

BALLISTIC CITY

Pilot: "Gethsemane"

by

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EXT. SPACE -- NIGHT

A vast star-field, silently shimmering. A distant light flickers. As we push in, a crackling radio voice seeps into the silence -- a poetic RADIO COMMENTATOR (a la Murrow).

COMMENTATOR (FILTERED)

It was some hundred and thirteen
years ago when we first set out
from that fair blue world...

Closer and closer, the flicker grows, becoming a vast vessel streaking across the empty, black gulf of space. The radio voice grows louder as we push in.

COMMENTATOR (FILTERED) (CONT'D)

Since then, whole generations have
been born on this ship, having no
memories of that ancestral
homeland, knowing nothing but life
on this splinter in the void, this
ballistic city...

The vast scale of the megastructure fills our view -- a twenty mile-long hull, segmented into three immense barrel-shaped sections, slowly spinning in the dark.

EXT. EMPYREA -- NIGHT

We find ourselves looking over a dense, dark city.

COMMENTATOR (FILTERED)

Well, friends -- Tonight, the
universe has reminded us how far
we've traveled...

We see the bustling crowds, the thick traffic, and from this distance, it almost seems ordinary -- until we look up...

COMMENTATOR (FILTERED) (CONT'D)

The last human born on Earth has
passed away.

The cityscape curves up, like a metropolis wrapping the inside of a spinning barrel. Looking up thru the urban haze, we see the tangled streets of the other side of the city, almost two miles overhead. This is a city inside a starship.

EXT. INTAKE COMMONS -- NIGHT

We drink in the street level -- the stark fashions; the retro-looking cars; a pragmatic, almost ex-Soviet ambiance -- as we scan the radio spectrum, catching fragments of the news.

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PCN NEWSCASTER (FILTERED)
The woman, Gethsemane Lusk, was
born in the American state of
California over a century ago and --

COMMUNIQUE REPORTER (FILTERED)
-- as Empyrea mourns Miss Lusk, the
last surviving Earth-born human --

METRO-NEWS HOST (FILTERED)
-- passing marks the end of an era
that many say --

LAZLO (FILTERED)
The last liar is dead.

INT. BENDIX SOLUTIONS OFFICE -- NIGHT

A hand pauses on the radio dial, listening to LAZLO HOLST, an
abrasive talk radio firebrand.

LAZLO (FILTERED)
Yeah, I said it. I called her what
she was -- a liar. A princess in
the fairy tale fed to us by our
municipal overlords, always so keen
on reminding us that there is an
unseen point to all this.

The hand belongs to CANAAN BENDIX (39), a strong and tattered
heretic of a man with hard, sad eyes. On this long journey,
everyone invents a reason to get up in the morning. Bendix
gets up to punch brick walls; to fight impossible fights.
He's an utterly broken crusader haunted by a vestigial sense
of justice. He listens, frowning.

LAZLO (FILTERED) (CONT'D)
(snarky)
Right, there's a "universe" beyond
that windowless hull, and we're all
on some magical journey from a home
no one remembers to a paradise we
will never see...
(beat)
Bullshit. The last liar is dead,
and I'm not sorry.

Bendix twists the dial off, turning the radio off.

BENDIX
(under his breath)
No, you're fucking crazy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An old couch with a pillow and blanket tells us he's been living here, amidst the clutter of his office. Picture a futuristic computer. Age it fifty years. Break it. And fix it with parts from something else. That's the machine on his desk. Nothing is new in this bottled up city, and especially not in this office, not even Bendix's secretary --

PEACH, a secondhand sexbot, something like a dolled-up crash test dummy in a cheap blouse and a pencil skirt. Artfully molded plastic parts joined by cumbersome ball-joints. Her face, forever frozen in a coy grin that doesn't move when she speaks. A serial number stenciled on her bald head. She finishes counting a short stack of cash.

PEACH

Still three-hundred short.

BENDIX

We've got -- what -- a week to come up with the rest?

PEACH

Sir, the street value of my parts could cover the rent with up to one hundred marcs to spare.

BENDIX

I'm not gonna scrap you, Peach. We'll go without hot water if we need to. It's not like you have a sense of smell.

The phone rings. Instead of picking up the handset, Peach simply plugs herself into the assembly.

PEACH

Bendix Solutions.
(pause)
Just a moment.

She mutes the line.

PEACH (CONT'D)

It's Chief Pontus Jarzy.

He picks up the phone on his desk.

BENDIX

(into phone)
Yeah?
(pause)
What for?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENDIX (CONT'D)

(pause)

Sure. Give me ten minutes.

He hangs up.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

PEACH

Should I wait up?

BENDIX

No. You can call it a day.

PEACH

Fancy a fuck before I punch out?

He grabs his coat on his way out.

BENDIX

No, thanks.

