - I got bad news. My implant's caught a glitch.

Billy stops. Mr. Wright's words sink in.

BILLY

"Expecting me"? Wait - what? Why?

Mr. Wright grins, as wide as a shark.

MR. WRIGHT

I wouldn't call it a glitch. Just a hardware backdoor I built in.

BILLY

Bbbbb - back doors to the stuff you sewed into my *brain*? Dude!

MR. WRIGHT

(shrug)

The implants you asked me to install. At a very low cost, may I add. Didn't you read the waiver you signed? I'm very meticulous about such things. You consented to that before the procedure began.

BILLY

Who reads that stuff? I don't care what I consented to. Just get it out!

Mr. Wright's voice turns sinister. His smile does, too.

MR. WRIGHT

Only after you pay up. If you want full extraction, the cost will be \$10,000. Firm.

BILLY

That's blackmail!

MR. WRIGHT

The term is "black market", son. And - in my line of work - surely you understand I require full cash payment up front.

The teen grabs the scissors, waves them around the implant.

BILLY

If you won't take it out, I will!

Mr. Wright Tsk-tsks, wags his finger at the screen.

MR. WRIGHT

Now, boy...

BILLY

That's "Billy Skaggs" to you... Mr. Criminal. Or whoever you really are!

MR. WRIGHT

(sighs)

I know your name, child. And plenty more. I've got all your personal data downloaded, thank your hippocampus very much. But that hardware I gave you is difficult to replace. And it's in your contract I retain salvage rights. So if you do anything to willfully damage it, I'll be forced to protect my investment. Of course.

BILLY

Protect this, asshole!

Billy flips a finger at the screen, hangs up.

Running to a mirror, he aims the scissors at the implant. Gulps and braces himself for what comes next.

BILLY

This can't hurt more coming out than going in. Right?

His hand shakes. The blade descends, about to break skin.

Until: Sultry Sophia pops up in his vision. Billy shrieks, waves his hand at the mirror.

BILLY

I paid for you already. Shoo!

Sophia tsks-tsks. When she speaks *this* time, it's Mr. Wright's voice on her ruby lips.

SULTRY SOPHIA

Silly Billy. I'm not in the mirror, just your mind. I'm sorry it must be this way, but it appears your implant has been rejected. Are you familiar with the term "Bricked"?

BILLY

Get the fuck outta here. I don't have
time for fetishes now!

SULTRY SOPHIA

That's no fetish. Just tech-slang.

BILLY

Meaning... what?

SULTRY SOPHIA

It's time to shut the system - and
you - down.

Sophia blinks out of existence.

Billy stabs down with the scissors at the implant,
desperate. But then...

Twitches. Like a video download with a bad connection.

Billy drops to the floor, stops moving. His cell falls, too.
Lands face up.

Downstairs, his mother yells:

MOM (O.S.)

Billy Skaggs, stop making noise this
instant!

Billy's brain's been wiped, so... no response. Mom
misinterprets the sudden silence.

MOM (O.S.)

Good!

On the cell, the screen lights up: a text from Tim!

TIM

(texting)

Listen, Billy - I know this seems
cliche. But if the implant's
glitching, maybe you should just turn
it off, then on. You know, reboot?

But Billy stares into nowhere, unseeing eyes extra wide. His
hardware's (and wetware's) been forever fried.

FINAL FADE OUT: