REMNANT

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FADE IN:

INT. SECURITY STROLL

A DAZZLING JEWEL stares out of its case, resplendent --

The OVAL ROOM around it hums with illumination from the wall itself, a continuous construct smoothly curving into the floors and ceilings, glowing soft white.

This is a Security Stroll. The size of a hockey rink, empty except for the jewel...

...and a WHITE LASER POINT that suddenly appears at the entrance, floating across the floor, as the sound of FOOTSTEPS becomes audible.

On the roof, a rounded, plastic laser pointer WHINES as it generates the point.

At robotic pace, synced to the movement of the laser point, MASON (50) enters the room.

Powerfully-built, brown-skinned, Mason has a labourer’s roughness about him that’s at odds with the pristine Stroll. He’s dressed for survival in the desert, his clothing layered, thick, and weather-worn. GOGGLES on his head.

He follows the laser point along one wall of the room to the other end of the oval and holds his wrist up to a rounded, plastic lens in the wall. It BEEPS. This is a Shift Check.

The white point continues around the room. Mason follows.

On the roof, the laser pointer whirs away.

LATER

Mason follows the white point into the room. It’s impossible to tell whether this is the same room, or not. He follows the laser point to the Shift Check -- BEEP! -- and back out.

LATER

Mason approaches another Shift Check and raises his wrist.

MASON

Beep!

The first sign of life.

The Shift Check BEEPS.
INT. SECURITY STROLL - HALLWAY

Mason follows the white point down a hallway with the same rounded, glowing wall, stopping at a T junction. Down the hallways, Security Strolls are visible. Two in all.

The bottom part of the T junction is blocked by a closed door.

Mason rolls up his sleeve and places it in a small compartment in the wall, which glows soft blue. A Punch Clock.

On Mason’s bared arm, a tattoo-like bar extends from just below the inside of his elbow, up towards his wrist. It’s not fixed to his skin, but seems almost holographic.

The Punch Clock BEEPS, and the bar recedes slightly, further away from Mason’s wrist. This is Mason’s TAB.

Behind him, the door slides silently open.

Outside, DARKNESS.

Mason flips his goggles down and steps out. The door shuts behind him.

EXT. SECURITY STROLL - NIGHT

COMPLETE DARKNESS.

Mason’s eyes are the only thing visible, bathed in green glow from the goggles. He looks left, right, then starts to walk.

LATER

A WHITE BAR of LIGHT appears, clutched in Mason’s hand. Just enough to illuminate him and the OUTSIDE WALL of the Security Stroll behind him.

He sets the light down and trudges out into the darkness. After a moment, a point of RED LIGHT appears in the distance. It BEEPS once as Mason turns and walks back into the light.

Mason sits, his back against the wall, and breathes out hard through his teeth. Flicks his goggles off.

After a moment, he takes out a BUSTED UP MP3 PLAYER and puts an earbud in one ear. TINNY MUSIC plays. He turns it up...
Eventually, some might recognize Jay-Z’s HOLY GRAIL.

Mason closes his eyes for a long moment, then reaches out and touches the light bar. It fades.

Nothing but the tinny music and darkness.

**LATER**

The point of RED LIGHT hums away, steady. Total quiet.

Then, a FAINT SOUND.

The red light starts to blink steadily.

MASON’S EYES pop open as his goggles also light up a dim red, flashing in time with the red light. He’s on his feet instantly, flicking his goggles over to green light.

He heaves something away from him with a GRUNT. It lands in the distance and glows white -- the light bar.

FOOTSTEPS sound in the darkness, stealthy...

...but not stealthy enough. An IMPACT. The SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE, then something HEAVY FALLS.

A MAN CRIES OUT, and then, a CRUNCH.

After a moment, the red light stops blinking, goes back to a steady hum.

Mason appears out of the darkness and scoops up the light bar, clicking it off.

**EXT. SECURITY STROLL/INT. HANGAR - DAY**

A white glow on Mason’s face, just like the light inside the Security Stroll. His eyes open.

In the “daytime” the whole area is visible. It’s a MASSIVE HANGAR, made of the same glowing white material as the Stroll. The Stroll itself is built into the hangar, rising out of the floor with smooth curves.
The hangar has several other Strolls, each roughly in the shape of a figure 8. But the front doors of every other Stroll are GREY, unlike the uniform WHITE door of Mason’s.

Mason retrieves a black tripod placed on the floor, the source of the red light from last night. A Motion Ping. He telescopes it down and slides it into his pocket.

He looks past it. A DEAD BODY, facedown on the floor, head caved in, a FUTURISTIC GUN in its hand.

LATER

Mason pulls the body around the corner of the Stroll to reveal TWO MORE BODIES dumped against the wall. He throws the new body down next to them and rifles through its clothing.

He pulls the body’s sleeve up. The gun is attached to the man’s arm, grafted onto his TAB right at the wrist. Like the weapon is growing right out.

MASON
Cred-Runner. Shit.

He stands and looks at the bodies.

No sign of violence on the other two, except that their TABs run right up to their wrists...and a sharp, elongated PIECE OF PLASTIC punches up through each body’s wrist, right at the end of the TAB, as though it came from inside.

Mason puts his goggles down, scans some information inside them, then puts them back up. He walks to the front of the Security Stroll.

A TERRIFIED MAN staggers into him. Mason pushes him off.

TERRIFIED MAN
I need work. Please. I need work.

He holds out his wrist. His TAB is almost completed.

TERRIFIED MAN
Please help me.

He stumbles forward. Mason punches him, dropping him to the ground.

TERRIFIED MAN
No. Please! I-

He looks down in terror at his wrist.

Something inside it BEEPS.
He screams.

A sharp, elongated piece of plastic, just like on the dead bodies, pops out of his wrist. Blood spurts.

He wriggles forwards, grabbing at Mason’s leg. Mason steps back, checking his own TAB.

**MASON**

One more time.

As if on cue, the WHITE DOOR slides open to reveal the hallway and the Punch Clock.

**MASON**

Can we hit it and quit?

He steps inside. The door closes behind him.

The Terrified Man lies on the floor, bleeding out.

**INT. SECURITY STROLL**

The laser pointer WHINES away, light in a bright white point. Mason does his rounds. Holds up his wrist.

BEEP!

**LATER**

Mason follows the white point.

Suddenly, he stops. Cocks his head.

The white point continues, becoming an ANGRY RED as it gets further and further away from him.

Mason turns and dashes towards the hallway.

**INT. SECURITY STROLL - HALLWAY**

Mason shoves his arm into the Punch Clock. It barely reduces his TAB. The door slides open behind him.

**INT. HANGAR - DAY**

Mason turns from the Punch Clock and sprints out the door, full force.
He falls to the ground. Looks back. He tripped over the Terrified Man’s corpse.

He stands, sprints. Breathing hard. For a second, he’s running in silence, face set. Then --

THE SOUND OF A SHOT. Another. Mason’s still running hard.

BLOOD EXPLODES from Mason’s left arm as a projectile rips through it. He stumbles but keeps sprinting.

A GANG of SHIFT-ROBBERS is spread out behind him, silent and mean, leaning into the chase. Like Mason, dressed for survival. Out front, another CRED-RUNNER tries to hold her weapon steady at full tilt.

They sprint after Mason, each of them tiny black imperfections in the vast whiteness of the hangar.

Mason’s breath is raspy. He sneaks a glance behind him -- they’re gaining. A PROJECTILE SCREAMS BY.

Mason pulls his light bar out, skids to a halt, aims, and throws it. He’s running again before the light bar SMASHES the Cred-Runner in the neck, dropping her to the ground.

Her weapon goes off as she falls, the sharp CRACK echoing through the room as the chase continues.

Mason angles around one of the Security Strolls, and now his destination is in view.

An off-grey cylinder the size of a small elevator car stands on the floor, the first non-human thing here that isn’t attached to everything else. A Transit Pod.

The Shift-Robbers tear around the corner. Close, now. A TALL SHIFT-ROBBER yells at Mason from the rear of the pack.

TALL SHIFT-ROBBER
You got the credit for that! No way you got credit, shigger!

Behind Mason, a DANGEROUS SHIFT-ROBBER draws a short sword. Mason’s giving it his all, feet pounding the floor.

The Shift-Robbers gaining...Dangerous grins, bringing his sword up as he closes the last few feet...

Mason hurls himself through the doors of the Transit Pod and thrusts his wrist into a compartment in the wall. It’s bathed in red light.
MASON
Come on!

The Dangerous Shift-Robber roars as he angles the sword down. Mason locks eyes with him.

BEEP!

The doors to the Pod slam shut. The Shift-Robber’s sword slams painfully against them. He YELPS in pain, then ROARS in frustration as the rest of the gang catches up, breathing hard, studying the closed doors.

TALL SHIFT-ROBBER
Credit for a pod.

DANGEROUS SHIFT-ROBBER
Fuck!

TALL SHIFT-ROBBER
Forget him. That stroll must pay big, and we lost two. More for us.

Dangerous glares at the pod.

TALL SHIFT-ROBBER
More for us.

He puts a hand on Dangerous’ shoulder and pulls him back as the Transit Pod silently starts to rise into the air, first slow, then faster

DANGEROUS SHIFT-ROBBER
Yeah. More for us!

The gang whoops as the Pod rises towards the ceiling of the hangar. A small, circular HANGAR DOOR opens into the ceiling to reveal complete blackness outside.

On the bottom of the Pod, the quiet glow of a large, circular IMPULSE ENGINE, powering it upwards.

INT. TRANSIT POD

Mason watches his TAB grow longer under the red light of the Pod’s compartment. A huge increase.

Almost up to his wrist. Mason winces.
**EXT. HANGAR**

From above, the incredible precision of the hangar door is visible -- the Travel Pod slides through with barely a centimetre of clearance, perfectly in the centre.

And as the Pod powers into the sky, the landscape it leaves below is different than expected...it’s THE MOON.

Covered in white HANGARS and SKYSCRAPERS, spread out across the surface, dead quiet, the craters and dust of the moon are still recognizable. Which means, as the Pod gains speed...

Hung in the sky in a vast black expanse, the Pod is aimed right at THE PLANET EARTH.

Or something like it. Because instead of green and blue, the Earth is grey and brown. The colours of CITIES and DESERTS.

But the Pod floats on, through the dark, towards a different world.

**EXT. DUNES – DAY**

The desert. Sun-burnt and lifeless.

A BLACK ROD is stuck in the sand, knee-high, the only sign of human life. In the distance, three more are visible, stretching out in a formation called the Community Line.

Then two pairs of little feet churn sand up to the top of the dune. AISHA (12), Aryan features, a sense of power, shields piercing blue eyes as he gazes upwards.

> AISHA
> You see it?

Behind him, TERL (13), a tall, awkward brunette, squints.

> TERL
> It’s coming down.

She waits for Aisha’s lead, but he just stares.

> TERL
> It’s coming down!

In the distance, the TRANSIT POD is barely visible, high in the sky but definitely headed earthward.

Aisha takes a few steps forward. Right to the black rod -- toeing the line. Terl’s agitation grows visibly.
TERL
We should get back.

Aisha raises a boot from the sand...then kicks it idly against the rod. Turns suddenly and strides past Terl.

AISHA
C’mon.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - DAY

Livable, geodesic tents perch on the sand, in a circle around the massive HALF-BUILT CHAPEL in the centre of the community. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS work steadily, an oasis of sound and humanity in the empty desert. The Chapel Construction.

Terl struggles to keep up to Aisha as he reaches the tents at a run and beelines through towards the CHAPEL.

He stops at the bottom, fresh-faced despite the run.

AISHA
Mom!!

EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - ROOF - DAY

At the top of the site, a woman straightens from work.

She pushes sweat off a kind, youthful face with a glove. She moves like she’s done no-nonsense, hard work her whole life, and she’s got the muscles to match. This is MYRNA (33).

Behind her, the other workers continue, moving rhythmically and robotically, guided by the same WHITE LASER POINTERS as in the Security Stroll. Here, though, they talk and joke while they work.

Myrna’s work partner, TOM (42), grins at her, his grizzled face wearing the expression comfortably.

MYRNA
That kid is gonna be sad as hell when next year hits and he’s labour-ready.

TOM
So indulge him now. Punch out and send Jayce up.

MYRNA
I’ve got 80 minutes still.
AISHA (O.S.)

MOM!!