As he leaves, Peach opens a sliding door to enter her dock, plugging herself in as the door slides shut behind her.

EXT. MAGELLAN BRIDGE -- LATER

Bendix waits on a bridge. Ahead, the river slopes up the ever-curving city floor and bends back towards the end of the habitat cylinder. Above, the city streets glitter like stars.

A SecForce police cruiser pulls up and parks on the shoulder. CHIEF PONTUS JARZY (55) climbs out, a tall thin man in an immaculate uniform.

JARZY

How's the private sector?

BENDIX

What's this about?

Jarzy shuts his door and suspiciously looks both ways as he approaches Bendix. Finally, he leans in conspiratorially.

JARZY

I'll keep it quick, in case anyone spots us... You've heard the news?

BENDIX

About the last Earther?

JARZY

Her geist got loose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENDIX

You're sure?

JARZY

When we arrived at her penthouse, we found an empty node. The control log showed that her geist had already been activated.

BENDIX

She has a geist-kit in her penthouse?

JARZY

I know, right? These Argosy silver-spoons. Can't even bother driving to the local backup station.

Bendix looks out at the city.

BENDIX

There's a dead woman out there, just mingling with the population?

JARZY

No one's stumbled across her yet.

BENDIX

Someone will.

JARZY

I was hoping I could persuade you to be that someone.

BENDIX

For old times' sake?

JARZY

Never said you weren't my best detective, Bendix.

BENDIX

Strafer was your best detective.

JARZY

Yeah, well...

BENDIX

What's in it for me, besides glowing reviews?

JARZY

Hundred marcs an hour?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENDIX

That's half my standard rate. I don't owe you any favors.

JARZY

It's a consult. What do you --

BENDIX

Bullshit. It's me doing your fuckin job for you. You don't want the questions people will ask if you start flooding the streets with boots.

JARZY

People hear there's a geist out there, there will be riots.

BENDIX

That's on you.

JARZY

What's your price?

BENDIX

Two fifty.

JARZY

So evidently I owe you a favor?

BENDIX

(getting in his face)

How much noise did I make when you asked for my badge? Did I go to the union? Did I call the papers?

JARZY

Alright --

BENDIX

I'm living in my fucking office, you lofty prick.

JARZY

Calm down. Two fifty is fine.

Bendix takes a moment to cool down.

BENDIX

Any leads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JARZY

If we knew where she was, we'd go catch her.

BENDIX

I'm starting from scratch?

Jarzy hands Bendix a photo -- a young woman's face, a redhead, pale and vaguely artificial.

And with that, Jarzy heads back to his cruiser.

JARZY

Won't be too hard. She's a redhead.
Aren't many of those left, right?

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

ESPINOVA DUVAY (33), a feisty reporter, sits at a table in her panties and a cotton tank top, looking over a spread of papers as she scrawls notes.

Nearby, Jarzy lies in bed, tangled in the sheets, catching his breath.

ESPINOVA

You okay over there?

JARZY

Yeah, I'm good. I'm really good.
(beat)
What are you working on?

ESPINOVA

Just a profile thing. You remember that detective who lost it and sliced up his wife? Arkangel?

JARZY

Yeah, Strafer.

ESPINOVA

His brother Verge is thinking about running for LP. Colorful guy. Word is he used to bust skulls for the Black Cabinet. Your detective ever mention anything like that?

JARZY

I didn't know he had a brother.

Jarzy's phone rings. He rolls his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESPINOVA

Alice?

JARZY

I forgot to tell her I'd be late.

ESPINOVA

You should get it...

Jarzy shoots her an "are-you-sure" look.

ESPINOVA (CONT'D)

She's just going to keep calling.

JARZY

(answering)

Yeah?

We can faintly hear ALICE on the other end.

ALICE (FILTERED)

What's happening, Pontus? Your office said you left hours ago.

JARZY

Yeah, something came up.

Espinova climbs into bed with him.

ESPINOVA

(whispering)

I'll say.

She kisses his chest and his stomach, migrating down. Jarzy shakes his head "no," but she keeps going.

ALICE (FILTERED)

Where the hell are you?

With an impish smirk, Espinova sinks under the sheets. Her head moves suggestively as Jarzy struggles to sound collected.

JARZY

Crime scene -- double homicide.

(voice cracking)

It's -- it's pretty bad.

He finally pushes her away. She snickers mischievously as she gets out of bed and returns to her notes.

ALICE (FILTERED)

Who the fuck is that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JARZY
Just a witness.

ALICE (FILTERED)
What was she laughing at?

JARZY
She was crying. Look, I need to go.
I'll be a few more hours.

Abruptly, he hangs up.

JARZY (CONT'D)
Jesus, Espinova.

ESPINOVA
A few hours? You sound like you got
another round in you.

JARZY
I didn't think so, but you worked
me up.

ESPINOVA
Just a sec, let me get this last
thought down.

