

TEXT: 2047

TEXT: 12 HOURS UNTIL THE INCIDENT

INT. OFFICE - DAY.

An office hums with life. RANNOCH (30s) is sat in his office.

He is dressed in an expensive suit, with slick, oiled hair; he is very corporate and highly self-important.

As he works an alert comes through on his HIVE-unit: a screen implant residing in his inner-forearm. He scans it and types back a reply.

On lower floors, his employees also work in tandem with their HIVE-units.

EXT. HIVE CLINIC - DAY.

CASSIDY (late 20s) is protesting outside a clinic.

Free-spirited and passionate, she's wearing a loose-fitting denim jacket over an oversized t-shirt. Her hair is short and wavy, stopping above the neck.

Her sign reads: 'WE ARE NOT MACHINES'.

A small crowd of people have gathered around her, bemused and watching the performance.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY.

Commuters sit miserably, swaying with the train. SEAN (early 20s) examines his HIVE-unit anxiously: NO SIGNAL.

Dressed in a crumpled shirt and jeans, with close-cropped hair and glasses, his leg twitches up and down. He checks his unit again and sighs, stressed and worried.

INT. SERVER ROOM - DAY.

Dressed in a blue boiler-suit and a hi-vis jacket, VIRGIL (50s) navigates a room of huge computer servers.

A serious man, with watery eyes, he is slightly overweight.

Heavy breathing forms clouds of breath in the cold room as he places his tool box onto the floor. Sliding out a large panel, VIRGIL examines the specs on his HIVE-unit.

TEXT: 8 HOURS

EXT. HIVE CLINIC - DAY.

SECURITY GUARDS emerge from the clinic, talking into their HIVE-units.

As they begin propelling her away from the clinic, Cassidy turns to preach to the crowds watching, shouting and waving.

EXT. STREET - DAY.

Sean is running. He stops for breath, anxiously reads the screen: RECONNECTING... 68%. He swears, carries on running.

INT. BAR - DAY.

Sean rushes into the pub, trying to control his breathing. His MANAGER appears, visibly angry and gesturing to his HIVE-unit. Sean is very late.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY.

Rannoch is pitching to a small group of executives. He occasionally swipes images from his unit onto a hologram display screen.

INT. SERVER ROOM - DAY.

Virgil finishes inputting a code and slides the panel back into place. He receives a call over his HIVE-unit, and smiles.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY.

Virgil puts his tools down and eagerly accepts a coffee from CO-WORKER.

TEXT: 2 HOURS

EXT. LOBBY - EARLY EVENING.

Rannoch is storming across the lobby. He stops and paces back and forth, furiously talking into his HIVE-unit.

A COURIER enters the lobby from a side-door and begins half-running across the floor. He's focused on his HIVE-unit, and doesn't see Rannoch.

As Rannoch turns the courier knocks into his shoulder, causing him to fall heavily. His arm flails and smashes into a nearby waiting bench.

The courier rights himself easily, and looks behind quickly to smirk at Rannoch, before disappearing around a corner.

Looking down at his arm, Rannoch sees that the screen is shattered.

INT. CAR PARK - EARLY EVENING.

Rannoch is standing by an expensive looking car. He holds his fractured HIVE-unit to the door. Nothing happens.

He tries again, becoming increasingly angry. He kicks the car before storming off.

EXT. HIGH STREET - EARLY EVENING.

Cassidy is standing atop a bench, preaching from one person to the next, but ignored by all. Everyone is heading home, some are making 'phone' calls via their HIVE-units.

INT. BAR - EVENING.

Sean is alone in the bar, save one patron asleep at a table. Sean sighs, checks the time on his HIVE-unit.

He collects half-empty glasses from tables before wiping them down. He yawns.

INT. SERVER ROOM - EVENING.

Virgil is working off a cross between a laptop and a hologram into which wires from a nearby conduit are plugged in. He is frowning.

INT. HIVE CLINIC - EVENING.

Rannoch's arm is being scanned by a machine. A SURGEON is talking, referring to a blueprint of the HIVE-units overlapped with an x-ray of his arm.

The surgeon shows him into a backroom, and closes the door. A light fixed nearby turns green: SURGERY IN PROGRESS.

EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING.

Cassidy is glumly waiting. She pulls out a battered phone, checks the time. Cold, she pulls the denim jacket tighter.

EXT. BAR - EVENING.

Sean locks up the bar, before heading down the street.

He passes a drunkard in a crown and red cloak, leaning against a wall for support. The man laughs at him as he passes by.

INT. HIVE CLINIC - EVENING.

By the counter, the surgeon is talking to Rannoch. One of his arms is tightly bandaged, a protective casing around the forearm.

Rannoch offers his card to the receptionist as the surgeon hands him a pamphlet and a key fob. They shake hands, and the surgeon leaves.