Tom raises a cheerful eyebrow as Myrna shakes her head.

MYRNA
I’ll get Jayce back tomorrow.

TOM
Hey. Takes a village to spoil a child.

EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - BASE - DAY

Aisha strides around the corner of the Chapel, Terl trailing, to reveal a set of three HYDRAULIC LIFTS at the side wall.

Myrna descends on one platform, posture sternly expectant, clutching the lift’s CONTROL POD. Aisha’s words start spilling while she’s still twenty feet up.

AISHA
We stayed in bounds the whole time!
But there was a Transit Pod, at the Launch.
(to Terl)
Tell her!

TERL
We were in bounds.

Myrna’s face tightens as the lift travels the last few feet.

AISHA
But the pod was coming down. From space. Down to the Launch.

Myrna’s expression freezes as the lift stops. Obviously, the pods don’t do that.

Aisha stares up at her.

AISHA
We were in bounds.

INT. MYRNA’S TENT - DAY

The inside of the geodesic tent is laid out for functionality, but the slight clutter, along with pieces of charcoal art on the walls, give a homey feeling.
The tent is one room, no privacy. Myrna enters and grabs a rucksack from just inside the door. She pulls out a pair of GOGGLES, like Mason’s but less heavy duty, and snaps them onto her head.

Terl stands by the door, casting longing glances outside, as Aisha crosses to his bed at the near wall.

Myrna crosses to the far end and pulls a RIFLE CASE from underneath her bed. She hefts the rifle, a FUTURISTIC but sand-torn and rusted weapon, and rounds on the kids.

Aisha holds up a RIFLE MAGAZINE. She eyes him, then Terl.

MYRNA
Terl, would you get your brother please? And nobody else.

Terl turns smartly out the door. Aisha’s hand wavers under the magazine as Myrna levels her gaze on him again.

Then she takes the magazine and slaps it into the rifle.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - TERL’S TENT - DAY

A juncus stalk is pulled into place against one side of a woven structure by well-worn hands.

TERL (O.S.)
Roper!

ROPER (16), a kind, simple face atop a massive, muscular body, looks up as Terl approaches. He holds tension in the juncus stalk, which is part of a fourteen-foot tall weave.

Terl stops in her tracks, distracted by the structure.

TERL
You’re actually making it!

ROPER
Need something?

Terl studies Roper’s work a moment longer, then snaps back.

TERL
Myrna wants you. Just you.

ROPER
Guess we’re going past the Line.
EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY

The launch is obviously fallen into disuse. What was once a series of interlocking metal circles, landing and launch sites for transit pods, now looks like a junkyard.

Several pods litter the ground, tipped and destroyed. Those standing don’t look like they would fly. A skeletal hand stretches out of a ruined pod, a desperate death.

In the sky, Mason’s pod descends towards the earth.

Feet stir the dust as an ARMED, EMACIATED COUPLE cross the launch circles and take cover behind a standing transit pod. This is TARAN and SAFI (mid 30s), their inviting faces belied by desperate eyes.

They watch the pod, then lock eyes. Taran draws a gun from his belt and clutches Safi’s hand.

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - HIGH GROUND - DAY

Myrna and Roper watch from the peak of a dune, rifles in hand, concealed by the slope. They watch Taran and Safi.

   MYRNA
   Drifters.

   ROPER
   Could be Cred Runners.

Above, the Pod’s impulse engines glow as its descent slows.

Below, Taran hefts his gun.

   MYRNA
   No, his weapon’s loose. How many bullets you got?

   ROPER
   Four.

Myrna holds up three fingers to his silent question.

INT. TRANSIT POD

Mason looks up as a band of white light runs up the inside walls of the pod. A COOL FEMALE VOICE sounds.

   TRANSIT ANNOUNCER
   Welcome to Earth.
Mason stands and studies his TAB. Not much time.

Suddenly, an IMPACT knocks him sideways.

**EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY**

The Pod SMASHES into the remnants of two others as its automatic system forces it towards a designated landing pad.

It tips and slams hard into the ground, rolling sideways, a large chunk torn out of it.

**EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY**

Myrna watches through her rifle scope as the Pod rolls to a stop in the middle of an empty adjacent landing pad.

Taran gestures for Safi to stay put and starts towards the Pod, gun raised. Then --

A HIGH PITCHED BEEP, short and digital, echoes across the dunes.

**EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY**

Taran drops to the ground as the BEEP echoes again.

His gun drops to the sand as he falls to his knees and scrabbles desperately at the sand, digging a hole.

Behind him, Safi does the same.

**EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY**

Roper watches as Myrna starts to paw the sand. She glances up at him for a quarter of a second.

**MYRNA**

Dig!

**ROPER**

What is it?

**MYRNA**

Auditor.

BEEP! Closer, this time.

**ROPER**

I thought they-
MYRNA
-fucking dig, Roper!

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY

Taran pulls a last few handfuls of sand from the ground and plunges his TAB wrist forward, deep into the hole.

BEEP!

Behind him, Safi pushes her wrist down and starts to pull sand back around her submerged forearm.

EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY

Roper watches as Myrna repeats the same bizarre actions, then pushes his own wrist down.

BEEP!

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY

The humans stop moving. Everything goes silent and still.

Then, with a cold, mechanical WHIRRING NOISE, a perfectly round, opaque white sphere, levitating nine feet off the ground, moves into the centre of the Moon Launch.

BEEP! The sphere flashes a brighter white as it emits the sound. This is an Auditor.

It hovers, perfectly still.

INT. TRANSIT POD

Blood runs down Mason’s forehead.

He’s on his back, angled awkwardly downwards in the crushed cavity of the Pod.

His eyes fall on a square red panel by his foot. That exact, particular shade of red of an EXIT sign.

He grunts in pain as he stretches a leg out towards it.
EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY

The Auditor moves towards Taran’s prostrated body on a perfect vertical axis. It stops a foot away from being exactly above him.

BEEP!

Taran’s face stiffens, but he gets a hold of himself. He falls back into perfect stillness.

After a long moment, the Auditor moves away.

EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY

The Auditor is visible below, moving towards Myrna and Roper’s location but with no sense of intent.

BANG!

Behind it, Mason’s Pod flips over as a passenger eject mechanism fires. It lands face up as the doors open.

The Auditor goes FULL BLACK, emits a LOUD, LOW TONE, and zooms away, past Myrna.

MYRNA

Shit.

She pulls Roper up as the Auditor disappears into the distance.

ROPER

What’s happening?

Myrna hoists her rifle up and sights down the scope. Below, Safi runs towards Taran as he stands up.

MYRNA

That’s how it calls the Collector.

ROPER

That was really an Auditor?

MYRNA

You Chapel-born. Clueless.

Roper takes up his rifle reproachfully as Myrna swings the scope towards the Pod. It’s still, open door facing upwards, no sign of Mason.
MYRNA
Whoever’s in there has got about 90 seconds before the Collector’s on them.

ROPER
And us.

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY
Safi trails as Taran approaches the Pod, gun leading.

TARAN
Hey, who’s in there? You okay?
He adopts an obvious firing stance as he edges closer.

TARAN
We’re here to help.
He nods at Safi. She makes her voice soothing.

SAFI
Yeah. Yeah we’re here to-
Mason’s goggles fly out of the Pod in a lazy arc. Startled, Taran squeezes the trigger. BANG!

The shot ECHOES as the goggles land at Taran’s feet. He looks down.

WHAM! Mason slams into Taran, tackling him to the ground. He knees Taran in the groin and rolls off, grabbing his goggles off the ground as Safi charges.

He brings the goggles up in a sweeping motion and hurls them into Safi’s face, drawing blood. As she stumbles forward, he kicks her in the side of the knee. She drops.

EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY
Roper raises his eyebrows and glances at Myrna.
Her face tightens as she keeps her sights on Mason.

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY
Mason grabs his goggles, jumps over Taran, and takes off at a sprint, away from the High Ground concealing Myrna and Roper.
Taran struggles to his feet.
TARAN
Wait! I’m sorry. We just need help!

Mason maintains pace. Taran grabs his gun.

SAFI
You came down! Please help us!

FZZT! A BALL OF ENERGY shoots over Safi’s shoulder and slams into Mason’s back. He drops to the ground.

BRAAAAMP! A loud, aggressive, low tone sounds as Taran and Safi turn, terror on their faces.

A COLLECTOR stands behind them. All black, seven feet tall, somewhere between a medieval knight and a futuristic SWAT operative. Its whole head is opaque, uniform black.

COLLECTOR
Citizens.

Visor-shaped white flashes accentuate each syllable of its booming speech.

COLLECTOR
Weaponry is the sole right of the State and its Subsidiaries.

Taran drops his gun in the sand.

EXT. HIGH GROUND – DAY

Roper eyes Myrna.

ROPER
What are we doing?

MYRNA
Can’t do anything.

ROPER
Can’t let them die.

Myrna stares him down, then looks away.

EXT. MOON LAUNCH – DAY

Mason coughs and rolls onto his back. He struggles up, resolutely still as he watches the Collector takes a single, menace-heavy step towards Taran and Safi.
COLLECTOR
You will be fined.

SAFI
Please don’t.

COLLECTOR
Weaponry is the sole right of-

TARAN
There is no State!

COLLECTOR
-the State and its Subsidiaries.

TARAN
Are you a human?! Please! Look around you, there’s no-

His wild gesture takes in Mason, a hundred feet out. He stops. He locks eyes with Mason.

The Collector grabs Taran by the hand. Mason watches, impassive. Safi screams.

Taran’s TAB shoots up to his wrist. He yells.

A PIECE of ELONGATED PLASTIC shoots up through his wrist. The same as the corpses at the Security Stroll. He falls to the ground, hot spurts of blood staining the sand.

COLLECTOR
Partial payment is unacceptable.
This debt is transferable to your spouse and other immediate family.

Safi registers the words. She turns and sprints.

The Collector’s chest FLASHES as another BALL OF ENERGY flies from its chest and slams into Safi’s back, knocking her off her feet. Her face hits the sand hard.

She painfully raises her head and starts to pull herself towards Mason, who still stands, impassive.

The Collector takes a few short steps to catch up to her. It grabs her by the arm, then looks up at Mason.

COLLECTOR
Citizen. Come forward.

Mason starts forward as the Collector grabs Safi by the palm.
EXT. HIGH GROUND - DAY

Myrna grits her teeth as Safi’s face contorts in fear.

MYRNA
Oh, fuck it.

Roper looks sharply at her.

MYRNA
In the chest, when it fires.
Understand?

ROPER
I can’t hit it from here.

MYRNA
Yep.

She stands and sprints over the top of the dune. Down towards the Collector below.

EXT. MOON LAUNCH - DAY

Mason watches as Myrna, then Roper, charge over the hill. Myrna’s yelling at the top of her lungs.

MYRNA
Destroy the State! Destroy the State!

The Collector cocks its head.

ROPER
Destroy the State!

The Collector drops Safi and turns to face them.

COLLECTOR
Citizen! Cease incitement.

Mason raises an eyebrow at Safi.

MASON
Friends of yours?

She shakes her head.

MASON
Hmph. Death wish.

COLLECTOR
Cease incitement.
Myrna drops from a run to a firing stance with an easy agility. She squeezes the trigger.

TCHAK! The bullet impacts the Collector’s head with no apparent effect. The crushed piece of hot metal falls to the sand next to Safi.

She glances from it to Taran’s gun, ten feet away.

FZZT! The Collector’s chest yawns into a massive cavity of energy as it FIRES from its chest. Myrna pushes Roper to the side. The energy scorches the ground between them.

**MYRNA**

When it fires, hit inside! Get your shit together!

They scramble forward, taking cover behind a destroyed Transit Pod.

The Collector starts an unhurried walk towards them.

**MYRNA**

One two. You ready?

Roper nods.

Myrna stands and sprints towards an adjacent Pod.

The Collector FIRES. So does Roper. The bullet smashes harmlessly into the Collector’s hip.

Myrna tumbles to the ground as the ball of energy rips the top half of a Pod off. The Pod shudders and starts to collapse towards her.

She rolls into the open. The Collector swivels.

**ROPER**

Hey!

Roper stands and fires a bullet into the Collector’s head. It fires back. The blast of energy knocks the toppled Pod in front of Roper’s leg sideways, sending it careening into him and breaking his leg.

The Collector fires again. So does Myrna.

