

Cipher 5: "ALL THAT GLITTERS"

Vox Elysium: A Paperless Pulp Cyber Noir

Written by Jon Jon Johnson

[00:00]

[Opening theme music]

[Previously on Vox Elysium - clips from Cipher 4]

NARRATOR: Flying V Presents: Vox Elysium, a Paperless Pulp Cyber Noir. Cipher 5: All That Glitters.

[Fancy string music, clinking of glasses, cheerful conversation]

ECHO: (Internal) Hm. *Fancier than I expected.*

GUARD: Excuse me, miss...Oh! Miss Adams, I didn't see you step out.

ECHO: Oh, you know-

GUARD: --a costume change? Weren't you wearing something else just now?

ECHO: Spilled some wine. Had a backup outfit just in case

GUARD: Oohhhh smart, smart, that's some real "Brighter Lives" inspiration. I should take note.

ECHO: Not bright enough. It appears I left my nametag on my other outfit. Be a dear and...

GUARD: Absolutely, Ms. Adams

[Sound of printing, handoff]

GUARD: There you go. No one will even notice.

ECHO: I'm counting on it. You saved my hide there...uh...

GUARD: Don't mention it.

ECHO: No, I mean —

GUARD: Don't. Mention. It.

ECHO: You got a name?

GUARD: Unimportant. You have a good time, Ms. Adams

ECHO: Great...you too.

GUARD: I'm here to make sure *you* have a good time.

ECHO: Well, I mean...you're doing a great job.

GUARD: You're too kind, Ms. Adams.

[Footsteps away]

[Clinking glasses and tableware]

GUEST 1: Try some?

ALEXANDRA: What is it?

GUEST 1: Oh, no idea! But it's tasty.

ALEXANDRA: Mmm... Oh, it's divine.

GUEST 1: This is what Gabriel talked about, right? This is the brighter life. Good food and drink. Beautiful company.

ALEXANDRA: Oh, would you be a dear and fetch me a drink?

GUEST 1: It would be my pleasure. Clear Skies —

ALEXANDRA: —Brighter Lives. (Internal) *Clear skies. Not a cloudy thought. Clear skies. Keep it light. Empty.*

[Glasses clinking, champagne bottle pop, liquid poured]

GUEST 1: Here you go Ms Adams.

ECHO: Oh...I-uh.

GUEST 1: What's the matter? Not a fan of champagne?

ECHO: No. No not at all!

GUEST 1: Here, take it. I'll track down some more of those hors d'oeuvres.

ECHO: ...thanks.

[Dramatic music increases, then cuts out]

ECHO: (Internal) *What the hell? Is that...*

[Strings have a dramatic flair]

ECHO: (Internal) *It's her! My twin? She looks... that's eerie.*

[03:33]

[Sound of a gong, crowd hushes]

GUEST 1: I can't believe we are actually going to get to see *the* Gabriel Grant.

GUEST 2: I feel like I'm going to faint!

[Gabriel's dramatic speech music begins]

ECHO: (Internal) *Damn. Lost her...*

GABRIEL GRANT: My fellow Elysiites!

[Applause, whoops]

GABRIEL GRANT: I hope everyone's having a lovely time at today's mixer?

GUEST 1: Oh he's so handsome!

[Applause]

GABRIEL GRANT: We love to hear it. We hope that you're finding your joy today as we float through the fair weather to our promised, Brighter Lives. The Voice of Elysium calls out to us evermore, and soon we shall all find our greater purpose.

[Cheers, assent, someone weeps]

GABRIEL GRANT: The sound of your jubilation makes my heart soar. Your tears of ecstasy make me want to weep for joy, as the great mission of the organization continues due to the impeccable work provided by you all. Your labor, your toil - all leading us to our promised victory, the great liberation, the perfect Embodiment of Self. As we were once banished from the utopia of Elysium because of our sin... So too will we find it again... [Audience: Yes!] We take another indelible step towards the realization of our dreams of Brighter Lives... Of clearer skies... Of freedom, in our pursuit of truth, justice, and beauty.

[More cheers, applause]

ECHO: (Internal) *Flashy. Not substantive. Disingenuous. Really worked a thesaurus for some of those bigger words, I bet.*

[Across the room...]

ALEXANDRA: Wow...Gabriel Grant, what a wordsmith.