The receptionist hands back the card. Rannoch leaves.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT.

Sean is watching his HIVE-unit as he waits. The screen is flickering, once, twice, off: NO SIGNAL.

TEXT: 10 MINUTES

EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING.

Rannoch makes his way down a street toward the bus stop. A

young women is sat there in a denim jacket, her knees brought up to her chest from cold. A futuristic, but run-down bus (**reference China's 'straddling' bus**) rounds the corner.

Cassidy stands and raises a hand to the oncoming bus. She eyes Rannoch's bandaged arm. He notices and turns away.

The bus pulls over and Cassidy boards. After a moment of apprehension, Rannoch also steps up, and sits uncomfortably, disgusted and embarrassed.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT.

The train arrives and Sean boards. He is alone. He settles back and closes his eyes as the doors close.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT.

Virgil is worried. He hits enter on the laptop and a system test begins to run.

He sips at a cup of coffee, placing it back on the floor. Wires from a nearby conduit are spread across the floor, his equipment equally dispersed.

Across the room, a computer screen flickers to life.

VIRGIL

Hello? Is someone there?

He makes to move closer but an alert sounds from the laptop. He quickly examines the data, looks up. He is scared. The computer beeps, the screen reads: KNOCK KNOCK.

He looks from the laptop to his arm, and back again.

The computer beeps again, louder. The text re-appears, bolder.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

(hoarse)

Hive?

The computer repeats its ritual, louder and bolder.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Who.. who's there?

His HIVE-unit beeps. Virgil looks down and reads: IT'S ME.

Virgil's arm contorts suddenly, seized by pain. He collapses to the floor, muscles spasming. With his other hand he reaches across the floor, searching blindly with his hand.

His hand finds a screwdriver and he jams it forcibly into his arm, prying the HIVE-unit loose. He screams in pain as he yanks the device free of his arm, wires and all, falling to the floor amidst a growing pool of blood.

He upturns the coffee over the device, which short-circuits and sparks.

The text on the computer deletes itself.

Virgil stumbles from the room, trying to staunch the flow of blood.

EXT. RANNOCH'S PORCH - NIGHT.

Rannoch pulls the key fob from his pocket and uses it to unlock his front door.

Across the street, he sees a man illuminated by his HIVE-unit, as he lets his dog out. He sighs miserably and enters.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT.

Rannoch's lights flutter on as he enters the house. Everything is very flush.

RANNOCH
HIVE? Play something calming please.

There's a brief pause, before a white box on the table begins playing soft, classical music.

As Rannoch pours himself whiskey, we see through the window..

PAN (THROUGH WINDOW) TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT.

The man across from Rannoch's porch is still typing on his HIVE-unit when he suddenly begins convulsing and twitching uncontrollably.

As quickly as it began, it ends. The man now stands there silently, waiting. The dog barks.

INT. CRAMPED BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Cassidy climbs into bed. Her room is a mess of computer science magazines and journals and house plants, various articles are pinned to the walls amidst pictures of her travelling with friends.

In several pictures Sean can be seen.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN CARRIAGE - NIGHT.

The train lights suddenly blink out and the carriage begins to slow down, despite not yet arriving at the next station.

Sean remains oblivious, asleep in his seat.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT.

A security camera observes Virgil as he stumbles down the corridor, a trail of blood behind him. A sign points towards a Control Hub.

He is very pale. Virgil steadies himself against a wall, breathing heavily and sweating profusely.

Desperately, he pushes away from the wall, but slips and crashes to the ground. He reaches out, but soon stops moving.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT.

The computer screen beeps. New text appears: :).

FADE TO BLACK

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING.

Rannoch is eating a cooked breakfast, listening to orchestral music when the music is interrupted by the HIVE-box.

HIVE

Incoming message. Message reads:
eleven thirty meeting has been moved
to nine fifteen. Message ends.

Sighing irritably as the music recommences, Rannoch rushes from the room, leaving the protective casing on the table.

EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING.

Rannoch is pacing around the bus stop, frustrated. He goes to check his HIVE-unit, remembers, and swears under his breath.

Suddenly the dog runs past him, dragging its lead behind. Rannoch stares confused as it disappears down the street.

He begins following it down the street.

EXT. HIGH STREET. EARLY MORNING.

RANNOCH is slowly walking down the high street. People are standing around unmoving. All are facing the same direction.

He glances at the closest person before moving further down the street, and deeper among them. Unbeknown to Rannoch, the person's head turns to follow him, the expression blank.

Rannoch begins to examine another of the people more thoroughly, leaning closer and closer until..

MAGGIE

Excuse me?

Rannoch turns, startled.

He sees an old woman peering at him eagerly. Her hair is greying, and pulled back tightly across her head into a tight bun. She is dressed in faded clothes that have clearly seen better days.