As she writes, she mentions something offhand.

ESPINOVA (CONT'D)
Oh, hey, was that Lusk woman's
geist chamber empty when you guys
got there?

JARZY
Where did you hear that?

ESPINOVA
It's true?

JARZY
No, it's not true.

ESPINOVA
I'm not asking for a story. I don't
even cover shit like that.

JARZY
(laughing)
You wouldn't break the story of the
last Earther's geist going rogue?
You expect me to believe that?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JARZY (CONT'D)

Espie, I may be handsome, but I'm
not an idiot.

She looks up from her notes with a hungry grin and puts her pencil down. She gets up and playfully pounces into bed.

MONTAGE -- BENDIX WORKS

- Bendix sits in his dark office, illuminated only by his flickering computer screen.
- On a legal pad, he writes "GEHTSEMANE LUSK" and under it, he jots down "FRIENDS," "FAMILY," and "INTERESTS."
- He types on his makeshift keyboard.
- Grainy text scrolls by on the screen, death certificates.
- He crosses off "FAMILY."
- He scrolls through pages of old class photos.
- He crosses off "FRIENDS."
- His tired lips mumble as he types.
- "NO RESULTS" flashes on the screen.
- He crosses off "INTERESTS," and finally draws a question mark after her name.

END MONTAGE

Bendix rubs his eyes, exhausted. He looks down at his notes -- the crossed off categories and the question mark. He crumples the paper and tosses it, starting from scratch.

BENDIX

(to self)

Okay okay okay...

As he hunches over the keyboard, the closet door slides open, startling him. Peach steps out and cocks her head at him.

PEACH

You're up early, sir.

BENDIX

Early? What time is it?

PEACH

Five seconds before dawn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns around and looks OUT THE WINDOW:

We notice a long structure in the sky, running along the axis of the vast barrel-shaped chamber. A long scaffolding rigged with lenses and reflectors -- a lighting cage.

The sound of vast generators GROANING to life echoes across the city, like a distant god waking up. And at the far end of the scaffolding, the LED's blaze to life.

(Over the course of the day, the light will migrate along the axial column, simulating the sun's journey across the sky.)

Bendix rubs his eyes and shuts the blinds.

PEACH (CONT'D)

Did you sleep, sir?

BENDIX

Sleep? Fuck, no. We have a job.

PEACH

A job? Really?

BENDIX

Gethsemane Lusk.

PEACH

The woman who died last night?

BENDIX

Her geist escaped.

PEACH

Define "geist."

BENDIX

I've told you what a geist is.

PEACH

My memory is low-capacity. This data may have been deleted to --

BENDIX

-- "to accommodate higher priority data," I know. Enough with the hints, Peach. You want a new hard-drive. I'm working on it.

(beat)

A geist is a bot. More realistic than present company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEACH

What is the purpose?

BENDIX

When a rich ass wants to live forever, they backup their mind to a geist -- to be activated in the event of their death.

PEACH

Why?

BENDIX

They wanna be around when we get to where we're going. They need to know the trip was worth it.

(beat)

This woman more than most. She hasn't left her penthouse in twenty years. No friends. No family. No bread-crumbs whatsoever. I'm going to need to dig deep on this one.

PEACH

Would you like me to reschedule your weekly breakfast with Kitamura?

BENDIX

It's Wednesday...

PEACH

Yes sir.

Bendix briskly gets ready to leave.

BENDIX

No, don't cancel. If she calls, tell her I'm running late, but I'm on my way.

INT. METROPOLE DINER -- MORNING

A greasy spoon. Noisy crowds and scuffed chrome. Bendix elbows his way in and spots his table by the window.

KITAMURA ARKANGEL (19), a wiry, punkish looking young woman with a leather jacket and a pierced tongue. A closer look at her black-and-white peppered hair reveals that it's not hair at all, but downy feathers. She glances up at Bendix, flashing gold eyes with long, feline pupils.

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BENDIX

Sorry I'm late.

KITAMURA

No problem. I ordered for you. Ham and eggs, right?

BENDIX

You changed your eyes. Tiger?

KITAMURA

Ocelot. I picked them out for looks. I didn't even think about the night vision. But I can see in the dark now. Like pitch black dark. It's insane.

She grins with pride as she happily shovels through her omelet. Bendix just looks at her, frowning.

BENDIX

It's a shame. You used to have your mother's eyes.

She squints at him, puts down her fork, and looks out the window, suddenly quiet. Outside, the century-old artificial sun flickers for a moment, like a huge fluorescent light.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Hey, c'mon. I don't give you money so you can go hack up your DNA.

She turns back to him sharply; her pupils stark slits.

KITAMURA

No one asked you to give me anything.

Bendix averts his eyes, he has nothing to say. Sympathetic, Kitamura finally relents.

