

Cipher 2: "LUXURY'S LAP"

Vox Elysium: A Paperless Pulp Cyber Noir

Written by Madelyn Dorta

[00:00]

[Previously on Vox Elysium - clips from Cipher 1]

NARRATOR: Flying V Presents: Vox Elysium, a Paperless Pulp Cyber Noir. Cipher 2: Luxury's Lap.

[Gentle intro music]

[Gentle phone alarm]

[Click as the alarm is turned off]

[Alexandra yawns]

ALEXANDRA: I can't remember the last time I slept so welllllll (turns into a yawn.)

[Knock at the door]

[Bedding thrown aside, she rises and slips on a robe]

ALEXANDRA: Coming! Where are my slippers? [distortion grows] ...wait, where am I...

[Something whispery and electronic fills the air, then fades]

ALEXANDRA: Coming!

[She hurries across the carpet and opens the door]

ALEXANDRA: Uhhh...Can I help you?

SERVANT: Good Morning Miss Alexandra, your breakfast is ready.

[Jangle of a food cart as the servant rolls it in and takes the cover off the tray]

ALEXANDRA: (confusedly) Uhh. Thank...thank you.

SERVANT: Please sit up and eat, I'll run a hot bath for you.

[The servant rushes off to the bathroom]

ALEXANDRA: (Internal) *Ooh, this looks good. Is that real fruit?* [She sits] *No way!* (to Servant) Thank you for breakfast uhhh...I didn't catch your name.

SERVANT: Your garments will be here shortly. Eat up.

ALEXANDRA: My garments? I think you may be confu—

[Ominous noise, brief distortion]

ALEXANDRA: (startled) Do you hear that?

[Dog barking in the hall]

SERVANT: Must be Ms. Grant's little pup. She's always wandering about.

[Servant heads towards bathroom again]

SERVANT: I'll start your bath, please finish your breakfast, you mustn't be late.

ALEXANDRA: Late for what?

[Ominous noise again]

[Alexandra gasps]

SERVANT: Miss Alexandra, are you feeling alright?

ALEXANDRA: Uhh...yes, I just, feel a bit...[pause, Alexandra eats a piece of fruit.]
Mhmmm, I'm fine. Must have slept too long.

[Servant turns bath water on]

[They continue to rush around the room]

ALEXANDRA: (Internally) *What am I going to be late for? Think Alex...* [she takes a bite] *god this fruit is so good. When was the last time I had fresh fruit? Or slept in...*

SERVANT: Miss Alexandra, your bath will be ready momentarily. If you are finished with your breakfast, I will lay out your attire for the day, as well as your Vox watch.

[Servant turns bath water off]

ALEXANDRA: Thank you.

SERVANT: Hurry along now! It's a very exciting day! Your itinerary will be digitally sent to you in just a moment.

[Servant lays clothes out]

ALEXANDRA: Right, my itinerary. Well, thank you for breakfast and the bath, I didn't catch your name.

SERVANT: The bath will turn cold, have a nice day Miss Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA: Wai-

[Servant grabs rolling tray and exits]

[Door closes softly]

ALEXANDRA: Okayyyyy...bath time it is.

[She walks to the bathroom]

[Splashes as she eases in to the water]

ALEXANDRA: (moans) (Internal) *This water doesn't smell... watery! I haven't taken a bath like this since I was...since I was?? ...It doesn't even matter Alexandra, enjoy your bath!* (sighs) *You've earned this. I earned this right?*

[Swish of water, she brings her arm up to a digital device and presses play]

ELECTRONIC VOICE: *Miss Adams, your presence has been requested by Gabriel Grant. Your meeting has been reserved in Alcove A in the Green Tree Lounge. As for the rest of your day...* (The voice becomes softer as Alexandra says her next line.) *You will attend a Vox crew luncheon at noon, followed by an introduction to your team lead and prescribed Vox representative. Dinner at 6:30. Bed time 9:00 sharp.*

ALEXANDRA: That can't be right. Gabriel Grant, the Gabriel Grant wants to meet me? No one just "sees" Gabriel Grant.

[Knock at the door]

SERVANT: (through door) Miss Alexandra! Miss Alexandra, I'm here to escort you to your meeting with Mr. Grant.