A crooked name badge identifies her as 'MAGGIE'. She cocks her head and stares at him for several moments.

Rannoch unsuccessfully tries to disguise his disgust with a smile. He strides away, but to his dismay she follows.

RANNOCH

(through gritted teeth)

I don't have any change.

MAGGIE

Knock knock?

Rannoch stops and turns, as several other people turn to face him.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Rannoch Finch?

He looks around, paranoia increasing.

RANNOCH

Who.. do you know what's happening?

He turns to look at the nearest person, noticing the HIVE-unit has a red screen. He looks around at several others, all appear the same.

MAGGIE

It's me.

Maggie attempts a reassuring smile but her mouth is twisted, as though unfamiliar with the concept of physical movement, resulting in a twisted grimace.

Rannoch takes a step back, and looks again at Maggie. Through her sleeve, a red glow can be seen.

He turns, ready to run when the man he had been inspecting abruptly grabs his wrist from behind, pulling his arm up into a painful position.

RANNOCH

Oww! Get off me!

MAGGIE

Join the hive Rannoch Finch.

Rannoch attempts to pull away but the man twists his arm harder.

RANNOCH

OW! Okay, okay! I'll go with you!

The man releases him, and Maggie 'smiles' once more.

Rannoch suddenly backhands Maggie across the face. She doubles over.

Rannoch steps back, baring his teeth. As Maggie stands she raises a hand to her face, cradling a deep red mark. Rannoch notices everyone in the high street mimicking her actions.

She frowns, as if trying to work something out.

MAGGIE

(broken enunciation and speech
pattern)

This is pa-in?

She turns to look at Rannoch, who backs away and looks around. Everybody has turned to face him. Everybody is staring at him.

Their heads all turn to follow as he runs from the street.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY.

Sean awakens in an unpowered train carriage. He stretches his arms, using one to massage the back of his neck, which is clearly sore.

Blinking profusely, he looks around the dim carriage, confused. He stands slowly, before calling out.

SEAN

Hello?

After pausing for response, he checks his HIVE-unit: NO SIGNAL.

Sean tries to see through the window, but sees only darkness. He holds up his arm, but the soft white screen offers little light.

He sighs, and moves to examine the other windows. Nothing.

Sean tries to activate the carriage doors but it's unresponsive. He struggles to pull the carriage divide apart, but eventually makes enough room to squeeze through.

Sean tries to exit the train, but the door refuses to move. He tries with increasing frustration, eventually ramming it with his shoulder, and groaning with the effort.

He tries again, and punches the glass component in anger, crying out in pain and cradling his hand.

Realising, Sean examines the door frame, and the walls. Nothing. Squeezing back into the carriage, Sean continues searching. On the far wall he finds: IN CASE OF EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS WITH HAMMER.

INT. UNDERGROUND RAILWAY - DAY.

Sean is walking down the tunnel, hammer in hand. A small cut drips blood onto the tracks as he walks. Behind him we can just see the front of the train, fading into the shadows.

A rat squeaks and Sean turns sharply, his posture alert and tense.

Ahead, a glimmer of daylight beckons, and Sean hurries forward.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY.

Two people walk through an alley, clearly in a poorer district.

The first, an overweight middle-aged man in jeans and a polo, walks forward-facing, head moving from side to side, searching. The second, a teenager in school uniform, moves behind him, walking backwards and scanning the area behind.

At the top of the alley, another figure stands, silently waiting.

Rannoch watches from behind a skip as they near, but seeing only the man. His breathing is heavy, but he is desperately trying to hold it.

The man passes by, and Rannoch lets out a deep breath, before catching it quickly as the teenager comes into view.

The teenager stops, staring at the skip.

Rannoch freezes.

The teenager begins walking closer, and Rannoch steadies himself, preparing to run. As he moves his foot, he knocks a glass bottle, causing it fall onto the ground with a loud

clink.

The teenager advances, and Rannoch darts out, side-stepping the grasp of the teenager. A soft thud is heard behind him, but he doesn't notice. He smirks at his own cleverness, before tripping over a large mass and falling to the ground.

The teenager rotates, and pauses. At Rannoch's feet lies the man, a yellow-purple bruise swelling on his forehead.

Behind stands the girl from the bus stop, wielding a hockey stick fiercely. She looks down at him.

RANNOCH

(whimpering)

Please, please don't hurt me..

She rolls her eyes, steps over him and swings her stick at the teenager, who raises his hands to protect his head. Cassidy pulls back and swings low, catching the teen in the leg. The teen collapses to one knee, and examines his leg curiously.

He doesn't see the swing to his head, and seconds later crashes to the floor unmoving.

Cassidy is breathing heavily, leaning on her stick for support. She lightly kicks Rannoch, who is still lying on the floor.

CASSIDY

Oi, could've helped?