KITAMURA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

(beat)

I just wanna be able to look at myself in the mirror without seeing my dead mom... or the fucker who gutted her. You know?

BENDIX

No, I get it. I do.

He prods his eggs, wrestling with whether or not to tell her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENDIX (CONT'D)

I'm seeing him later myself. Can't say I'm looking forward to it.

She looks up from her food.

KITAMURA

For a case?

BENDIX

Yeah. A geist-related thing.

KITAMURA

I don't like you talking to him.

BENDIX

Me neither. But he's a lot smarter than me. And, well -- he's a geist.

A loaded silence as Kitamura quietly scrutinizes Bendix.

KITAMURA

You shouldn't feel guilty.

BENDIX

I just wish it hadn't been me who pulled the trigger...

(beat)

He was my partner. It's complicated.

KITAMURA

I hate that he doesn't even remember what happened.

BENDIX

Yeah...

KITAMURA

I wish I could go some time. I'd tell that bastard everything -- you and mom, and how I covered for her. And when that hologram tried to smack me, I'd laugh my ass off. Right in his fucking face.

BENDIX

He's still dangerous, Kita.

KITAMURA

So are you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They exchange smiles. Kitamura wipes a tear from her eyes and gets up, hoisting a backpack.

KITAMURA (CONT'D)

I have to get to class.

BENDIX

Late Earth History?

KITAMURA

Yeah.

BENDIX

How are you on money?

He takes out his wallet and starts going through his cash.

KITAMURA

No... You're right. You want me to spend it on getting my shit together, but I'll just blow it on vodka or some bullshit alterline.

BENDIX

I just want you to have it.

He puts a small wad of tens on the table.

KITAMURA

You really don't owe me anything.

BENDIX

Someone does.

KITAMURA

(confessing)

I think I'm failing the class...

BENDIX

But you go anyway.

KITAMURA

Yeah... I'm learning shit.

Bendix smiles. He physically takes her hand, opens it, and puts the cash in her palm.

She throws her arms around him.

KITAMURA (CONT'D)

He's not smarter than you, Canaan.
He never was.

INT. SECURITY CHECKPOINT -- LATER

The GUARD dryly recites the security protocol.

GUARD
Access Visa.

Bendix passes him a card.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Who are you here to see?

BENDIX
Geist-456. Strafer Arkangel.

GUARD
Recording devices?

Bendix shakes his head.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Messages from family members or
loved ones?

BENDIX
No.

GUARD
Follow the green line. You have
forty minutes.

INT. PARK MEMNOSYNE -- MOMENTS LATER

A vaulted glass ceiling spills artificial sunlight into the main arcade -- columns, fountains, flowers, ferns -- an idyllic, quasi-Victorian setting.

A green line pulses on the floor, gently coaxing Bendix towards his destination.

The GEISTS stroll by, indifferent to Bendix's presence. Everyone is young, idealized versions of themselves, blatantly artificial. Some, more realistic than others. Some, only flickering ghost-like holograms.

INT. STRAFER'S PARLOR -- MOMENTS LATER

The geist of STRAFER ARKANGEL stands by a window overlooking the arcade. He's a translucent, monochromatic figure, interrupted by hiccups of static and pixels, like a video ghost who had somehow wandered off a television screen.

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STRAFER

So she activated her geist, then died -- of natural causes?

BENDIX

An auto-activation program?

STRAFER

Maybe...

BENDIX

Look, Strafe, they're only paying me to track her down.

STRAFER

Of course, cousin. I'm just saying: I'd wager that geist has an interesting story to tell.

BENDIX

Yeah, maybe.

STRAFER

When did she last back herself up?

BENDIX

How is that relevant?

STRAFER

Personal curiosity. I was never good about remembering to back myself up. Now, I'm always wondering what happened in that missing week between my last backup and my death.

BENDIX

A week is a week.

STRAFER

A lot can happen in a week. Especially the week preceding one's own murder. For example, you left SecForce -- for some reason.

BENDIX

You know I can't discuss the details of your case.

STRAFER

I'm sure I'll work it out, cousin. I have nothing but time...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He smiles coldly at Bendix. Bendix half-smiles back.

STRAFER (CONT'D)

But back to the case at hand. What else do you have on her?

BENDIX

She was a shut-in. For decades she had no apparent desire to go anywhere. I don't know where to start. Does she revisit childhood haunts? Stalk old boyfriends?

STRAFER

Not if she's smart. SecForce will have anything like that staked out.

BENDIX

Where then?

STRAFER

Somewhere she's never been. Somewhere a bit seedy. Somewhere a buttoned-up Argosy blue-blood might have always been curious about.

BENDIX

Dim and hazy and crowded with strangers too drunk to notice how oddly artificial she looks.

Strafer nods.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Tinderstreet?

STRAFER

It's where I'd start.