The bullet slams against the Collector’s chest, just inside the circle formed by its weapon. It staggers sideways.

The blast of energy hits Roper, killing him instantly.

Myrna struggles up, hefting her weapon.
The Collector catches itself, then fires on Myrna. She leaps sideways, firing back as she does. The bullet misses the Collector, and its blast catches her in the side, knocking her to the ground.

She rolls behind a destroyed Pod and throws her gun down. No bullets. She checks Roper’s steaming body, twenty feet away. The gun lies next to it.

Mason’s eyes trace her spot to the gun. No way she’s making it. Anyone can see that.

Safi looks up at him, eyes pleading.

Safi
Help us.

Collector
Be silent, Citizens.

It starts towards Myrna’s cover.

At the sound of the heavy footsteps, she makes a stumbling sprint for the gun, clutching her side. In the open.

The Collector cocks its head as it targets her.

WITH A YELL, Safi tackles the Collector just as it fires. She barely moves it, but it’s enough that its energy attack hits Myrna in the shoulder, dropping her but not killing her.

The Collector breaks Safi’s arm and hurls her to the ground. It grabs her by the palm. She SCREAMS as her TAB fills up and a plastic piece explodes out of her wrist.

Bright red blood. Safi whimpers as she dies slowly.

The Collector turns to target Myrna as she staggers up. She turns, a deer in headlights. That’s it.

Mason, Taran’s gun in hand, leaps onto the Collector’s shoulders, swings the gun down as the Collector’s chest yawns open, and unloads the clip directly into the cavity as the blast of energy emerges.

Mason screams as his hand fries. Myrna leaps to the ground, dodging the blast.

The Collector lets out a last, loud BRAAAAAMP! as it falls to its knees, Mason hanging on to its back.

It falls backwards, crushing Mason beneath it as it lands. His eyes go wide with the impact, then shut.
Myrna struggles to her feet, and then her eyes roll back in her head and she collapses sideways.

Then the Launch is still again, the bodies and blood and destroyed Collector new additions to the collection of useless junk.

**EXT. DUNES - NIGHT**

The Auditor moves fast across the dunes. With purpose.

BEEP! The sound echoes through the dead night.

**EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - ROOF - NIGHT**

A pale moon rises over night shift workers.

**INT. TOM’S TENT – NIGHT**

Mason’s eyes open.

He’s laid out on a table, a pillow under his head and a blanket covering him. It’s quiet inside the tent.

He raises his head off the table. Myrna’s in a bed across from him, bandaged and apparently unconscious.

His hand catches. He’s strapped to the table legs.

He looks around, then yanks his hand up. A GROAN OF PROTEST from the table. He pulls again.

MYRNA
Shut up. Don’t worry, shut up.

Mason looks over. Myrna stares at him from the bed, dazed.

He yanks hard on the table again. The leg RIPS OUT and the entire thing crashes over, dumping Mason onto the ground.

Mason starts to push himself up, then freezes. He looks down. A stump where his gun hand once was, bandaged, stained red.

TOM (O.S.)
My table!

Mason looks up to see Tom in the entrance to the tent.

MASON
My hand!
INT. TERL’S TENT - NIGHT

Terl lies alone in the tent. Across from her bed, another one, empty. A collection of juncus stalks leaned against it.

Her shoulders shake softly as she cries.

A RUSTLING outside. She sits up, wiping away tears as Aisha enters.

AISHA
Hey.

She sits up. He kneels and hugs her tight.

TERL
It was for the good, right? Even if they snuck out. My brother died for the good.

AISHA
Course. Just like our dads. Explorers.

TERL
Yeah. Explorers.

Aisha draws back and looks her in the eye.

AISHA
Um. I dunno if you want to come. But they’re awake.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - TOM’S TENT - NIGHT

Aisha and Terl sneak across the moonlit night towards Tom’s tent. Their paces slows as voices become audible.

INT. TOM’S TENT - NIGHT

Mason stands in the broken remains of the table, trying to yanks his other hand free.

TOM
Just hold on.

MASON
This doesn’t make me feel much like talking.

He pulls up again. The table GROANS. Tom draws a small, hand-held weapon.
TOM
Help us out, okay? Let’s just talk.

A taser. Mason recognizes it. He stops pulling.

MYRNA
We’re not gonna hurt you.

She stands, wincing as she does, and crosses to look Mason in the eye.

MYRNA
Nobody’s come down for decades. Is this the start of the Reintegration?

MASON
What the hell are you talking about?

MYRNA
When the State went underground, it was called the start of Reintegration. The State moves beneath the surface, and the workers that were sent Skyward return here.

Mason stares her down, incredulous.

TOM
They said you were coming back for us.

MASON
No.

The other two wait, but Mason has nothing more to say.

TOM
They said-

MASON
-everyone’s dead up there. A few people scraping by, a whole lot of Shift Robbers, and a bunch of burned out Shifts.

He looks around.

MASON
You got it better down here.
TOM
That’s impossible. They said we were prospering in the Sky.

MASON
I worked a decade to save for a Transit Pod back here.

He holds up his arm, his TAB nearly up.

MASON
Lost a hand, now I’m gonna die for it.

Tom sits down, hard. Wind gone from his sails.

MYRNA
Yeah. Thanks, by the way.

MASON
It true you didn’t know that woman?

Myrna nods.

MASON
I haven’t seen a…selfless action, for a long time.

MYRNA
You helped us.

MASON
I’m…sorry about-

A RUSTLE behind him. Before anyone can react, Mason RIPS his other hand upwards, separating it from the table. In two strides he’s at the door, pulling a terrified Aisha inside.

Terl runs in after them, trying ineffectively to pull Aisha from Mason’s grasp.

MYRNA
Let him go.

Mason does. Aisha backs away reproachfully as Myrna rounds on the two kids.

MYRNA
How long have you two-

She stops when she meets Terl’s eyes for the first time. Then she grabs Terl and hugs her.
MYRNA
You know he did it for the good, Terl.

Terl silently hugs her back. Mason shoots a glance at Tom.

TOM
Myrna and...the man who was with her have been exploring outside the community often. Looking for signs of the coming...of the Reintegration.
(to Myrna)
These kids are the reason we found you two.

Myrna’s eyes snap to Aisha.

MYRNA
Did you cross the Line?

AISHA
We didn’t. We just told Tom.

Her hand goes to her side. A sudden, strong pain. Tom grabs her by the shoulder and steers her towards the bed.

TOM
You need to rest. We all do.
(to Terl and Aisha)
You two, out. We’ll talk about listening in on private conversations in the morning.

They do as they’re told. He turns to Mason.

TOM
There’s enough work here to go around. You can trust us, stay and take a shift tomorrow, or you can try the desert. I can tell you there are no shifts for at least fifty miles, and I can tell you we’ve got plenty of Shift Robbers round here, too.

MASON
Okay.

He turns and walks out of the tent.

Tom follows to the door and watches as Mason sets out into the sand.
TOM
Huh.

MYRNA
He’ll be back.

She clutches her side in pain, trying to get comfortable.

MYRNA
He’s a survivor.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Mason crests a hill and looks back at the community, the tents circling the Chapel. On the roof, the night shift works away. The cross on the Chapel roof hasn’t been raised, but it’s visible, laid out in the moonlight.

Mason turns and walks away.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - DAWN

The sun peeks over the horizon.

INT. TOM’S TENT - DAWN

Light hits Myrna’s eyes. She sighs, then struggles up.

Tom is standing at the door, looking at something outside.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - TOM’S TENT - DAWN

Myrna shuffles out the door to join Tom. He’s staring down at the hooded, sleeping form of Mason, back pushed against the outside of the tent. Myrna laughs.

MYRNA
Told you.

Mason wakes with a start and peers up at them.

MASON
Let’s get to work.

TOM
Feel like some breakfast first?

Mason looks like he hasn’t heard that word in decades.
EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - DAY

Mason follows Tom and Myrna through the tents towards Myrna’s tent. Mason looks up at the Chapel, looming over them.

MASON
Everyone here lives off those shifts?

MYRNA
Yeah. For years we were bouncing around, catching temp shifts. Always moving. Then we found the Chapel.

MASON
Almost done.

TOM
We tear it down every few months.

Mason shields his eyes against the sun, peering up.

MASON
No kidding. Tech doesn’t catch you?

MYRNA
The tech’s old. Nobody from the State has been around for decades.

Mason glances down at his missing hand.

MASON
Except those Collector assholes.

MYRNA
When we were moving, they hunted us. They’ve ignored us since we settled here. This land was designated for the Chapel. Something special about it.

MASON
All that time I was shift-scavenging, one pointless job to the next. Thinking about getting here.

They stop outside Myrna’s tent. She smiles.

Inside, Aisha and Terl are curled up on the same bed, back to back, safe and secure.
MYRNA
Least you’re not alone here.

Tom glances into the distance.

TOM
And speaking of how the
Reintegration is a fable, shall we
get on to shattering everyone’s
worldview?

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - BREAKFAST TENT - DAY

JOVIAL CHATTER fills the air as day shift workers pass food,
joke, laugh, and get ready for their day.

The workers, all ages, colours, and genders, are seated on
the ground in front of a long row of mats.

One particular man, JAYCE (40s), a dark and brooding manner,
watches the others silently.

Then, the chatter falls silent as Tom, Myrna, Terl, and Mason
approach the tent. Other members of the community are
trailing them, keeping a respectful distance.

Jayce stands. Many of the others follow suit. Jayce levels a
finger at Mason.

JAYCE
You’re the man from the Sky.

MYRNA
Yes, Jayce.

Myrna raises her voice as MURMURING rises.

MYRNA
Yes, this is him. This man saved my
life and is here of his free will.
He can be trusted. I tell you now
that this is going to be
a...difficult conversation. If any
of you wish to take your children
away, do so.

Nobody moves.

JAYCE
We risked a lot to get you two
back. Always wanting to explore.
What have you found for us?
The murmuring dies away. All eyes to Myrna.

Mason surreptitiously leans down and scoops up some food.

**MYRNA**
There is and there will be no
Reintegration. The State lied. Most
in the Sky are dead, and the rest
are in poverty.

A deep, stunned silence falls over the community.

**TOM**
We live as well as anybody. We have
been happy here. As...upsetting as
this news may be, we can’t allow it
to change things that shouldn’t be
changed.

A **YOUNG MAN** steps out of the crowd.

**YOUNG MAN**
No Reintegration...this is all
there is? This, here?

Myrna nods.

Now the crowd ERUPTS, their questions and lamentations
blending into incoherence. Jayce’s voice rises above the din.

**JAYCE**
Myrna.

She stares him down.

**JAYCE**
All that time. Exploring. This is
what you bring us? This...nihilism?

**MYRNA**
All I ever sought was the truth.
Terl’s brother gave his life for
that. Now we know it. The State
abandoned us and the Sky dwellers.

**JAYCE**
Is that true, Sky man?

All eyes go to Mason, who’s shoveling food in his mouth. He
stops, then chews thoughtfully, observing the crowd.

**MASON**
On the moon, most are dead. We
scavenge shifts and try to live.

(MORE)
Some were sent to Mars, but I doubt they made it.

YOUNG MAN
So there’s hope. The ones that went on!

MASON
Hope?

He studies the faces of the crowd staring back at him, but he has nothing to say. Tom steps in front of him.

TOM
Of course there’s hope. Hope is nothing but a desire to make the best life we can of the possibilities that arise. And that’s what we’ve done here. That’s what we will do. The Chapel Construction project has supported this community and it will continue that way, until it’s time for us to move again. But we are strong. We-

His head explodes.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)
Cease incitement.

The voice floats out of nowhere. Everyone is silent.

BRAAAAMP! All heads turn outwards.

In every direction, in squads of three, Collectors are marching down the dunes and into the community, winding between the tents. At least thirty of them.

They fall in, a circle formation, corralling the community.

Myrna pulls Mason and Aisha back into the crowd.

One Collector steps forward. An Auditor moves with it, hovering closely.

COLLECTOR
Citizens. Thank you for your cooperation. This construction project is formally completed.

Myrna whispers to Aisha. He nods, and slips away. Terl follows him.
A YOUNG WOMAN faces the Collector, pushing her father’s hand away as he tries to hold her back.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    What do you mean, “completed”? We need these shifts!

    COLLECTOR
    The State no longer requires this Chapel.

    YOUNG WOMAN
    This is a death sentence!

