



Glitch was an insect.

He loved how the world always seemed so large from his bug's eye view. He hated how it made him feel vulnerable. As he climbed up the wall, he fought down a sudden shiver—the feeling of so many gecko tips catching and releasing on his multiple legs gave him the willies. He could feel one of his legs cramping up—the micro-servos on one of the drone's legs must be acting up again.

He reached his destination: a small vent grate that loomed like a vast cavern mouth. He skittered inside, dragging a thin fiberoptic cable with him. From there it was another twenty minutes of crawling through vents, even passing through the wired mesh of the facility's Faraday cage.

Finally he reached the darkened lab. He scurried across it, taking a dangerous path across open space rather than sticking to the walls—he was afraid he had misjudged the distance, and his reel of fiberoptic might run short. He was halfway to his destination when the ground began to shake. He froze and peered through the sensors, but was suddenly blinded by a powerful light. His virtual eyes recovered from the glare just in time to see a large boot come stomping down right next to him. His body screamed to move, certain that he was about to be stepped on.

But the footsteps receded across the room, taking the light with them—a guard, making the rounds. Close call. One misstep and his drone body would've been crushed, dumping him from the Matrix and spoiling the run.

He skittered on, taking another few minutes to locate the object of his search: a fiberoptic cable that he hoped led directly to the research nexus he planned to penetrate. His insectoid pincers gripped the cable, applying the optical tap. It bent the cable, capturing a minor amount of the light signals passing through it, without disrupting the connection. The tap linked the cable to the one Glitch had dragged in from outside.

He took a deep breath, jumped out of the drone, and dove into the cable. His persona materialized before a set of Roman ruins—the nexus's login gateway—and immediately assaulted the node's defenses, scanning for an exploitable weakness. He kept his hacking tools up to date, and in just a few seconds he had found a software vulnerability, taking advantage of it to bypass the firewall and acquire user privileges. He passed between the tall pillars, entering a large coliseum. A pair of large lions sauntered past, not seeing to see him. Yet.

From there, it took him only a few minutes to survey the lab's latest research—cutting-edge commlink design. He spent a few minutes admiring the handiwork and design principles that would go into the commlinks hitting the market in 5 year's time. His inner geek smiled. Then he logged out, cut the tap, jumped back into the microdrone, and headed out. He took nothing with him.

Sometimes, the thrill of the hack was just knowing that you could.