ALEXANDRA: Right, thank you. Be ready in just a few minutes.

[She exits the bath and towels off]

ALEXANDRA: (Internal) *Deep breath Alexandra, deep breath.*

[06:27]

[Gentle atmospheric music in a lightly-filled room]

[Soft conversation]

[Footsteps up to a table]

GABRIEL GRANT: Alexandra! How lovely to see you. Would you like something to drink? A Health Shot perhaps? Maybe some Essence?

ALEXANDRA: Mr. Grant, it's an honor to meet you. [She pulls her chair out and sits] I just had breakfast, thank you!

GABRIEL GRANT: Are you sure? Nothing quite like a fresh Health Shot to keep you focused on what matters, don't you agree?

ALEXANDRA: (stutters) Off-cccOURSE.

GABRIEL GRANT: Two Health Shots then!

[Gabriel snaps at a server]

[Two cups are placed on the table]

GABRIEL GRANT: Here we are. To Vox Elysium!

ALEXANDRA: Right, to Vox Elysium!

[They clink glasses and take their drinks]

ALEXANDRA: (Internal) *Wow, that's good.*

GABRIEL GRANT: Alexandra, how did you find your accommodations? Were you truly satisfied?

ALEXANDRA: Ohh...it was amazing. Down beds, fresh fruit, real water for the tub. What's not to love?

GABRIEL GRANT: I'm so pleased to hear that. Your contentment and commitment to our organization is of great importance. That's why I invited you here today to ensure that all your needs have been met.

ALEXANDRA: Very much so Mr. Grant.

GABRIEL GRANT: Please, call me Gabriel. I want all of us here to think of each other as a family unit, working towards a better tomorrow.

ALEXANDRA: Of course... (beat) Gabriel.

GABRIEL GRANT: (Smiling) That wasn't so hard now was it? So tell me Alexandra, how are you adjusting to your new life? Your position means a great deal to us--to me--and I want to make sure you receive all the support you need.

ALEXANDRA: I appreciate that Mr. Gra- Gabriel. To be honest, I was having a hard time remembering where I was this morning. I'm a bit disoriented.

GABRIEL GRANT: Oh, that is very natural given the procedure you've undergone.

ALEXANDRA: Procedure. I thought Vox was a manufacturing company...

GABRIEL GRANT: We are. And the privilege of being such a company is that we've had the resources to begin expanding beyond simply providing clean water and air to the public. We do much more now. You came to us at the perfect time, wanting to cast away the more difficult aspects of your identity. To become a better you. It's not uncommon that one's memory may be affected.

ALEXANDRA: Others have done this?

GABRIEL GRANT: A very lucky few. Though you are by far the most special.

ALEXANDRA: What makes me so special?

GABRIEL GRANT: All in due time my dear.

ALEXANDRA: Wait, I chose to come here to be altered somehow? To have a procedure done.

GABRIEL GRANT: Just so. Here.

[Gabriel pulls up a video on a tablet]

[Chiming beeps]

GABRIEL GRANT: We create a video of you before the procedure to help with this transition.

[He presses play; the video plays with some electronic distortion]

ALEXANDRA: (playing on the screen) I, Alexandra, being of sound mind and body, do consent to Vox Elysium's procedure which will create a better me. I acknowledge that my physiology and cognition may be altered as a result of said procedure. I forfeit any

visitations from outside of Vox Elysium wherein non-Elysiites will be kept from the campus. Anyone found to be visiting me will have legal action taken against them, and may be subject to interrogation.

[Pause noise]

ALEXANDRA: Forfeit visitations?

GABRIEL GRANT: We have found that visits from people outside of Vox confuses people who have undergone the procedure, and harms the transition process during a delicate time.

[He hits play again]

ALEXANDRA: (playing on the screen) I, Alexandra, do give over my past so that I may have a brighter future.

[Video shuts off with more chiming beeps]

GABRIEL GRANT: I know this video may be startling to hear out of context, but I assure you all information will be given to you in time. This is merely evidence that you have stopped running away from the difficulties of life, and instead made a choice of what to run toward. Blue Skies, Brighter Life. Until you are fully acclimated, we try to guide you as much as possible. You've received your itinerary, correct?

