

DARK CLOUD

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. SPACE

Opening scene of the earth, floating peacefully in space.

A meteor, about two miles wide, flies over, heading straight for the Pacific Ocean. A female, adult NARRATOR with a pleasing, soothing voice, begins speaking:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There came a day when hell and
earth became inseparable. (beat)
From out of the sun it came,
undetected, and all was lost.

The meteor plunges into the Pacific. The impact is horrific. Tsunami waves race out from the impact at the rate of a jet plane.

EXT. DEEP IN THE PACIFIC - DAY

Out at sea, a tsunami is heading out. The tsunami has hit the Hawaiian Islands. It is several hundred feet high. It washes over them so fast there is no time to send out a distress signal.

EXT. LA - DAY

As people see the 500 foot tsunami close in, they scream and run as best they can - only some able to stand up under all this.

The tsunami comes up off the shores of LA, several hundred feet high. The wave crashes in over LA. Nothing can stand before it's force. Office buildings topple and are reduced to rubble. Waves inundate the streets, going ever more inland, sweeping everything (people, debris) with it. The torrent seems to go on forever, washing up into the hills and over them, around LA.

At last the wave loses momentum and begins to recede back out to sea. It sucks everything with it, people included. Little is left.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

All that was, was no more. Most of
humanity: gone.

EXT. SCENE OF LA - DAY It is destroyed. Large tankers and other vessels lie scuttled in the city streets and up against what is left of some of the buildings.

Silence.

A leather-jacket clad group of young people walk through the ruins. They no longer have to hide that they are armed to the teeth and know how to use their weapons. Their confidence shows.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Society fell in tatters. Those who had enjoyed the prosperity of the old world found themselves at the mercy of the masters of the new.

EXT. SCENE OF LA - NIGHT

Images of Hell's Angels and other street types out wilding in the ruins of a city.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But out of this chaos, a new group came into their own. American youth, so long the victims of the older generation's misunderstanding of their lust for life...

Images of semi-punk/streetwise teenagers out cruising and drinking before the destruction. One of them whips out a switchblade and starts twirling it around to show off for the fun of it. His companions motion for him to put it down and hide it as they all spot a cop car. Everybody gets real quiet and waits for the cops to move on.

INT. YOUTH DETENTION FACILITY; SOLITARY CONFINEMENT - DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Locked away in institutions and youth homes, spurned for their survival skills in an anarchistic world, so misplaced in a middle-class society that failed to accept them.

Silhouette of a STREETWISE TEENAGER against the barred window of an isolation room in a teen treatment center. She leans her head against the side of the window frame and hangs her head in frustration.

(CONT'D)

EXT. POST APOCALYPTIC CITY STREETS - NIGHT

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They now came into their own as the aftermath of the destruction cooled, (beat) and the magnitude of their number became apparent.

Image of a hungry mother and child standing just barely near a sidewalk warrior who is roasting what is apparently his dinner over an open fire. He looks at their hungry faces and offers them a substantial portion of his own meal.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But to understand why DARK CLOUD, although one of their own, became the warrior she did, we have to go back to a time when the ashes of destruction were first cooling. There, Dark Cloud began, and her old self died, as erased as the removal that destroyed civilization and most of the people of the earth. (beat) Her old self crumpled and blown away, like the textbooks of the old way of life.

EXT. A HIGHWAY SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

DARK-CLOUD-TO-BE is holding back tears. She holds her thumb out, trying to hitch a ride when a car occasionally goes by. She has been crying, mascara running down her cheeks. She looks like a typical U.S. teenager in t-shirt and jeans, sneakers, about 16 years of age.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Dark Cloud ran away, to escape domestic violence and abuse, only to fall prey to worse. Naive and inexperienced, she was easy prey.

There's not much traffic, but one vehicle does come along, pull to the side, and stop. It is painted camouflage colors.

The DRIVER reaches over and opens the passenger door.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The first person she came upon
turned out to be a sadistic
survivalist, and he wanted her for
his own.

Dark-Cloud-to-be climbs in.

The SURVIVALIST is dressed in brown camouflage fatigues as well. The truck drives on for awhile, then pulls into the driveway of a mostly hidden residence. The two get out and go inside.

INT. THE SURVIVALIST'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Survivalist's house doesn't even look like a real house. It looks like a small, reinforced, well-stocked fortress. There aren't even conventional windows present.

They step in and he closes the door behind her, locking it securely. She doesn't even notice. Dark-Cloud-to-be is looking around the house, her back turned to him, so she doesn't see the look in his eyes as he watches her slim figure while securing the house.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Once home, he began brutalizing
her, breaking her spirit, to keep
her his.

The Survivalist pulls a knife and says something to her, inaudible to us. She shakes her head, and is terrified when he closes in and begins ripping and slashing at her clothes. Dark-Cloud-to-be begins screaming in protest (also inaudible to us,) vainly trying to keep the tatters of her clothes covering herself. For good measure, the Survivalist slashes Dark-Cloud-to-be across her abdomen, then walks away.

Dark-Cloud-to-be slowly sinks to the floor, hugging the corner of the room, once more crying.

He comes back and grabs her by one arm, dragging her to the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lit by a single, dull light bulb. Dark-Cloud-to-be is tied backwards in a very uncomfortable position - for hours. She strains against her confinement from time to time, tears coming to her eyes from the pain.

INT. MAIN ROOM OF SURVIVALIST'S HOUSE - DAY

The Survivalist has let her out of the basement. She is hunched up against a corner, bruised and bloodied, eyes closed as though trying to escape all this in her mind. He is talking to her, menacing, threatening, and slashes at her with a knife from time to time. It rips through her clothes and blood flows, but he is careful to not vitally hurt her.

He punches her in the face when she gets up to defend herself, knocking her to the floor.

She looks up at him from the floor. She is on her hands and knees, bruised and bloodied, naive and terrified.

He grins down at her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Fortunately for the woman she was to become, her captor did not think things through, or at least failed to grasp the consequences of his actions. He wanted both a subjugate, and one proficient in weaponry and survival. He did not care how - and that would prove to be her salvation from him.

MONTAGE of him showing her weapons, demonstrating their details. She looks terrified, and is too scared to cross him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It finally drew to a head one night, when, assured of his power over her, opportunity presented itself.

The Survivalist, smiling, hands her a new handgun, indicating that she should figure out and show him that she knows how to load and use it. He is sure to caress her cheek, and let her know she is behaving like a proper woman now.

Dark-Cloud-to-be is standing in front of him, a table between them. She is shaking a little, and terrified, but tries to hide it.

Dark-Cloud-to-be picks up the handgun, figures it out quickly and loads the clip. It isn't too hard for her to figure out, and she plays with the mechanisms a bit.

Something snaps inside her. She is holding a loaded, cocked pistol in her hand.

She looks up at the Survivalist, leveling the gun at his forehead at the same time. Her eyes are emotionless, cold, but still full of steel and determination.

He notices this and gets more than a bit alarmed. He starts to speak, to talk her down, but his words do not register with the young woman.

She cuts him short, firing, planting a bullet in the middle of his forehead.

He drops to the floor, dead.

Dark-Cloud-to-be watches him for a moment, then walks around the table, over to his prostrate body. She fires several more shots into his back, into his heart, to make especially sure he is dead.

She looks up, almost in a daze. She looks around the house, realizing she has to get out of here.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

All memory of her identity wiped clean from the trauma of what she had to do to escape another intolerable situation.

She walks over to another table and picks up the keys to his truck. She heads for the door and leaves, gun in hand, but only hanging there, mostly out of rounds, as though she forgot to put it down.

Both steel and daze reflect in her eyes.

EXT. THE SURVIVALIST'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She gets in his truck, starts it up, and drives off in the night.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Thus the person who was, died, and Dark Cloud began.

BREAK

On screen we see:

A FEW YEARS AFTER THE METEOR IMPACT

EXT. DAY - A CANYON IN THE U.S. DESERT SOUTHWEST

Dark Cloud is crouched under a ledge. She is still, and listens sharply as the sound of boots grate overhead. Her pursuer pauses overhead, takes a cigarette out of his mouth, and frowns in puzzlement. He carries an assault rifle and wears fatigues. He is trying to figure out where she has gone. The MERCENARY resumes his slow tracking overhead.

He works his way down to close by where Dark Cloud is. She draws a 9 mm handgun from a shoulder holster inside her jacket. Slowly, she releases the safety and trains it on the mercenary.

DARK CLOUD

Hold it right there...

The Mercenary turns around halfway before he realizes she has a gun on him, then slows his actions accordingly. She motions with her gun, and he puts his assault rifle down.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

You people just don't learn! You stay on the other side of your east ridge, and nobody gets hurt.

He smirks.

MERCENARY

But the General just wants to see you. Here, I brought you an invitation.

He slowly reaches inside his jacket.

DARK CLOUD

That's far enough.

Dark Cloud fires a shot at the Mercenary which misses. He throws himself on her, pinning her to the ground. They struggle. He attempts to take the gun away from her. Just as he succeeds, she knees him in the groin and breaks loose of his hold, rolling into a crouching position.

The Mercenary rights himself and levels the gun at Dark Cloud, but she already has a throwing knife in her hand. She buries it in his throat, beating him to the shot by a split second.

Dark Cloud watches her opponent for a minute, making sure that he is really dying and no longer a threat to her. She begins climbing to her feet.

...And hears a whizzing sound. She looks around just as a bola wraps itself around her neck. The weighted ends give her quite a blow to the head.

Reality spins.

As she comes out of it a SECOND MERCENARY grabs her around the throat and begins strangling her with the chains of the bola.

This one is crueler than the first Mercenary.

SECOND MERCENARY

Come on, honey. The General wants to see you in person. I'm just going to put you to sleep for the trip.

She grapples with him and the thin bola chains wrapped around her throat.

This does not go unnoticed by KLAATU, a humanoid shaped combat robot, somewhat like a robust Aztec Cylon. He has the no-nonsense personality of a silver-back mountain gorilla, therefore seldom speaks, but is quick to protect.

Two, metal-clad hands grab the second mercenary from behind and roughly jerk him off Dark Cloud. He is spun around to find himself standing face to face in the grip of the humanoid shaped combat robot. The high tech machine regards him coldly with his single eye, shaped like a monovisor.

The mercenary's attitude changes abruptly to desperation. He struggles futilely in Klaatu's grip. The robot snaps his neck like a twig. Devoid of remorse, the robot drops the body.

Dark Cloud is still struggling to free herself of the bola. She is nearly oblivious to the presence of anyone else. Klaatu gently, almost tenderly, quickly untangles the chains and helps her free.

Dark Cloud gasps and chokes still.

DARK CLOUD

Thank you, Klaatu.

She slowly steadies herself and Klaatu helps her to her feet. She walks over to a boulder and takes a seat, catching her breath and putting a hand to her head as she overcomes the blow of the bola.

Klaatu picks up the two bodies and piles them together. He begins breaking the long bones with his bare hands and shoving the jagged ends through the skin.

Dark Cloud grimaces a bit at this sight.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
You're very efficient at that.

Klaatu looks up at her but says nothing. He continues to methodically break the bodies, tearing the head off one.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
I'm glad you're on our side.

Klaatu continues to mutilate the bodies some more.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
What are you going to do with them
this time?

Klaatu picks up the bodies.

His voice is always monotone.

KLAATU
We are near a section of pass where
the convoy will traverse shortly.
I will drop in a present.

He takes them over to the edge of the ledge, waiting for the convoy to pass by.

Dark Cloud gets up and paces a little bit.

DARK CLOUD
Something is going down. I don't
know what Stone is up to, but that
kind of movement...

She thumbs in the general direction of the convoy, now rumbling it's way through the pass below.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
...is damn peculiar. He's got to
be up to something big.

She thinks for a minute, the frown creasing her forehead. At the edge of the plateau, they watch as the convoy draws near from below. Klaatu gauges the trajectory to the convoy with a practice swing, then tosses first one, then the second body on into the canyon.

EXT. DOWN IN THE CANYON - DAY

Klaatu's handiwork on the two bodies lands on the windshields of two separate vehicles.

The convoy skids to a halt. All hell breaks loose as the mercenaries below discover the results of Klaatu's handiwork. The noise of fear and alarm from the Mercenaries grows louder when they see exactly what he has done to the bodies.

Klaatu is still holding the head of his first victim in his hand. He throws it out to land on a vehicle's windshield, cracking it. It creates quite a reaction among the Mercenaries.

In the third jeep back, a slightly overweight but imposing man gets out, reaching for binoculars. This is GENERAL STONE, the self-styled despot of the territory bordering Dark Cloud's. Although not from a real military background, he does have enough of an organizational background with plenty of breadth and responsibility, to be able to apply it to holding the para-military contingent he commands, together.

More angry at what has just happened than unnerved, General Stone raises the binoculars to his eyes and scans for the parties responsible. He sees no one. Stone curses under his breath and calls for someone nearby who hurries to take orders.

GENERAL STONE

Major! Note this section for insurgent activity and send out an investigative team as soon as possible. Make sure they're armed to the teeth. I don't want a repeat of this.

General Stone glares at the canyon ridge and spits in anger.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

(to no one in particular)

This is intolerable! Get me an RPG!

Someone hands Stone a rocket propelling grenade launcher. He lobs off a few shells to hit as close to just over the ridge as possible.

EXT. THE RIDGE ABOVE - DAY

Dark Cloud throws herself to the ground and slithers on her stomach for cover as debris falls all around her. Klaatu hurries her to a rock shelter, just in case.

DARK CLOUD
Today is getting ridiculous!

EXT. DOWN IN THE CANYON - DAY

GENERAL STONE
That ought to send a message.

EXT. THE RIDGE ABOVE - DAY

Dark Cloud, lightly covered with dust, glances grimly up at Klaatu.

DARK CLOUD
I think it's a good idea to make an exit. Let's go, Klaatu.

Klaatu picks up his weapon that looks like a hand-held cannon and heads for the edge of the ridge.

KLAATU
Better to eliminate the convoy completely.

Dark Cloud screams at him.

DARK CLOUD
No! Klaatu! Your first directive is to protect me if possible! If you eliminate that convoy it'll just bring every force around, down on us! You will fail at your mission!

Klaatu abruptly stops, visibly processing his charge's logic. He puts down his weapon and returns to her side.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
We just had the bad luck of someone really aggressive in that convoy today.
(sighs)
It's too dangerous here right now.
Let's just get out of here.

She gets to her feet and briskly walks off back into the mesa and canyon lands. Klaatu follows.

EXT. ELSEWHERE IN THE MESA LANDS - DAY

The two make their way through the foliage and cover of the desert southwest, following hidden trails and narrow passages in the rocks that are all but invisible. Dark Cloud is very watchful, to make sure that there is no one around.

They top the last ridge and are greeted by the sight of home. A small adobe, with many workshop annexes, is nestled against the base of a second cliff face in the mesa. Smoke curls from the chimney.

Dark Cloud smiles at the sight of home.

She puts her assault rifle down by the door of her house and begins looking for the other person in her life that gives her joy, RICARDO DE CASTILE. He is definitely old enough to be her father, and somewhat fills that role as a substitute.

Ricardo is from the Old World. (Spain, specifically.)

Scenes between Dark Cloud and Ricardo are in Spanish, with English subtitles. Even Klaatu is fluently bilingual.

Dark Cloud opens a door, looking for Ricardo.

DARK CLOUD
Ricardo? Ricardo?...

She looks through a couple other rooms, then finds him.

INT. POTTERY WORKSHOP - DAY

Dark Cloud opens the door to their pottery workshop, smiling as she sees him and walks in.

RICARDO DE CASTILE
Ah, Dark Cloud. Come in, come
in...

He is in the process of throwing another piece of pottery on the wheel, and after waving for her to take a seat, goes back to it.

She smiles, and they sit in silence for a moment. Then he motions for something out of reach.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)
Why don't you hand me one of those
lumps of clay.

Dark Cloud willingly does so. Ricardo accepts it, but then notices something and pulls the collar of her shirt and jacket away a bit to get a better look at the red marks on her neck. He looks at her with worry.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)

Dark Cloud, how did you get this. -
And why are you so dusty.

Dark Cloud pulls her shirt and jacket collar a little tighter around her neck. She is a little nervous and apologetic about explaining.

DARK CLOUD

We had a confrontation today. Two
of Stone's men. It wasn't anything
me and Klaatu can't handle.

Ricardo looks at her seriously. His tone softens.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I worry about you sometimes.

Dark Cloud replies in a tone just as soft, looking at him with affection.

DARK CLOUD

I know, but I can take care of
myself.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I would hate to see you end up on
the end of a chain at Stone's
mercy. I would never get you back.

Dark Cloud stands up and gives him a hug.

DARK CLOUD

I'm going to change before dinner.
Then I'll feed the chickens and see
you inside.

Ricardo looks down, a little disappointed.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

You do that, then.

He goes back to throwing another piece of pottery.

Dark Cloud leaves.

INT. HOME ADOBE - DAY

Dark Cloud changes out of her pants and leather jacket, and hangs her weapons up. She puts on a brown, homespun, floor-length skirt, retaining the basic white shirt she always wears.