Rannoch stands, and dusts himself off as best he can.

RANNOCH

I am not prone to fighting in a
backwards alley like some common thug,
Miss...

Cassidy stares at him in disbelief for several long seconds. Rannoch gestures with his hand, awaiting the reply.

CASSIDY

(curtly)

Cass.

He frowns disapprovingly.

RANNOCH
Miss Cass, mmh.

She peers at him, frowning.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
What?

CASSIDY
Have we, have we met?

He looks down at her and smirks.

RANNOCH
I somehow doubt it that our social
circles intersect, you see I-

CASSIDY
You're the bloke from the bus stop.
Last night.

RANNOCH
Ah, well, that would explain it.

Several awkward moments pass.

CASSIDY
Well then, guess I'll leave you to it.
Have a nice doomsday!

Cassidy begins striding out of the alley as the man at Rannoch's feet begins to stir. He notices, and hurriedly jumps back.

RANNOCH
Hey! Hey you girl, wait!

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION PLATFORM - DAY.

Sean steps into daylight. He hurriedly shields his eyes and examines the platform.

A steep set of stairs lead directly outside, allowing daylight to pierce the dim darkness of the underground. Nearby, a flickering holo-screen advertisement reads: JOIN THE HIVE.

Sean climbs onto the platform, and after allowing his eyes to adjust, looks up the staircase. Three silhouetted figures stand there, backs facing him.

As Sean begins to ascend the staircase, he checks his HIVE-unit, and the 'NO SIGNAL' text begins flickering.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY.

Rannoch is pacing anxiously while Cassidy peers through a backdoor leading outside. Her hockey stick rests against a counter.

Rannoch stops, frustration building up. He lashes out, swiping a pot of utensils off the counter.

Cassidy turns at the noise, hurriedly pulling the door shut.

CASSIDY

Dude, what the hell? We're trying to keep on the downbeat, yeah? So quit your tantrum.

RANNOCH

Tantrum!? You will not talk to me like that, girl. You should know your place.

CASSIDY

Then don't behave like it, Jesus. I saved you once alright, might not do it again; *(beat)* After all, it's not my place.

She smirks and pokes her tongue at Rannoch, who glares at her as she hops onto a counter top.

RANNOCH

Tell me right now, what the fuck is going on?

Cassidy sighs, resting her eyes. She is tired.

CASSIDY

I don't know; *(beat)* Something happened last night. HIVE's public systems went down, and didn't come back online.

Rannoch subconsciously runs his hand over his arm.

RANNOCH

But, but the people out there, their units are on, I saw them!

CASSIDY

Whatever you think you saw, you have to understand: this is not HIVE, not as we know it anyway.

RANNOCH

Could it be terrorists? Hacking into the network, or sabotaging the systems? Or the Russians?

CASSIDY

The Russians, really?

She reconsiders, shrugs.

Could be. Might just be an error in the programming, might even be acting of its own accord.

RANNOCH

A little far-fetched don't you think? It's just a computer after all.

CASSIDY

You know scientists have been predicting technological singularities for decades?

Rannoch appears lost.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

The singularity is the event where technological advancements will exceed human control. Basically it outgrows us.

They both sit in silence for a few moments.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

God you people are so naive! I've been trying to tell people this for years but oh no, I'm just the crazy doomsday girl. You know I studied this? Got a first in computer science, travelled the world but noo, it's too

(MORE)

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
inconvenient to believe that it might
be dangerous. And now look..

RANNOCH
(somewhat awkwardly)
So, er, Miss Cass, how come you aren't
going postal with the rest?

CASSIDY
I wasn't stupid enough to have one of
those.. things in my arm.

RANNOCH
How come? I thought everybody had one
by now.

CASSIDY
Did you not hear anything I just
said?It's dangerous. I could never
stomach it. The thought of having some
device in my body that controls
everything? No thanks. Call me old
fashioned but I prefer phones.

RANNOCH
Phones? Those outdated bricks people
used some thirty years ago?

Cassidy nods.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
(mockingly)
Wow, you really are poor aren't you?

Cassidy waves her hockey stick at Rannoch threateningly.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
But doesn't it require constant
supervision and maintenance?

CASSIDY
Er, I guess I have to keep it charged
and stuff?

RANNOCH
Seems like a lot of effort to me, I
mean the HIVE-units are so much more
convenient. No use in resisting
progress.

CASSIDY
And how's that working out for you?

Rannoch sighs and slides to the floor.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
What about you?

RANNOCH
What about me what?

CASSIDY
How come you're not some killer robot?

RANNOCH
My unit was offline when whatever
happened.. happened. Some bloody kid
broke it crashing into me.

Cassidy chuckles.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
It's not funny! Do you know how much
money that brat cost me?

Cassidy raises her eyebrows.