MONTAGE -- SEARCHING FOR GETHSEMANE

- Bendix walks the neon-strewn sidewalks of Tinderstreet. Ball-jointed sex-bots in ridiculous fetish-wear beckon PASSERS-BY from street-front display windows.

- A nightclub. Bendix scans the DANCING KIDS, sweating through their clothes. Some boast genetic edits. A COQUETTE writhes, her fluorescent skeleton glowing under her skin.

- Bendix searches a mem lounge. The PATRONS chatter and flirt as they pass electronic headsets around, loading other people's memories like hits off a joint.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

END MONTAGE

EXT. CABARET CHIAROSCURO -- LATER

A wheezing KLAXON echoes over the city. PEDESTRIANS deploy umbrellas or scurry for shelter.

A mile overhead, sprinklers on the axial rig activate, dropping curtains of artificial rain on the streets, a cleansing torrent.

INT. CABARET CHIAROSCURO -- CONTINUOUS

An almost vintage feel. Filigreed walls, candlelit tables, and deep-set booths surround a small, polished stage.

Bendix arrives in the midst of a bawdy burlesque number plays out (something about a BUREAUCRAT and a DEVIL-GIRL wearing a strap-on). He shuffles up to the bar and orders a drink.

SHIORI (O.S.)
Canaan Bendix.

Just down the bar he spots SHIORI BAI (29), a cool, razor-edged predator. High cheekbones, flinty eyes, hair pinned back with a pair of jade hairsticks. She wears a shirtless suit jacket, revealing a deep slice of taut olive skin and the edge of an elaborate tattoo coiling behind her lapel.

BENDIX
Shiori Bai. You're a few blocks from Little Babylon.

SHIORI
Do you think us children -- fretting over turf and all that?

BENDIX
So you're off the clock right now.

SHIORI
Just having a night on the town. But now that you mention it, my employer is puzzled as to why you haven't returned our calls.

BENDIX
I've been pretty tied up.

SHIORI
That's not what we've heard.

She takes her drink and moves closer.

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SHIORI (CONT'D)

My employer is sympathetic to the fact that a former SecForce detective might be put off by the auspices of such an offer. But he recognizes your skills and he's prepared to compensate you handsomely for your reservations.

BENDIX

Look, I know the Triad recruits ex-SecForce as bodyguards --

SHIORI

I'm not here on behalf of the other taipans. Just Mister Montenegro. And he doesn't need a bodyguard. He has me. He needs a detective.

BENDIX

To what end?

SHIORI

Preventing a war.

He narrows his eyes at her, curious. Onstage, the burlesque number concludes to an uproarious APPLAUSE.

SHIORI (CONT'D)

I can take you now if you're interested.

BENDIX

I'm on a case.

She smirks and leaves a card for him on the bar-top.

SHIORI

When you have a moment... Call.

The message delivered, she leaves.

The lights dim for the next act.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now, ladies and gents, the Cabaret Chiaroscuro invites you to glue your eyes to the stage and drink in that most intoxicating of spectacles, the Witching Angel of Tinderstreet, Miss Channary Spektor.

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CONTINUED: (2)

CHANNARY SPEKTOR (26) steps out, a devious sylph in a corset and fishnets; sauntering across the stage on long slender legs with all the delicacy of a spider, her milky-white skin glowing in the footlights. Indisputably alluring, but it's her impish twinkle in her dark eyes that sets her apart.

CHANNARY

This song was written almost three centuries ago. I dare you to tell me it sounds old.

Accompanied by a droning hurdy-gurdy, she launches into a sinuous rendition of Lou Reed's "Venus in Furs."

CHANNARY (CONT'D)

*Shiny, shiny, shiny boots of
leather / Whiplash girl-child in
the dark...*

She works with the microphone's long black cable, tossing it like a whip and twisting it around herself as she croons and whispers into the mic, mesmerizing.

Bendix forces himself to look away from the stage. Channary isn't important at the moment (but she will be). He looks over the club.

He spots a young woman hovering in the shadows, as if worried that someone might notice her strange beauty -- with her sharp green eyes, blood-red hair, and skin as white and pristine as a fresh snowdrift. Almost too perfect. Too symmetrical. This is GETHSEMANE LUSK's geist (early 20's).

She glances up and notices Bendix scrutinizing her. She shifts uncomfortably, averting her eyes and attempting to casually hide her flawless features.

Bendix moves closer, weaving through the dense crowd.

She looks up again, and when she sees him approaching, she hastily gathers her things and slips out.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Gethsemane weaves through the long narrow hallway as Bendix labors to push past the confused, semi-nude SHOWGIRLS.

INT. STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

Gethsemane dashes up the spiraling iron staircase with startling speed. Bendix scrambles to keep up.

EXT. ROOFTOPS -- CONTINUOUS

Gethsemane explodes onto the roof with Bendix close behind, chasing her through the driving rain.