EXT. YARD IN FRONT OF HOME ADOBE - DAY

Dark Cloud walks out the front door with a shallow bowl filled with grain. After closing the door, she begins shattering it on the ground. The chickens dash for it.

A cat runs into the yard from one side, and starts chasing the chickens around. They squabble, flap their wings, and run in all directions.

Dark Cloud shoos the cat away, scolding her.

One of the chickens peeks out from behind a pot to see if the cat has gone.

The chickens slowly come back to eat. Dark Cloud sprinkles more grain on the ground.

INT. HOME ADOBE - EVENING

Dark Cloud walks in the door. She puts the bowl to one side and goes over to investigate the contents of a pot bubbling over the fire.

Klaatu is sitting at the table, leaning back against the wall with his feet propped up on the opposite bench, petting a kitten.

Dark Cloud samples the contents of the pot with a wooden spoon. She looks at Ricardo teasingly.

DARK CLOUD

I see you still haven't learned how
to cook, old man.

Ricardo has heard this kind of teasing before and knows it is teasing, so he responds like a Dutch uncle, and waggles his finger at her.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

Hey, if you don't like my cooking,
you can eat what you find out in
the desert

She dishes herself up a bowl with a smile on her face.

DARK CLOUD

I do anyway.

Ricardo nods in acceptance.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

That you do.

(beat)

That you do.

Dark Cloud scoops a deck of playing cards off a shelf on her way over to the table. She sits down opposite Ricardo.

DARK CLOUD

How about a game of gin, old man.

Ricardo teases back, playing, "poor me."

RICARDO DE CASTILE

No, you always win. You're just trying to make me feel bad again.

Dark Cloud is still smiling her mischievous little smile.

DARK CLOUD

No, I'll loose this time. I promise.

Ricardo reaches to pick up the deck.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

OK.

He starts dealing a hand.

After studying her hand for a few moments, Dark Cloud tosses down a card and picks up another.

DARK CLOUD

I have to go raid that pre-destruction munitions dump Stone calls his own, again. I'm running low.

Ricardo picks up the discarded card and adds it to his own hand.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

On brass?

DARK CLOUD

No, I have plenty of that; just nothing to put in them.

(MORE)

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

I can press my own bullets, but I need to have something to put in them; or I can just pick up pre-pressed ammo if I can.

They look at their cards for a moment longer, continuing to play.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

You know, you're pretty smart to hide your real specialty and dress like a Franciscan monk.

Ricardo picks up another card.

He speaks very matter-of-factly to her.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

That I do for you. If people knew what I can do, they might easily hold you hostage and force me to work for them, and even then your safety might not be assured.

Dark Cloud is flippant.

DARK CLOUD

Don't bet on it.

Ricardo looks at her lovingly, but warningly.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I wouldn't, but better not to take any chances.

He glances over at Klaatu, and thinks for a minute, remembering...

Dark Cloud slaps her cards down on the table.

DARK CLOUD

(grinning)

Gin!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOME ADOBE - NIGHT

Lights from inside the adobe shine through the window and from under the door. Crickets chirp. A shooting star crosses the velvety blanket of night.

Distant laughter is heard, both Ricardo's and Dark Cloud's, coming from inside the adobe. He sounds like he knows she has pulled a fast one again, but is amused by it.

EXT. THE MUNITIONS DUMP - NIGHT

Dark Cloud is back in her typical attire: black pants and black leather jacket. Her customary crow feathers and beaded rosette hang from her long, dark hair.

She raises infrared binoculars to her eyes and scans the munitions depot.

Barbed wire fence surrounds most of the depot, but is knocked down or missing in most places.

The place is also under guard by a detachment of Stone's mercenaries. A couple of the mercenaries patrol the perimeter of the depot.

The binoculars pan from the front gate of the depot to a long, trailer-type building nearby. From the lights and the sounds coming from within, most of the detachment is in there. Her binoculars pan back to the rest of the depot, to reveal again the two guards walking past each other as they continue a patrol around the perimeter of the depot.

Throughout this whole observation process, very few lights are prevalent or obvious around the whole depot. It is not well lit.

The place is monitored by (obviously) salvaged electronic gear that detects anything sneaking up on the depot.

Dark Cloud puts her binoculars down. She remains crouched, and puts her hand under her chin in a gesture of thought. She puts her hand back down.

Dark Cloud motions to Klaatu. He comes up from behind her. For all his size and power, he moves as silently and with as much stealth as Dark Cloud.

DARK CLOUD

We may have to deal with those
patrolling guards. I don't see any
way around it...
(to herself)
unfortunately.

Klaatu crouches next to her. She leans towards him, and they discuss how best to go about getting in. They whisper between each other barely audibly, making use of gestures as much as possible. Klaatu disagrees with Dark Cloud from time to time. She counters.

They agree on a plan. Both of them turn away from each other and begin working their way around the depot from opposite sides.

Dark Cloud is creeping through the brush surrounding the depot, using it as cover.

The guards are continuing their rounds.

Dark Cloud has stopped and is watching them again. She looks down. One of her boots is just under a trip wire. She slowly draws it out from under the wire and steps over the booby trap device.

Klaatu walks right past an infrared sensor, making no attempt to avoid it's scanning field.

INT. GUARD SHACK - NIGHT

A monitor that should go off when something infrared walks by. Nothing happens.

Several MERCENARIES are playing cards. Nothing shows on the monitor. He puts one of the cards down and draws another.

EXT. SOMEWHERE AROUND THE DEPOT - NIGHT

One of the GUARDS patrolling the perimeter of the depot. He is unaware of anyone around, and takes a cigarette out of his mouth, casually blowing smoke.

Dark Cloud sneaks up to the very perimeter of the depot. She has circled around to the left of her original vantage point. Klaatu is somewhere on the other side of the depot. Dark Cloud crouches under cover as the Guard walks by. Dark Cloud watches him go by. All her steel and wariness reflect in her eyes.

The Guard stops in his tracks, his eyes riveted on something in front of him and a little off to his left. Dark Cloud looks too, out of surprise and curiosity - and precaution. The Guard smiles and draws his pistol. He aims it at the rabbit and squeezes off a round.

The bullet misses. The rabbit jumps and dashes away. He squeezes off a couple more rounds, both missing, and the rabbit dashes right behind where Dark Cloud is hiding. The Guard brings his sidearm around to bear.

Dark Cloud jumps a little as she realizes the danger she is in. Before GUARD ONE can squeeze off another round, she is on her feet, vicious looking throwing star in her hand, and buries it in the Guard's throat. He gags, grabs the star, but is unable to pull it out without causing more damage. The poisoned tips take effect quickly. He falls face-forward, to the ground, cringes a little more, and dies.

Dark Cloud steps forward from behind cover. She looks at the dead man seriously, then shakes her head briskly and enters the munitions dump.

INT. INSIDE A GIVEN BUILDING IN THE MUNITIONS DUMP - NIGHT

Dark Cloud enters a building and lights a small pen-light flashlight, scanning the labels on several of the crates in the room. Cobwebs cover almost everything. The floor creaks under her footsteps.

Dark Cloud doesn't find what she is looking for in the first room. She walks into the next room. Her flashlight flickers over the labels of contents of more crates. Her footsteps cause the wooden floor to creak yet more, much to her annoyance. She tries to walk more carefully to make up for it, but it does little good.

Dark Cloud pauses as she hears a particularly loud creak turned to 'crack'. She then realizes it is coming from underneath her. Dark Cloud looks down just as the floor gives way beneath her. She drops into the basement below.

Dark Cloud lands amid a pile of boards. Dust swirls around, then begins to settle. After determining that nothing is broken and she is OK, she climbs to her feet and dusts herself off. She looks back up out the hole created by her fall.

Dark Cloud lights up her flashlight again and begins scanning the contents of the new room. She swings the arc of light around the room, then back, as something catches her eye. Dark Cloud approaches the crate that caught her attention. She brushes the cobwebs off the label, then wrestles the lid off the crate. Dark Cloud sorts through the packing material until she finds the contents. They are HIGH ENERGY EXPLOSIVES. She runs her finger over one, sniffs her finger, then tastes it. It confirms what she suspected about the type of explosive she has found - C4 plastic explosives.

She spits and utters a profanity, in Spanish pronunciation.

DARK CLOUD
Yeshua Christos...!

There is enough explosive power present to level a small city. Her flashlight flickering over the new found crates. Several warning labels read:

DANGER!

HIGH ENERGY EXPLOSIVES

An incredulous expression on Dark Cloud's face. She fishes a bar out and tucks it in her jacket. Dark Cloud continues to explore the building.

She finds what she is looking for in the next room. It is filled with the size of shot and some extra brass that her guns take. She takes out a canvas sack and begins filling it with ammunition supplies. She continues to listen carefully as she does so.

She fills her bag, throws it over her shoulder, and retraces her steps to the hole she fell through. After studying it from a couple of angles, she climbs back up through.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING DARK CLOUD HAS JUST EMERGED FROM - NIGHT

Dark Cloud emerges from the building with a bag of ammunition and related supplies over her shoulder.

Klaatu is standing there, with GUARD TWO squirming in his grip. Guard Two looks worried, but more wary. He figured that if he was going to die, it probably would have been right away, so he is counting on a chance to get out of this yet.

INT. GUARD SHACK - NIGHT

The Mercenaries in the guard shack are still playing cards. They study their hands. A pile of chips sit in the middle of the table. One of them throws a card down and draws another.

EXT. BACK IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING - NIGHT

Klaatu could not have a colder demeanor as he holds Guard Two by the neck.

KLAATU

How do you want me to dispose of this...

Dark Cloud puts her sack down. She looks at the desperate Guard Two, and notes that he has a healthy respect for them.

Something else strikes her about him, but she can't quite put a finger on it. He just doesn't seem like the rest of Stone's Mercenaries.

DARK CLOUD

Let him go.

Klaatu tilts his head sharply in surprise.

KLAATU

I would not advise that.

The Guard makes a redoubled effort and struggles to wrestle free of Klaatu's grip. The robot tightens his hold around the man's throat, who tenses up, then holds very still.

Dark Cloud is getting slightly irritated by now.

DARK CLOUD

I said let him go.

Klaatu reluctantly complies. The Guard dashes away a few steps, then stops, looks back at the two and straightens his fatigues.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu watch him silently, coldly.

Guard Two is cautious, but there's a hint of innocent curiosity in him. Yet he remains wary.

GUARD TWO

Thank you.

Still no response from Dark Cloud or Klaatu. He looks off towards the hills, then back at them.

GUARD TWO (CONT'D)

OK, I owe you one. It'll take me another 25 minutes to make another full round of the depot. You've got that long to get out of here before I have to raise the alarm over my dead companion, there.

He gestures off towards the other Guard's body.

DARK CLOUD

Fair enough.

Guard Two turns and walks briskly off into the darkness. Klaatu takes his place by Dark Cloud's side. Neither Dark Cloud nor Klaatu take their eyes off the Guard as he disappears into the distance.

KLAATU

That was an error.

DARK CLOUD

I would prefer the less bloodshed,
the better. (beat) Besides, I
have my own reasons.

She reflects for another minute, putting a finger to her lips, trying to figure out what was different about this guard, then dismisses it and picks up her sack, tossing it at Klaatu.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Here, help me load up. There's
ammo and supplies in there that'll
fit your weapons too.

She walks back into the building she emerged from.

INT. DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - NIGHT

Dark Cloud and Klaatu walk in the front door. Ricardo is still up, smoking his pipe and thinking about something. He looks up as Dark Cloud and Klaatu walk in.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I'm glad to see you made it back
safely.

Dark Cloud smiles at him and goes over and gives him a hug.

DARK CLOUD

You knew I would be.

She walks into their ammo supply storage room and starts putting things away on the shelves. Klaatu follows and helps. After some shuffling and movement, she and Klaatu come back out. They head for the front door.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

(puzzled)

Where are you going now? At this
hour?

Dark Cloud shrugs.

DARK CLOUD

Out.

Ricardo looks down, and shrugs too. He goes back to his smoke. After taking another drag, he says,

RICARDO DE CASTILE

Well, be safe.

Dark Cloud reassures him.

DARK CLOUD

I will.

She heads out the door with Klaatu behind her. Ricardo thinks, concerned, for a minute after they leave.

EXT. SOMEWHAT DISTANT IN THE DESERT - NIGHT

The moon is up and full. It is very bright out. Dark Cloud lights a small fire.

She pulls a peyote button from her jacket, the center already cut out and ready to go. She begins consuming it bit by bit, going into a vision quest. The effects begin to settle in. It shows on Dark Cloud.

Off in the distance, storm clouds billow at a very fast rate, much too fast for a natural storm. Thunder rolls from the clouds. Dark Cloud uses her second sight to look more closely.

In the storm clouds the transparent form of the Celestial Dragon, the LORD OF STORMS and Tempests, flies in a graceful pattern, looping and turning casually with the clouds as he speaks. His voice is thunder. He is black with red eyes, and a lighter black (gray) underbelly. He occasionally sends a pattern of lightning bolts through the clouds, though they do not touch ground.

Klaatu looks in the direction of the storm. He could not be more at ease. Klaatu is oblivious to the supernatural presence.

Dark Cloud watches the Lord of Storms a bit more, then calls to him. Her lips move soundlessly, uttering his secret name, the one she knows by which he will respond. The Lord of Storms turns to her, his transparent figure pausing as he fixes his eyes on her. He changes direction and flies towards her, leaving the clouds behind. He hovers in front of her, not too distant, hovering motionlessly in the air.

Dark Cloud greets him respectfully, though not fearfully.

DARK CLOUD

Alanta Ananaka.

He greets her back, tenderly.

LORD OF STORMS
Ts^u'upu - i^s - mehen, Yakunah.

Dark Cloud reaches out to him mentally, to strengthen the bond so they can communicate better.

Klaatu hears nothing but Dark Cloud's voice, but this does not bother him. He has heard Dark Cloud talk to seemingly thin air before. He simply stands by and keeps watch, occasionally looking at Dark Cloud to make sure she is OK.

For a moment they don't know what to say to each other.

LORD OF STORMS (CONT'D)
A storm is coming.

Dark Cloud is unimpressed.

DARK CLOUD
That much I can see.

The Lord of Storms pulls himself up, righteous, mighty.

LORD OF STORMS
That's not what I meant.

He settles to the ground, wings still slightly spread.

He sheaths his claws, and tenderly caresses her cheek.

LORD OF STORMS (CONT'D)
I cannot protect you. I can only
avenge.

Dark Cloud is a little frustrated.

DARK CLOUD
I'm so tired of struggling and
nothing comes of it! No one ever
said that life would be easy, but
this is too much!

The Lord of Storms speaks as though instructing her. He points a taloned forefinger at her at some point during his next dialogue.

LORD OF STORMS
You go where we send you. We
brought you to us. We have guided
your steps so that you would have
no option but to come to us. We
arrange that you will be where and
when we want, that we may
accomplish what we will.

Dark Cloud smiles sardonically.

DARK CLOUD
And the Gods do not go easy on
their tools...

The Lord of Storms looks a little sad and guilty at this. He re-sheaths his claws and caresses both sides of her face.

LORD OF STORMS
I love you. You are my Daughter.
You are my love. I want naught but
good to come to you.

He becomes sad, defensive.

LORD OF STORMS (CONT'D)
- but I have no control over that.
I cannot see the future. ItzamNa
did not give me that gift. I can
only see things as they unfold. I
cannot stop someone from harming
you. My power has it's limits too.
But I love you.

Firmness returns to his voice.

LORD OF STORMS (CONT'D)
- and I will tear the heart out of
anyone who tries to harm you.

Dark Cloud touches one of his transparent hands, careful not to press through it. She looks at him sadly, but tenderly.

DARK CLOUD
So there is no end. On and on I
must go.

The Lord of Storms nods, a little sadly. He knows the pain she has and does go through to be one of their own. Dark Cloud looks down. The conversation is over. Slowly, the Lord of Storms pulls back, then takes to the air again without raising dust. He returns to the clouds and they rumble away.

Dark Cloud sits with her hands in her lap, sad again. She stares into nothingness at the ground in front of her.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
Something is coming...

The fire crackles in the night.

EXT. A CANYON NEARBY - NEXT MORNING

A convoy of army-style trucks threads it's way through the canyon. It is another hot, dusty day.

A PAIR OF BINOCULARS observing the passage of the convoy. The viewer, whoever they are, is perched high up on the edge of one of the canyon walls; accessible, but hidden.

Guard Two, a.k.a BLADE, who escaped from Klaatu the night before, slides in behind the column observer, out of breath. He is always wearing his militaristic fatigues.

ROBERT 'SNAKE' BISHIRK, leader of the rebels who fight General Stone, puts down his binoculars and glances over his shoulder at his friend, then goes back to observing the movement of the convoy.

Like most of the resistance/rebels, who aren't double agents for them, Snake is a black leather jacket clad, long haired rebel. Quite the opposite of Blade playing soldier for General Stone, just to keep the rebels supplied with info on Stone.

Snake is a little casual in his manner today.

SNAKE

Blade, you look like you've been
roughed up by a robot.

BLADE/Guard Two nods and looks off in another direction.

BLADE

I was.

Snake looks at him like he's said something strange, then goes back to watching the convoy.