ALEXANDRA: Yes I did, just this morning and I am looking forward to learning more.

GABRIEL GRANT: We are looking forward to that too, Alexandra. Very much so! Each of us has a vital role to play here, and whatever you need, please do not hesitate to ask your Vox Elysium family. A representative has been assigned to take care of anything you may need.

ALEXANDRA: Thank you for the support, and for this opportunity.

GABRIEL GRANT: Well the thanks goes to us all for charging towards the future. You will shortly see the importance of your role.

ALEXANDRA: I'll do my best to not disappoint.

GABRIEL GRANT: I have no doubt in your abilities Alexandra, in fact, you were chosen for this unique position specifically. We only select the best of the best, you see. No one belongs here more than you.

ALEXANDRA: I appreciate the faith Vox Elysium has placed in me. Truly. As for the position, I—

GABRIEL GRANT: Failure doesn't happen at Vox. So please don't fret, trust that you will receive all the tools needed to succeed. Again, please let us know if there is anything, *anything*, you need, or wish to discuss.

ALEXANDRA: I will. Thank you for taking time to meet with me!

[Dog barking, running towards them, shaking]

GABRIEL GRANT: Ah, Sarafina's dog.

ALEXANDRA: I don't know if I've ever seen one.

[Dog pants and sniffs around them]

GABRIEL GRANT: Yes, though they are rarely separate. Where is your owner, little one?

[Dog barks]

ALEXANDRA: I thought I heard a dog running around in the hall this morning.

[Dog licks Alexandra's hand and continues to make excited noises]

GABRIEL GRANT: She seems quite taken with you.

ALEXANDRA: I love animals. Never had one though, because... well... I can't seem to remember. (internal) *That's odd.*

GABRIEL GRANT: Alexandra, please think on what I've said to you today. Now if you'll excuse me, I must see my sister.

[Chair moves back as he stands; he walks away]

ALEXANDRA: (Internal) *Who would have thought that Mr. Grant, a man who I'm sure is worth trillions... would want me to call him Gabriel.*

[Her digital watch beeps and plays a melody as it tells her to "Relax"]

SERVER: Here is your Health Shot, a Relaxer, and your Daily Essence.

[Server approaches with three glasses, setting them down]

ALEXANDRA: Oh, I didn't order these...

SERVER: Mr. Grant did, they are here at your leisure and can be delivered at any time. Just triple click your watch, and you will be provided with all the necessary nutrients you desire and need.

ALEXANDRA: Right...well thank you. [Server walks away] (Internal) *Triple click huh? If I take my Health Shot and Essence in the morning, why would I need another one? Maybe the job is going to be even tougher than I thought. Should I be worried? Never mind Alexandra, just take the Essence. Here's to Vox Elysium!*

[13:06]

[Footsteps, ruffle of clothing]

[Digital chimes, a door slides open]

V.E. REP: You must be Alexandra, I've heard such incredible things about you. I know Gabriel is just thrilled to have your brilliant mind on this project. Out of all the candidates, Mr. Grant picked you to secure Vox Elysium's future!

ALEXANDRA: Wow! What a welcome! Nice to meet you. I do have a few questions about this position.

V.E. REP: Of course! Mr. Grant mentioned you might. How can I help you better serve Vox?

ALEXANDRA: Well... What is this position exactly? I only ask so that I waste no time or resources.

V.E. REP: Has Mr. Grant filled you in at all?

ALEXANDRA: Not really, he just wanted to remind me of the importance of it and the work we do.

V.E. REP: Of course, Mr. Grant is a very thoughtful leader, he wants to guarantee your success and help us grow.

ALEXANDRA: Right...How exactly am I going to gro—

[Ominous noise, Alexandra trails off]

V.E. REP: Ms. Alexandra, are you feeling well? Would you like some more essence?

[Noise stops]

ALEXANDRA: No, I'm fine. Did you by chance hear that noise? It's faint, I heard the same sound this morning. It's...

V.E. REP: Can I offer you a Refresher?

ALEXANDRA: Uhh, no. I've had quite enough today, thank you. I apologize, must be the aftereffects of the procedure. Where was I? Right, can you show me exactly what it is I will be doing here?