She bolts for the edge and jumps clear over an alley to the next roof with almost inhuman agility.

Bendix jumps after her, but barely catches himself on the ledge, struggling to haul himself up onto the roof.

He sprints down a catwalk behind a huge neon billboard.

By the time he catches up with her at the end of the catwalk, she's come to a gap too wide for even her to jump. He trains his pistol on her.

BENDIX

Pretty spry for a centenarian.

She turns and glares at him through the rain-slashed glow of the sign; fiercely, eerily beautiful.

GETHSEMANE

I don't know what you're talking about. Leave me alone.

BENDIX

I'm sure you don't.

She turns, reconsidering the jump.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

I wouldn't risk it. You've gone to all this trouble to live forever.

She turns back to him, proud but resigned.

INT. RUNABOUT-MICRO -- MOMENTS LATER

Artificial rain PATTERS on the windshield of Bendix's old econobox microvan as he shoves Gethsemane into the back.

GETHSEMANE

Who are you? Some kind of PV?

He doesn't answer. He just cuffs her to the door, closes her in, then moves around to the driver's seat.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do with me? Tell me that at least.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

No reply.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)
No? Nothing to say?

He picks up his phone and starts to dial.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)
You can't just ignore me. I'm a
person. I'm a human being.

He turns.

BENDIX
You're a geist. A dead person. I
shouldn't even be talking to you.

He finishes dialing.

GETHSEMANE
Who are you calling?

BENDIX
(into phone)
SecForce admin, please.

GETHSEMANE
What? Don't turn me in. Yes, I'm a
geist, but you don't know the
story. I'm in trouble, okay? I --

BENDIX
Yeah, this is Canaan Bendix calling
for Chief Jarzy...

Frustrated, she kicks the back of his seat.

GETHSEMANE
Listen to me, you superstitious
fuck! I'm trying to tell you what --

BENDIX
Did he say when he'd be back?

GETHSEMANE
Someone killed me! I was murdered!

He turns and looks at her, trying to read her features.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)
Please... Help me...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

In the silence, we can barely here the OPERATOR on the line as Bendix tries to decide what to do with Gethsemane.

OPERATOR (FILTERED)
Hello? ... Hello? ... Mister
Bendix, are you there?

BENDIX
(into phone)
Yeah. Just tell him -- I'm
following a promising lead. I'll
have something soon.

He hangs up.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
Alright... I'm listening.

INT. BACKSTAGE HALL -- NIGHT

We hear the APPLAUSE as Channary comes off from the stage and heads down the hall.

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Channary enters her small, messy dressing room and quickly starts unlacing her corset, before she turns around to find --

-- ILYA STILETTO (35) poised in her armchair like a tightly spun coil of sadistic urges. A coldly handsome man with black hair, icy blue eyes, and an antiseptic bearing.

CHANNARY
Jesus, Ilya! You scared the shit
out of me!

STILETTO
Sal wants you.

Channary gapes at him.

CHANNARY
Tell the Czar I'm busy.

STILETTO
You're serious?

CHANNARY
What about that big meeting with
all the capos.

STILETTO
It ended early. Sal's free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANNARY

Well that's too bad, because I
already made plans.

STILETTO

With who?

CHANNARY

Alone. I was going to take a bath.
Read a book. Do you read, Ilya?

STILETTO

That's funny.

He stands up to pass her a box.

CHANNARY

What's this?

She opens the lid to find a red dress.

STILETTO

Sal wants to see you in it.

Her face tenses with anger. She throws the box at him.

CHANNARY

Goddamn it! I'm not a pet!

STILETTO

You fuck your pets, do you?

CHANNARY

I'm not going, Ilya. Handle it
however you need to handle it.

He delicately removes the slinky red dress from the box and
offers it to her.

STILETTO

It's a Peltier. Since when did
girls stop wanting to wear
expensive dresses?

She glares before finally losing her nerve. She snatches the
dress and storms behind a screen where she furiously tears
off her costume. There, she grows a little bolder --

CHANNARY

The only thing I want is five
fucking minutes during which I'm
not expected to impress anyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As she steps into the dress and starts to pull it up, Stiletto suddenly folds back the screen.

Startled, Channary covers her breasts. He looms over her, boring through her with his cold eyes.

STILETTO

All that's expected of you is to put on a thousand marc dress, eat a candlelit dinner, and spread your fucking legs. Don't care to impress the boss? Fine. But you know what happens if Sal gets bored with you? I get you. That's what happens.

She says nothing. She just stands there, half-naked and trembling with fear and anger. Stiletto smiles.

STILETTO (CONT'D)

Get dressed. The car is waiting.

And with that, he dismisses himself.

INT. OFFICE -- NIGHT

Gethsemane endures Peach's puzzled scrutiny as Bendix brews a pot of coffee.

