

"Image Transfer"

Written by

Rio Dell

"Image Transfer"

FADE IN:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

We open on a Cleanstreets Ltd. maximum security prison. NESS GELLER, a tired young woman jaded beyond her years, sits bored in her cell playing idly with a piece of garbage. Suddenly, the computerized voice of the WARDEN speaks to her.

WARDEN

Attention, inmate 3-0-8-8-4-1:  
Geller, Renesmee.

NESS

It's Ness.

WARDEN

You have been invited to a private  
meeting.

NESS

A meeting? Who with?

WARDEN

We do not have that information.

NESS

Telemarketers? Prison just gets  
better and better every day(!)

VR goggles and gloves emerge from a tray.

WARDEN

All recording devices will be  
disabled during your meeting.  
Attendance is compulsory.

Ness looks up at a gun turret that is pointed straight at her. She grabs the gear and puts it on.

NESS

This had better be good.

A loading screen brings us to:

INT. MANOR - DAY

Ness appears inside an opulent house, apparently alone. She slowly walks around the room, examining bizarre art prints and floating 3D models. As she stares at a low-poly glitch art statue, DILLEN PIKE, the charismatic businessman who summoned her, enters.

DILLEN

Beautiful, isn't it? That was the first N.F.T. I ever bought.

NESS

Why does it look like that?

DILLEN

It wasn't originally supposed to be shown in realistic lighting. You're Ness Geller.

NESS

Yes. And what are you trying to sell me?

DILLEN

Sell? No, you misunderstand. My name is Dillen Pike. I'm a crypto-trader. Well, I was. I retired a few years ago, and now I spend all my time on the APC Net.

NESS

Not a fan of real life, then?

DILLEN

I mean, what even IS real? Now, this estate is hosted by Gadian Softworks. I don't know if you've heard, but they're closing their APC Net servers soon.

NESS

Yeah, I heard. Gadian lets you run apps outside of the iLink store, so now they're saying there are security issues to try to kill it off.

DILLEN

I don't know about any of that. What I do know is that I can't copy this estate over to my own private server. It keeps saying that the files are encrypted. I was hoping, since I'd heard in the news you're such a prolific pirate--

NESS

I'm not a pirate. Pirates steal. Nobody ever goes after them, 'cause they won't pay no matter what. I paid for every kilobyte I ever downloaded. Never even used an ad blocker. They got me for cracking DRM. Steal shit, no one cares. But try to keep a hold of the media you paid for after your subscription runs out? Twenty years, minimum.

DILLEN

Not necessarily.

NESS

What do you mean?

DILLEN

If you can move this estate for me, I'll pay your release fee. You'll be free again.

Ness brightens up. She considers the offer.

NESS

Well, I can do it, no probalo. But you'll still need the server code from Gradian to actually run this place. Do you have an emulator?

DILLEN

A what? Look, I just need you to decrypt and copy some files for me.

NESS

But your apps won't run without connecting to their central server, or to a program that can perfectly replicate its function--

DILLEN

Don't lecture me. You can either do it or you can't.

NESS

(Tentatively)

You're sure you paid for total privacy? The warden doesn't know what we're doing?

DILLEN

Not till you log out. Right now, they don't even know if you're still in your cell.

NESS

(Sigh) Alright, I'll do it.

She gestures and brings up a menu. Navigating through the sea of data, she notices an anomaly:

NESS (CONT'D)

Whoa, what's with these file sizes?

DILLEN

What do you mean?

NESS

Even the biggest estates aren't much more than a few dozen terabytes, but yours is WAY bigger. What are you keeping in here?

DILLEN

It's, uh... I download a lot of anime, okay?

She instantly sees through his lie, but decides not to pursue the truth... for now.

NESS

Right.... Look, backing up files like this is dangerous. You remember what they did to the Internet Archive people. How about an extra ten thousand, just to cover my ass?

DILLEN

Done.

They shake hands. A quick montage as Ness sorts through menus, and then...

NESS

Alright, there it is. An exact duplicate of your estate, now on your private server forever. Compare the checksums.

Dillen looks at a floating readout, and is apparently satisfied by what he sees.

DILLEN

Thank you so much. You've more than earned your freedom.