The Collector’s chest hums. It releases a blast that tears a hole through the Young Woman’s chest. She falls, dead.

Her father cries out in agony, rushing forward to cradle her.

    COLLECTOR
    This area will be searched. Thank you for your cooperation.

The other Collectors turn as one and fan out through the tents. The Collector steps back and surveys the crowd.

    COLLECTOR
    Citizens. Please be seated.

Most sit. A few, including Jayce, stay standing.

The Collector swivels and fires a blast, executing the man standing nearest to him. Others sit down. The Collector turns again, firing a blast that kills two more.

Everyone sits.

    COLLECTOR
    Thank you for your cooperation.

Myrna and Mason, buried in the crowd, keep their heads down.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - TERL’S TENT - DAY

Crouched against the wall of the geodesic tent, Aisha and Terl watch the Collectors approach. Terl pulls him back, and they sneak into the tent.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - DAY

The Collectors spread out among the tents, black blotches on the pale yellow sand.
INT. TERL’S TENT - DAY

Terl hunkers down under her brother’s bed. Across from her, Aisha hides under hers.

A THUD at the door as a Collector steps into view.

It enters the room, cocks its head, then crosses straight to Terl’s bed and lifts it with one hand, revealing Aisha beneath.

He springs to his feet.

COLLECTOR
Citizen. Your service is required by the State.

Aisha stares up in fear and confusion. Suddenly, Terl leaps between him and the Collector.

TERL
Not unless you go through me, fucker!

The Collector smashes a heavy hand against her skull, knocking her into the wall.

AISHA
Terl!

The Collector cuts off his scream with a massive hand, hoists him up by his neck, and carries him out of the tent.

EXT. CHAPEL COMMUNITY - DAY

The Collectors reconvene, streaming back from the tents to join formation in the centre.

One has an unconscious Aisha slung over its shoulder.

Myrna sees her son with a gasp. Mason grabs her arm hard.

She looks over at him. He stares pointedly around the circle of Collectors. Not a chance in Hell.

A tear slips from her eye, then another.

COLLECTOR
Citizens. Be advised that while this site will remain designated holy land, work on the Chapel has been ceased until further notice.
An OLD WOMAN speaks up from a sitting position.

OLD WOMAN
Sir. Please understand. If we cannot work, we cannot maintain our payment to the State. We want to work. We want to pay you. If we can’t work, our TABS will complete and we will die.

She holds out her wrist. Her TAB is near.

The Collector cocks its head.

COLLECTOR
Have a nice day.

As one, the Collectors turn and march away.

Myrna watches Aisha’s body dangle limply, her face contorting. Mason leans over to her.

MASON
If you move, these people die.

She sucks her breath hard through her teeth.

MASON
If you move, these people die.

The Collectors begin to disappear over the nearest dune.

Myrna takes one desperate look at her son’s face as he disappears over the curve.

Then, silence.

Slowly, Mason stands. He turns a full circle.

MASON
They’re gone.

The community begin to stand. Some weep. Some rush to hold each other, or dead loved ones.

Myrna stands and sprints towards the Chapel.

MASON
Hey. Myrna! Hey!

He chases after her.
EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - BASE - DAY

Myrna reaches the hydraulic lifts and powers one up, heading for the roof of the Chapel.

Mason arrives as she disappears upwards, then jumps on a second lift.

It moves him quickly upwards. He watches the community spread out below him as he rises. Stragglers join the group in the centre while some run to check their tents.

EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - ROOF - DAY

Myrna strides towards the main Punch Clock on the Chapel roof. She throws her arm up into the soft blue light.

Nothing.

Frustrated, she slams her arm against the side of the compartment. The blue light winks off. Nothing.

She turns to see Mason’s lift reach the roof behind her. She paces towards him.

MYRNA
It’s fucking done. The Clock’s off. We can’t work here. They left these people to die, they took my fucking son, and it’s your fault!

She reaches Mason and takes a swing at him. He ducks it and punches her in the gut. She collapses.

MASON
Let’s pretend for a minute it doesn’t matter whose fault any of this shit is.

He raises his arm and points at his wrist.

MASON
My TAB’s nearly up, I bet yours isn’t far behind, so we die if we don’t find a Shift. You know why they took your kid?

MYRNA
Yes.

She grits her teeth and stands, her face dark.
MYRNA
And I know where. The Capital.

A light goes on in Mason’s eyes.

MAISON
Your dead friend said the nearest shift was fifty miles. Long jog. Let’s get moving.

MYRNA
We’re not jogging.

Mason raises an eyebrow.

MYRNA
I’ve got something a little faster.

EXT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION - BASE - DAY

A group is gathered at the bottom as Myrna and Mason descend on the lift.

MYRNA
The Chapel’s done. The Punch Clock is dead. We need to move.

The lift settles at the bottom. The crowd stares at them, eerily impassive.

MYRNA
We know where the nearest shifts are, but none of them will support all of us. We need to splinter, settle shifts, and then explore. Look for somewhere to support all of us again.

Jayce steps out of the crowd. Filled with accusatory grief. Tears still on his face.

JAYCE
 Seems like your exploring got us here in the first place.

Mason studies the crowd, then leans in to Myrna’s ear.

MAISON
You got a way to travel, bring it to the Launch site. Run. Now.

Mason starts walking to the right. One branch of the crowd suspiciously edges towards cutting him off.
We don’t know why they came here. We need to-

— for your Sky man. The one who says we’re living a lie.

Or for your son.

Please—

—the only one they took.

Finally, Myrna sees the hate in the eyes of her former community.

Please. We lived together.

Mason takes off at a sprint.

With a yell, the crowd surges forward.

The Young Man charges Myrna. She punches him in the throat, dropping him, and turns to run.

The community tears apart into two large groups, one pursuing Mason, the other pursuing Myrna in the opposite direction.

Further and further, out into the desert.

The sun blasts the desert.

The bodies of Taran, Safi, Roper, and the Collector lie where they were left.

Mason approaches, Taran’s gun clutched in his hand.

Myrna!
Myrna sits up from inside a Transit Pod. It’s the exact one that Mason arrived in, one day earlier. She stands.

    MYRNA
    I don’t know your name.

    MASON
    It’s Mason.

    MYRNA
    How’d you get away?

Mason hefts Taran’s gun.

    MASON
    Stole this from your dead friend’s house. Went out and buried it last night. I shot a couple of your other friends in the leg before they backed off. Sorry.

    MYRNA
    Hate to say it, but you’re about my only friend, now.

She studies him closely

    MYRNA
    Why is that, Mason?

    MASON
    I want to get to the Capital. You know the way. And you’ve got a vehicle.

    MYRNA
    You ruined my big reveal! How’d you know?

Mason points behind him. A line of tire tracks in the dirt.

    MYRNA
    Oh. Yeah.

EXT. DUNES – DAY

A beat-up, dust covered Hummer H1 Alpha climbs over a dune and powers forward.
INT. HUMMER H1 - DAY

Mason clutches the side of his open window. He’s looking a little green.

Myrna looks over at him and smiles.

    MYRNA
    You been in a vehicle?

    MASON
    Not since I left Earth.

    MYRNA
    Why’d you go up?

Mason watches horizon disappear in the side mirror.

    MASON
    No choice.

Both fall silent for a long moment. Suddenly the desert around them seems more immense.

EXT. DUNES - DEAD CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

A CONSTRUCTION SITE rises out of the ground, foundation completed but no other work begun. Punch Clocks, Shifts Checks, the whole deal, sit silent in the sand.

In the distance, the Hummer powers through the desert.

INT. HUMMER H1 - DAY

Mason watches the Construction Site in the distance.

    MASON
    Site’s dead?

    MYRNA
    Yeah. Shifted there for a couple weeks. Don’t know what happened. Just stopped paying when the foundation was done.

    MASON
    You try tearing it down?

    MYRNA
    No go.
    (distant)
    (MORE)
There was something special about the Chapel.

Mason sees the hurt in her face, but there’s nothing to say.

In the far distance, a break in the desert. Two buttes rise from the sand, steep and imposing.

Myrna adjusts the wheel, aligning with the rock formations.

EXT. DOUBLE BUTTE - AT THE H1 - DAY

The H1 slows, stopping about a quarter mile out from the closer rock formation. Myrna and Mason exit, Myrna with a small shovel in her hand.

MYRNA
How many bullets-

She’s loudly interrupted as Mason doubles over and vomits next to the vehicle. He stands, wiping his mouth, and shoots Myrna an embarrassed look.

MASON
Three bullets.

Myrna runs a tongue over her teeth, studying the rocks.

MYRNA
If there’s someone there with rifles, we’re fucked either way.

Mason smacks his lips and wrinkles his nose.

MASON
You got any food in this thing?

MYRNA
All in the cache, my friend.

She sets out towards the butte at a brisk pace.

Mason spits and follows her.

EXT. DOUBLE BUTTE - MYRNA’S CACHE - DAY

A small piece of the formation’s steep wall curves inwards. Mason follows Myrna as she approaches the base of the wall, both scanning their surroundings.

Myrna plants the shovel and starts to dig, working fast and hard. Mason watches, then continues to glance around.
Myrna’s shovel hits something hard.

  MYRNA
  Ha.

She starts to carve out the object, a large case. A handle comes into view.

Mason bends down to pick up a rock, then leans against the wall conversationally. He speaks in a perfectly relaxed tone.

  MASON
  You’re gonna be calm while I keep talking. Weapon in that case?

Myrna’s eyes flash, but she doesn’t react otherwise, digging at a steady pace with her head down.

  MYRNA
  Yeah.

  MASON
  Coming down from above. Can’t tell how many, but uh...

He hefts the rock, feeling its weight.

  MASON
  Gonna need more than three bullets.

ABOVE THEM, rappelling down the sheer walls on ropes fixed at the top of the butte, is a GANG OF SHIFT-ROBBERS.

The foremost members of the squad have guns wired directly into their flesh -- Cred Runners again. Their lips twist back in silent anticipation.

Myrna strains as she pulls the case out of the ground.

  MASON
  Lemme help with that.

He leans in close as they pull.

  MYRNA
  Shoot it, might blow the gas.

  MASON
  Strand us.

  MYRNA
  That or dead.
Mason stares at her, then nods. His hand comes up under hers, pushing the rock into her palm.

With grunts of effort, they heave the case up out of the ground. It’s nearly four feet long, heavy duty.

Myrna stands and starts to walk away from the case as Mason hunches over it. He eases the gun out of his jacket...

Myrna keeps walking. Ten feet. Fifteen.

YAGGHH!!!

They let the lines loose, zipping downwards with howls and battle cries, opening fire on Myrna as she sprints to cut an angle around the wall.

Mason throws himself onto his stomach, away from the case, his handless arm holding his jacket’s heavy hood over his head and the other arm holding the gun out behind him.

He squeezes the trigger three times in quick succession.

Bang! Bang! Bang FWOOM!!

Igniting gasoline fumes soar upwards out of the case, splashing against the rock and screaming towards the rapidly descending Robbers.

Mason’s back is engulfed in flame.

The Cred Runners in the front pull up sharply, stopping their downwards descent. Myrna, still sprinting, hurls the rock hard at one of the Runners, hitting him in the skull.

His eyes go dull and his hand goes slack on the line. His body goes into free-fall, slamming into one of the Runners below and sending both tumbling into the flames.

One of the bodies lands next to Mason, who’s now completely on fire. He rolls into the wet mess of blood and bone, back and forth, killing the flames, then stumbles up.

The gasoline fire burns itself up as Mason starts to run.

The Shift Robbers free their lines with a collective cry of rage, zipping down to the ground and cutting loose.

EXT. DOUBLE BUTTE - DAY

Now Mason, with Myrna out ahead of him, is sprinting away from a crowd once again.
BANG! A bullet rips through Myrna’s leg. She drops.

Mason makes it to her, pulling her up. Bullets WHIZZ through the air above them.

Before Myrna is even standing, a bullet slams into the meat of Mason’s shoulder, sending him stumbling to the ground. The Cred Runners are right on them.

Mason stays on his knees, putting both hands up. Myrna glances over, then does the same.

MYRNA
Got anything?

MASON
Hell no.

MYRNA
I’ve got a flash thing, but I dunno-

ROBBER LEADER
SHUT your mouths!

The Robbers are right on them. At least twelve of them, guns at the ready. The ROBBER LEADER steps forward.