GUEST 1: An actual poet. I'd pay an arm and a leg for a masterclass on oration.

ALEXANDRA: Just, really beautiful language.

GUEST 1: Gravitas and Charisma.

GABRIEL GRANT: Do you trust me?

[Affirmatives from the crowd]

GABRIEL GRANT: Do you believe me?

[More enthusiastic affirmatives]

GABRIEL GRANT: DO YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELVES?

[Enthusiastic affirmatives]

ALEXANDRA: I want to.

ECHO: (Internal) *...of course not.*

GABRIEL GRANT: We could never have come this far without that special sauce: Belief. Belief is what empowers us. It propels us forward into the blind unknown! We need so little else to traverse the wilderness, for even a modicum of belief will guide you. But you must shear away the thick, entangling weeds of doubt and uncertainty, to allow that belief to blossom.

ECHO: (Internal) *What am I, a plant?*

GABRIEL GRANT: Belief is a flower.

ECHO: (Internal) **Scoff**

GABRIEL GRANT: Watered by trust.

ECHO: (sardonically) Our community, the sunlight.

GABRIEL GRANT: The sunlight? Our community. Only together, as a whole, whose sum is greater than our parts, can we continue to stride forward.

[Cheer from the audience]

ECHO: (Internal) *Plants don't walk.*

GABRIEL GRANT: Only then can we achieve our dreams, in the spirit of mutual trust. Through community care. And the incredible work ethic of each and every one of you.

[More cheers]

GABRIEL GRANT: We are so fortunate that we have built this loving community...no...we are more than that are we not. More than even a family. Especially in these uncertain times, with crisis on the constant encroach. This complex world, it hurts our hearts, our minds, muddies our souls, and ever seeks to dampen your pride. And for sure, at times we feel lost. [Someone sobs] But we at Vox Elysium have been relentlessly pursuing the true solution! We embrace our ambition. Our courage. Our bravery to stand in the face of this darkening world to hold the light of hope aloft.

GUEST 2: WE LOVE YOU, GABRIEL GRANT!!

GABRIEL GRANT: And I, you, fellow Elysiite! Your love honors me, as it honors our family, and our great work. (beat) Speaking of the work: the cost has been great. We did scrounge and save, pinching every penny we could to provide you this splendid event, to memorialize this magnificent occasion.

GUEST 1: This *is* probably the most fancy gala yet.

ALEXANDRA: You don't say? That's so wonderful.

GABRIEL GRANT: And so much of this to honor the person who brought us to the precipice of the next great leap. Her brilliance is cracking the cipher, unlocking the knowledge we sought. And thanks to her, our amazing goals are all in the palm of our hands!

GUEST 1: She must be incredible.

GABRIEL GRANT: It is my humble privilege, in the shadow of such radiant brilliance, to give a warm kudos to the inimitable ALEXANDRA ADAMS!

ECHO: (Internal) *Alexandra?*

ALEXANDRA: Oh my God...

[Crowd applauds]

GUEST 1: Wow, I had no idea I was in such amazing company.

[Alexandra hesitantly speaks into a mic that's been shoved in front of her]

ALEXANDRA: Oh, no, here at Vox Elysium, we're all amazing. My accomplishment is your accomplishment!

GABRIEL GRANT: Alexandra, now that you have proven your worth before all of your fellow Elysiites, know that that incredible mind of yours can soon rest. We know the struggle of thought. How thought clouds the mind, strangles belief with incessant doubt. You have overcome that to provide us all with something incredible, which no doubt proves your fortitude. You are a true exemplar of what an Elysiite can do when she is determined!

[Cheering, applause, and whistling]

GABRIEL GRANT: And soon you can rest, reaping the reward of your work. You can cast those thoughts and doubts aside, as you rest in the embrace of the divide.

GUEST 2: The Great Divide awaits us all!

GABRIEL GRANT: You have created something that helps not just your family here, but everyone in the world. You should be so proud of this monumental accomplishment. I know I am.

ALEXANDRA: (into mic) Thank you! I--

GABRIEL GRANT: And now the mission proceeds in The Facility.

ECHO: (Internal) ... *the lab Graey mentioned.*

GABRIEL GRANT: ...Where we can truly change hearts and minds. Our technology, the technology that will save us, will be so much more advantageous thanks to Alexandra's brilliant work. Just imagine how much easier all our lives will be, living in this lavish luxury, living lives of ease, of laughter, and delight.