CASSIDY
Really?

RANNOCH
What?

CASSIDY
You really.. Okay, wow. That kid is
the only reason you're not some
mindless drone! Wake up and gain some
bloody perspective.

Rannoch glares sulkily as Cassidy checks the door again. She pulls the door to and the sound of footsteps can be heard outside.

Rannoch searches his pockets and draws out the pamphlet from the night before. He reads how reconnecting units to the HIVE-severs can take between 15 and 20 hours.

After a few long seconds, the footsteps move away. Cassidy glances outside and grabs her hockey stick.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

I'm off.

RANNOCH

Off? You think you're going to survive this all by yourself?

CASSIDY

(snarky)

I've been doing better than you, Mi'lord.

RANNOCH

Where are you even going to go?

CASSIDY

Was thinking of heading to the countryside. Seems the safest bet under the circumstances. Less signals and stuff. Why? You coming?

Rannoch glances down at the pamphlet and shoves it into his pocket. He nods.

RANNOCH

I need to leave as soon as possible.

As Cassidy peers out of the door and starts to exit, Rannoch grabs a knife off the kitchen wall. As Cassidy turns back he hides it.

CASSIDY

Come on then, we're going underground.

Rannoch pauses.

RANNOCH

Literally?

CASSIDY

(frowns)

Obviously.

RANNOCH

How can you literally go underground?

He pauses for a second and then realises.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)

You don't mean?

CASSIDY

Course I do, make us harder to find
won't it? Plus, with a bit of luck,
nobody's going to be looking down
there.

RANNOCH

I refuse to ruin this jacket with that
processed filth. It costs more than
money than you can earn in a month.

Cassidy looks back, exasperated.

CASSIDY

We're not going into the sewers you
idiot, we're going to THE underground,
the train tunnels? There's a line
that'll take us right to the outskirts
of the city.

Rannoch tries to hide his embarrassment as he follows Cassidy
out of the door.

EXT. UNDERGROUND STATION ENTRANCE - DAY.

Cassidy and Rannoch dart across an empty road. No one else is
in sight, the streets are eerily silent. She peers around a
building corner and swears under her breath.

RANNOCH

What? What is it?

Cassidy steps back as Rannoch looks out. Three people stand
surveying the area, facing outwards.

UNKNOWN VOICE

(O.S.)

Hey!

Cassidy and Rannoch peer out, alarmed as the guards turn.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION PLATFORM - DAY.

SEAN

Hey you! What's going on?

As Sean nears the entrance, the trio ahead turn to face him.

SEAN (CONT'D)

All the power's gone, no light or anything down here. Has something happened?

They simultaneously cock their heads and Sean stops. Something is wrong here.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Err, hello?

Cautiously Sean approaches, and continues trying to elicit a response.

Suddenly the central figure, the drunkard King from the night before rushes forward, arms out-stretched. Sean jerks to the side, but is grappled by the man. He stumbles backwards as he holds onto him, footing poor on the narrow stairs.

Both fall into the platform.

Sean wearily stands, a purple bruise swelling on his face.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Argh what the hell!?! Are you crazy?

The man makes no move to stand. He warily examines him and notices his red HIVE-unit as it flickers off: NO SIGNAL.

He checks his own unit, now firmly offline. He considers this and climbs the stairs again, eyeing his own unit.

Once the signal begins restoring, Sean stops. The two remaining figures reach out and step towards him but Sean steps back once and they stop.

Sean notices a red glow through the thin blouse of a business woman, her partner's arm, an old man covered in fleecy clothing, cannot be seen.

SEAN (CONT'D)

What.. what the fuck?

EXT. UNDERGROUND STATION ENTRANCE - DAY.

From their perspective, Cassidy and Rannoch observe as a figure in a red cloak and crown descends the stairs. They hear a young man's shouts, and see the remaining figures step lower before halting.

CASSIDY
(under her breath)
Come on!

Before Rannoch can object, Cassidy is creeping towards the platform.

Rannoch whispers furiously at her but she ignores him, pointing to the stairs and mouthing 'safe'. He follows.

Nearing the mouth, Cassidy sees a young, scrawny looking man standing below the two remaining people. They lock eyes, recognise each other. Despite himself, the man smiles.

She puts a finger to her lips and he nods.

Rannoch joins Cassidy near the entrance.

RANNOCH
(whispering)
What now?

She shrugs.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
(also whispering)
What do you mean you don't know?

CASSIDY
Cause a distraction.

RANNOCH
YOU cause a distraction!

She rolls her eyes and moves slightly further away and stands, hiding the hockey stick behind her back.

CASSIDY
(innocently)
Um, excuse me, something's happened to my friends can you help?

The two remaining figures turn instantly. The woman cocks her head.

BUSINESS WOMAN
Knock knock.