ROBBER LEADER
A kindness, Shifters. You kill two of us and roast them, too.

He snarls over his shoulder to the Runner behind.

ROBBER LEADER
We will eat heartily!

He levels a grin at Myrna and Mason.

ROBBER LEADER
So then we will torture you during dinner and save you for our morning meal. Shigger meat!

MASON
Maybe try the flash thing.

ROBBER LEADER
Shut-

BRAAAAAMP! A familiar sound, by now.

The Shift Robbers look around wildly. In the distance, the Collector is visible, stalking quickly towards them.
Myrna and Mason stay kneeling as the Robbers turn and run. The Collector nears as Myrna and Mason stand.

MASON
This better, or worse?

MYRNA
Better.

She strides forward as the Collector nears.

COLLECTOR
Citizen-

Myrna throws a massive haymaker at the Collector’s helmet. THUD. The Collector staggers backwards...

COLLECTOR
What the fuck!

...and falls on its ass, the helmet coming off.

Inside the suit is a woman with delicate, aristocratic features and wide, cheerful eyes. This is ZAZ (25). She holds up her hands, appeasing.

ZAZ
I saved your life.

Myrna looks back at a dazed, burned, blood-soaked Mason, then down at Zaz.

MYRNA
Somewhere you can take us?

Zaz nods agreeably.

MYRNA
Put that damn helmet on before they see you.

EXT. DOUBLE BUTTE - AT THE H1 - DAY

Myrna, Mason, and Zaz approach, the young woman with her helmet back on. Zaz rounds the passenger side.

ZAZ
(Collector voice)
Ewww! Yo, somebody puked.

MYRNA
Okay, take it off again.
Zaz pulls the helmet off, her face wrinkled in disgust.

ZAZ
Yo. Somebody puked.

MYRNA
What’s your name?

ZAZ
Zaz.

MYRNA
Myrna, Mason. Get in the vehicle, Zaz.

All three get in, Mason carefully avoiding his vomit as he gets into the front passenger seat.

ZAZ
Hey, this thing’s fuckin’ cool as god damn, by the way.

Myrna steps on it.

INT. HUMMER H1 - DAY

Mason gingerly cleans gore off him, as best he can.

Myrna watches Zaz in the rearview as she examines her cracked helmet. Suddenly, Zaz looks up, catching Myrna’s gaze.

ZAZ
Hey, you both are welcome, by the way.

MYRNA
Thanks. Where are we going?

ZAZ
Yeah, just...I’ll tell you when to turn. Me and my lover have a real nice place.

At the word “lover”, Myrna rolls her eyes almost impossibly hard.

ZAZ
Hey how’d you know I wasn’t a real one, anyway?

MYRNA
You walk like a woman.
ZAZ
Like a woman, huh?

Mason pulls a big pink chunk of organ from a fold in his jacket and examines it with displeasure.

MYRNA
Or a girl.

EXT. DUNES - ENTRANCE TO ZAZ’S - DUSK
The dunes are uniform and characterless as ever, here.
Nonetheless, the Hummer comes to a stop.

INT. HUMMER H1 - DUSK
Zaz flips her goggles up, then down over her eyes, then up again.

ZAZ
Yep!

She opens her door. Mason and Myrna watch as she gets out and starts forward into the sand.

She turns and looks back, then spreads her arms in a “What?” gesture. Myrna and Mason look at each other.

Zaz rolls her eyes, then walks a little further and starts to disappear downwards, looking almost exactly like an “invisible staircase” gag, except that she’s clearly submerging herself in sand.

She turns back again and locks eyes with them.

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY - DUSK
A massive, beautifully furnished area with the feel of a futuristic New York apartment. Massive, with hallways leading out of sigh. Skylights provide natural lighting. Art lines the walls.

SEWELL (27), a well-muscled, vapid-faced hunk, sits shirtless in a FUTURISTIC RECLINER, attention on a HANDHELD VIDEO GAME. He doesn’t look up as Zaz leads Myrna and Mason in.

ZAZ
This is me. Us.
The other two are speechless, staring around in wonder. Zaz watches blood drip from their bullet wounds, onto the floor.

ZAZ
Let’s get you guys bandaged up. Oh!
I have food.

She saunters across the room to a large, open-concept kitchen area and taps her fingers on her chin, cataloguing.

ZAZ
I could make, like...ooh, omelettes? You guys want omelettes?

Myrna and Mason stare blankly back at her.

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY - NIGHT

Two plates of beautiful, gourmet omelettes are set down.

Myrna and Mason, now bandaged up, stare at the food sitting in front of them. Opposite, Zaz and Sewell smile, Zaz now in comfortable evening clothing.

Mason takes a small bite and chews. After a second, he scoops a massive piece up and shoves it in his mouth.

ZAZ
Good, right?

Mason ignores her, stuffing his face. Myrna watches him a minute, then takes a deliberately small bite.

MASON
Haven’t eaten like this in decades.

SEWELL
Hard times, huh?

Zaz shoots him a disapproving glance.

ZAZ
Sewell...

MASON
Status quo, I guess.

Finally, Myrna blurts it out.

MYRNA
How do you live like this?

Zaz and Sewell look at each other, embarrassed.
ZAZ
It’s not like, a voyeuristic thing, or anything. We just feel more at home out here.

MYRNA
You’re Subsidiary.

ZAZ
Yeah, but we’re not like, elitist, or anything.

MYRNA
(to Sewell)
You a real Collector?

SEWELL
Uh, no.

ZAZ
I made the suit, actually. It took a really long time, but I think it turned out good.

MYRNA
Why did you save us? For fun?

Zaz pouts.

ZAZ
No! To save you! Those Shift Robbers are animals. Give everyone a bad name.

MYRNA
(cold)
You mean they give all the shiggers a bad name.

The table goes quiet.

After a long moment, Zaz nudges Sewell.

SEWELL
Uh...don’t talk to her that way, okay?

MYRNA
When’s the last time you worked a Shift?

ZAZ
This morning!
Her eyes dart cheerfully between them. Mason’s already polishing off his plate.

ZAZ
Wanna see?

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY – OFFICE – NIGHT

All smoothed white walls and humming technology, the office is reminiscent of the Security Stroll. A QUIET HUM of power.

A massive monitor takes up almost the entire wall opposite the door. Spread across it is a large, detailed holomap, changing second by second, listing off numbers and statistics next to various locations.

Myrna and Mason peer up at the display as Zaz steps forward and manipulates it with her hands.

ZAZ
I work a full shift every day. I only need half but Sewell, y’know. He’s focusing on other...

She trails off and zooms in on a structure that becomes recognizable as the dead Construction Site that they passed earlier, shakes her head, then moves the display over to another structure, a RESTAURANT SERVICE.

Two WORKERS are visible inside the Service, following the instructions of white laser pointers; one “cooking,” the other “cleaning,” chasing the laser across the floor.

ZAZ
So I oversee here, and then at these other places.

She pulls the display back to reveal a large area.

MYRNA
You oversee?

ZAZ
Yeah I have to make sure...I keep track of the numbers, make sure everything adds up.

Myrna steps forward suddenly.

MYRNA
That’s the Chapel.

Zaz zooms in. There’s the Chapel Construction.
ZAZ
Yeah. Shut down. Sad.

Myrna’s face is twisting into a snarl.

MYRNA
Your “Shifts” are sitting here and watching us work? And you live like this?!

ZAZ
I make sure everything adds up.

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY – NIGHT

Myrna walks stiffly out of the room and sits on the couch. Sewell is back in the recliner, video game in hand.

Zaz follows Myrna, crestfallen. Mason trails.

ZAZ
It’s not like I don’t want to help people. I saved your life!

Myrna stares at the floor, rubbing her teeth together.

ZAZ
There are people that have it a lot better than us, you know. We’re out here while they’re back in the Capital. It’s not like-

MASON
–hey.

The two women look over at him. He holds up a 1970s-era record. James Brown grabbing a microphone on the cover.

Sex Machine.

MASON
You got a way to play this?

LATER

Zaz’s hands carefully place the record on the player and set the needle.

That scratchy old vinyl sound, then – SEX MACHINE.

A grin comes over Mason’s face. He closes his eyes.

Then he opens them and starts to dance.
Everyone watches him in amazement. Even Sewell looks up. Mason dances away, faster and more energetic. Zaz giggles.

He dances over to Myrna. Grabs her. She punches him in the stomach, but he keeps dancing. Grabs her again.

**MYRNA**
I’m not dancing.

Mason pulls her up off the couch.

**MASON**
Just stand then. Stay on the scene!

Zaz grabs Sewell and pulls him up. They dance.

**INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY – OFFICE – NIGHT**

JAMES BROWN plays on in the background.

On the display, some movement. The two buttes, the site of their showdown with the Shift Robbers, are visible.

Numbers scroll by as a group of figures move around on top of the butte, circling an individual. The lone figure is massive, far taller than the rest.

It looks like it’s giving orders.

**INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY – NIGHT**

Myrna watches all of them dance. Her foot starts to move...

Just as her hips start to sway, Mason steps in front of her. She snaps to stillness.

**MASON**
(with song)
Can we hit it and quit?

He smiles at her.

**MASON**
Can we hit it and quit?

Despite herself, she smiles back.

Those final notes hit...
INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

A clean and exaggeratedly homey little bedroom. Impractically luxurious in its aesthetic, but it’s got a bed and a couch. Myrna watches from the couch as Mason sets up his Motion Ping, on its black tripod, by the door.

He catches her eye.

LATER

Mason puts a hand over a panel. The lights dim.

He heaves his tired body onto the bed with a sigh.

A long silence.

MASON
You know how to get to the Capital.

The question hangs in the air for a long time. Something unspoken between them. They both know where this goes.

MASON
Except the State and Subsidiaries, not many people-

MYRNA
yeah. I was a sex slave.

MASON
You ran.

MYRNA
Pregnant. Didn’t feel like getting raped anymore.

MASON
So the Collectors took your boy because he has Subsidiary blood.

MYRNA
They look after their own.

Nothing from Mason. Silence stretches.

MASON
We’ll get your son back, Myrna.

Myrna readjusts on her couch, trying to get used to the softness.

LATER
Mason’s eyes are open in the dim room.

On the couch, Myrna’s outline is barely visible, rising and falling with her steady breath. Fast asleep.

Mason watches her for a long time.

MASON
You have to laugh it off. Dance, now. We’ll be at the Capital soon.

He smiles.

MASON
Then we kill them all.

EXT. DUNES - DAWN

Sun rises over the sand.

The H1 sits, apparently in the middle of nowhere.

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY - DAWN

Sewell lounges in the recliner, playing away.

Zaz cheerfully lays out toppings for a waffle breakfast.

She turns and squeaks surprise. Myrna and Mason stand, in full gear, staring her down.

MYRNA
Ready to go?

Zaz studies them, trying to gauge the situation.

ZAZ
I was just making breakfast...

MYRNA
I know how to get to the Capital, but I’m betting you can get us in.

ZAZ
Sewell...

MASON
Let’s not do threats, or the rest of it. You get us in, head home safe. Simple enough.

Zaz looks at Myrna, eyes pleading.
MYRNA
Grab that suit of yours.

ZAZ
You...jerks!

Mason catches sight of Myrna’s wrist. Like his, her TAB is millimeters from completion.

MASON
And one other thing.

INT. ZAZ’S HIDEAWAY – OFFICE – DAY

Zaz and Sewell enter, Mason trailing. Zaz and Sewell step against the wall, shooting nervous glances at Mason and each other.

Myrna crosses to the display.

MYRNA
Clock him in.

ZAZ
Oh, it’s not like that.

MYRNA
What do you mean?

Zaz points at the panel on the wall. Like the Punch Clock, but rather than a compartment, it’s a flat panel, glowing the same soft blue. This is a Salary Clock.

ZAZ
Just enter some hours.

Mason steps aside. Zaz takes a moment, then gets the hint and manipulates the touch display next to the panel.

She steps back.

ZAZ
Then just...your arm.

Mason, slow and suspicious, waves his arm past the panel. He turns it over slowly to look at it, then starts to laugh.

His TAB is receded right down to the line. A clean slate. Myrna stares at it in wonder, then over at Zaz.
ZAZ
Well I still have to work that Shift sometime. It’s not free.

EXT. DUNES - ENTRANCE TO ZAZ’S - DAY

Zaz slumps up the stairs.