ECHO: (Internal) *At whose expense?*

GABRIEL GRANT: Do you suffer?

CROWD: We suffer!

ALEXANDRA: Uh...

ECHO: Ugh...

GABRIEL GRANT: Do you believe?

ECHO: (Internal) *We believe.*

CROWD: We believe!

GABRIEL GRANT: Vox Elysium cares for you

ALEXANDRA: How do you all—

CROWD: So we offer our devotion!

GABRIEL GRANT: In the best of times!

ECHO: (Internal) *In the worst of times.*

CROWD: In the worst of times!

GABRIEL GRANT: In sunlight

CROWD: And in rain!

GABRIEL GRANT: In green pastures

CROWD: In the darkest night!

GABRIEL GRANT: Clear Skies...!

CROWD: Brighter Lives!

[Cheers]

GABRIEL GRANT: Our Brighter Lives are coming!

ECHO: (Internal) *Atop the echoes of the past...*

GUEST 1: (with rapture) Atop the echoes of the past...

[Musical fanfare]

[Fireworks]

[11:03]

[A pneumatic door slides open]

[Beeps as Echo enters a code successfully]

[Footsteps down a quiet hallway]

ECHO: This must be it.

[Sound of steaming and bubbling vats]

[Digital chiming]

ECHO: (Internal) *What the hell? What are all these tubes? What's in these vats?*

[Sound of glass being wiped as she takes a closer look]

ECHO: What in the world...?

[Digital chiming]

ECHO: What is this place...?

[A door slides open down the hall; Echo gasps and hides]

[Approaching footsteps and the sound of conversation]

SCIENTIST 1: "So with the new code from Adams-"

SCIENTIST 2: Exactly! We'll be able to wipe pretty much any independent thought.

[Door closes]

SCIENTIST 1: They'll be just blank slates.

SCIENTIST 2: So the code they have Adam's working on?

SCIENTIST 1: Oh, it has to allow us to program them.

SCIENTIST 2: However we please! (laughs)

SCIENTIST 1: So I could get a blank to just...do all my chores?

SCIENTIST 2: You could even make it enjoy them.

SCIENTIST 1: Why would I do that?

SCIENTIST 2: I mean, why not? A happy blank wouldn't dream of rebelling or turning on you.

SCIENTIST 1: But it wouldn't be able to anyways; it won't be able to do anything it's not programmed to do.

SCIENTIST 2: Oh, an excellent point.

ECHO: (Internal) *This is horrifying...they're programming people.*

SCIENTIST 1: There are so many other applications to this. Anything that requires human testing? How does... The Entity react to the use of its abilities?

SCIENTIST 2: No idea. It's really fascinating, but, hey, maybe we program a bunch of smart blanks and make them figure it out.

[Their voices begin to fade]

SCIENTIST 1: And then we bring it to the boss...

SCIENTIST 2: Voila. Profit.

SCIENTIST 1: And we *split* it.

SCIENTIST 2: Nice!

[Door opens, they walk through it, their conversation fading]

ECHO: (Internal) *What the hell are they talking about? Graey said Vox was programming people but this... Maybe if I find the Entity...*

[Click of flashlight]

GUARD: HEY!

ECHO: Shit.

GUARD: Sorry Ms. Adams, but you shouldn't be down here. Restricted area! Let me escort you back up-

[Door opens nearby]

GABRIEL GRANT: That won't be necessary.

ECHO: Gabriel!

[He walks in leisurely]

GABRIEL GRANT: I believe we've found a byproduct.

ECHO: Not a flower?

GABRIEL GRANT: How clever.

[Gabriel's gun cocking]

GABRIEL GRANT: Guard, please escort this... Soon-to-be-blank, to a cell.

ECHO: What does that mean?

GABRIEL GRANT: Pity. For all of Alexandra Adams' intellect, I'm surprised none of it got shared with you. (beat) Vivien was so wrong about you.

ECHO: Wait, what does Vivien have to do with this?

GABRIEL GRANT: Take her away.

[The Guard grabs her, she struggles]

ECHO: NO. LET ME GO!

[She struggles still as a cell door is opened and she's shoved inside it]

[The cell locks with a beep]

[Gabriel lights a cigarette with his zippo and sighs as he exhales]

[End Theme & Credits]