V.E. REP: Of course! You will be using that brilliant brain of yours to help us reprogram a new and revolutionary code.

ALEXANDRA: Wow, that's fantastic! What kind of product is it? Reprogram? Have you tried to launch this program before?

V.E. REP: Yes, we actually had one programmer attempt this code before you and--

[Harsh, corrective beep from the Rep's watch]

ALEXANDRA: Is that your watch?

V.E. REP: Um. Yes, new tech! Anyway, the code has been partially written but needs someone more aligned with Vox's Values working on it--

[Harsh, corrective beep]

V.E. REP: Um. We need you. Only you can help us Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA: Well. Here I am...

V.E. REP: And how lucky we are for that. For now, the most important thing you can do is to get yourself acclimated to your new environment and envision your future here. We strive for success each day.

ALEXANDRA: Great, I'm looking forward to getting caught up.

V.E. REP: Well, I won't take up too much of your time. I know how important you are to our organization, and I won't stand in the way.

ALEXANDRA: It was nice to meet you.

V.E. REP: It was lovely meeting you as well. Clear Skies, Brighter Life to you!

[Quickly receding footsteps]

[The door slides back open and closed again]

[Distorted memory of Vivien's voice: "Echo, we shouldn't have secrets..."]

ALEXANDRA: Vivien? Hello?! (deep breathing) Let's uh—(deep exhale) let's see what we are working with!

[Computer turns on with a happy sound]

[Sounds of her typing]

ALEXANDRA: (Internal) *Alright Alexandra, what did you get yourself into? Woah! This is...oof... This coding is incredibly complex. Wow, they might as well be trying to simulate the human brain in binary.*

[Ominous noise]

ALEXANDRA: But why would they be trying to simulate the human brain?

[Gentle reminder to "Relax" from her watch]

ALEXANDRA: Hm.

[She turns the reminder off]

[Door slides open and closed]

VIVIEN: Hey there, kiddo.

ALEXANDRA: Vivien! I thought I heard you. What are you doing here?

VIVIEN: They've also got me on this project. Guess you aren't getting rid of me that easily.

ALEXANDRA: I'd never try to get rid of you. I think... I just wanted more for myself. And so do you, I see. One step closer to what you've always wanted! Living in Vox, the lap of luxury. (they laugh) What do they have you coding?

VIVIEN: Oh I'm not coding, you know I was never any good at it. (pause) I'm uh... management!

ALEXANDRA: Oooo so fancy, look at you.

VIVIEN: Trust me, it's a lot less glamorous than what you're picturing. How are you holding up?

ALEXANDRA: Holding up?

VIVIEN: Yeah, after your procedure.

ALEXANDRA: To be honest I don't remember much about it.

VIVIEN: Really?

ALEXANDRA: Yeah. I remember getting the offer to move here, obviously. But after I got here things feel like a blur.

VIVIEN: So much excitement I guess.

ALEXANDRA: Yeah. I feel so... pampered.

VIVIEN: Do you feel like the best version of yourself?

ALEXANDRA: I think so.

VIVIEN: That brochure they sent you was pretty emphatic about guaranteed results. "Do you suffer? We can help! Let the light of Vox Elysium burn away your impurities." I hope you more than just think you feel like your best self.

ALEXANDRA: No, I do. I do. I just... I guess I can't really remember how I felt before the procedure so I don't have much to compare it to. I mean I remember my life and everything, I remember you and my parents in Blue Lake.

VIVIEN: Glad to know they didn't fry your head so bad that you'd forget where you came from.

ALEXANDRA: (laughs) Yeah. But. When I woke up today. I had this overwhelming feeling. Like something is just. Off.

VIVIEN: You're lucky Alex. Most of us may not ever get to have what you have.

[Corrective beeps from both of their watches]

VIVIEN: Shit. I just remembered, I need to report to Mr. Grant.

ALEXANDRA: Vivien?

[Vivien runs off]

ALEXANDRA: (Calling out) Vivien!

[Ominous noise]

ALEXANDRA: Hello?!

[As ominous noise fades, her watch chimes at her to “Relax”]

[End Theme & Credits]