ZAZ
You know, I did save your lives.

Myrna pushes her forward.

They climb into the H1.

INT. HUMMER H1 - DAY

Zaz slumps down in shotgun as Mason settles himself in the back seat. Myrna checks the gas gauge, then consults a piece of paper covered in handwriting.

MYRNA
We’re gonna run out of gas about eighty miles out.

Zaz watches Myrna for a long second.

ZAZ
Are you really gonna let me go once you’re into the Capital?

MYRNA
Yeah. Of course.

ZAZ
Then you don’t need to drive that far. The lake’s just like, a hundred miles from here. I can show you.

Myrna and Mason stare at her for a long moment.

MYRNA
What the hell is a “lake”?

ZAZ
A lake is a body of water surrounded completely by land, excepting tributary rivers.

MYRNA
What the hell is a “body of water”? 
Zaz frowns.

**EXT. DESERT - DAY**

The Hummer zooms along.

The land is smoother, here. Plumes of dust rise behind the vehicle.

In the distance, ROCK CLIFFS rise out of the sand.

**INT. HUMMER H1 - DAY**

Zaz leans forward, peering at the cliffs.

ZAZ
Yeah, keep on. Be there in no time.

Mason is bent over the back seat, rummaging in the trunk. He grabs something, then settles back into his seat to stare at it. It’s a large, tri-coloured paperback book.

MASON
What’s this?

Zaz lights up when she sees the book.

ZAZ
Hey, I’ve got the same one! It’s like a three-in-one, right?

MASON
It says...“Ta”...“Tana”...

ZAZ
Yeah! It’s like, the Tanakh, the New Testament, and the Quran.

MASON
(to Myrna)
You can read?

Zaz goes quiet.

MYRNA
Tom used to read it to me. Not...he didn’t call it “Quran” or whatever you said. He called it the “Introduction.”
ZAZ
Oh! Yeah, that’s like the...like, thoughts from the editors.

MYRNA
The Introduction talks about these things called “organized religions.” It says when there is an ideal, a thing called an “infrastructure” is created to transmit that ideal. And then it talked about how all the infrastructure of religions became bigger and bigger, but those in power start to forget the ideal.

She looks out the window. A BROKEN, RUINED PLACE OF BUSINESS in the distance, remnants of structure and technology rising up like a skeleton in the sand.

MYRNA
I don’t know what “religion” is, but it always sounded like they were talking about our world. Tom...we read that part over and over.
(she considers the word)
Remnants. Just remnants.

They sit in silence as Mason flips through the book.

Outside, the cliffs are close.

ZAZ
A “body of water” is basically any accumulation of water that’s reasonably significant, like that-

BAM!

Something sends the Hummer flying.

EXT. DESERT – DAY

The Hummer pops up, flipping through the air, ten feet above the ground, as explosions burst through the sand around it.

Looks like massive land mines. The explosions set off a shift. THE GROUND RUMBLES AND OPENS, a chasm yawning.

The Hummer SLAMS into the ground. Another mine SENDS IT SPINNING...
It careens off the edge of the chasm and down into the crack in the earth.

Then the explosions stop, and the dust settles, and everything is quiet.

EXT. DESERT CAVERNS - CRASH SITE - DAY

Light streams down from above. The explosions have uncovered a long cavernous area under the sand, branching out, disappearing around corners.

The Hummer is totaled, smashed upside-down against a wall. Mason kicks the back door open and pulls Zaz out. She’s bleeding from the head.

ZAZ
Ow ow ow ow...

Mason drops to his knees and looks in through the shattered front window.

MASON
Myrna!

Myrna looks up. Her left arm is caught under the seat, twisted and broken.

MASON
How you doing?

Myrna smiles at him, her face going pale.

MASON
Good. Let’s get going.

He braces himself against the ground and tries to push the Hummer over. Not a chance.

MASON
Okay. Let’s, uh...

MYRNA
Sshh!

They go quiet.

ZAZ
Ow ow ow ow...

Mason throws a rock at her, striking her in the neck. She shuts up.
The DISTANT THUD of VERY HEAVY FOOTSTEPS.

Then, more footsteps, lighter, are audible. The WHOOPS and YELLS of the Shift Robbers.

    ZAZ
Oh no. Oh no oh no.

Mason drops down again.

    MASON
Hey we gotta go, lady.

    MYRNA
You got a knife?

Mason stares her down for a minute.

    MASON
We’ll hold them off.

He passes her a large serrated knife. Without hesitation, Myrna starts to saw through her trapped forearm.

Mason leans in past her and grabs Zaz’s helmet.

    MASON
Zaz!

He tosses it to her. She looks down at the large crack in it.

    MASON
That suit doesn’t have that energy weapon, does it?

    ZAZ
No...

Mason holds up a gun.

    MASON
The only one. Be convincing. Do NOT pull the trigger.

**INT. DESERT CAVERNS - CORNER - DAY**

The Shift Robbers come into sight, Cred Runners leading, SNARLING and YELLING, brandishing weapons.

**EXT. DESERT CAVERNS - CRASH SITE - DAY**

The Cred Runners round the corner and stop.
Zaz, in full Collector getup, stands facing them. She raises a gloved hand.

**ZAZ**
*(in Collector voice)*
Citizens. Disperse or you will be fined.

The Cred Runners hesitate, the group behind them bristling. But no-one moves forward.

**AT THE HUMMER**

Myrna’s cutting reaches the bone. She grunts, grits her teeth, and saws hard.

Mason is crouched outside the windshield, watching her. He winces in sympathy, but there’s nothing he can do.

**AT THE CORNER**

The Shift Robbers mill around.

Zaz takes a step forward, and they take an involuntary step back. She raises the gun.

**ZAZ**
*(in Collector voice)*
Citizens. This is your final warning.

Thud. Thud! THUD!

The Shift Robbers part as a MASSIVE CYBORG rounds the corner. Nine feet tall, heavily armoured, but with a superhero design, complete with sculpted muscles in the armour and a logo in the centre of its chest.

It has a grotesque, tech-infused human head resting atop its impossibly huge body. The face is square-jawed, blond-haired, blue-eyed; like a perfectly chiseled action hero.

**This is an Atlas.** ATLAS 5, to be exact.

**AT THE HUMMER**

Zaz looks over at Mason, crouched behind the Hummer. She speaks in her own, non-projected voice, quiet enough that the Shift Robbers won’t hear.

**ZAZ**
We need to go. We need to go.
AT THE CORNER

Atlas 5 smiles.

ATLAS 5
These are them.

His voice projects, booming out towards the Hummer.

ATLAS 5
Two wanted for the murder of a Collector. One for impersonating a Collector.

He looks down at the Shift Robbers around him.

ATLAS 5
You have nothing to fear. ATTACK!

The Shift Robbers charge.

AT THE HUMMER

Myrna grits her teeth as she saws at her arm.

MASON
Time to go.

MYRNA
She’s running.

Mason’s head swings around. Zaz is disappearing into the distance at full sprint.

MASON
No gun.

He peeks his head over the Hummer.

A HAIL OF BULLETS flies past him as he ducks back.

MASON
No time.

Myrna hesitates, then drops the knife and pulls her tattered sleeve back to expose her nearly-sawed-off arm.

MYRNA
I’m only half through the bone. Do me a favour.

Mason meets her gaze for a minute, then swings his body around and poises his leg to kick down.
MASON

Sorry.

He kicks.

AT THE CORNER

Her scream is so loud that Atlas 5 grins.

AT THE HUMMER

Myrna, now missing her left forearm, pulls herself out through the windshield.

The Shift Robbers are nearly on them.

MYRNA

Ow.

MASON

That flash thing you mentioned...that combust?

Myrna smiles at him through the pain.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HUMMER

The Shift Robbers close on the Hummer...

Myrna and Mason stand and take off at a sprint...

The Cred Runners open fire...

THWOOM!!! The Hummer’s gas tank explodes, knocking everyone on both sides to the ground.

Mason pulls Myrna up. They disappear around the corner as the Shift Robbers get their bearings.

Atlas 5 stomps forward angrily.

ATLAS 5

Get after them!!

INT. DESERT CAVERNS - STRAIGHTWAY - DAY

Mason and Myrna sprint around the corner. The light fades, here as they move away from the exposed cavern that they first fell into.

Zaz is visible at the other end, nearing a Y branch.

They pick up speed.
INT. DESERT CAVERNS - Y BRANCH - DAY

Mason and Myrna catch up to Zaz as she reaches a branch.

MASON
Hey!

She keeps running.

MASON
ZAZ!

He’s right behind her. She stops.

ZAZ
We gotta...can you hear it?

MASON
I know, they’re coming.

ZAZ
No. Water.

Mason freezes.

It’s faint, but it’s there. RUNNING WATER.

ZAZ
There’s a waterfall somewhere. Get me there, I’ll get us safe.

The Shift Robbers appear at the other end of the straightway.

MASON
Left!

They take off at a run.

INT. DESERT CAVERNS - CAVE STRAIGHTWAY - DAY

The cavern walls are pockmarked with caves and tunnels, some shallow, some deep.

ZAZ
Hide or run?!

Myrna looks behind her. A trail of blood from her arm.

MYRNA
Don’t think we’re hiding.

She looks at Mason.
MYRNA

Or...

INT. DESERT Caverns - Cave Straightway - Later - Day

A Cred Runner sprints out ahead of the pack, giggling as he follows the trail of Myrna’s blood.

Suddenly, it splits into two. He stops.

The main group catches up to him. Two trails of blood, each leading to a different cave. The Robber Leader elbows his way to the front of the pack.

ROBBER LEADER
Check both!

The Runner charges into one cave. Another Cred Runner follows the other trail. The group waits.

The Cred Runners return, shaking their head.

The Robber Leader shades his eyes. In THE DISTANCE, more blood. At least three more trails lead into different caves.

He snarls.

ROBBER LEADER
You three, check them all!

He strides forward, then turns back and looks at the rest.

ROBBER LEADER
Enough time wasted! Let’s move!

The bulk of the group charges to the other end of the straightway, disappearing around the corner, as the Cred Runners fan out and start into the three caves.

The moment the straightway is empty, Myrna, Mason, and Zaz run out and disappear back the way they came.

INT. DESERT Caverns - Y Branch - Day

The three slow to a fast walk as they emerge back out at the branch. Zaz giggles nervously.

MYRNA
Oldest trick in the fuck.

MASON
Fuck?
Mason follows her eyes.
At the far end of the Y branch, Atlas 5 is stomping towards them.
He breaks into a sprint.

    MYRNA
    Fuck.

They dash to the right.

**INT. DESERT CAVERNS - RIVER LEDGE - DAY**

The trio tears around the corner and nearly careens off the ledge. A hundred feet straight down is the river, cut into a canyon, a sheer wall rising up on either side.

The winding ledge leads slowly down, reaching water level about five hundred feet away.

THUD THUD. Atlas 5 is close.

Mason grabs Zaz.

    MASON
    How were you gonna get us out?

Zaz pulls a small, PLASTIC DODECAHEDRON out of the Collector suit.

    ZAZ
    It inflates.

    MYRNA
    Do it.

Zaz hesitates. THUD. THUD. She presses a button and drops the object...FWOOMP! A SMALL INFLATABLE RAFT hits the ground between them.

Myrna and Mason each grab one side and heft the raft.

    ZAZ
    How-

    MYRNA
    -jump.

    ZAZ
    No way!

Atlas 5 careens around the corner.
Mason grabs Myrna by the hand and yanks her forward as they sprint and leap off the edge.

Zaz SCREAMS as they hurtle through the air. The raft catches the air like a mini-parachute, slowing their momentum with visible effect.

Atlas 5, unable to stop his momentum, leaps after them, impossibly high and far.

AS HE FLIES THROUGH THE AIR, he raises a hand with a MASSIVE GUN and fires a blast downwards.

The blast rips through the raft, popping it like a balloon. The trio plunges straight downwards.

Atlas 5 clears the width of the canyon, slamming into the other side FIST FIRST. His massive robotic arm plunges right into the rock, holding him steady to the sheer wall.

He peers down. The ripped raft is briefly visible before disappearing underwater.

No signs of life, otherwise.

Atlas 5 wields his gun and FIRES A QUICK SERIES OF BLASTS downwards. He hesitates, then fires again.

Nothing.