Blade is still out of breath and looks thoughtful.

Snake looks at him critically.

SNAKE

You look like you've had a close
call. Did someone discover your
cover?

Blade replies like he's laying out facts that should be obvious.

BLADE

Well, in addition to how hard it is
to sneak out of Stone's compound,
do you know what kind of trouble
I'm going to be in if he ever finds
out I'm one of your double agents?

They look at each other for a moment, each immersed in their own emotional reactions. Blade looks off for a moment, then changes the subject.

BLADE (CONT'D)

No, something else happened.

Blade looks off to the horizon critically.

BLADE (CONT'D)

I think I know who might be behind
the mutilations of Stone's
Mercenaries, 'cause I was almost
one of them myself.

SNAKE

Who...

BLADE

There's this woman. Looks like
she's real good at taking care of
herself; and this combat robot who
runs around with her.

Blade is still stunned by what he saw.

BLADE (CONT'D)

Incredible piece of machinery.
Never seen anything like it. I'd
be dead myself, but she told it to
let me go.

Snake is watching Blade very closely, listening to every word he says.

SNAKE

So how'd you convince her to do
that?

The question is so out of the ballpark it puzzles Blade.

BLADE

I don't know.

Snake looks back through his binoculars, expectantly.

SNAKE

This is news to me. She sure must hide her tracks well, 'cause I've sent people up in that area, and they haven't seen a trace of anyone.

BLADE

She's good. She got into Stone's peripheral munitions dump last night. Never tripped an alarm.

Snake looks back at the convoy, disappearing from view. He gets up and walks along the lip of the canyon. Snake's mind wanders a bit as he watches his target.

SNAKE

We need more allies, and help, Blade. We can't keep fighting this battle all by ourselves.

The convoy comes to a blockage in the road. The first truck stops close to the obstacle, which consists of rocks and driftwood piled all across the width of the road. Several Mercenaries dismount from their trucks and begin working on clearing away the obstruction.

Snake and Blade have stopped, close by overhead of the obstruction in the road, but still out of sight to the members of the convoy. Snake takes something like a hand-made cigar, made from some local, smokeable weed, out of the inside of his jacket, sticks it in his mouth and lights it up.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Unless we can find someone who knows how to do large scale damage with explosives...

An explosion erupts from the mound in the road. The ensuing explosion takes out several of those working on the pile and the first truck. There are shouts and exclamations as the survivors back off quickly. The shouts reflect anger, surprise and frustration.

Snake turns away and faces Blade, thumbing over his shoulder at the explosion.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

(still casual)
...Then all I can do is little shit, like that. I wish I could get into Stone's munitions dump easier.

BLADE

She doesn't seem to have any problem.

They both watch the confusion and chaos below. The first truck is still burning. Others are trying to give first aid to the victims of the blast.

Snake's mind runs fast, mulling over this new turn of events that Blade has told him about.

SNAKE

That's good. Let's think of a way to get to her.

Blade stiffens up at that statement.

BLADE

You're gonna have to be real careful about that. One wrong move, and that combat robot of hers will rip us apart. And on top of that, she's quite capable of simply disappearing whenever she wants.

Snake frowns, thoughtful.

SNAKE

Yeah, we'll have to think of a way.

He looks thoughtful for a moment, reflective, before changing the subject.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I've found someone who can finally tell us what's behind that big project Stone's so set on keeping secret. Come on. I'll introduce you.

They walk away.

EXT. ELSEWHERE NEARBY - DAY

Snake and Blade come to what looks like a gutted bomb shelter. They pause and look at each other with some concern before approaching. They walk up to the entrance of the structure, and greet the Guard standing duty by the door.

SNAKE

Hello Mark.

GUARD/MARK

Hello Snake. You know, I'm going to catch hell if I ever get caught letting anyone in, and - especially you!, Leader of the Resistance!

Snake pats him on the shoulder.

SNAKE

Don't even think about it. You're a great guy, Mark.

Snake pats him on the shoulder. Snake and Blade walk inside.

What they see should look like the hovel the futuristic humans in 'The Terminator' lived in. The structure is mostly underground, which means that access can easily be controlled. Here is where Stone keep all his field workers under lock and key. The air smells of human misery and people packed too close together.

People lay around in a state of depression, or use what menial utensils they have to prepare a meal of plain corn. They are all dressed raggedly. Their clothes serve only to cover them, but nothing more. Stone doesn't see any logic to issuing them a better clothing allowance, since they are just the brute labor that tends his fields and does his menial work, and he sees no point in investing anything more in them than absolutely necessary to sustain their miserable lives.

Snake and Blade are each affected in their own way by the sights they encounter. Snake is angry at the sight of people kept in this condition. Blade is appalled by the sight. Since both of them are people used to living in the outdoors, combined with the wretched conditions that face them here, they both feel very uncomfortable in this place.

The two walk through corridors and past curtains rigged for makeshift privacy.

They stop and kneel next to the figure of one very ragged looking middle-age WOMAN IN GREY. She is curled up against the wall, her back to them.

Snake gently touches her shoulder, and she rolls over to look at them. Her first expression is apprehension, since she does not know who is behind her. Upon recognizing Snake, she relaxes, but stiffens up as she fixes eyes on Blade, still in fatigues.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

No, it's OK. This is my friend that I told you about.

(MORE)

SNAKE (CONT'D)

He works for me. Working for Stone
is just his cover.

The Woman In Grey begins to relax again.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

He'll do what he can when he can to
ease your burden as much as
possible.

The Woman In Grey looks up at him, almost as though she's
afraid she'll be slapped down, and nods.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Now, can you tell my friend here
what you saw going on?

The Woman In Grey looks up at him and nods again. She opens
her mouth to speak.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE THE SHELTER - DAY

A small COMPANY OF MERCENARIES approaches the converted fall-
out shelter. The Guard/Mark, knowing Snake is inside, snaps
alert as the COMMANDER OF THE DETACHMENT approaches, and
salutes him.

COMMANDER

I want you to be aware that there
is insurgent activity in this area.
One of our convoys was bombed
within the past hour. I want you
to be alert for anything
suspicious.

GUARD/MARK

Yes Sir!

COMMANDER

Have you seen anything suspicious
in this area?

GUARD

No Sir!

INT. WORKER'S HOVEL

Snake and Blade are just inside the door, out of sight,
weapons drawn. They listen silently to the conversation,
prepared for battle if necessary.

EXT. WORKER'S HOVEL

The Detachment Commander nods in appreciation for the lack of trouble, completely unaware as to why there is no trouble at this particular location.

COMMANDER

Good. We don't need any more surprises. Keep your eyes open, Private.

They salute each other, and the Commander and his Detachment leave. Snake and Blade cautiously walk out of the shelter after Mark gives them the clear.

GUARD/MARK

You be careful, Snake! Stone'll string you up yet!

Snake and Blade are walking away from the shelter. Snake is back to his cocky self again. He turns to yell his laughable, flip response back to Mark. A parody of W.C. Fields with his big smoke and almost comic demeanor.

SNAKE

He'll have to catch me first!

He turns back away, and he and Blade keep walking. Blade throws him a serious look that could cover several topics.

BLADE

Man! I knew that man was crazy, but I didn't think he'd plan something like that. It'll be the death of us all! Wha'do we do, Snake?

Snake takes a drag off his hallmark cigar.

SNAKE

I don't know, Blade. I need some time to think.

Snake snaps his fingers in a 'Eureka!' moment and grins broadly.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Hey! Let's start scouting around for that woman you mentioned!

Blade backpedals at the suggestion.

BLADE

I warned you to be careful about her! Didn't I tell you about that combat robot?

Snake ignores his friend's reservations and chuckles, putting his cigar back in his mouth.

EXT. DARK CLOUD'S TERRITORY - NEXT MORNING

Dark Cloud and Klaatu are out on a perimeter check of their territory. Dark Cloud wants to do some more observation of the activity in her militaristic neighbor's territory. The sun is bright, and she is relatively unworried as she adjusts the grip on her assault rifle.

The day is hot, and it will take them some time to reach the observation spot Dark Cloud picked, so they are in no hurry.

On the way, they encounter a fair sized pool of water surrounded on one side with brush, lined in rock. Without a second thought, Dark Cloud strips off her jacket, drops most of her weapons, and dives in.

Dark Cloud surfaces, throwing her hair back over her head. She looks at Klaatu, standing casually by the bank, and splashes him with water.

KLAATU

Explain the significance of this behavior.

Dark Cloud smiles.

DARK CLOUD

It's called horsing around.

Klaatu shakes his head in puzzlement, indicating it's all a mystery to him. Dark Cloud splashes around for a few moments more.

Klaatu looks off to the brush-covered side of the pool, but does not seem too worried. Dark Cloud surfaces again, and notices that he has discovered something.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

What is it?

KLAATU

There is a large animal life form approximately ten meters behind you. I cannot determine whether it is an animal, or human.

Dark Cloud slicks back her hair and looks over her shoulder at the brush, then throws Klaatu an annoyed look.

DARK CLOUD

Thank you! I'm glad you tell me these things! What if they're a person and they're armed?

KLAATU

I detect no metal presence.

Dark Cloud does not look so annoyed at that statement. She drops into stealth mode.

DARK CLOUD

OK, Klaatu... we check this out.

She dips back under the surface and swims to the other side of the pool. Quietly, Dark Cloud emerges out of sight of the location Klaatu indicated, hidden by brush cover. She slicks back her hair again and slinks out of the water onto a rock. Her motions are once again cat-like in their grace and control.

Klaatu is working his way around to the other side. Dark Cloud silently creeps closer. She figures that the person, or whatever it is, probably knows where she is already, but she's not taking any chances. As Dark Cloud approaches the target spot, she draws a knife from her belt, and readies herself for conflict. Dark Cloud pulls the shrub cover aside.

A Woman In Grey (the same one Snake talked to), dressed raggedly in homespun gray, crouches under cover. She is highly agitated, and bears evidence of having been badly beaten. She has obviously been through hell.

WOMAN IN GREY

No! - Don't!

She thrusts her hands out in self-defense, then pulls them back as if she's afraid they'll be chopped off. Dark Cloud immediately becomes more compassionate.

DARK CLOUD

I won't. It's OK.

She offers her hand to the Woman In Grey, and works her way closer.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

It's OK...

Klaatu steps into sight. The woman cringes at the sight of him.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
 Don't worry about him. He's on our side.
 (to Klaatu)
 Klaatu, watch for others.

Dark Cloud sits down next to the Woman.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
 Are you running from someone?

The Woman nods and covers her mouth with her hand.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
 How many?

WOMAN IN GREY
 I think
 (beat))
 four.

DARK CLOUD
 No problem then. They're no match for us.

She again extends her hand to the Woman.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
 Come on. I'll take you to a place of safety.

The Woman is still doubtful and afraid.

WOMAN IN GREY
 One of the mercenaries was kind enough to tell me where to run to after -

She gets visibly upset.

WOMAN IN GREY (CONT'D)
 - they beat me like this! He couldn't stop them!

DARK CLOUD
 It's OK. You'll be safe.

She coaxes the Woman to her feet.

INT. DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - DAY

Dark Cloud and Klaatu have taken the Woman back home. She is resting in bed. Ricardo is blotting the last traces of blood and dirt off the cuts and bruises on the Woman's face. The Woman is considerably more calm, but still looks haggard and worn.

Ricardo picks up the last of his medical supplies and puts them in a shallow bowl.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

You try to get some sleep now.

He stands up, takes Dark Cloud by the elbow, and steers her into the next room. His expression is grim, sad.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)

There is nothing more we can do for her. She has too many internal injuries. She tells me she was badly beaten by Stone's mercenaries when he found out she was planning to 'leave service' under him.

DARK CLOUD

In other words, run away.

Ricardo nods.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

And of course, feeling that his workers are his personal property, he did not wish to allow this, so he had some of his men 'explain' it to her.

Dark Cloud turns away.

DARK CLOUD

...Beaten for wanting to leave an oppressive situation. (beat) Things must be pretty bad under Stone.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

There is nothing more we can do for her. I suspect she will die of her injuries by morning.

Dark Cloud still faces away.

DARK CLOUD

And still she found the strength to run away...

They hear some coughing and struggling coming from the other room. They both go back in to see her, and find her struggling to sit up. Ricardo goes to her side and tries to help her lie down again. She resists.

WOMAN IN GREY

Wait.

(cough, cough)

There's more you need to know.

Dark Cloud joins Ricardo at her side.

WOMAN IN GREY (CONT'D)

Those shipments you've been asking about... You need to know what's happening. Stone is planning to dump thallium into the river that runs through his valley.

(cough, cough)

That's what those convoys are carrying.

DARK CLOUD

That's a tributary of the Rio Grande! It'll poison everything from here to the Gulf!

WOMAN IN GREY

He can't find a large enough supply all in one place, so he's bringing in small amounts of the stuff and having it specially processed for something.

Dark Cloud and Ricardo look at each other in horror.

Klaatu grips his rifle a little more firmly, and shifts uncomfortably. He is not aware of the threat in the same way Ricardo and Dark Cloud are, but is aware that the matrix of life is being threatened, which cannot be allowed according to his programming.

DARK CLOUD

How soon.

WOMAN IN GREY

I don't know.

(cough, cough)

Ricardo put his hand on her shoulder and makes her lie down.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

You rest now.

WOMAN IN GREY

He puts people to work, handling that dangerous stuff without protective clothing! They get sick! They die! He wanted me to work there, but I don't want to die young!

RICARDO DE CASTILE

You try to get some sleep now.

The Woman complies and closes her eyes.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)

We will remain with you for as long as you need, to be safe.

He lights a lamp. Dark Cloud and Ricardo sit down to keep their vigil over her through the night, but have not told the Woman she will surely die.

EXT. SOME WAYS AWAY FROM THE ADOBE - NEXT MORNING

Ricardo is putting a last rock on a new grave. Dark Cloud stands at the head of the grave, also putting a last rock on it.

Ricardo steps back, straightens up, and rests his hands on a shovel stuck into the ground. Dark Cloud steps back from the grave and joins him.

Klaatu stands off to the side, watching silently.

Ricardo raises his hand in the manner of a Catholic priest dispensing a blessing, and makes the sign of the cross over the fresh grave.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

May you find rest from this world.
May our Father give you a home more
pleasant than you found here. May
the Saints guide your way to a
peaceful rest.

He pauses. Both he and Dark Cloud look thoughtfully at the grave.

Dark Cloud, Ricardo and Klaatu look down, then turn and walk away from the site, not looking back. Dark Cloud is immersed in thought. She is disturbed by what she has heard and seen. Dark Cloud stops and looks over her shoulder for a minute, then walks on.

INT. DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - NIGHT

Dark Cloud is seated at the table, leaning back against the wall. She periodically raises a gourd of some bitter tasting alcohol to her lips and takes a drink. Other than that, she stares at nothing, immersed in thought.

Ricardo steps in the front door, a string of peppers in his left hand.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

You drinking that foul distillate
you make again?

Dark Cloud smacks her lips and nods, not looking at him.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)

You drink too much, you know that?

Dark Cloud nods again.

Ricardo looks at her closely, then sits down across from her. He knows her, and knows she will snap back. She is one, tough cookie, so he is not worried about her - yet.

He begins cutting up the peppers for addition to their evening meal.

His eyes drift across the table to a small, gold, heart-shaped locket Dark Cloud wears around her neck, below the medicine stone and other Native American paraphernalia she wears, in addition to her rock-n-roll leather jacket.

Dark Cloud has noticed Ricardo's fixation. Her voice softens to a tenderness.

DARK CLOUD

You still love her, don't you.

Ricardo looks down at the table, grimacing uncomfortably, and goes back to slicing the peppers. He changes the topic of discussion.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

Normally I would say that you are
drinking just because sometimes you
drink like a fish. That, and other
things, is what you usually drink
over;

(beat)

but why do I get the
impression that it is something
else this time...

Dark Cloud pauses a moment, looking down, realizing that there are certain topics he does not want to discuss. She goes with his shift in conversation.

DARK CLOUD

You know, Ricardo, I'm really worried about what that woman told us. It bothers me. I just don't see how I can just sit here and let it happen.

Ricardo stops slicing the peppers and shakes his knife at her admonishingly.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I know that look on your face. Don't do it! Stay put here, where you'll be safe!

Dark Cloud looks at him pleadingly, like she's just been caught at something.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)

I mean it. I worry about you. Most of the time I would say you can take care of yourself, but not when it comes to confronting a fair size force, like our crooked neighbor, face to face.

Dark Cloud shifts uncomfortably.

DARK CLOUD

All right, don't worry. I won't do anything stupid.

Ricardo knows this ploy too. He gently presses his point home.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I worry about you, Dark Cloud. Not usually, but now, I do.

Dark Cloud extends her hand to Ricardo. He takes it and squeezes it. She smiles weakly.

INT. DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Dark Cloud tip-toes past Ricardo's room in the dim, pre-dawn light. She pauses at the doorway and peeks in on him to make sure he is still asleep, and to reflect on the sadness it will cause both him and her that they may never see each other again.