She smiles and rushes her. Cassidy swings the hockey stick low and topples her, quickly preparing to attack the old man, but cannot bring herself to swing.

She tries to dodge his flailing hands but fails.

Rannoch runs past as the old man grabs Cassidy's hair.

Rannoch looks back as she cries out but continues running, hiding behind Sean, who watches, aghast.

As Rannoch hides, the man shakes him loose and climbs into the street. He eyes his HIVE-unit, the signal is connecting.

Cassidy drops the hockey stick as Sean rushes past and shoves the old man to the floor. He does not release his grip and Cassidy joins him.

The signal is already at 22%. Sean hurriedly pries the fingers loose whilst fending off the man's other hand.

SEAN

Sorry about Mayfair Cass', I-

CASSIDY

(grunting)

Not the time.

Cassidy looks up as the sound of feet is heard. Towards them run more people, all in unison. Even from here the familiar red glow can be seen.

Finally Sean and Cassidy untangle themselves from the old man.

Sean's unit is at 56%. Both scramble towards the stairs, Cassidy grabbing her fallen weapon as she goes.

Together they make it down the staircase where an unapologetic Rannoch stands, straightening his tie.

They both stare at him, furious but out of breath. He peers down at them.

RANNOCH

(curtly)

It is important to maintain standards.
You might consider sorting yourselves
out.

Sean is about to reply when Cassidy hugs him. They hold each other for several moments.

CASSIDY
(whispering)
Thank you.

Suddenly the sunlight darkens and they break apart. Looking back up the stairs they can see a silent mass of people observing them. A little girl (8) steps forward.

HIVE
You cannot survive here. This environment will prove fatal to you in less than four days.

CASSIDY
I don't plan on being down here very long. *(beat)* If you can't even follow us, how you going to find us?

HIVE
There are over eight million humans living within this city alone. The stations will be observed. Soon you will rise, and we will join together.

Cassidy, scared but determined, starts heading down. Sean and Rannoch follow.

INT. UNDERGROUND RAILWAY - DAY.

The trio are walking through the tunnels, Rannoch slightly ahead.

Cassidy and Sean are conversing in low voices. He shows her his HIVE-unit, gesturing to the 'NO SIGNAL'. She is saddened.

INT. UNDERGROUND RAILWAY INTERSECTION - DAY.

Rannoch pauses at an intersection, turns to speak but is roughly shoulder-checked by Cassidy who takes the left tunnel.

Sean follows, avoiding Rannoch's gaze.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION PLATFORM - DAY.

Cassidy and Rannoch are climbing a broken escalator, Sean paces nervously at the bottom. Cassidy looks back, descends.

RANNOCH

What?

SEAN

I can't go up there. My unit will reconnect.

Rannoch stares.

CASSIDY

He'll turn into one of those things!

RANNOCH

So?

CASSIDY

I'm not leaving him!
(quieter)
Not this time.

RANNOCH

That's his choice to make. But you and me? We can make it out of here!

They stare at him, disbelievingly.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)

Fine! If you're so keen on sticking together, why don't we just rip it out of you?

Rannoch draws out the knife; there's a moment of silence.

CASSIDY

You can't be serious?

Sean holds out his arm, the 'NO SIGNAL' text flickers occasionally.

SEAN

Do it.

CASSIDY

Sean no! We ca-

SEAN
Just do it.

Cassidy reluctantly holds down his arm as Rannoch steadies the knife at the edge of the HIVE-unit.

CASSIDY
3, 2, 1..

Rannoch barely applies pressure before Sean rips his arm away.

SEAN
(crying)
No! No, no, no, no, no, I, I can't I
can't I'm sorry..

There's a moment of silence.

RANNOCH
Well you can suit yourself girl, but I
refuse to stay in this filth any
longer.

He stands and brushes himself down before making for the stairs. Cassidy pulls him back roughly.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
Argh, get off! Fine! We'll do it your
way.

He grabs the hockey stick from Cassidy's hands and swings at Sean's arm... CRACK.

Sean cradles his arm as Cassidy comforts him.

CASSIDY
You sociopath!

RANNOCH
Unit broken yes? So problem solved.
Now if it wouldn't be any
inconvenience could we please leave
these godforsaken tunnels?

Rannoch begins climbing the escalator again. Whimpering and furious, Sean and Cassidy follow.

INT. UNDERGROUND HUB - DAY.

A large room awaits them.

Rows of ticket machines divide the room into quarters, with more escalators leading down to separate platforms. On the opposite side of the room, a ticket office stands nearby a set of stairs leading up to daylight.

A child's sobs quietly echo. Rannoch and Sean do not notice.

Rannoch begins walking across the foyer.

CASSIDY

Shush!

They listen.

RANNOCH

What the hell, where is it?

They scan the room, Sean points out the sobbing child curled in a ball.