EXT. DESERT CAVERNS - RIVER SURFACE - DAY

The river flows onwards, still and unbroken, no sign of life. Almost pitch black, down here. What little light reached the top of the canyon is drowned out.

Then Zaz’s Collector suit bobs up. She takes a massive breath and grabs at her neck.

Myrna’s arm is wrapped around her.

Myrna’s head breaks the surface as the water rips them around a corner. They’re picking up speed. Zaz yells over the water.

ZAZ
Let go!

Myrna clutches her tighter.

ZAZ
You’re gonna drown us!

Zaz struggles, but they instantly start to sink. She calms.
MYRNA
You float!

ZAZ
Yeah, fuckin’ lucky me! Waterfall!

MYRNA
What?

Zaz sucks in a deep breath.
Myrna looks ahead. The river abruptly disappears.
She sucks in a breath...

EXT. DESERT CAVERNS - WATERFALL - DAY

The two careen over the waterfall. Forty feet straight down. They slam into the water.
Again, Zaz bobs to the surface. Myrna’s arm is still wrapped around her. She coughs and sputters.

ZAZ
No fucking let GO of-

MYRNA
Waterfall!

Zaz’s head snaps forward...

EXT. DESERT CAVERNS - SECOND WATERFALL - DAY

The women scream as the waterfall rips them apart and plunges them over the edge.

Myrna lands hard, surfaces, then falls under. She can’t see Zaz. She fights the water alone. Sinking...

The river seems to be slowing. Around a corner, LIGHT APPEARS in the distance. An end to the tunnel...

Myrna’s barely afloat. She fights...

Then succumbs. Slips under the water.

Blackness.

EXT. THE LAKE - DAY

A distant SLAP sound.
Then again, LOUDER.

WHAM! Mason slaps Myrna across the face. She sits up, sputtering, water ejecting from her lungs.

    MYRNA
    What!

She collapses in a fit of violent coughing.

    MASON
    Sorry. Didn’t really know what was wrong with you.

Myrna gingerly touches her face.

    MASON
    Not used to, uh, too much water.

Myrna sits up with a start, taking in her surroundings for the first time.

They’re on a small rock ledge etched into a wall, next to the tributary river that brought them out of the caverns.

Stretched out in front of them, sparkling blue, reflecting the sunlit sky above, is a massive, gorgeous lake.

    MYRNA
    Oh...

She takes it in, stunned.

Mason’s eyes are still wide, too. Like nothing they’ve ever seen. Nothing in their world is like this.

    ZAZ
    Yeah yeah.

Zaz drifts into view, floating face up in her Collector suit.

    ZAZ
    You nearly killed me, you bitch.

    MYRNA
    Get out of the water.

    ZAZ
    No. I’m in shock.

Myrna looks at Mason. He shrugs.
MYRNA
You said we could get in by the lake. Just show us where and you can go home.

ZAZ
Home? I’ll never know the safety of home again after the psychological suffering that I’ve-

Myrna stands straight up.

MYRNA
-show us how to get into the Capital or I’m gonna beat you until I can see bone.

Zaz scrunches her nose up, then backstrokes towards them.

EXT. DEAD END - DAY

Zaz fumbles out her goggles as they approach a sheer wall at the edge of the lake. She flips them on, squinting through the one broken lens.

ZAZ
Yep.

MASON
Another hologram.

Zaz steps forward and pushes her arm through the non-existent wall.

ZAZ
Can I go now?

Mason and Myrna look at each other.

MYRNA
Sure.

Zaz bows and starts to walk away. Then she turns back.

ZAZ
Oh I just wanted to say...thanks for everything.

She puts on a sarcastic thinking face.

ZAZ
Oh wait. I just wanted to say...
She raises her middle finger.

ZAZ
Sit on my dick, you’re both cunts, you’ve convinced me to never help anyone again, and I hope you fucking die.

MASON
Fair enough.

ZAZ
Oh, and that crazy cyborg chasing us? That was an Atlas, and there are nine more of them, probably all in there. So you will fucking die.

Myrna waves, “bye”. Zaz sniffs, then turns and disappears into the distance.

Mason looks over at Myrna. Her face is drawn, pale.

MASON
You up to this?

MYRNA
Any chance you’ll take care of my son if I die?

MASON
No.

Myrna doesn’t show disappointment, if she feels it.

MASON
But I’ll try to get him somewhere safe.

BEEP! The Auditor’s tone echoes through the desert.

The opaque white sphere whirs down from above like a bird of prey. Myrna drops.

MYRNA
Dig!

The Auditor stops in front of them.

Mason levels his gun at it and fires a full clip into it, point blank. It drops to the ground, a malfunctioning mess of sparks and technology.

Myrna slowly stands.
MASON
No more hiding.

Myrna smiles.

SCREAMING slowly becomes audible.

ZAZ (O.S.)
Get inside! Get inside!

Zaz tears around the corner at full sprint.

ZAZ
Get inside! Get inside!

Cred-Runners appear around the corner behind her.

CRACK CRACK! The shots start to whizz by.

A bullet hits Mason in his already-shot-and-bandaged shoulder. He stumbles back.

Myrna turns and leaps through the holographic wall. Zaz slams into Mason, tackling him through...

INT. CAPITAL - BACK DOOR - DAY

Myrna, Mason, and Zaz tumble into a small, hexagonal room. It’s like nothing that’s coming before. Everything in the room is a soft, metallic blue, and the edges of walls are hard and jutting.

Zaz leaps up and hammers at a display panel. A HEAVY METAL DOOR slams shut with a CLANG, sealing them inside.

She stands. Myrna and Mason are both still on the ground, Myrna pasty-faced and clutching at her sawed-off arm, Mason wincing as he grabs his newly-bleeding shoulder.

She watches them for a minute, then touches the display panel again, opening a different door, and walks away.

Myrna looks over at Mason and smiles.

MYRNA
Maybe we should kill that girl just on general principle.

Mason grins.

MASON
What was that you Chapel folk kept saying? “For the good”? 
MYRNA
Yeah.

MASON
“More for me!” That’s all we said in the Sky.

He struggles to his feet and holds a hand out to Myrna.

MASON
The girl’s just more the second type.

FOOTSTEPS sound. Mason turns as Zaz stumbles back into the room, knocking him to the ground again. Her breath comes in panicky gasps.

ZAZ
Hey something’s wrong. Something’s wrong out there in the Capital.

Myrna winces, struggles up, and helps Mason up.

ZAZ
Oh hey sorry about the whole...thing, thing. I’m glad you’re not dead.

Myrna stumbles. Mason holds her up.

ZAZ
You guys look like shit...hey!

Her face brightens. She digs in her suit and pulls out two short black plastic injectors. **Stimpacks**. She grins.

ZAZ
Your good buddy Zaz is here to help.

**EXT. CAPITAL - MAIN COURTYARD - DAY**

A METAL DOOR opens and Zaz leads Myrna and Mason, looking decidedly energized, out into the courtyard.

The open-air structure is monumental. A triumph of engineering, landscaping, and architecture, the area is a work of impossible beauty, a testament to human achievement.

Gardens line the walkways, flowers of every colour and type arranged around towering trees. Fountains, spires, and works of art are arranged in perfect aesthetic lines, stretching into the distance.
But in front of them, the dead body of a Cred-Runner rots in the sun.

ZAZ

Something’s very wrong. There should be people here. All my...there should be Subsidiaries here! Walking, everywhere.

Myrna kneels over the body.

MYRNA

Dead a while.

ZAZ

What are those things, anyway?

MASON

Cred-Runner.

Zaz waits for more, but Mason is silent, looking around.

Myrna holds up the Cred-Runner’s gun, extending out of its arm. She waves it at Zaz, who puts an involuntary hand up.

MYRNA

Someone figured out how to wire people so they can steal credit. They don’t work, they just kill for it. But they only help you out if you let them fry these guns into your hand. They wire you, they own you.

ZAZ

Oh, that’s us.

MYRNA

What?

ZAZ

I mean, the Capital. We call them the People’s Army. You serve, you can kill for credit.

She furrows her brow at the rotting corpse.

ZAZ

Sure looked more heroic on TV, though.
MASON
Bullshit. If the Capital makes Cred-Runners, how’d you scare them off with that Collector suit?

ZAZ
I dunno. I guess they’re like, rebels or terrorists or whatever. Or maybe it’s not us, who knows.

MYRNA
Maybe the Capital’s secretly sending orders to kill everyone.

ZAZ
Why the fuck would they do that?

MYRNA
I don’t know. Why isn’t there anybody here?

Zaz looks around.

ZAZ
I don’t know.

INT. CAPITAL - SKY WALKWAY - DAY
Metal doors slide open as the trio enters the Sky Walkway.

The long metal corridor leads steadily upwards, opening into a wide room.

INT. CAPITAL - SKY TRANSITWAY - DAY
A FUTURISTIC SUBWAY STATION, the same hard-edged, blue-steel design as the Capital’s entrance. A corridor cuts through the centre, though no tracks are visible.

As they approach, a SOFT HUM sounds.

CHIP (O.S.)
Hello, travelers!

A long, open-top, limousine-shaped PLATFORM, hovering above the glowing central corridor, pulls into a waiting position in front of them. A man lounges in the driver’s seat, winking robotically from below his chauffeur cap. This is CHIP.

CHIP
Hop in!
Zaz does. Myrna and Mason stare at Chip.

ZAZ
He’s just the driver.

They look at her, then back at Chip.

MASON
Hello?

CHIP
Hi!

ZAZ
A robot. Look.
(to Chip)
Hey Chip, would you fuck me?

CHIP
Sorry traveler, but that wouldn’t be morally conscientious OR anatomically feasible!

Zaz looks at Chip wistfully.

ZAZ
We used to LOVE that growing up.

Myrna and Mason hesitantly enter and sit.

CHIP
Where to, travelers?

MYRNA
The...to the government.

CHIP
I’m sorry, I don’t-

MASON
The Kane House.

FSZT! A shimmering force field FLASHES TRANSLUCENT around the platform, then disappears.

CHIP
Here we go!

The platform picks up speed and disappears down the track into the curved tunnel.
INT. TRANSIT TUNNEL

The blue-grey of the tunnel is a blur outside.

Myrna reaches out. The field BECOMES VISIBLE as her hand presses against it, shimmering. She pulls her hand back.

MYRNA
They have to be here. The Collectors shut the Chapel down. They took Aisha. Someone’s here.

Zaz narrows her eyes at Mason.

ZAZ
Hey, how’d you know about the Kane House?

MASON
I was born there.

He raises his gun. Before Zaz can move, he fires a bullet between her eyes. She slumps.

CHIP
Hey, settle down back there!

Myrna slowly turns to face him as he holsters his gun, keeping her hands raised.

MYRNA
You gonna kill me?

MASON
No, I like you. Done with her.

MYRNA
Me too, but you didn’t have to kill her.

MASON
I’m going to kill all of them. Every single Subsidiary. Then I’m gonna kill the State with my bare hands.

Myrna leans back. The strongest emotion she’s ever seen on Mason, and it’s pure, unbridled hatred.

MYRNA
Okay, man.

MASON
You gonna give me trouble?
MYRNA
I just want to find Aisha.

CHIP
I’m sorry, I don’t know that location!

MASON
That’s okay, Chip. I do.

CHIP
And not only that, but get ready for a lovely view!

Mason and Myrna’s eyes both go up the track. Daylight in the distance, approaching quickly...

EXT. THE CAPITAL – TRANSIT TUBE – DAY

The transit platform zips out into the sunlight, carried now through a transparent tube weaving through the air.

Below them, the full splendour of the Capital is revealed.

The city is an astonishing work of FUTURISTIC, FASCIST-CHIC ARCHITECTURE, all in the same hard edge and blue-grey. The layout is geometric perfection, a series of mass-experience spaces and awe-inspiring buildings.

Both Mason and Myrna are frozen in wonder.

In the far distance, towering over everything, the gargantuan KANE HOUSE. Mason fixates as it grows nearer, his eyes going dark.

MYRNA
Um...

He follows her gaze.

A massive figure is running through the streets far beneath them, glancing up at them in between powerful strides.

It’s an Atlas.

Myrna points. Off to the side, another one. And another.

The Atlases, even at full tilt, are falling behind the platform...but not too far behind.

MYRNA
You really know where Aisha is?
MASON
I know who to torture to find out.

Myrna stares down at the powerful cyborgs below.