She tip-toes to another room, and sneaks inside. Weapons and their related supplies fill this room and are all over. Dark Cloud looks around quickly, and begins silently taking the items she needs off the shelves. She takes a knife and sheath off a shelf and straps it to her leg, then takes a few boxes of ammunition off the shelf and slips them into her jacket.

Klaatu steps up behind her. She begins taking ammunition and weapons off the shelves and handing them to him. He reaches over to one side and picks up a large caliber rifle (more like a hand-held cannon.)

Dark Cloud takes one last look around the room to make sure they haven't forgotten anything, then they leave.

EXT. A SHORT DISTANCE FROM GENERAL STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

Dark Cloud and Klaatu are under cover from behind a stand of rocks. She is watching the activity around the compound through binoculars.

Several Mercenaries get in a jeep and drive out of the compound. Dark Cloud's gaze pans with them until they leave the compound, then return to the center of activity. Stone has the gates open at the time. Everything seems to be standard (for Stone). Guards patrol the perimeter, some on the walls. Some loading and unloading of goods is going on. Dark Cloud is satisfied. She leans back and nods, both with satisfaction, and some apprehension. She is a little unnerved by what she is about to do.

DARK CLOUD

Well, my titanium friend, are you ready for this?

KLAATU

I still think this is a mistake. You should just let me go in and take care of this.

DARK CLOUD

I'm sure you would like to do that, my friend.

She steps back and reaches into a sack she brought with them. From it she produces a brown robe much like the one Ricardo wears. She holds it up and shakes it out.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Here, we're going to disguise you so you don't scare everyone prematurely.

Klaatu looks at the robe matter of factly, as though the unwilling victim of playing 'dress up'. Dark Cloud slips it over his head, and Klaatu puts down his rifle to help finish the job, in spite. Dark Cloud assists in putting a few finishing touches on the arrangement of the garment. She dresses the hood around his head, and makes sure all the folds lay right. To look at him now, anyone would think he was just a large person in a robe, wearing a metal mask over his face.

Dark Cloud looks back at Stone's fortress. She swallows hard in apprehension at the task she has set before herself. She and Klaatu start off towards the fortress.

The two approach the compound.

As the two approach, they are noticed by the Sentries on the walls and one of them challenges her. Dark Cloud gets within feet of the compound before she is told to stop.

SENTRY

Hold it right there! State your purpose!

Dark Cloud and Klaatu stop.

DARK CLOUD

This is a social call. I'd like the privilege of seeing your General.

She gags on her words inside. Dark Cloud loathes her enemy.

SENTRY

You don't know what you're asking. Go away and don't come back.

DARK CLOUD

I insist.

The Sentry turns his back to her while he relays the strange request. Dark Cloud waits while word is being passed on the inside. People from the compound/fortress have begun to look at her curiously.

Dark Cloud's determined expression.

The compound/fortress. Little activity is visible while a decision is being made.

The Sentry returns to face her, and relays his instructions.

SENTRY

You may approach and enter the compound.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu start walking forward.

SENTRY (CONT'D)

Only you. Not your friend.

DARK CLOUD

He comes with me.

There is another lag as this message is relayed.

SENTRY

All right. Permission granted.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu resume their approach. They are met at the gate by one of Stone's aides. He looks her up and down, then smiles.

STONE'S AIDE

The General will be pleased to see you. If you'll just follow me.

INT. STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

He turns and walks away, towards Stone's audience chamber. Dark Cloud and Klaatu follow. Although not closely under guard, both of them notice the ready availability of strength and weapons around the compound, in the event of threat.

Stone's aide is especially pleasant.

STONE'S AIDE

May I inquire as to the nature of your business with the General?

DARK CLOUD

I think that is best discussed between me and him; no offense...

STONE'S AIDE

None taken.

They walk on in silence.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu are surrounded by a small detachment of Mercenaries, and escorted down an internal corridor. The look on Dark Cloud's face is serious. Even with Klaatu at her side, she knows she is in a very dangerous position. They come to a fork in the hallway and change directions.

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

GENERAL STONE stands by a large table, with some of his officers, drawing out plans on the table.

GENERAL STONE

Now, I want that settlement
downstream wiped out so they don't
compete with me for supplies
anymore. This should do it.

He taps the plans with his pen to emphasize his point, then begins spray painting over the papers, expecting his surprise guest at any moment.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE OF STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

The party stops in front of a large wooden door. The Front Escort pounds on it loudly. There are a few moments of silence, then the door slowly swings open.

The door opens to the sight of a brightly lit bay window. A large, slightly overweight figure silhouetted against it. It is General Stone.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu step inside the room, escorted. Stone does not dismiss the Detachment. The Aide steps aside.

Blade is there, oddly enough. He looks at Dark Cloud in recognition. A serious, urgent look crosses his face and he eyes the door furtively, looking for a chance to exit quietly. A moment later Dark Cloud sees him and is a little surprised, but the look goes unnoticed by everyone else.

General Stone steps forward to greet Dark Cloud.

GENERAL STONE

Well, welcome young lady. I don't
get too many visitors, let alone
one's as pretty as yourself.

He is rolling over options. General Stone is virtually drooling at the possibilities for how he can use such an attractive young woman who wears the demeanor of desert skills and weapons proficiency.

He decides to hear what she has to say first.

DARK CLOUD

Thank you, General. I'm flattered
(in a tone that says she's
anything but flattered,)
(MORE)

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

but I came here to discuss a very serious matter.

Stone turns to a nearby pitcher. He pours a couple glasses of some refreshment.

GENERAL STONE

No. First let me offer you some hospitality. Here, enjoy.

He hands one of the drinks to Dark Cloud. She accepts, but looks at it dubiously. Stone takes a sip of his.

Klaatu is silently standing behind her, a little ways back, but still closer than the Mercenaries. Stone ignores him.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Now, what brings you all the way out here...

Dark Cloud is trying to be diplomatic, but it is difficult for her. Her speech comes in bits and phrases, carefully selecting her words at first.

DARK CLOUD

I've heard rumors that disturb me. I was hoping you could either clarify them or put them to rest.

Stone frowns a bit, but wants to hear more.

GENERAL STONE

Well, rumors fly everywhere. Tell me what you've heard.

He takes another sip of his drink.

Dark Cloud starts to blurt things out, her diplomatic touch slipping.

DARK CLOUD

I've heard you're amassing a supply of a special compound of thallium.

Stone frowns a little, suspiciously, but continues to hear her out.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

I'm not sure you realize the implications of what dumping that into the environment will do.

Stone scowls and tugs on his belt. He frowns at Dark Cloud.

GENERAL STONE

I don't see that it's any of your business what I do. Who sent you? Are you from that competing settlement down river? Did they put you up to this?

Dark Cloud steps closer, more energy coming into her speech.

DARK CLOUD

It's everyone's business when you're planning on dumping something that toxic into the water supply! You're going to kill everything from here to the Gulf! And hundreds of square miles around!

Stone scowls at her. He is angry, but controls it because he feels confident in his ability to control the situation. He calms down a bit, and lectures as though to a disobedient child.

GENERAL STONE

All right. I'll tell you. Yes, I do intend to dump as much thallium into the river, downstream from us, of course, as I can. It'll wash downstream and poison out my competition.

He looks at his nails, then at her. He says, almost proudly, as though sharing a secret:

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

My own special blend, too. I've found a way to bind it so it will have the same specific gravity as water. It won't sink to the bottom and slowly wash downstream. It will stay with the water and poison whoever drinks it.

Dark Cloud looks at him dumbfounded and horrified. She still can't believe it. She gives him a lop-sized puzzled frown like she is seriously wondering about his thinking faculties.

DARK CLOUD

Now, what about the environment? That stuff won't just go away.

GENERAL STONE

That's not my problem.

DARK CLOUD

And what if you want to expand into that area...

GENERAL STONE

I don't.

Stone doesn't like her attitude at all.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Just don't you worry about that. That's not your department.

Dark Cloud is still looking at him like she's seriously wondering about his thinking faculties. She starts shaking her head in disbelief.

DARK CLOUD

No, Stone. That material won't leave the environment. It'll get into everything, and poison everything, from here to the Gulf.

Stone scowls at Dark Cloud.

Dark Cloud backs down and tries to regain her diplomatic composure.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

I don't mean to be rude about this. Normally I would say what you do is your business, but something this deadly...

Stone cuts her off and ignores the last phrase.

GENERAL STONE

Then why stop now! This is none of your business. I consider this conversation finished!

Dark Cloud takes a few steps around the room and motions out the bay window.

DARK CLOUD

Look around you at this wasted land! If you won't believe me, then at least look for yourself! It still bears the scars of the last time people played with stuff like that, and we got off easy in this locale! Now you want to bring that lingering death back?!

Stone is working into a rage. He hasn't forgotten his options, but he is angry at the situation unfolding here.

GENERAL STONE

You young hoodlum! You just butt out of business you have no part in. You're just like those other people, the 'resistance', who refuse to have the discipline to rejoin the civilized world under me and help me rebuild! They ambush my convoys, sabotage equipment in the night.

A light goes off in his head.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

In fact, I'll bet you know them. Let's see what you do know! Grab her!

A Mercenary approaches Dark Cloud from one side to grab her. She does not seem to be too dangerously armed. Dark Cloud whips out from under him and pulls a blade, dancing away. She draws a throwing star from a hidden sheath in the back of her jacket and throws it into the throat of the next approaching Mercenary. The Mercenary with the throwing star in his throat. He gags and drops to the floor.

Two Mercenaries attempt to grab Klaatu. He throws them off along with the robe he was wearing. He detaches a gun from it's holster hidden at his side and levels it at the next approaching group. All of them back off.

Dark Cloud. She is tensed for conflict. Her back is to Klaatu's side, and her gun drawn from it's hidden holster inside her jacket.

DARK CLOUD

That's right, Stone. This is an HR-1000 combat robot, designed to wander the aftermath of a nuclear war in case we lost and 'dispose' of anything living it found.

Stone snarls some vague obscenity.

Dark Cloud asks an honest rhetorical question, without sarcasm.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Did you really think I would just walk in here with no sure plan of escape?

(MORE)

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

(beat))

Touch me, and Klaatu will level
this place.

She turns to leave, Klaatu covering her back.

INT. A CORRIDOR IN STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

They walk off towards the exit. Stone's mercenaries follow them at a respectful distance. Dark Cloud and Klaatu begin backing down the corridor leading to the entrance they came in by. They are followed at a consistent distance by Stone and his men.

Halfway down the hallway - A grinding noise.

Both of our hero pair stop. Dark Cloud looks puzzled, then jumps away in recognition as the floor begins to move. The floor drops out from under Klaatu. It happens so fast he has no time to react, and drops from sight. Klaatu drops 30 feet, into a perfectly smooth, cylindrical stone shaft. He didn't bring his heavy duty weapons on this trip, and begins pounding the walls in frustration.

Dark Cloud poises her gun at Stone's Men again and steps away.

She wants to leave, but does not want to be the first to fire a shot or leave Klaatu. For the first time she is cornered. Her enemies are on her almost instantly, and she is easily overpowered by their sheer weight and number. She fights back, but it does no good.

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

With one Mercenary on each arm, painfully holding her and pulling her head back by her hair, she is dragged back into Stone's audience chamber.

GENERAL STONE

Put her over there!

He motions off camera to his left. Dark Cloud resists as she is dragged towards a device that looks none too friendly.

Scuffling and noise O.C.

Dark Cloud as she slowly brings her head up. She is on her knees, spread eagle, chained to a metal grid. Electrical wires trail away from the metal grid. Dark Cloud glares at Stone with hate.

Stone's calm demeanor is returning. He nods to one of his Mercenaries, who steps forward and belts Dark Cloud across the face with the butt of his rifle. She reels from the blow.

Stone notices the locket around her neck. He goes over and tears it off. He takes it back to his table and puts it down.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)
A barbarian like you doesn't
deserve something so delicate.

Dark Cloud glares at him even more hatefully. She vehemently spits a Native American profanity at him.

DARK CLOUD
Tah`u-Tak`a!

General Stone ignores this.

GENERAL STONE
Now we get some real answers.

A hand closing the circuit to the metal grid. The sound of electricity being passed; Dark Cloud fights it, but can't help uttering a cross between a moan and a scream.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)
Tell me about the insurgent
activity in this area. Where can I
find the terrorists responsible!?

Dark Cloud. She is beginning to sweat hard. As the interrogation goes on the moisture begins to dampen the front of her shirt.

DARK CLOUD
(almost under her breath)
Fuck You!

Stone sighs and motions again.

Someone's hand closing the circuit box again. Once again, the sound of electricity being passed, and Dark Cloud screams.

Stone walks up to her and grabs her by her mane of hair, forcing her head back.

GENERAL STONE
Let's try it again. Who is
responsible for the ambushes on my
convoys!?

Dark Cloud does not respond. He turns away and motions that the circuit be closed again. There is the sound of electricity. Dark Cloud. She grits her teeth and represses her scream. Her eyes are squeezed shut from the pain.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Where is the insurgent base of operations located?!!

Dark Cloud is breathing heavily, and glares at Stone, but says nothing.

A new sound interrupts the proceedings. Heavy thumping of metal on stone is heard from outside the room. Stone looks up in annoyance.

ANONYMOUS MERCENARY

It's the combat robot, Sir.

Stone nods.

GENERAL STONE

I know.

(he looks at Dark Cloud)

He won't get out of there.

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - LATER THAT DAY

Dark Cloud is limp. She hangs, head down, exhausted. She is still chained to the grid.

Stone frowns and swears something inaudibly.

GENERAL STONE

Take her away. Lock her up. We'll continue this tomorrow.

Two mercenaries loosen her shackles. She is limp, and barely moves. She moans softly as they drag her out of view.

General Stone is still considering options for what to do with her, and looks thoughtful as she is dragged off.

General Stone confers with one of his officers.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Damn It! Where is she getting her supplies from, and where did she get a combat robot like that?!

An occasional thumping still resounds through the compound as Klaatu periodically fights his imprisonment, to come to the rescue of the woman he is directed to protect.

Stone and his officer stand by the lip of the shaft holding Klaatu prisoner.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

(in respect)

Look at that. What a machine. To think of what I could do with something like that...

Klaatu looks up at Stone. He continues to search for a means to escape this trap.

INT. A CELL IN STONE'S FORTRESS

The door to the cell opens, and two Mercenaries drag Dark Cloud in and unceremoniously dump her on the floor. They leave immediately, locking the door behind them as they go.

Dark Cloud slowly drags her knees up under her and cringes on the floor. She gags a little, but does not throw up. She is very shaky. At last, she rolls over on her side and her eyes flutter open and closed. She breathes with some difficulty.

EXT. A LEDGE OUTSIDE BY DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - NIGHTFALL

Ricardo steps into view. He is worried. Dark Cloud is still not home, and she usually at least checks in by now. Ricardo raises his hand to shield his eyes against the glare of the setting sun, and scans the horizon.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

Dark Cloud, Dark Cloud, where are you...

He knows very well where she has gone.

Ricardo sighs heavily and heads back inside. There is nothing further he can do tonight. He will investigate further in the morning.

INT. THE CELL HOLDING DARK CLOUD IN GENERAL STONE'S FORTRESS - LATE AT NIGHT

Dark Cloud is laying on her back. She is starting to come around. She opens her eyes and looks up out the cell window at the few stars that can be seen from her vantage point. She closes her eyes and begins to hallucinate/flashback to the fugue in her mind that blocked out all prior memories to the time before she knew herself as Dark Cloud.

DARK CLOUD'S HALLUCINATION/FLASHBACK

EXT. A HIGHWAY IN THE SOUTHWEST - NIGHT

Dark Cloud is driving off in the Survivalist's truck (the one who picked her up and brutalized her near the beginning of the screenplay.) By this point, she has no idea who she is. She has just committed murder to escape an intolerable situation from a pig she hated.

The truck starts to falter, then grinds to a halt. She looks down at the gas gauge. It reads well below empty. Dark Cloud-to-be thinks for a minute, still in a daze from what has just happened. She sits there a moment more, then opens the door and wanders into the desert, seemingly in a daze.

Dark-Cloud-to-be is weak, and her steps falter. Her expression reflects not just pain and daze, but determination to live through it all.

During the hottest part of the day, she takes shelter. When the sun goes down, she staggers to her feet and continues her journey, still in a daze.

The sun comes up again the next day.

Dark-Cloud-to-be is fast approaching the end of her endurance. She staggers a few steps further, wavers, and drops to her knees. She tries to get up again, but finds she doesn't have the strength to. Her head drops forward. She grimaces in frustration and desperation.

DARK-CLOUD-TO-BE

Help me!

A hallucination begins to take place on top of this. Slowly, the earth around her begins to change hue, grow more rosy like it does at sunset, although it is still mid-day. The earth seems to take on a stillness to it, and hum slightly.

At this point, she notices that something funny is going on. She raises her head curiously.

Dark Cloud-to-be looks up into the face of a woman. She is wearing a white blouse, brown shawl, and long brown skirt. Everything is homespun. The woman herself looks Hispanic in a strange way. She could be upper class Spanish, White, or Native American. She could be young or old. It is hard to tell. She is timeless.

DESERT WOMAN

I am the Desert, that which they
call Earth Mother in this land.