CASSIDY

Poor thing.

She begins walking towards it.

RANNOCH

(hissing)

What are you doing!?

CASSIDY

I'm going to help that kid!

RANNOCH

Help it!? What if it's one of them?

CASSIDY

It can't be! (*beat*) The Technological Implants Act of 2039? Children under 5 can't legally receive implants because their cognition isn't considered to be fully developed enough to cope with the strains these systems put them under.

RANNOCH

What, how do you know all this stuff?

CASSIDY

Because I was campaigning for the age restriction to be higher! Do you have any idea what they actually put inside your body to make it all work? The manufactured bio-chemicals, the foreign substances..? Honestly, you sh-

SEAN

He's right Cass.

She looks at him despairingly.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Even if the kid is too young to have a unit it doesn't mean it's not a trap.

CASSIDY

So you think we should just leave the kid here then?

SEAN

I'm not saying that, just.. I don't know.

RANNOCH

(sighs)

Pick a side kid. Look, it's easy. We run up the stairs and out of the city, like you said. We can't stay down here, and outside the city there are fewer signals and therefore less of them. Correct?

Cassidy looks over at the kid, then back to Sean, then at Rannoch.

CASSIDY

Just, stay here?

A row of ticket machines divides the room, and she climbs over. As Cassidy nears the child, Rannoch begins shuffling slowly towards the exit, away from Sean.

Cassidy crouches down, places a hand on the child. The sobbing stops.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Hey, it's okay, shh, it's going to be
okay.

She turns back to the others.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
See? Everything's fi-

The child suddenly grabs Cassidy, knocking her to the floor.

A loud knocking begins echoing through the room. Rannoch and Sean twist and turn, paranoid. They cannot find the source. More knocks can be heard, from different exits and entrances, surrounding them.

RANNOCH
I fucking told you, why don't you
fucking listen to your betters!

As Cassidy breaks free from the child she loses her grip on her hockey stick and the child clutches it tightly.

People begin to emerge from the other tunnels and escalators.

SEAN
Cass?

CHILD
(playfully)
Knock knock.

Cassidy begins backing away. The child steps forward, maintaining distance. The others mirror the child.

Rannoch draws out his knife again, eyes the exit.

Cassidy suddenly vaults the ticket booths as HIVE rushes forward.

Rannoch goes for the exit, Sean close behind him.

Cassidy gets there first, but is grabbed by the courier.

RANNOCH
You!

The face barely registers Rannoch before he barrels into him, knifing him several times as Cassidy flees.

HIVE momentarily jerks still, before continuing the attack.

As he rushes up the stairs Rannoch looks back, they are close behind. Sean is just ahead of him, Cassidy out in front.

They burst onto the street, hands are reaching out toward them. Grasping.

Rannoch darts forward, pulls level with Sean.

He trips him.

SEAN

No! No, no, no! Help, help me!

Cassidy looks back as the HIVE swarms Sean, she begins slowing, but Rannoch grabs her and pulls her forward down a backstreet as several people follow.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS - DAY.

At the city's outskirts, Rannoch is walking away from Cassidy, who is crying.

CASSIDY

We have to go back! We have to! He's not gone, he's not!

Cassidy grabs his sleeve, yanks it backwards, tearing it, and the bandages underneath.

Rannoch glances at the damage before angrily turning on Cassidy. He shakes her hard.

RANNOCH

You don't get it do you? He's gone, and I am not risking my life to save some kid who couldn't cope with what's happening. It's survival of the fittest now, and if he couldn't keep up then he deserved to go.

CASSIDY

He.. what?

RANNOCH

We tried it your way Little Miss Compassionate, and look where that got
(MORE)

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
us. From now on, I'm looking out for
number one, I suggest you do the same.

CASSIDY
(with absolute contempt)
It's the only thing you know.

RANNOCH
Doesn't mean I'm not right.

He brandishes the bloody knife, points it at her.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
Now, are you coming?

As he raises his arm, Cassidy notices a faint red glow behind
the ripped fabrics.

She takes a sharp intake of air, but catches herself, averts
her eyes, nods.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
Now if you would be so kind as to lead
the way...

Cassidy heads off, wiping tears from her eyes.

EXT. DIRT TRACK - LATE AFTERNOON.

Cassidy and Rannoch are walking down a main road leading out
of the city.

CASSIDY
..there's a shortcut down here.

She gestures down a dirt track running behind a half-cut
wheat field. An idle futuristic combine harvester, somewhere
between drone and a tractor, stands nearby, the HIVE logo
emblazoned across one side.

Rannoch sighs unhappily, but begins walking down.

Cassidy moves beside him and slips the knife from his
waistband. She shoves him into the dirt.

RANNOCH
(coughing dirt)
What the hell?

Cassidy points the knife down at him.

CASSIDY
When were you gonna tell me?