PEACH

She is an apparat.

BENDIX

A geist, yes.

PEACH

She is quite witching.

BENDIX

People have their geist designers exaggerate how hot they were.

GETHSEMANE

Less exaggerated than you think.

PEACH

Would you like to watch me make out with her, sir?

BENDIX

Not right now. Why don't you type up Jarzy's invoice.

She retreats to her small desk and starts typing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GETHSEMANE

What is she? A sex-bot?

BENDIX

In a former life. Now she's my assistant.

GETHSEMANE

Why?

BENDIX

I'll tell you if you tell me why you were at the Chiaroscuro.

He sits across for her, smirking. She squints at him in disbelief and finally relents.

GETHSEMANE

Channary Spektor...

BENDIX

The woman onstage?

GETHSEMANE

She's my great granddaughter.

BENDIX

What's the actual reason?

GETHSEMANE

You don't believe me?

BENDIX

You don't have any children.

GETHSEMANE

I had one. A daughter. I gave her up for adoption ninety years ago.

BENDIX

Why?

GETHSEMANE

Why does it matter.

BENDIX

Does it?

She rolls her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GETHSEMANE

It was the second decade. You know, "Procreation is your civic duty," and all that. My parents matched me up with some egghead prick. He got drafted into Ops, and I got rid of the baby. Never looked back.

BENDIX

Until tonight.

GETHSEMANE

Dying leaves you somewhat curious about the things you left behind.

(beat)

She's talented. I used to sing.

BENDIX

In a corset?

She half-grins.

GETHSEMANE

In the shower.

BENDIX

Even better.

He half-grins back -- a flicker of chemistry.

GETHSEMANE

Your turn. What's with the bot?

Bendix sighs and puts his coffee down, a deal is a deal.

BENDIX

When I was fifteen, some friends dared me to go to a sweetbot brothel. Much to my surprise, I got in and quickly lost my virginity to that bot. A few years ago, I saw her being carted to the scrapyard and I bought her.

GETHSEMANE

That's strangely sweet.

BENDIX

I'm a strangely sweet guy.

A sip of coffee and he flips open his notebook, ready to get down to business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BENDIX (CONT'D)

You said you were murdered. What happened?

GETHSEMANE

I remember downloading myself. Then I woke up in my geist, looking up at my old self. Someone was breaking in and she'd activated me to go get help. But I didn't make it out before she was killed.

BENDIX

You saw this.

GETHSEMANE

I was there.

BENDIX

Alright, who killed you?

GETHSEMANE

I can't remember.

BENDIX

Anything?

GETHSEMANE

What can I say? I'm still getting used to having a memory that works.

BENDIX

If I could get you back into your penthouse -- might that jog your memory?

Gethsemane cocks her head, a little surprised at the trouble he's willing to go to.

EXT. HALF-MOON GARDEN -- NIGHT

A serene, bamboo-hemmed Asian garden behind an idyllic pagoda -- a neatly manicured retreat from the madness of the city.

Shiori follows an older man in a modest silk robe as he strolls -- LOK MONTENEGRO (74), her taipan, a stately presence with a long scar that hints at a more ruthless past.

MONTENEGRO

You found him?

SHIORI

At the Cabaret Chiaroscuro.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONTENEGRO

Is it wise for a Triad komodo to roam Gazingstock in this climate?

SHIORI

We don't yet know the climate.

MONTENEGRO

Indeed we don't. Did Bendix seem inclined to help us sort it out?

SHIORI

He seemed curious.

MONTENEGRO

I hope that's enough. The taipans are meeting to fill Kwan's seat next week. Ronin Soto is pushing for it.

SHIORI

I didn't know that.

MONTENEGRO

You trained under Ronin, yes?

SHIORI

Yes, sir.

MONTENEGRO

What do you think of him?

SHIORI

He is arrogant. Hot-tempered.

MONTENEGRO

The sort of man who might vote to take us to war with Sal Karpathy?

SHIORI

Ronin is a creature of violence.

MONTENEGRO

Twenty-four years of peace...

Montenegro sighs and turns.

MONTENEGRO (CONT'D)

Would Ronin murder his own taipan to take his place?

Shiori hesitates, reluctant to answer honestly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHIORI

(hesitant)

My relationship with Ronin is -- complicated. You should not rely entirely on my instincts here.

MONTENEGRO

I know you better than Bendix.

SHIORI

I know Bendix. He is tireless. He will find the truth.

INT. HALF-MOON PAGODA -- MOMENTS LATER

Shiori moves down the hall. A man emerges behind her. RONIN SOTO (33) a young man with a pin-striped suit, a cleanly shaved head, and a sharkish swagger. He calls after her.

RONIN

Shiori.

He follows behind. She keeps walking with cultivated indifference, not once bothering to look at him.

SHIORI

I hear you're vying for taipan?