(MORE)

DESERT WOMAN (CONT'D)

I take all who come to me and make
them my own.

Dark Cloud-to-be looks at the apparition in some hope.

DESERT WOMAN (CONT'D)

I have felt your pain, not only
here, but elsewhere also. Will you
accept my help?

Dark Cloud-to-be reaches up to take the woman's extended
hand. As she touches it, her hand goes through thin air, and
the woman vanishes.

In her place stands Ricardo de Castile. He looks down at her
with some concern. He looks at her with a puzzled frown that
shows concern and means 'You have my undivided attention'.

Dark Cloud-to-be looks up at Ricardo. She is as confused as
he by now. She passes out. Ricardo kneels and rolls her
over. He gently picks her up and walks away.

INT. DARK CLOUD AND RICARDO'S HOME ADOBE - DAY

Ricardo is nursing her back to health after finding her in
the desert, suffering from dehydration, exposure, and her
treatment by the survivalist.

He finds the locket around her neck that he gave his beloved.
He gently removes it. Dark Cloud is in no state to resist.
He examines it more carefully, opening it to reveal the
pictures of himself and his beloved, which he touches fondly,
but sadly. It is a one of a kind. There is no mistaking it.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

(gently)

Where did you get this?

He hands the locket back to Dark Cloud. She is puzzled. She
touches the picture of the woman, running her finger around
it.

DARK CLOUD

(puzzled)

I don't know. She seems to
resemble me. Maybe my Mother gave
this to me. I don't know...

Her gaze is still almost trance-like.

She looks at the other picture in the locket, then at
Ricardo. They seem to look the same, except he is much older
now. She looks at him for answers.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
This is you, isn't it.

Ricardo says nothing. He sits back in sad recollection.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
(a bit more forcefully)
It's you, isn't it.

He does not tell Dark Cloud the meaning of the locket or his attachment to her Mother.

He diverts the conversation.

RICARDO DE CASTILE
(gently)
What is your name?

Dark Cloud is unsure, struggling to remember.

DARK CLOUD
I... don't know. I can't remember.

Ricardo gently presses her again.

RICARDO DE CASTILE
Think of a sound, even a syllable
that is familiar.

Dark Cloud blinks, distressed, confused.

Then peace, and she says, almost in defiance.

DARK CLOUD
Dark Cloud.

Ricardo accepts this. His expression shows that he realizes something terrible has happened to her, but does not press her for more.

He sits back and watches her for a moment more.

END OF DARK CLOUD'S HALLUCINATION/FLASHBACK

INT. NIGHT - THE CELL HOLDING DARK CLOUD IN STONE'S FORTRESS

Dark Cloud opens her eyes, still fatigued from her ordeal.

The stars as seen through the cell window. They look different now, since the constellations have moved around a lot since the last time she looked.

The sound of footsteps coming down the outside hallway. It is the sound of two people coming. They are both wearing boots from the sound of their footsteps.

UNKNOWN MERCENARY ONE
I know, I know, but Stone'll probably kill her tomorrow, and I want a piece of that ass before it's gone.

UNKNOWN MERCENARY TWO
(laughs)
Not into fucking corpses, huh.

UNKNOWN MERCENARY ONE
No.

UNKNOWN MERCENARY TWO
Just don't get caught... See ya later.

The sound of one pair of boots walking off.

The lock on Dark Cloud's cell starts to rattle.

She notices instantly, but pretends to still be unconscious.

The door to her cell opens, and UNKNOWN MERCENARY ONE comes in, slowly. He leers at her prostate form. He leans over, crouching over her, runs his hands into her hair, and bends over for a kiss.

Dark Cloud unfolds her hands. Stone's Mercenaries did not find all of her weapons, and she has a knife hidden in her hand. She grabs the back of her assailant's throat with her left hand, sinks the knife into his neck, turning it corkscrew to give it a better cut as she slips it all the way through to the vertebrae at the back of his neck and severing the links between two of them.

The Mercenary is surprised by this quick action. He grows angry and struggles back, but it is already too late. Dark Cloud has done her job and he is dead before he can react.

He collapses on top of her, dead.

Dark Cloud rolls the body off herself, removes the knife, and wipes it off on him before putting it back in its hidden sheath. She gets up slowly, very weak.

Dark Cloud gulps a couple times, then cautiously opens the cell door and peers out.

INT. GROUND FLOOR HALLWAY IN STONE'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The hallway is empty.

Dark Cloud steps out of her cell, shaky, but moving with the grace of a cat. Looking around, she walks down the hallway for a short ways, then explores an adjoining one. She has to hide around the corner as a few Mercenaries walk past. After they are well gone, she continues exploring. Still no sign of anyone else. She walks silently, all the time.

INT. PARALLEL GARAGES - NIGHT

Finally she comes to what looks like a series of garages. She checks the contents of the first garage. A specialized truck sits in center view. Bars are welded to the front to ram through things. Dark Cloud breathes a sigh of relief. She steps inside the garage, and walks towards the truck. She slips in behind the wheel, still keeping her eyes peeled for any sign of anyone else. She draws her knife again, slashing away a plastic section over the steering column. She reaches inside and pulls out some of the wires to hot-wire the vehicle.

A commotion starts outside, and Dark Cloud knows her handiwork has been discovered. She looks apprehensively towards the door. Dark Cloud tries to hot-wire the truck. It sputters and dies.

The man-door to the garage opens, and light floods in from the hallway, temporarily blinding her.

UNKNOWN MERCENARY THREE

In here!

Dark Cloud tries to start the truck again, and stabs the accelerator with her foot. The truck leaps forward, towards the garage door as someone begins firing on her. The truck impacts with the garage door. There is a slight decrease in momentum as it takes a second for the bars welded to the front to do their job and crash through. The grit-teeth expression on Dark Cloud's face as the truck impacts with the door. The door splinters and gives way as Dark Cloud rams through.

EXT. STONE'S COURTYARD - NIGHT

The truck explodes from the garage, racing out into the courtyard. Dark Cloud shifts gears and fishtails the truck around, heading for the front gate.

The angry and startled reactions of Stone's Mercenaries as the truck races past them.

Dark Cloud heads for the front gate. She rams the main gate. The beams creak and give way. The truck bursts through, leaving a very messed-up gate behind it.

EXT. A DIRT ROAD LEADING AWAY FROM STONE'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

Without a moment's hesitation, Dark Cloud changes gears again and heads down the road, towards freedom.

EXT. STONE'S COURTYARD - NIGHT

A light comes on from the second floor, in General Stone's quarters as:

MONTAGE O.C. - FROM THE COURTYARD

Loud shouts.

Barked orders.

Running Mercenaries.

Shots fired.

END MONTAGE

Dark Cloud is gone.

Stone comes to a balcony on the second floor, still in his night robe. He bangs his fist on the railing and curses angrily.

EXT. A DIRT ROAD SEVERAL MILES FROM STONE'S FORTRESS - NIGHT

Dark Cloud is still driving down the road. She is driving fast, but not as recklessly as at first, since there has been no sign of pursuit.

She is drained, angry, and sad at things.

The truck begins to sputter and cough. It jerks and slows down. Dark Cloud frowns and plays with the gears a little, trying to coax it a little further on. She looks down at the gas gauge. It reads empty. The truck slowly grinds to a halt. Dark Cloud grips the steering wheel a little more firmly, then hits it.

DARK CLOUD

Shit!

She collapses forward, over the steering wheel, totally exhausted. She sighs and lays her forehead on the steering wheel for a minute.

Dark Cloud rests her chin on the steering wheel. She looks sadly off into the night, gaze unfocused.

A light flashes in the rear-view mirror. Dark Cloud frowns and elevates herself, looking more closely at the source.

From the rear view mirror, the lights of a jeep driving up behind the truck can be clearly seen.

Dark Cloud once again has that wary expression on her face and backs away from the mirror. She begins scrambling around the cab, looking under the seats, above her, anywhere for a weapon.

The jeep pulls to a stop behind the stalled truck. The driver's door opens, and someone gets out.

The Driver is seen from the waist down. He begins walking towards the driver's side of the truck. Upon reaching it, he apparently takes a home-made cigar out of his mouth, hand down in sight of us, and reaches up, unlatching the door. It opens with a creak.

There is no one inside the truck.

The sound of a click, at the back of the truck... Snake stands at the driver's side of the truck. He turns around to look at the back of the truck. He shows some surprise, but not worry.

Dark Cloud is at the back of the truck, with a gun on Snake. Although shaking and tired, she is still determined, wired, and as ready for conflict as she can be in her state.

SNAKE

You can put that down. I'm not going to bite you.

DARK CLOUD

How do I know that...

They both hear a click behind Dark Cloud. She turns to see someone with a gun on her.

BLADE

Because I'll vouch for him.

He walks out of the headlights of the jeep, and to her great apprehension, Dark Cloud recognizes him as Guard Two from the munitions dump, who's life she ordered Klaatu to spare.

BLADE (CONT'D)

Drop the gun.

Dark Cloud lifts it's sights from Snake, but refuses to surrender her gun.

SNAKE

(casually)

Really. You don't have anything to fear from us.

He begins walking towards her.

Blade walks up and takes the gun from her grip. She does not resist, but is still looking at both of them coldly and suspiciously.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

We're the resistance,
(almost flippant at the
idea))
so to speak.

He looks at her and concern fills his eyes.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

You look like you've been through hell.

Dark Cloud is defensive.

DARK CLOUD

And you're here to take me back? I always knew evil would be good-looking.

Snake's eyes widen at this new twist, then shakes his head and lowers it as he takes another drag off his cigar.

BLADE

This is just a cover. I'm against Stone, too.

SNAKE

Come' on. I'll bet you need a place to hole up and recover. At least let me offer you that.

Dark Cloud thinks for a minute, then nods, dropping her gaze. Snake puts his cigar back in his mouth and puts an arm around her shoulders.

The trio walk back to Snake's jeep, Dark Cloud hanging her head. Snake puts an arm around Dark Cloud's shoulders. She actually relaxes at his touch.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Come' on. Let's go.

They get in the jeep and start driving off into the night, Blade driving.

INT. INSIDE THE JEEP - NIGHT

DARK CLOUD

(indicating Blade)

I thought there was a little something different about you, that night I had Klaatu let you go.

BLADE

Yep. Now you know.

SNAKE

(casually)

So, you call yourself Dark Cloud.

DARK CLOUD

(serious)

I am Dark Cloud.

SNAKE

So what was your name before the destruction?

He offers her a drag off his joint/cigar.

DARK CLOUD

I don't know. I don't care.

She still seems distracted by something. She accepts the joint/cigar and takes a drag off it before handing it back to him.

Snake presses her for more.

SNAKE

No, really. What was your name?

Dark Cloud is starting to get upset and a little angry that he wouldn't just take her answer.

DARK CLOUD

I don't know!
 (She puts her hand to her
 forehead as if in pain.)
 I don't know! I don't want to
 remember!

Snake grasps Dark Cloud gently by her upper arms. Dark Cloud looks at him and feels that spark of first romantic interest again. A feeling unknown and uncomfortable to her.

SNAKE

Whoa! Whoa! Calm down! I don't
 want you upset.

Dark Cloud pauses for a minute as they look into each other's eyes, then she pulls her gaze away deliberately, holding back.

DARK CLOUD

Let me give you a tip: When you
 don't remember like I do, yet have
 a feeling that what you're not
 remembering would be worse if you
 did - and I'm talking baggage from
 different situations - don't try to
 remember. - And don't ask me
 again. ...Now, where's a good
 stiff drink.

Snake backs off and realizes something is wrong, but hands her a pint of liquor. She drinks some and stares out the window.

INT. THE REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - NIGHT

Snake walks Dark Cloud into a building and sits her down on a pallet. He leaves for a minute and then comes back with some first aide supplies.

SNAKE

(gently)
 OK, now I'm not going to hurt you.
 Let's just see what we can do about
 these electrical burns.

He treats the superficial ones first, the one's most evident with her clothes still on.

Dark Cloud calmly accepts his attention.

Snake realizes that the next step is going to be difficult, and is very tender in the demeanor he takes on.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Now, I'm not trying to take advantage of you. This isn't a pass, but I need you to loosen your shirt and slip it off. You can leave your underwear on.

Dark Cloud about freaks out and begins climbing away from him and off the pallet. He can see the terror in her eyes and the tension.

He grabs her and holds her down.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

It's OK! It's OK! You're safe here!

(gently)

I just want to make sure you're OK.

Dark Cloud is still shaking but stops resisting. Snake lets her loosen her shirt and slip it off at her own pace. She stares off into space beyond him.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Yeah... That stuff we won't talk about. Just chill. You're safe here.

Snake picks up some of his first aide supplies again, then sees the old knife scars from the creep that threw her into fugue. He looks at them in disbelief.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

My God! Who did that to you?!

Dark Cloud looks down at the scars, totally puzzled.

DARK CLOUD

I don't know.

Snake dabs some ointment on the burns, thinking about what he has just witnessed, but treating what he can.

SNAKE

You've been through hell. I can tell that; but I'm not giving up on you yet.

Dark Cloud looks at him cautiously. She doesn't quite know how to take what he just said.

Snake gently squeezes her arm below the shoulder.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Does that hurt?

Dark Cloud nods. She is getting calmer again.

DARK CLOUD

It's real sore. And it's all over my body.

SNAKE

OK. You've probably got some pulled muscles and maybe even a little tearing. It'll bruise first, but it will heal. Whatever you do, don't limp your soreness. Try to keep up normal activity. Limping it won't help it heal right at all, and I'll give you some exercises to help it heal right.

He has finished treating what he can. He gets some blankets from nearby and hands them to her.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

Get some rest. Come out and join the rest of us when you feel like it.

He picks up his supplies and leaves. Dark Cloud watches him go before pulling the blankets up over herself and laying down on the pallet. She gradually drifts off to sleep.

INT. THE REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - DARK CLOUD'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Morning light is beginning to filter through a small window in the room where Dark Cloud is recuperating. Dark Cloud wakes up, then closes her eyes and goes to sleep again, still absolutely worn out.

The day passes into night, then into morning again.

She opens her eyes. Dark Cloud sits up slowly and rubs her head. She still feels somewhat disoriented. Dark Cloud reaches for her clothes by the side of the pallet she was sleeping on. She begins pulling them on.

EXT. COURTYARD - THE REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - DAY

Dark Cloud steps into the sunlight and winces at the light. Snake and several others are having an argument. Several people stand around Snake and a PUNK ROCKER as they argue.

PUNK ROCKER

But we have to move soon! Stone'll dump his supply, and that'll be the end of everything!

Snake is arguing back.

SNAKE

I know!, but we can't move until we can be reasonably sure of an effective hit, and I need a good demo's expert for that!

ANONYMOUS REBEL

And what if our mysterious friend here can't help?

Dark Cloud walks forward and into the conversation from the side.

DARK CLOUD

You mean about the thallium?

All eyes turn to her in curiosity.

Snake takes another drag off his cigar.

SNAKE

Not exactly... Let's talk.

He and Dark Cloud wander off.

Snake turns around abruptly to face her.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

(serious)

How'd you know about the thallium scheme?

Dark Cloud is equally serious and a little saddened by the memory.

DARK CLOUD

I ran into a poor remnant of a human being who'd been worked over by Stone's mercenaries. She told me what he's got in store.

Dark Cloud pauses. She looks grieved at the recollection. Snake nods and puts his cigar back in his mouth.

SNAKE

Good enough. Any ideas how to stop him?

DARK CLOUD

Well, it seems to me that if he wants to poison out people's water supply downstream, best thing to do is cut off his water supply for doing so, and siege him out until he surrenders the material.

Snake looks skeptical.

SNAKE

And how do we do that?

DARK CLOUD

Blow his dam up. Divert his water supply. Of course I still have to take a look at the specific structure and point in the river where he's taking his water supply from, but I think we can pull off something like that.

Snake looks suitably impressed.

SNAKE

I don't know if we have the materials to do that.

Dark Cloud has been fairly casual in her demeanor.

DARK CLOUD

I'll take a look at what you have.

Snake responds with a 'by all means' gesture.

The two of them head for one of the many run-down cement buildings in the place, all of them mostly buried by the hillside. The rest is camouflaged very well.

INT. REBEL MUNITIONS SUPPLY ROOM - DAY

The building they step into is fairly well filled with weapons and incendiary devices.

Dark Cloud looks around the room, calculating what can be done with what is present.

She begins walking around the room, her eyes drifting over explosive triggers, rifles and clips, all neatly stored away.

SNAKE

We're good guerrilla fighters, but none of us know much about large scale explosive destruction, and I have a feeling we're going to need than before we're through with Stone.

Dark Cloud looks at him in acknowledgment, then goes back to taking inventory.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

By the way, what is thallium, and exactly what does it do?

Dark Cloud responds without looking back at him. She continues taking inventory as she talks.

DARK CLOUD

It's a toxic heavy metal. Causes kidney failure and other things. Stone's apparently found a way to bind it to something else so it won't just sink to the bottom of the river bed and slowly work downstream, but float in the water and kill anyone and anything that drinks it.

Snake nods.

SNAKE

That's what someone told me. I just wanted to make sure.