NESS

No, thank you. I never could've bought my way out alone. Please, let me thank you in person.

DILLEN

(Frantically)

That won't be necessary. Goodbye!

The screen cuts to black as Ness is booted out.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Ness pulls off the headset, leaving a red ring on her face.

WARDEN

Inmate 3-0-8-8-4-1: Geller, Renesmee. Your release fee has been received and the transaction is being processed. Please proceed to the exit chamber.

She stands on shaking legs and stumbles out of the cell.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Ness waits outside a grimy nightclub. A uniformed POLICE OFFICER swaggers up to her.

OFFICER

(Lasciviously)

Hey, folkie. My patrol ends at midnight. If you're available then, I can forget I saw you working this corner.

NESS

Nice try, cab, but I'm not for sale.

OFFICER

Aw, that's a shame. If you want to reconsider--

NESS

I'm 22, pedo!

OFFICER

Oh. Uh... just stay out of trouble, kid.

He power-walks away, hiding his face from the ubiquitous overhead cameras. AYERON, a cybernetically enhanced hacker in an outrageous suit, steps out from the club, followed by loud music. They slap a high five.

AYERON

Damn, Ness, never thought I'd see you loose so soon! Congrats on the bail, my doge!

NESS

Thanks. It still doesn't seem real though, somehow. I'm not really free. Not yet.

AYERON

Well man, you gotta check this out. Hyphen Zexxy just shat out this new song. It's totally putrid!

He produces a CD from his jacket.

AYERON (CONT'D)

Even came out on polycarbonate. Totally retro! You gotta give it a listen.

NESS

Look, Ayeron, I'd love to, but I need a favor first. I got this wallet code. Last transaction. I need you to find out what you can about the owner.

Ness holds out her watch. Ayeron places the top of his hand to the watch face. Faint text appears in his glasses.

AYERON

So, what do you know about 'em?

NESS

Said his name was Dillen Pike. Got rich trading crypto. He wanted me to copy a huge estate off Gradian onto a private server. I got curious, so I made him pay me so I could get his wallet code. Funny thing is, he didn't even bother trying to haggle.

AYERON

Hold up, they got a Gradian emulator now?

NESS

No, but I don't think he knows what that means. Whatever apps he had in that estate, he thinks he can just run wherever.

Ayeron scoffs, then finishes the analysis and reads some data off the glasses.

AYERON

Well, that's weird. He hasn't made any transactions, besides yours, for years.

NESS

What, so he went off the grid, started using cash?

AYERON

Maybe. Hmm, sent sixty million to something called "Neuraseff." That's an AI startup, right?

NESS

Never heard of them. Anyway, Can you find a shipping address? Where does Dillen live?

AYERON

Erm... aha! Here, in Colorado. I'll send it your way.

NESS

Thanks, Ayeron. Hey, you know what? I can head out there tomorrow. Tonight, let's catch up.



They walk into the club.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Ness wakes up on a couch in a tiny apartment. Clutches her head and moans. Looks at her watch and talks to it.

NESS

Messages. Copy address. Book a loop to Denver in an hour. No... make it two hours. No, four.

The watch beeps to confirm. She lies back down to tend her hangover.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - EVENING

Ness arrives at a seemingly abandoned warehouse. She walks around it, finally finding a door. Inside, she finds...

INT. WAREHOUSE - EVENING

A dimly lit metal room. She walks down a dark corridor and sees a figure slumped in front of a computer.

NESS

Dillen? Dillen, it's me, Ness.

She rounds the corner and gasps. Sitting at the desk is a putrefied corpse.

NESS

God, Dillen, is that what's left of you? That's why your estate was so big. You had them image your entire brain before you died.

She pushes the body aside to look at the computer screen and taps on holographic keys. A lengthy ledger appears.

NESS (CONT'D)

Whoa, crypto-trading really paid off, huh? Early bitcoin adopter. You were a multi-trillionaire. Never really understood the technology you were using, though.

"Image Transfer"

9.

She looks at his corpse with something between pity and disgust.

NESS (CONT'D)

Well, you don't need all this money anymore. Especially now that Gradian's closing the one thing keeping you alive. Guess I'll just help myself.

She types some more.

NESS (CONT'D)

Consider it payment for the server emulator I'll write for you.

THE END