MYRNA
Well, let’s do it quick, before they catch us or you decide to kill me.

Mason looks at her sharply.

MYRNA
You’ve got fuckin’ crazy eyes, man.

EXT. THE CAPITAL - THE KANE HOUSE - DAY
The platform approaches the house.
It drops out of daylight into another tunnel.

INT. TRANSIT TUNNEL
Mason and Myrna drop into ready stances as the platform slows...

INT. KANE HOUSE TRANSITWAY - DAY
The platform breezes down the corridor.

CHIP
Here we are, The Kane House!

The force field SHIMMERS AND DISAPPEARS as the platform stops. Mason jumps the second it does, hitting the platform running. Myrna follows his lead.

EXT. KANE HOUSE - MAIN GARDEN - DAY
The tunnel from the Transitway leads out into a garden, open-air, long overgrown but still beautiful. A massive wall surrounds it, separating the Kane House from the city.

Suddenly, Mason stops. Myrna runs up, panting.

MYRNA
Hard to run with one...fucking...

Mason looks around, as if remembering something, then dashes towards one side of the garden.
MYRNA

Arm.

She sucks in a breath and takes off after him.

Mason draws ahead, disappearing into a low, almost camouflaged STORAGE BUILDING against one wall of the garden.

Myrna’s pace flags. She slows for a moment...

SMASH!

The WALL IMPLODES INWARDS 200 feet behind her...

As the dust clears, Atlas 3 charges out.

Myrna picks up speed towards the Storage Building.

SMASH! A COMPACT, HOVERING VEHICLE shaped like a longer, sleeker jet-ski CAREENS through the front wall of the building, coming to a sideways stop in front of Myrna.

Mason at the wheel.

MASON

All your gardening needs.

This is a Hover Mower.

Myrna hops on, grabbing Mason like she’s a passenger on a motorcycle. He steps on it.

SMASH!

Atlas 2 smashes the nearest wall, narrowly missing them.

Mason jerks the Mower sideways, tearing back to the central pathway as the Atlases give chase.

Atlas 3 is gaining on them. It lunges...

He jerks the Mower to the right, skidding around the corner to face towards the House.

Atlas 3 flies past them, its outstretched hand spearing towards Myrna...

Just missing her. Mason floor it again, and the Mower speeds down the central pathway as the Atlases sprint after it.

The house nears, looming over them...

MASON

Door!
Myrna hugs Mason and ducks. Mason pulls sharply back on the controls, pointing the nose of the Mower upwards as they near the sheer blue doors of the House...

WHAM! The Mower slams right through the thin, plastic-y material of the doors.

INT. KANE HOUSE - LOBBY - DAY

The Mower careens into the lobby and continues in a straight line down a long hallway.

Mason ROARS. Jagged splinters of the door spear through his arms and gut. He fights for control of the Mower as it slams into one wall, then the other.

   MYRNA
   Door!

INT. KANE HOUSE - LOBBY HALLWAY - DAY

At the far, far end of the hallway, a STARTLED MAN is backing away as a HUGE METAL BLAST DOOR, twelve feet high, starts to descend over the entrance to the room.

Mason opens the throttle. Behind them Atlas 2 EXPLODES IN through the wall, followed by Atlas 3.

The BLAST DOOR LOWERS...it’s gonna be tight.

   MYRNA
   Not gonna make it!
   MASON
   We will!
   MYRNA
   Off the back!
   MASON
   What?
   MYRNA
   Grab!

The blast door lowers...

Myrna grabs Mason and pulls him backwards off the Mower. His arms flail out, grabbing at the vehicle...
He CATCHES ONTO THE BACK as the Mower, suddenly riderless, cuts power and slams to the ground...

...dragging them behind it as its momentum carries it skidding across the floor...

...and carries them under the blast door as it slams shut.

**INT. KANE HOUSE - SECURITY ROOM**

Mason springs from the floor in one smooth motion and tackles the Startled Man, who’s struggling to pull a gun out. They FIGHT FOR CONTROL...

Mason punches the man in the neck, grabs the gun, and spins.

THREE OTHER GUARDS in the room. Mason shoots one of them as he brings his gun up...drops...fires a bullet through the second guard’s eye.

GUARD #3 drops her weapon.

Mason stares at her...

WHAM!

The metal blast door shakes, then again. **The Atlases are outside.**

MASON

Turn around and kneel on the ground.

Guard #3 does. Mason looks back at the ruins of the Mower.

MASON

Myrna?

With a grunt, Myrna stands. Her leg’s broken, the BONE PROTRUDING. A testament to her adrenaline that she’s upright.

MASON

Sit. Sit down, sit.

Myrna collapses.

MASON

(to Guard #3)

What’s your name, Subsidiary?

WHAM! Guard #3 flinches as the Atlases continue to batter the blast door.
GUARD #3/RAYNA
Rayna.

MASON
Rayna, you’re going to take me and this woman to see Kane.

RAYNA
Will you let me live?

Mason’s face tightens.

MASON
Yes.

RAYNA
Okay.

INT. KANE’S ELEVATOR
Rayna supports Myrna while Mason leans back against the wall. Rayna looks him up and down, then locks eyes with him matter-of-factly.

RAYNA
You’re going to die.

MASON
Got any...little black injections, they give energy or something?

RAYNA
Stimpacks?

Mason nods and trains his gun on her. She slowly reaches into her belt and holds out two Stimpacks.

MASON
Her first, then me.

Rayna injects them both.

MYRNA
My son.

She paws weakly at Rayna.

MYRNA
The Collectors took my son. Subsidiary blood. Where is he? Where are your people?
RAYNA
Everyone’s dead.

MASON
What?

RAYNA
No-one’s left. We scavenge
Shifts...we live to survive.

MASON
No.

MYRNA
My son. Aisha, they took my son.
The Collectors, who do they work
for?

RAYNA
The Collectors are robots run by an
algorithm. Everybody’s dead. We’re
just trying to live.

Mason puts his gun to the side of her head.

MYRNA
No!!

Mason pulls the trigger.

INT. KANE’S HOUSE – ELEVATOR LOBBY

The doors open as Rayna’s body slumps to the ground.

Myrna falls against the side of the elevator, trying to stand
as Mason steps out.

MYRNA
Why?!

Mason approaches the large double doors at the other side of
the lobby, ignoring Myrna.

MYRNA
You stupid fuck, we’re all that’s
left! The Sky, the Subsidiaries,
all of us! There’s no State,
no...there’s nothing but remnants.

Mason pulls the doors open.

MYRNA
We need to build.
Mason speaks as if in a daze.

MASON
I found your son.

Myrna’s breath catches in her throat. She hobbles forward as Mason steps into Kane’s room.

INT. KANE HOUSE - KANE’S OVERSEE

A formal bedroom in the fascist style, but circular, and the walls are transparent glass, floor to ceiling.

A hologram of a sausage-fingered, nervous man with quick-moving bug eyes and a perfectly tailored suit stands at the centre of the room. This is -- or was -- KANE (60s).

KANE
...you see, children, a society is built on the backs of a few exceptional individuals, forging ahead fearlessly, and demanding that everyone catch up with them! That’s where you all come in.

And seated in a lone chair, watching him, is Aisha.

Kane’s lecture continues, as though nothing has changed.

MYRNA
Oh...

She staggers forward, grabbing her son in a hug. He doesn’t react.

MYRNA
Aisha!

MASON
He’s drugged. He’ll be fine.

He crosses to the window and peers down into the LABORATORY BELOW.

ON THE LAB FLOOR

Standing in a perfect semicircle, waiting to be filled, are seven more giant suits of robotic armour -- the other seven Atlases.

Myrna hoists Aisha out of the chair, cradling him like a child. She walks to the window.
MASON
(reciting)
As there are powerful individuals,
so too are there weak individuals,
those people unfit to lead and
sometimes unfit to live.

Myrna watches him for a moment before realizing that he’s reciting in time with the hologram of Kane.

She backs away from him in awe.

MYRNA
He wanted to make you one of those things.

KANE
Men of Subsidiary blood!

MASON
Just like your son.

Below, a DISTANT CRASHING SOUND.

KANE
Men with Subsidiary brains!

MASON
He said we would be the source of order when he died. That we would carry on the ideals that helped him build these great worlds.

MYRNA
What happened?

MASON
My mother...I’m only half Subsidiary.

He grits his teeth at the memory.

MASON
He told me that I wasn’t fit to be in the presence of the State. That I didn’t deserve his teaching. He said my mother had disgraced the Capital.

He looks away.

MASON
And then they executed her, and they cheered.
He studies the hologram of Kane.

MAISON
I wonder if he knew then that his empire was crumbling.

LOUDER CRASHING from below.

MYRNA
I’m gonna pass out.

She grabs onto his shoulder.

MYRNA
Can we still put you in that armour?

Mason looks down at her and Aisha.

MAISON
Let’s find out.

INT. KANE HOUSE - LOBBY HALLWAY - DAY

Atlases 2 and 3 pound rhythmically on the door.

Suddenly, it starts to rise.

Atlas 2 shoves a massive hand underneath the blast door and rips it upwards...

ATLAS 7 careens towards them, holding Myrna and Aisha like a football in its left hand, GUN BLAZING in its right.

Atlas 7, of course, is Mason.

Caught by surprise, the two Atlases are knocked aside as Mason charges down the hallway.

They open fire on his back. He stumbles as the floor and ceiling EXPLODE IN GUNFIRE around him, and his armoured back is PUMMELLED by the blasts.

He stumbles, rises, then stumbles again.

He sets Myrna in front of him.

MAISON
Bye now.

He turns to face the two Atlases bearing down on him. Myrna turns and runs.
Mason fires indiscriminately at the charging Atlases.

Atlas 2 leaps forward in a flying tackle. Atlas 3 dogpiles on top, but Mason shoves his gun INTO ATLAS 3’S FACE and blows its head apart.

Myrna stops at the entrance and looks back.


Myrna turns and runs.

**INT. KANE HOUSE TRANSITWAY - DAY**

Aisha’s eyes flutter.

    CHIP (O.S.)
    Where to, traveler?

    MYRNA (O.S.)
    Main courtyard, Chip.

Aisha sits up, opening his eyes. He’s in the back seat of the platform. Myrna is collapsed in the front. Chip looks back at Aisha.

    CHIP
    Here we go!

**INT. TRANSIT TUNNEL**

The platform zips away from the Kane house.

Aisha struggles out of his drug-induced haze, getting his bearings, as the platform starts to move.

    MYRNA
    Hey Chip, would you fuck me?

    CHIP
    Sorry traveler, but that wouldn’t be morally conscientious OR anatomically feasible!

    AISHA
    Mom?

Myrna sits up and looks back at Aisha.

She smiles.
Daylight explodes behind her.

EXT. THE CAPITAL - TRANSIT TUBE - DAY

The platform zooms out above the city.

Myrna cries as Aisha piles over the seat and collapses in her arms.

MYRNA
Aisha, I love you. I love you, and I’m going to tell you a story real quick, before I forget it.

EXT. CAPITAL - MAIN COURTYARD

Myrna and Aisha walk hand in hand towards the back entrance. The steel door stands open, waiting for them. A SCRAPING SOUND behind them. Myrna slowly turns. A hundred feet away, staring straight at them, is Atlas 5.

MYRNA
Aisha. Bye now.

Atlas 5 charges. Myrna pushes Aisha towards the steel door. He sprints. Myrna turns to face Atlas 5, charging her at full force. She raises her gun with a smile.

MYRNA
Remnants. Fuck.

Atlas 5 leaps towards her.

EXT. DUNES - DAY

The desert. Sun-burnt and lifeless.

A black rod is stuck in the sand, knee-high, the only sign of human life. In the distance, three more are visible. A PAIR OF BOOTS pause at the Line, then step past.
EXT. THE HUT - DAY

A small hut, roof built out of the remnants of a geodesic tent, sits alone in the sand.

Next to it is a small pool of water.

Outside the hut is a small tower composed of a MESH NET wrapped in a frame of juncus stalks, just like Roper was building.

This is a Moisture Tower.

Small hands pull a weave of juncus stalks tight, holding tension.

AISHA (O.S.)
You did it.

Terl looks up.

Aisha looks like he’s come a long way.

A slow smile spreads on Terl’s face.

AISHA
Let me tell you a story quick, before I forget it.

FADE OUT.

THE END.