DARK CLOUD

(still looking around)
Yeah, I met her. Poor thing. Actually it's OK to handle if you take the right precautions.

SNAKE

(in derision)
Stone doesn't care.

Dark Cloud shakes her head, pursing her lips, but is agreeing with him.

DARK CLOUD

Not about his brute labor, no; but
he sure takes care of his
mercenaries.

She pauses near a mine, picking up the trigger, fingering it thoughtfully. So far she hasn't seen much that she could use.

Dark Cloud looks around the room thoughtfully to see if she has missed anything.

Snake pulls the tarp off a table in the center of the room. It is piled high with boxes of unidentified explosives.

SNAKE

We managed to get a load of this
stuff out of Stone's munitions
dump.

(under his breath)

Boy, that was tricky.

(normal voice again)

We know it's some type of
explosive, but we don't know what.

DARK CLOUD

...And you don't dare experiment
because it could attract attention,
and that's only one possible
problem.

SNAKE

Exactly...

Dark Cloud approaches the table. She reaches into one of the crates, removes a bar and brushes the residual packing material off. The light of recognition gleams in her eye.

DARK CLOUD

I know what this stuff is. I've
seen some of this in Stone's depot
myself.

Snake looks at her sharply, wondering how she could have seen the inside of Stone's depot, then shrugs it off. She ignores his expression, so he says nothing.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

This is C4 plastic explosive. It's
pretty wicked stuff. Whatever the
job requires, and I do mean
whatever, this will get it done.

(MORE)

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Great for blasting through
concrete.

She's as casual as ever as she hefts a bar in her hand.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Would you care to show me our
primary

target tonight?

Both Dark Cloud and Snake are smiling at each other
mischievously. Snake takes his cigar out of his mouth.

SNAKE

By all means...

EXT. A RIDGE ABOVE STONE'S DAM - NIGHT

Infrared binoculars held by Dark Cloud scan the region in and
around the dam. They focus on a couple of different PATROLS
walking the perimeter of the dam in a security check pattern,
then her gaze moves on to continue a check of the rest of the
structure and surrounding geography.

DARK CLOUD

I don't see any problems...

Her binoculars come to rest on another Patrol.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Wait-wait. Boy, Stone sure does
guard this place well.

She puts her binoculars down.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Those patrolling guards could be a
problem. Like you said, this may
be more of a group effort than I
thought.

SNAKE

But can it be done?

Dark Cloud raises the binoculars to her eyes again and
continues to study the area.

DARK CLOUD

Definitely...

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

Ricardo de Castile enters the room, heavily escorted.

AIDE

A monk here to see you, Sir. He says he has some information about Dark Cloud and something to discuss that might interest you.

Stone turns around with a scowl.

GENERAL STONE

This had better be good. Who is he?

He eyes Ricardo distastefully, obviously not approving of the monk's habit.

Ricardo steps forward, introducing himself and taking control of the conversation. He is trying to be calm and respectful, yet assertive.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

My name is Ricardo de Castile. I come here to discuss the matter of a certain friend of mine,
(beat)
named Dark Cloud?... whom I fear has come your way.

Stone is interested.

GENERAL STONE

Yes, she's been here. Go on.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

First of all, I must apologize for her errant ways. She is young, and like many young people has a habit of not listening to sound advice.

General Stone is in a nasty mood.

GENERAL STONE

That much I know. What are you here for?

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I would like custody of the girl returned to me. She and I will leave, and I assure you, we will trouble you no more.

GENERAL STONE

You're asking a lot for someone
who's given me as much trouble
as she has. Why should I give
her to you?

Ricardo looks uncomfortable. He does not know how much of
what he really is willing to reveal about himself.

Stone walks around a bit, circling Ricardo, Stone's hands
folded behind his back. He wants to see what he can flush
out of this person.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

What's in it for me...

Ricardo draws a deep breath. Now it is his turn to circle.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

I am also a structural and
mechanical engineer. I am sure you
have need of some form of service I
could provide.

Stone is suddenly both interested and a bit surprised and
curious.

GENERAL STONE

Why do you live in solitude with a
hoodlum like that, when I could
offer you a much better deal here?

Ricardo is cautious and reserved, but Stone's statement about
Dark Cloud pissed him off.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

She is no hoodlum. The finest
blood of Castile should be flowing
through her veins. She should have
had a life of much richer
opportunity. It was her
birthright,
 (under his breath, with a
 touch of sorrow)
as was her Mother's.

Stone only half acknowledges this. He is busy trying to
quickly assess this shift in resources potential.

GENERAL STONE

I think we can work something out.
Stay here for a few days. We need
to discuss this further.

Ricardo frowns warily.

RICARDO DE CASTILE
General, I did not intend to make
this an overnight trip.

One of Stone's mercenaries points his rifle at the engineer disguised as a monk.

General Stone is trying to be polite, but get his way, so he acts polite but firm...

GENERAL STONE
No, I insist...

EXT. SOMEWHERE AROUND STONE'S DAM - NIGHT

The dam the rebels are about to blow up is not exceptionally large, but it is made of concrete.

Dark Cloud and Snake top a ridge next to the dam. Both of them are carrying items in packs over their shoulders. They both pause to get a bearing on the situation. Dark Cloud

looks around, making sure no one has seen them. They are both silhouetted against a starry sky. Since they both wear black, it mostly blends in.

Together, they slip down the side of the ridge towards a spot at the base of the dam. They dislodge a few rocks and gravel along the way, but for the most part they make little noise.

Dark Cloud and Snake slide to a stop at their first chosen spot, breathing hard. They are both apprehensive of being caught, now more than ever.

Snake looks around for Mercenaries, then back at Dark Cloud, who is scooping a hole out of the ground to plant the charges, next to the dam. She is concentrating heavily on what she is doing. Snake looks at the device she is planting, and then at her.

SNAKE
You sure this is gonna do it?

The explosives Dark Cloud is laying into the rocky depression.

It is an oblong box of some type. She presses a switch on it, and a light comes on, indicating it's active state.

DARK CLOUD

Positive. We just have to lay a few more at the spots indicated, and then we're out of here.

Dark Cloud covers the detonator with rocks and gravel. They both jump to their feet and scramble further down the dam.

They drop to their knees in a new spot, and start scooping out another hole. Dark Cloud pulls another explosive device of the same type from her backpack, activates it, and plants it. They put rocks over the top of each one.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Hide the lights and detonator with these rocks.

The two begin weaving their way back to a safe spot away from the dam after repeating the process in a couple more places.

The night is still, and sound carries easily.

A SECURITY PATROL is approaching. They can both hear the sounds of approaching footsteps and low talk. Snake touches Dark Cloud's shoulder and indicates a large stand of boulders off to one side. They both quietly slip behind it. The Patrol comes within sight of the two as they hide, peeking

around the rocks. It consists of half a dozen mercenaries. They watch the Patrol walk most of the way past them.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

(whisper)

I thought your other groups were going to create some distractions.

Before Snake can reply, a loud noise comes from up in the hills on the other side of the dam. It sounds suspicious, and worth investigating. The Patrol takes off to investigate.

Dark Cloud and Snake reach the top of the same ridge they came in by. They sit down, and Dark Cloud pulls out a small radio control device. She extends the antenna, then activates a switch. A small light on the device comes on. She looks at Snake.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

You ready?

SNAKE

Start the fireworks.

Dark Cloud looks back down at the dam, and presses another switch. The darkness erupts with noise. There is an exploding roar as dirt and debris explode outward. The water in the dam, slowly at first, then with increasing momentum, begins surging towards an adjacent valley, away from its normal course.

The water begins carving a new course for the river, away from the Rio Grande by far.

Dark Cloud and Snake look at each other with a satisfied grin, and shake hands.

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - LATE NIGHT

Stone is seated, but rises to his feet at the news.

GENERAL STONE
THEY WHAT?!!

AIDE
They blew up the dam, Sir,
diverting the flow of water.

General Stone is furious.

GENERAL STONE
HOW DARE THEY!!!

He turns away for a moment, in thought.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)
Get that damn priest, or whatever
he is, up here now!

AIDE
Yes Sir!

After a short time, Ricardo enter the room.

RICARDO DE CASTILE
I understand there is some problem
with my young friend?

GENERAL STONE
Damn right there is! She blew up
my dam!

Somehow this does not surprise Ricardo. He sighs and begins to speak, but Stone cuts him off.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

I've been nice up until now. Now it's time to put your money where your mouth is and fess up. If you mean what you propose about cooperation, then tell me where those rabble are holed up.

Ricardo sees that Stone has misunderstood his proposal.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

General, even if I knew where they were, that was not the agreement that I offered. Now, if you want...

Stone cuts him off again.

GENERAL STONE

It's what I want now! I've been nice, but maybe you need a little persuasion.

He signals to his Men, who close on Ricardo. Ricardo realizes he has nothing to lose and grapples with the NEAREST MERCENARY for his weapon, the magnitude of his strength suspicious.

In the struggle, Ricardo's right forearm and hand are gashed and torn. There is a flash and shower of sparks. Ricardo's

forearm drips blood. Underneath the immediate skin and flesh, electronic circuitry and mechanics show through.

Ricardo grips his arm at a pressure point and mildly hunches forward. The Mercenaries have backed off in surprise and confusion.

Now it is Ricardo's turn to be arrogant. He looks Stone straight in the eye.

RICARDO DE CASTILE

That's right, Stone. I'm the engineer who designed that combat robot you're so impressed with.

(Still pissed, but sticking to his deal.)

I could trade some of those skills if you will let me find Dark Cloud and leave us alone.

A shot rings out.

Ricardo's first response is shock. He staggers forward a couple steps, and collapses to his knees. His look turns to anger. He looks up at Stone.

RICARDO DE CASTILE (CONT'D)
 You fool. By this act you have
 sealed your own fate. She won't
 stand for this.

General Stone looks down on him with no concern.

GENERAL STONE
 You have a lot more faith in your
 'young friend' than I do.

Ricardo crumples to the ground and dies. The last expression to cross his face is regret, grief.

The TECHNOPHOBIC MERCENARY, terrified, who shot Ricardo. His gun is still drawn and smoking. He looks at Ricardo, then at Stone for approval of what he did. Stone coldly shoots him without warning.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)
 (miffed)
 I didn't want him dead.

He looks back at Ricardo's body.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)
 Maybe we can salvage something out
 of the situation after all. Dump
 the body outside on the garbage
 heap. That should send a message
 to this, (beat) 'Dark Cloud'.

EXT. REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - DAY

Dark Cloud is upset, briskly walking away. Snake is right behind, trying to stop her. He grabs her shoulder. She roughly jerks him off.

DARK CLOUD
 Leave me alone.

SNAKE
 I'm sorry! I truly am! But you
 mustn't let this stop you!

DARK CLOUD
 Who's stopping? I just need to be
 by myself for awhile.

Snake grabs her, turns her around and shakes her roughly.

SNAKE

(almost shouting)

Damn it! You've got too much to offer! I don't want you crawling off and hiding somewhere because you're in pain!

Dark Cloud fights him back.

DARK CLOUD

Look! I need some time to myself! Come look for me later.

Snake lets her go. He gets cool but assertive.

SNAKE

All right. I will. But you can be damn sure I'm coming after you woman, or sending someone who will. I'm not gonna let you hide yourself away from the rest of humanity because of this.

Dark Cloud looks back at him. Snake looks genuinely determined and concerned.

SNAKE (CONT'D)

(more calmly; almost compassionate)

You go ahead and do whatever you have to do, but then rejoin the group, woman. I'd hate to lose you.

Dark Cloud looks uncomfortable with that statement. She turns and heads off into the desert, by herself.

Other REBELS have been watching the proceedings from the background. They look uncomfortable. Some sit on cars, concrete remnants, or lean against buildings. They say nothing. They just watch to see if Snake can keep Dark Cloud with them.

Snake watches her leave, as serious in his determination as ever. He takes a drag off his cigar, scowling.

EXT. EVENING - SOMEWHERE OUT IN THE DESERT

Dark Cloud has found herself a spot to collect her thoughts. She lowers herself next to a pile of firewood and touches a lit twig to it.

The pile quickly takes fire and a flame grows. Dark Cloud straightens back up. She reaches inside her jacket and pulls out a small metal container. Dark Cloud opens it and takes a hand rolled cigarette/joint out of it. Dark Cloud puts the metal cigarette case back in her jacket, lights up the cigarette, and inhales deeply.

She holds the smoke from her cigarette, and from the expression on her face it should be obvious that it is a narcotic of some kind.

Dark Cloud sits down by the fire and takes another drag off her cigarette. She lays back, putting her arm behind her head as a pillow. She looks over at the fire, sighs, looks away, and closes her eyes.

A little time has passed.

The fire crackles a little more loudly than normal.

Dark Cloud turns her head to face the fire, and opens her eyes sleepily. She is finally relaxed.

The fire. It looks the same.

INT OR EXT UNKNOWN - A DREAM WORLD - NIGHT OR DAY - ALL UNKNOWN

Dark Cloud turns her head to look up at the sky. The sky has taken on an unreal reddish hue. Dark Cloud frowns with some concern and leaps to her feet. Once more, she stands in Stone's audience chamber, but this is no earthly audience chamber. She stands in a dream-like world. The walls are transparent, yet nothing shows beyond them. The floor feels oddly soft. The geography beyond, through his bay window, is an indistinguishable red blur.

General Stone sits directly in front of her, about 15 feet away, but this is no earthly General Stone. His skin has a greenish cast to it. His eyes glow unnaturally. He looks as much like a MONSTER, a product of warped mutation, as a human can and still look human.

Stone is glaring at Dark Cloud as though she is the cause of all his problems.

Ricardo stands next to Stone, but does not seem to notice him. He seems oblivious to his surroundings, unworried. He looks off, past Dark Cloud.

SLOW MOTION

ZOOM IN ON DARK CLOUD.

Reality distorts in a strange way. Dark Cloud reaches out for Ricardo, and hears her own voice in a very distant, hollow plea.

DARK CLOUD
Ricardo? Ricardo?!

She reaches for him and tries to walk forward, wanting his reassurance. He does not hear her or respond.

General Stone rises to his feet and reaches for Ricardo's neck. The engineer/monk's face does not flinch.

Dark Cloud's expression turns to horror. She realizes what Stone will do and runs to intercept him. The more effort she makes to reach Ricardo, the farther away they both become, as though the room stretches out in response to her effort.

She silently screams the word, "No!"

Stone wraps his hands around Ricardo's throat. Still, Ricardo does not respond. Stone tears Ricardo's head from his shoulders.

Dark Cloud is horrified. She screams soundlessly. The Monster/Stone still holds Ricardo's head in one hand. He turns his attentions to Dark Cloud. Dark Cloud stops dead in her tracks.

NORMAL MOTION

The Monster/Stone is suddenly on Dark Cloud. He grabs her roughly by her jacket and throws her over backwards. Dark Cloud throws her hands up to defend herself as the Monster closes in again. He grabs her around the throat and begins choking the life out of her, snarling all the while.

The woman who appeared to Dark Cloud in the desert suddenly appears again, next to her.

DESERT WOMAN
Dark Cloud!

Dark Cloud looks at her, the Monster's hands still locked around her throat. The Desert Woman slips Dark Cloud a bolt of blue-white lightning. Electricity dances along the animated, eldritch spear. It moves in her hands. Dark Cloud turns back to fight the Monster.

She brings the bolt around and sinks it into his stomach, seeking for a way to kill him.

The Monster growls/yells in protest, but does not release his grip on Dark Cloud's throat. Dark Cloud begins to feel the loss of oxygen to her brain. It is weakening of her. The Monster's fingers sink deeper into her throat. The flesh begins to peel off his fingers, leaving the bones of the Monster's hands to continue choking the life out of her. Dark Cloud's face distorts with pain and she utters another soundless scream.

The fabric of reality rips.

EXT. THE CAMP THAT DARK CLOUD PITCHED THE DAY BEFORE -
MORNING

Dark Cloud comes abruptly awake. She is laying on her back. Blade is bent over her, shaking her by her jacket, trying to wake her up.

BLADE

Dark Cloud! Wake up!

Dark Cloud looks up at him with a start. She grabs his hands and sits up with a start.

DARK CLOUD

Yeshua Christos! You scared me!

BLADE

Sorry about that. There's something you've got to see -- now!

He almost pulls her to her feet in his urgency.

DARK CLOUD

OK! OK! I'm coming!

She straightens up and follows Blade. They leave in a hurry.

EXT. SOMEWHERE NEAR STONE'S DAM - DAY

Dark Cloud and Blade walk through a section of hilly desert. They walk up a rise, and at the lip, the expanse of the area around Stone's dam opens up to their field of vision.

There is much activity surrounding the dam. Much of the dam is dry, and the water level is low. Stone's Men mill around the dam. The preparation for something big is in progress.

Dark Cloud reaches for the binoculars that Blade hands her.

DARK CLOUD

Yeah, I need a closer look.

She raises the binoculars to her eyes and scans the region below. She pans back and forth until she notices something, and her vision comes to rest on Stone.

General Stone is below in the midst of the activity. He is directing the actions of his Men, and FIELD LABORERS who have been transferred for the extra labor. He looks very happy with the progress of the work.

Dark Cloud, watching closely. She pans the area again.