RANNOCH
(spluttering)
Tell you what? What the fuck are you
doing!?

CASSIDY
Your arm is red you robot fuck!

RANNOCH
NO! No no no! You've got it wrong I'm
not like them!

EXT. NEIGHBOURING FIELD. LATE AFTERNOON

A farmer in muddy overalls is scanning the area.

CASSIDY
(shouting)
You lied to me! You're a fucking
robot, you're one of them!

She begins heading towards the shouts in the next field.

EXT. DIRT TRACK. LATE AFTERNOON.

RANNOCH
I didn't lie, please, you have to
believe me, I did-

CASSIDY
Shut up. (beat) Give me one bloody
good reason why I shouldn't stick this
blade in you and leave you here!

RANNOCH
Please, you can't leave me here!

CASSIDY
Why? You left Sean, and I'm just
looking out for number one, remember?

She looks defiantly smug.

RANNOCH
I don't care about your bastard
boyfriend!

Cassidy steps forward decisively.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
(panicking)
Please no! It's rebooting, please
don't kill me, oh fuck, oh fuck,
please don't kill me.

Cassidy lowers the knife slightly.

CASSIDY
Rebooting?

RANNOCH
(whimpering)
Oh please don't kill me.

CASSIDY
Hey!

She shakes Rannoch hard.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
What do you mean rebooting?

RANNOCH
It really was broken, I swear, but I
had it fixed. The surgeon said it
would need 24 hours to reconnect to
the main servers. That's why I came
with you, I need to get out the city,
out of the signal range before my unit
finishes connecting, or..

Rannoch exhales heavily, unable to finish. Cassidy frowns and
grabs his arm. The screen reads: CONNECTING... 78%. She
releases his arm.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)
(weakly)
Please, don't leave me here.

Cassidy shakes her head and walks away from him. Rannoch goes
to follow her but she turns, kicking him viciously in the
face as he tries to stand. His nose breaks.

RANNOCH (CONT'D)

Argh owww!
 (hissing)
 You fucking delinquent!

He clutches at his nose, blood pouring out, and collapses to the floor.

Cassidy crouches in front of him.

CASSIDY

That didn't sound like an apology.

She uses the knife edge to force his face upwards.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Try again.

RANNOCH

(hoarse,)
 Fuck you, bitch.

He spits blood at her and she recoils, noticing the farmer standing a few metres away. Several other people stand behind her, watching.

CASSIDY

Ohh fuck.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON.

Rannoch is limp-running behind Cassidy, still holding his bloody nose. He glances behind, sees HIVE giving chase, but occasionally faltering; missing a step or jerking a random limb.

The farmer is stood still, observing the surroundings. She notices the combine harvester and cocks her head. The body raises itself up and begins propelling the harvester across the field, accompanied by a deafening roar of the engine.

Cassidy disappears into the uncut wheat and Rannoch follows. As she passes a large wheat bale Rannoch throws himself behind it, petrified. HIVE runs straight past.

He checks his unit: 94%.

He quickly begins heading in the opposite direction, but consumed with fear does not hear the impending engine growing louder. He trips while looking behind and falls as the harvester cuts across directly in front of him.

He staggers up, shell-shocked, and begins blindly running, stumbling out of the wheat and emerging nearby the farmhouse and barn.

He pauses for breath, but hears rustling behind him and rushes for the barn. Rannoch heaves the door closed and slinks down the wall, breathing heavily.

INT. BARN - EVENING.

With the door closed, the light is very dim.

Looking up, Rannoch double-takes as he sees several collapsed farmhands inside the barn. It looks as though they were loading wheat bales onto a trailer before. He peers at them for several moments before dismissing them.

Outside, Cassidy screams.

Peering through a loose board Rannoch sees her in the courtyard, swinging a rake desperately. She looks ten times worse than earlier, cuts and bruises across her face.

CASSIDY

Help!

Rannoch moves to hide at the back of the barn behind some farming equipment.

As he limps past the farmhands, their HIVE-units blink into effect, one at a time. Through the gaps between the boards, Rannoch sees a shape run past, accompanied by heavy footsteps and heavy breathing. It is followed by several more.

The farmhands clumsily stand, not fully connected.

He turns back, looking at his unit: 98% and 99% flicker back and forth. He sighs with relief, looks up and cries out.

The two farmhands move towards him, their movements jerky and uncoordinated.

Outside, now further away, Cassidy screams again.

Rannoch looks around, but there's nowhere to go.

RANNOCH

(crying)

Please, please, oh God, please no,
don't..

They loom closer, cornering him, arms outstretched.

Rannoch claws at the boards behind him with futility. His legs give way and he collapses.

FARMHAND

(playfully)

Knock knock..

His unit briefly shows 100% before showing the 'LOADING' symbol.

TEXT: CREDITS