The Men are leaving the site of activity, and hurry to high ground, where Stone is waiting, looking smug.

BLADE

Yes, he's going to repair that breach you put in the dam.

DARK CLOUD

I guess he had to fix it sometime.

BLADE

But didn't you blow a hole the size of Mt. Everest in it?

DARK CLOUD

I did. Let me look again.

She pans the area with the binoculars again, this time spotting a large pile of C4, then observes the type of rocky and clay-like material along the breach.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

With what and how he's got things rigged to blow, yes, he can eventually repair that breach I blew out of it.

She taps her fingers on a rock in frustration.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Damn!

An explosion rocks the area. Dirt and debris fly. Large rocks slide into the breach created by Dark Cloud, along with the slide of clay. It doesn't fill the breach, but does repair it some.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Whatever Snake says, we have to take this man out now!

EXT. REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - DAY

Dark Cloud and Blade walk into the courtyard.

Snake is bent over, under the hood of the car. He is trying to fix it, and a Punk Rocker is there with him. She's leaning over the car too.

SNAKE
(obviously frustrated)
Well, then how do you fix it?!

The Punk Rocker backs off for a minute.

PUNK ROCKER
Hey, I'm not gonna fix it. It's
your car.

Dark Cloud walks up behind him and taps him on the shoulder.

He turns around, straightening up, wiping his hands with a rag. He greets her with a smile.

SNAKE
Dark Cloud, Hi, what's -

He is cut short as Dark Cloud slaps his face.

DARK CLOUD
I was a fool to let you convince me
there was plenty of time. You
gravely underestimated our
opponent, and you were a fool to
think he would continue to sit
still.

Snake is shocked by her strong message, but does not hit her back. He looks at her and Blade with some anger, but expects an explanation.

BLADE
Stone's repairing the hole we put
in the dam.

DARK CLOUD
At a decent pace, too.

Dark Cloud grabs Snake by his jacket lapels and shoves him back up against the car.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
Don't you see?! There's nothing to
stop him now!
(MORE)

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

He can go ahead and go through with poisoning the land just like he plans, and that's exactly what he'll do if we don't stop him now! We can't wait for your slow infiltration, and he wasn't satisfied

(her voice trembles a little))
with Ricardo's death!

Snake looks disturbed. He loosens Dark Cloud's grip on his lapels and brushes them off, straightening out his jacket. For once, he does not pull out a cigar and light up. Snake looks at the ground, thoughtfully, then back up at Dark Cloud.

SNAKE

I feel your pain, but we can't move on Stone just yet. We stand to lose too much.

DARK CLOUD

You're going to lose everything if you don't move now!

Snake looks uncomfortable.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

There's nothing to stop him!

Snake is still fidgeting.

SNAKE

I'm sorry. We're just not prepared right now.

Dark Cloud back down in anger.

DARK CLOUD

Not as sorry as I am. This is going nowhere!

She turns and storms off, disgusted with the lot of them.

In the background, though this whole confrontation, the Punk Rocker has been surreptitiously fixing the car, ignoring the whole altercation.

Snake is frustrated and kicks the tire.

PUNK ROCKER

(casually, as though nothing is wrong;
(MORE)

PUNK ROCKER (CONT'D)

and in a semi-loud
voice.)

OK. It's fixed.

Snake looks at her like she's nuts, looks away, then looks at her again like she is nuts. He shakes his head in disbelief at this morning's events.

EXT. THE COURTYARD OF GENERAL STONE'S FORTRESS - NIGHT

General Stone steps in front of a captive audience. He has commanded this demonstration of his power. To one side is gathered a group of workers. At the other side, a small group of MERCENARIES and four blindfolded, bound CAPTIVES. Other Mercenaries ring the audience.

Stone strides slowly among the lit bonfires and makes his declaration.

GENERAL STONE

Let this be an example to all of you, of what happens to anyone who is foolish enough to defy my authority. The four criminals here are double agents: pretending to work for me while serving the cause of undisciplined riffraff out in the wild. Let their punishment serve as a deterrent to any of you who would consider doing the same.

He looks at the Captives, giving the signal to proceed. His Mercenaries puncture each of the Captives' throats with a knife, not quite slitting it, but leaving enough perforation for them to choke/bleed to death, drowning on their own blood.

The Captives struggle on the ground.

Small gurgling noises.

One of the workers. It is Snake, in a worker's robe, blending in with the other workers. His eyes are slits of anger.

Blade, now back in fatigues, passing for a Mercenary again. He is also serious, but is very careful to look like he does not disapprove. To do so would blow his cover.

Dark Cloud, crouched just over the fortress wall. She fully realizes the potential for pain that Stone can inflict.

Dark Cloud notices the approach of a mercenary and drops, cat-like, out of sight.

EXT. THE REBEL BASE OF OPERATIONS - DAY

Snake has come around to Dark Cloud's point of view. Stone's demonstration was the last straw. He, Dark Cloud, and Blade congregate to discuss the matter.

SNAKE

OK. I see your point. Wha'do you think is the best way to deal with Stone?

Dark Cloud thumbs towards Blade.

DARK CLOUD

Ask him. He's been putting together some pretty good ideas of his own.

Snake turns to Blade with a 'by all means...' gesture.

BLADE

Stone's forces leave at daybreak. He'll be sending half of them out to go collect more of his... 'stuff'. We can make sure they go, 'cause he always sends his convoys out by the same route.

SNAKE

You mean the best road in and out...

DARK CLOUD

You mean the only one you haven't bombed...

BLADE

I don't think they'll do anything different than the last dozen times they've made this run, but this will be the last time he sends one out before he dumps it into the Rio.

DARK CLOUD

That's why we have to move now.

Blade slows down and gets very specific. Snake is still listening to both of them.

BLADE

Now, here's the master plan.
Thanks to D.C. here showing us how
to use those C4 plastic explosives,
and how much to use to do what,...

We do not hear the rest of the conversation.

EXT. STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

In the courtyard of Stone's fortress, a fresh convoy is getting ready to pull out. Two Mercenaries swing the front gate open. The Driver in the first vehicle leans out of the cab, and waves forward.

Slowly the convoy begins to roll forwards, and out of the gate.

EXT. LIP OF A CANYON WALL - DAY

Dark Cloud is still watching through her binoculars as the first of the trucks rolls into sight. Trucks are starting to roll towards the trio, bumping down the dusty road.

Dark Cloud, crouched, turning with the passage of the trucks.

Snake. He is watching close too. A new determination has come into his face.

Blade. He looks satisfied that things may finally change.

The trucks are beginning to pass out of sight...

Dark Cloud lowers her binoculars. The trio exchange knowing looks.

EXT. STONE'S FORTRESS - LATE IN THE DAY

One of Stone's Mercenaries, standing to one side of a compound wall, rifle in hand, overseeing the arrival of the LATE SHIFT WORKERS.

Another Sentry, opposite him, also overseeing the influx.

The Late Shift Workers mill through the gates of the fortress between them.

ZOOM IN on three Workers. They are dressed as raggedly as the rest, and have hoods pulled over their heads, but a CLOSE SHOT reveals them as Snake, Blade, and Dark Cloud in disguise.

INT. JUST OUT OF THE SUN IN STONE'S FORTRESS - SAME TIME

The line of Shift Workers trudges out of the sun and under cover, down a corridor slanting underground. They all seem monotonous. Our three heroes convincingly blend in with the others. They pass points where Guards are stationed at intervals.

INT. DEEPER INTO STONE'S COMPOUND - DAY

They reach a branch in the corridors that is unwatched. Quickly, the three of them dash to one side and out of the way, seeking temporary cover in the adjacent corridor. The workers continue to trudge past, as though unaware that the three have slipped away, or don't care.

The three then turn back and look down the way they have come, then begin sneaking down the new hallway towards their goal. Their mode of bearing has changed dramatically, from the feigned trudge of beaten workers, to the sharp readiness of guerrilla fighters.

Three slipping quietly down the internal passageways of Stone's fortress.

At one point they must hide while a Patrol goes by.

The three are waiting just out of sight. They wait around a corner, waiting for the next person to come by. To their luck, it is only one MERCENARY they have to contend with, and as he goes by, Snake grabs him from behind and puts a knife to his throat.

The Mercenary struggles against Snake's death grip. Blade draws a knife and puts it to the Mercenary too. The more frantic struggles of the Mercenary cease immediately.

SNAKE

OK... Where's the combat robot.

MERCENARY

(choke, choke))

Are you kidding? They'd kill me for telling you.

Both Snake and Blade press him with their blades.

SNAKE

You think you're gonna live much longer like this?

Dark Cloud. She is watching the proceedings with a cool eye, feeling no pity for the Mercenary.

MERCENARY

OK, OK. I'll tell you. Go down this hallway till you come to the first left, then take it to the end. You'll find you're robot there.

SNAKE

Thank you.

He slashes the Mercenary's throat from ear to ear and drops the body. The three of them step around it on their way, and keep going down the hallway.

They come to the first left. Snake covers them after they check it out, and they all go that way.

Their footsteps slow and movements grow more silent as they approach the place where Klaatu is locked up.

The Guards watching Klaatu's confinement. They talk idly.

KLAATU GUARD ONE

This is the most boring shift I've ever pulled.

The trio, just as they sneak up, just around the corner.

KLAATU GUARD TWO

Yeah, but isn't it a little spooky to think that just on the other side of this wall is something could tear us apart without even thinking about it?

(beat)

I wish it would at least stop thumping...

They hear an occasional thumping coming from behind them.

Klaatu Guard One shuffles nervously.

KLAATU GUARD ONE

Yeah... Thankfully that wall holds.

The trio have drawn their weapons, and at a signal from Snake, attack.

Blade steps forward and attacks the Mercenary further from them. He throws a small throwing star into the man's throat. Somehow the man still manages to bring his gun around to bear, but Blade is too quick.

Machete in hand, he chops the Mercenary's hands off at the wrist. The Mercenary drops to his knees. Blade swings again, beheading him.

Almost simultaneously, the nearer Mercenary that Blade bypassed reacts by drawing his gun. Snake has already moved in. The first Guard/Mercenary is distracted by what is happening to the second, leaving Snake to level his semi-auto and drill him full of holes.

Silence reigns momentarily.

Blade wipes off his machete and replaces it in its sheath.

Snake walks over to the mechanisms in the wall and fingers them.

SNAKE

Now, let's figure out how this thing works...

Dark Cloud is shedding her worker's clothes in distaste. Underneath, she is dressed and armed in her regular attire.

DARK CLOUD

It looks like that device rotates a section of the wall. Klaatu is being held in a cylindrical chamber just beyond.

Snake rotate the device, and a section of the wall moves.

It creaks and groans, then begins to slowly move aside.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

You two had better stand back. He might come out fighting, and unless he sees me first, you two are in danger.

Snake and Blade move back a little as the section of wall clears and Klaatu shoves against it, moving out, looking around and assessing the situation in combat mode very quickly.

Klaatu is obviously agitated. He looks at Dark Cloud, and doesn't like the physical marks on her from what she been through at all. He then looks at Snake and Blade, like they were the one's responsible.

Klaatu advances on them.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Klaatu! Cease hostilities! These are allies.

The robot stops, eyes them suspiciously, then obediently turns to Dark Cloud.

KLAATU

Inquiry as to your state of being, and the combat situation.

DARK CLOUD

I'm fine, Klaatu. We're getting out of here, and we're going to do some damage along the way.

Snake scratches his chin and recaps their plan.

SNAKE

(to Dark Cloud)

OK. You two get as much of that thallium as you can, on a truck, and get it out of here. Me and Blade'll provide a diversion for you, and then go ahead with our plan of attack and try to take over.

DARK CLOUD

Good enough. Good luck, and thanks for everything.

She extends her hand for a shake.

Snake looks a little worried. He looks at Dark Cloud, puzzled.

SNAKE

You sound like this is good-bye.

DARK CLOUD

It may be. I hope not, but just in case...

Snake shakes his head briskly.

SNAKE

Don't talk like that. You're too good a team player, Kimosabe.

Dark Cloud looks at Snake in that way where attraction could just bloom into something more, again, then shakes her head.

DARK CLOUD

Snake, you make me feel funny - in a way I just don't know if I've got room for right now, let alone used to. Let's see the end of all this, and maybe then...

Snake nods reluctantly, hoping he will see her again.

SNAKE

Baby steps... I look forward to helping you through that, too.

Snake silently holds her gaze for a moment more, strangely firm, hoping for more; then abruptly turns and walks away with Blade.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu watch Snake and Blade as they turn and walk away. After they are out of sight. Dark Cloud looking in the direction of their departure:

DARK CLOUD

I know I promised Snake I wouldn't do anything rash, but...

She walks into the cylindrical chamber that held Klaatu captive. He follows. She examines the smooth rock, neatly fitted together. Dark Cloud draws a knife from her boot.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

...we have a score to settle with the General.

She hands the knife to Klaatu.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Here, carve us some grips in the wall. We're going to pay the 'General' a visit.

Klaatu takes the knife and begins stabbing at the wall methodically, slipping the highly tempered blade into the thin seams between the stones and using his great strength to tear out chunks of rock.

INT. THE TOP OF THE CYLINDRICAL CHAMBER, IN THE HALLWAY LEADING TO STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

All is clear. Not a soul in sight.

The sound of brutal chipping and hacking - metal on stone.

All falls silent.

Dark Cloud peeks over the rim, into the empty hallway. She looks all ways, then silently slips over the lip of the chamber and crouches by the rim.

Klaatu's head appears above the rim next. He, too, looks all ways, then joins her. They are both silent and graceful in their movements.

The two of them straighten up and walk towards Stone's audience chamber.

Dark Cloud's expression is grim. The manner of both of them is determined.

INT. THE PERIMETER OF STONE'S FORTRESS COURTYARD - DAY

Snake and Blade have returned to the surface, and are walking through the above mentioned location. Snake has his hands over his head, fingers locked together, as though a prisoner. Blade keeps an assault rifle in his back.

Blade looks up at one of the guards walking the top of one of the fortress walls. He motions slightly with his rifle. Little more than an adjustment in how he holds it. It is a subtle signal.

The GUARD who got the message. He nods almost imperceptibly, and continues his rounds. He passes another Guard, and reaches up to scratch his nose, but it is really another signal.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE OF STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

At the reach the big double doors that lead to their goal, Dark Cloud silently signals Klaatu. He nods, and heads off in another direction.

Dark Cloud pauses at the doors. She swallows hard in apprehension, tensing herself for conflict and remembering what it was like for her the last time she was in this room. She draws the gun from its shoulder holster, and swings one of the doors open a crack. Dark Cloud flattens herself against the door and looks sideways into the room. Nothing. All is silent. Dark Cloud opens the door and peers in. Nothing. She hunches up a little and takes a step inside the doorway. Still nothing.

INT. STONE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER - DAY

Dark Cloud begins to unwind a bit. She looks around the empty chamber, her eyes coming to rest on a table a few paces away. Maps and notes are scattered on it. Dark Cloud walks over to the table and finds her locket. The chain is broken, but not irreparably. She looks at it sadly, then puts it in her pocket.

She begins pushing the papers on the table around, looking for information. She picks up one piece to scrutinize it better.

The sound of a pistol being cocked...

Dark Cloud whirls around in surprise, her wary expression intensifying.

General Stone sits fifteen feet behind her (now she is facing him.) He holds a loaded, cocked pistol in his hand, it's sights trained on Dark Cloud's forehead. Dark Cloud is caught off guard.

GENERAL STONE

(casually)

Oh don't look so surprised. I know enough about your craft to make myself so inconspicuous I might as well be invisible.

Dark Cloud is trying to quickly think of a way out of this situation.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

There might have been a place for you in my organization at one time, Dark Cloud, but not anymore. What a pity we didn't meet under better circumstances.

He leans forward, intensifying his aim.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Very slowly...remove the clip from your gun and put them both on the table next to you.

Dark Cloud slowly does as she is told.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

Now. Maybe we finish this quickly, and maybe not so quickly...
Goodbye Dark Cloud.

Dark Cloud realizes he is going to fire. She does not wait for the shot.

She whirls around and dashes for some crates stacked up against a near wall. General Stone fires off a couple rounds, deliberately, narrowly missing her as she drops behind the crates. They thud into the wall overhead, showering her with dirt.

Stone rises to his feet.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

So we do this slowly, then...

He smiles smugly.

A heavy, metal hand plants itself firmly on his shoulder from behind. It spins him around, and Stone finds himself staring into Klaatu's unforgiving, expressionless face.

Stone wastes no time. He reacts immediately. He grabs a nearby canister, about the size of a grenade, and presses a nozzle on it. It sprays a thick, black, sticky substance directly into Klaatu's face. It clouds the combat robot's receptors effectively.

It is Klaatu's turn to be surprised. He was not expecting this sort of maneuver. He releases his grip for only a moment -

- then reroutes his decision and grabs again.

He clutches thin air.

Dark Cloud peers out from behind the crate. Stone is nowhere to be seen.

Klaatu is trying to wipe the substance off his face.

Dark Cloud cautiously leaves the cover of the crate, walking over to assist Klaatu. She picks up a discarded fatigue shirt and begins trying to wipe the stuff off. It does not come off easily.

She looks down at the table next to where Stone was sitting.

She sees that there are several cans of spray paint and thinner sitting there.

Dark Cloud shakes her head and doesn't know whether to laugh or be mad at the resourcefulness of her enemy.

DARK CLOUD

Spray paint... As simple as that.

She reflects for a minute, half on the edge of a laugh, half on the edge of a smile. This is just so idiotic to be stopped by something so simple.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Well, I guess it's a good way to cover your own plans, once you've memorized them. No paper shredders around...

KLAATU

I apologize for my inadequacy in handling our opponent.

Dark Cloud picks up the paint thinner and begins cleaning the residue off Klaatu's face with more efficiency.

DARK CLOUD

Don't worry. He's a tough hombre. Just keep doing your best and maybe we'll get out of here alive.

She has cleaned off most of the paint.

Klaatu puts his hand protectively on Dark Cloud's arm and inclines his head towards her.

KLAATU

(concerned, caring)
Are you unharmed?

Dark Cloud returns the gesture, then gives him a hug.

DARK CLOUD

I'm fine. You did just great.

Klaatu starts collecting his weapons from where they are stacked in the room and checks them. Dark Cloud does likewise with her gun. She recovers it from the table and reloads the clip.

They assess their surroundings.

An explosion rocks the compound. Dark Cloud looks knowingly in it's direction.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

We need to move on that thallium supply.

Dark Cloud drops what she is doing and heads for the garages. Klaatu falls in next to her. She pauses at the doors to make sure the hallway is clear, then slips out.

EXT. INSIDE THE COURTYARD OF STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

The activity around the compound is instantly in a flurry. The Mercenaries rush towards the source of the disturbance. Small explosions are going off all over the place. The garages are left unwatched.

INT. SOMEWHERE IN THE INTERIOR OF STONE'S FORTRESS - DAY

DARK CLOUD

(to Klaatu)

Our two friends there, just created a diversion so we could get inside and see how much thallium Stone has ready to dump. We put it on a truck, steal it, and get out of here.

She slips around a corner and heads for the garages.

INT. INSIDE ONE OF THE GARAGES - DAY

There are numerous boxes and crates stacked up against one wall.

The sound of shots and running is heard outside, but as though far away.

Dark Cloud whips out a Tanto knife and rips off the top of one of the boxes with it. It contains metal drums. She checks the labels and it confirms that she has found what she was looking for.

DARK CLOUD

(muttering)

At least he's using the right containers to keep it in... (beat)
I wish I had some protective clothing to handle this stuff with.

She looks over her shoulder at Klaatu.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Klaatu, load this stuff on the truck. Were taking it with us.

She steps over to another set of crates and works the lid off each of them. After examining the contents, she finds the same thing.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Klaatu, load these too.

While Klaatu loads the crates with inhuman speed, Dark Cloud steps over to the cab of the truck and proceeds to work on hot-wiring it. She jerks out a handful of wires from the steering column and starts stripping the plastic coating off a couple of them. Klaatu slips into the passenger seat next to her as she finishes preparing the wires.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

KLAATU

Affirmative.

DARK CLOUD

Then let's go!

She starts up the truck and stabs the gas pedal. The truck leaps forward.

EXT. THE COURTYARD OF STONE'S FORTRESS - LATER IN THE DAY

Dark Cloud's truck smashes through the gate of the garage. She fishtails it around and heads for the front gate. Stone has had it fixed and reinforced by now, but she is driving an even more reinforced special assault vehicle now. Dark Cloud in the cab of the truck, sizing up what she is about to ram, and getting tense about it.

DARK CLOUD

Hold on.

She speeds up the truck. They impact with the gate. For a moment it looks like they will not go through.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

Hang on. Our trip may end here.

The two in the truck, feeling the impact. Dark Cloud's assessment is grim, and shows on her face.

At the last second, before they really lose momentum, the gate splinters and snaps under the strain of impact. It gives way. The truck roars off into the gathering late afternoon.

Back in the fortress, Stone is furious. He yells to no one in particular:

GENERAL STONE

Get me a jeep! NOW!

A Mercenary pulls up next to him in a jeep. Stone jumps in and turns over his shoulder to issue orders.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

After her! Now!

Several vehicles race out of the compound after Dark Cloud. Stone's jeep is one of them.

DRIVER

But Sir! Should we be leaving?
The fortress is under attack!

Stone. He is consumed by his hatred of Dark Cloud, and it should show in his expression.

GENERAL STONE

YOU LEAVE THAT TO ME TO DEAL WITH!!
SHE IS THE REAL SOURCE OF ALL OUR
PROBLEMS!!!

Stone's Driver shudders and says no more. He simply keeps driving.

EXT. STONE'S COMPOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Snake rushes up to watch the vehicles disappear after Dark Cloud. He is definitely upset.

SNAKE

Blade! Couldn't we have kept him
here?!

EXT. A ROAD LEADING AWAY FROM STONE'S FORTRESS - LATE
AFTERNOON

Dark Cloud and Klaatu in the cab of the truck. They are roaring along as fast as they can. Dark Cloud's expression is very determined.

General Stone, the wind tugging at his uniform in the open jeep.

The back of Dark Cloud's truck, roaring away ahead of them. Stone's jeep in hot pursuit, alternately gaining and losing ground on her.

About a dozen vehicles, commanded by Stone, pursue Dark Cloud and Klaatu.

Dark Cloud in the cab of her hot-wired truck. She is wired and agitated. She looks in the rear view mirror.

DARK CLOUD
(softly)
Damn!

She hits the steering wheel.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
Klaatu, I need you to ride shotgun
for me.

KLAATU
Affirmative.

Despite Dark Cloud's outburst, she is all business again.

Dark Cloud hits the steering wheel again, harder this time.

DARK CLOUD
Damn it! I had no idea he would
react this way! How'd he know I'd
stolen the load - or is he just
after me?!

Dark Cloud's truck racing by. The other vehicles quickly follow.

One of the vehicles comes up around the passenger side of the stolen truck. The Driver slowly closes, alternately loosing and gaining ground.

Klaatu opens the door, and holding onto the frame with one hand, uses his other to level his hand-held cannon sized rifle at them. He fires.

The result places a hole half the width of the pursuing vehicle in it, starting at the driver's side. It spins wildly, flips over, and crashes off the road.

From his vantage point in the pursuing jeep, Stone curses under his breath.

Stone motions to the Mercenaries in another vehicle. They close on the truck and one of them climbs off the vehicle, over the front, and onto the back of Dark Cloud's truck.

Dark Cloud feels the weight shift as something climbs onto her truck from the back, causing it to bounce. She looks into the side view mirrors, then up.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)
Damn! Klaatu, I think we got a
passenger. Check it out.

Klaatu twists around and places both hands on the ceiling of the cab. After a moment of gauging pressure and stress points, he presses, peeling his side of the roof back like a can opener. The metal shrieks under the force of his power. The Mercenary on the roof looks incredibly shocked as Klaatu emerges from the new hole in the cab roof. Klaatu levels his rifle at him. The Mercenary is able to take one scoot back before Klaatu fires.

The force of the blast sends what's left of the Mercenary's body backwards to land in bits and chunks on the windshields and grills of some of the pursuing vehicles.

Stone's Driver shudders. Stone looks angry, but a little more cautious.

The whole group races down the road, headed towards Sacred Native American ground. It is more brightly colored than the land surrounding it, and it has many striking, wind-sculpted rock formations that suggest a mystic atmosphere to it.

Overhead, the sky is brewing a strange storm. Angry, purple clouds swirl as a thunderstorm develops, but they move much too quickly for any kind of natural storm. Thunder roars loudly as both sheet and bolt lightning ricochet through the clouds. This is definitely no natural storm. It breaks the laws of nature, but what has been described is happening. Stone motions to the Mercenaries in another truck. The one in the passenger seat takes out a rifle and aims it at Dark Cloud's truck.

Stone's Driver. He does not like the look of the clouds, or the place they are headed.

DRIVER

Sir! We're headed towards sacred Indian ground!

GENERAL STONE

(puzzled and pissed off at this distraction)

So?!

DRIVER

Sir! We shouldn't proceed!
Strange things happen on that land!

Stone dismisses this as a bunch of malarkey, with a wave of his hand.

GENERAL STONE

Don't be influenced by make-believe Corporal. Drive! That's an order!

He ignores his worried Driver and turns back to the chase.

The other Mercenary, a Sharpshooter still shooting at Dark Cloud's truck.

Her truck weaves back and forth once.

The storm clouds brewing overhead, looking more angry than ever.

The Sharpshooter fires once more. He finally hits his mark. One of the front tires on Dark Cloud's truck is shot out. The front wheel hub digs into the road. The truck flips and rolls over and over several times, coming to rest on an area of flat, packed earth.

Dark Cloud and Klaatu are trapped inside the cab of the truck.

Dark Cloud struggles weakly against her confinement. Klaatu seems trapped.

At last, Dark Cloud gains a bit of leverage as she tries to struggle out of the cab. She shoves at the door with both feet. It slowly gives with a grinding noise.

Dark Cloud squeezes out of the cab. She crawls to her feet. There is a small gash in her forehead, and she is weak from the crash, shaking hard, but somehow manages to climb to her feet.

She turns to face what she knows is the inevitable.

Stone's jeep slides to a stop about fifteen feet away. He gets out with a sneer as his other vehicles pull up behind him and stop.

Dark Cloud. She glares at Stone, but pulls herself up to face him.

Stone pulls a small caliber gun from his hip holster. Dark Cloud has lost hers in the crash. She is unarmed now, and shaking too badly to accurately use any of her non-gun weapons. General Stone levels his .22 at Dark Cloud and shoots her in the left shoulder, firing quickly, deliberately hitting her in a non-lethal area of the body.

Dark Cloud is knocked on her back from the force of the impact and her weak, shaky state. She grabs her shoulder and writhes in pain.

Klaatu, still in the cab. He sees what is happening to Dark Cloud and redoubles his efforts to wrestle free of the wreck, but to no avail. He is still trapped in the wreckage.

Dark Cloud rights herself and climbs to her knees, clutching her arm just below the shoulder. She glares at Stone.

General Stone is both pissed off and smug.

GENERAL STONE (CONT'D)

I don't want to kill you just yet,
Dark Cloud. Let's do this
slowly...

He levels his pistol at Dark Cloud again, aiming carefully.

Klaatu looks at the sky, and seems to realize something. From somewhere, he gets the strength to peel the truck off himself.

Klaatu wrestles free of the truck and rushes for Dark Cloud, on her knees in front of Stone. A flash of tremendous lightning blinds everyone momentarily as he scoops her up. Stone squeezes off another round. It hits Klaatu's alloy surface, glancing off him harmlessly.

Klaatu, having grabbed up Dark Cloud, races for one of Stone's jeeps. He bodily throws the Driver out.

Klaatu places Dark Cloud gently in the passenger seat, and gets in the driver's seat himself. Dark Cloud slumps forward in pain. Klaatu starts up the jeep and races away from the scene of confrontation.

A violent wind has whipped up, making it hard to hear. Stone shouts some orders that go mostly unheard. His Men look at each other in confusion, then climb back in their vehicles to pursue the two, but for some reason their vehicles just sputter and die when they try to start them.

The angry storm overhead. The clouds are so thick they virtually turn the late afternoon into night.

Stone's Men are getting worried, and mutter among themselves about the nature of this place.

Klaatu races off into the growing dusk, stopping many miles away, by a large rock formation. He gets out, picks up Dark Cloud and rushes behind it. He takes cover, holding Dark Cloud close and protectively, shielding her with his own body.

Dark Cloud has become only semi-conscious from pain and shock.

Stone's Men are still unable to get their vehicles started, argue, and relay this information to him that they cannot find anything wrong. Meantime, the windstorm still howls around them and the clouds still swirl overhead.

Bolt lightning begins hitting the ground. It strikes loudly and close by a couple time before hitting the truck that DarkCloud hot-wired and stole.

In the back of the truck, surrounded by nuclear material, sits a small, thermonuclear trigger.

The lightning bolt triggers it, and a small thermonuclear explosion takes place. The boom and flash of light fill the area. A wash of incredible heat rolls across the land, followed by an incredible wind.

The mushroom cloud begins slowly curling into the air.

Stone and his Men are swept away to nothingness. What poisons and toxins were not consumed are sealed into the ground forever.

EXT. STONE'S FORTRESS - DUSK

The attempted take-over by Snake and his Rebels was a success. The battle is over. Peace is returning to the intermittently smoldering compound.

Snake sees the aftermath of the explosion from the compound. The sky is lit up and a warm breeze tugs at his hair and clothes. A large mountain stands between him and the blast, so his eyes are shielded from the direct light of the blast. He is in awe of the event.

Small mushroom cloud curling up from behind the mountain.

Snake continues to look at the aftermath.

Blade walks up, machete in hand.

BLADE

It's over, man. We won!

Snake nods absently. Blade notices he is distracted.

Blade looks off in the direction of the mushroom cloud.

BLADE (CONT'D)

Do you think she survived?

Snake is still looking at it.

SNAKE

Yeah, I'm sure of it.

He says this in a way that tells Blade emotions are at play here. From the expression on Snake's face, he can tell there was some attachment developing. He is not as sure as Snake that she survived, and this shows on his face also.

BLADE

Hang in there, man. If she's alive, she'll be back.

He looks at Snake, not knowing what to say; then turns away and heads back down the steps into the fortress.

EXT. THE ROCK FORMATION KLAATU TOOK SHELTER BEHIND - DUSK

The wind whistles over the somewhat rearranged contour of the land. A new pile of rubble and rocks. All is quiet, then they move a little. Klaatu emerges, and begins pushing rocks and debris off himself and Dark Cloud. She coughs weakly. Klaatu clears away the debris surrounding her. A light coat of red dust covers both of them.

Dark Cloud holds her arm below the shoulder and sits up. She looks around, then back down the valley, pondering what to do next.

DARK CLOUD

Klaatu, how did you know there would be an explosion?

Klaatu looks puzzled.

KLAATU

Apparently there is a gap in my memory. The last I recall, Stone was preparing to shoot you a second time.

Dark Cloud looks at him as though she has just heard something unearthly, but something she would not be surprised by.

DARK CLOUD

Never mind, then.

She looks back down the valley.

Dark Cloud adjusts her shoulder slowly and grimaces with pain. She is trying to determine the extent of her injuries. She flexes the fingers of her left hand gingerly.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

I think he missed the most important parts. Once the bullet's taken out, I should be able to heal OK.

Dark Cloud holds her arm and looks back down the valley again.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

I wonder if I shouldn't go see Snake; let him patch me back together.

Klaatu bristles at the idea.

KLAATU

I would not advise that. The company of your own species does not seem to promote your well-being.

Dark Cloud looks at him with a 'go on' expression.

KLAATU (CONT'D)

You are better off out in the desert, where others cannot harm you. It is fitting, considering the circumstances surrounding the attainment of your identity.

Dark Cloud throws another wistful look down the valley, towards the hidden Rebel Base of Operations. Her look is almost sad. She turns away, dropping her eyes.

DARK CLOUD

(sorrow)

I guess so. Ricardo's gone... There's nothing to hold me here anymore. ...Except -

Dark Cloud looks off, thinking for a minute, then shakes her head.

She looks up at Klaatu.

DARK CLOUD (CONT'D)

All right. Let's get out of here, Klaatu.

Klaatu helps her to her feet. She leans on him heavily in the process. They slowly turn, and disappear over the hill. They vanish into mystery.

EXT. STONE'S FORMER FORTRESS - TWILIGHT

Snake has been watching the horizon hopefully. Blade walks up to him again.

BLADE
You still here?

Snake does not take his eyes off the horizon, but nods. Blade takes a seat. He knows his friend is going through something and needs some talking to.

BLADE (CONT'D)
She meant more to you than you're admitting, aren't you.

Snake still watches the horizon.

SNAKE
(with reservation)
I guess so...

Blade stabs the end of his machete into the adobe, looking down.

BLADE
You know, if she's still alive and OK, she'll come back. If she's hurt, we can start a search party.

Snake looks at his friend for the first time. At first there is hope in his speech.

SNAKE
Yeah, we can do that.

He looks back off towards the horizon.

SNAKE (CONT'D)
If she's hurt, we'll find her.

He thinks a minute more, reflecting; then resignation returns to his tone.

SNAKE (CONT'D)
If she's not hurt, she's with her combat robot, and he's pretty protective of her, so she'll probably just disappear. In that case, no amount of searching would find her.

He looks sad. Snake reaches inside his jacket and pulls out one of his hallmark cigars, lights it, and takes a drag.

SNAKE (CONT'D)
(like he's considering
something)
Still... she'd be worth going
after...

Blade gets up and pats his friend on the shoulder.

BLADE
(sympathetic)
It'll be OK, man.

He leaves Snake alone to his thoughts. Snake stares off into
the deep dusk.

CLOSING MONOLOGUE: VOICE OVER BY SNAKE

SNAKE
I don't know what happened to her
after that. But I can't help but
think she's still out there
somewhere...
(voice drops))
somewhere.
(beat))
This may not be over...

FADE OUT

T H E E N D