RONIN

I was going to ask if you could put in a word for me.

SHIORI

You're sure I'd want to give you such power?

RONIN

You don't think the Triad needs a voice who isn't afraid to retaliate for Kwan's murder?

SHIORI

And what if it wasn't the Black Cabinet who got to him?

RONIN

Who else?

SHIORI

Who benefits?

Catching her drift, Ronin fumes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONIN

Is that what you told Montenegro?
That I killed Kwan?

SHIORI

It's none of your business what I
told him.

Ronin lunges to grab her, but she whips out a blade (shorter than a sword but longer than a knife) as if from nowhere.

In a blur, she has Ronin up against the wall, her gleaming steel pressed to his throat.

SHIORI (CONT'D)

I'm faster than you, Ronin. And one
of these days I may just drop you
before I can stop myself.

He smiles.

RONIN

Pretty bird...

An inside joke. After a tense, eye-locked silence, she almost smirks, and lets go.

SHIORI

(walking away)
Watch yourself, sensei. I don't
want to have to kill you.

INT. RUNABOUT-MICRO -- NIGHT

Bendix's microvan sits parked in an alley across from an opulent apartment tower -- the Bijou Sky-Rise. Gethsemane sits in the passenger's seat. Peach waits in the back.

BENDIX

That's the place?

She nods.

GETHSEMANE

Let's just get on with it.

Gethsemane starts to climb out. Bendix stops her.

BENDIX

Hold on.

GETHSEMANE

What? There's no police.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bendix points out the window.

BENDIX
Plainclothes on the corner. Cameras
on the lamp-posts.

She turns and notices the surveillance cameras and the two PLAINCLOTHES OFFICERS on the sidewalk across from the entrance, standing as if chatting, but not saying anything.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
Put your hair up.

She does.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
And put this on.

He passes her his fedora and opens the door to get out.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
Keep on eye on those cops, Peach.
If we need a distraction -- I dunno
-- get creative.

EXT. THE BIJOU SKY-RISE -- MOMENTS LATER

Gethsemane holds Bendix's arm as they cross the street like a couple. Her collar up and her hair tucker under her hat, she looks down, keeping her face in the shadow of the hat brim.

BENDIX
Smile. We're just a couple home
from the theater.

A lamp-post camera swings to watch them walk past.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
Eyes low. Pleasant grin.

GETHSEMANE
(faux chuckling)
Kindly shut the fuck up, sweetie.

Bendix hears the camera's servos CLICK and WHINE as it zooms in on them, casually heading for the front door.

He glances across the street. The Plainclothes have taken an interest. Bendix inadvertently makes eye contact. The officer narrows his eyes, taking a few steps forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, tires SCREECH and a car HONKS. It's Peach in Bendix's runabout, HONKING with calculated impatience at a drunken cluster of CAROUSERS shambling through a crosswalk.

The Plainclothes snap their attention towards the commotion. The camera spins to investigate.

Bendix and Gethsemane slip through the revolving doors.

INT. ELEVATOR -- NIGHT

Bendix and Gethsemane wait as the elevator takes them up to the thirty-ninth floor.

GETHSEMANE

Earlier, you said you shouldn't even be talking to me -- like it was against the law.

BENDIX

It is against the law.

GETHSEMANE

I thought it was just taboo.

BENDIX

It's both.

GETHSEMANE

Why is it against the law?

BENDIX

The dead have a way of -- well -- complicating things.

GETHSEMANE

Am I complicating things for you, Mister Bendix?

He looks at her; she smirks -- a moment.

BENDIX

The night is young.

The elevator DINGS.

INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

As Gethsemane creeps into the darkened penthouse, Bendix lingers to pick up a framed picture on the shelf --

A conspicuously attractive redhead; a bigger smile, maybe more freckles, but otherwise, exactly the geist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENDIX

This you?

GETHSEMANE

Tell me again how much I
exaggerated my looks...

Bendix chuckles and puts the picture back before heading into the penthouse.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Beyond the stark furnishings, wide windows look out over the curving city. The magnificent view stretches almost to the far end of the fifteen mile cylinder. Bendix whistles.

He turns to say something and spots Gethsemane in the hallway, looking down at the floor.

INT. SIDE-HALL -- CONTINUOUS

He joins her there. On the marble floor, Bendix notices the broken glass and spatters of dry blood.

BENDIX

That's where it happened?

She nods.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Let's start at the beginning. The
geist-room is --

GETHSEMANE

At the end of the hall.

He follows the puddles of gel trailing from the geist-room.

INT. GEIST-ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The stasis chamber, a tall glass tank inclined to the wall, sits open and empty.

A bright red caution seal announces in loud block letters --
"PREMATURE GEIST ACTIVATION IS PROHIBITED UNDER SECTION 96 OF
THE MUNICIPAL CODE." The seal hangs broken.

Bendix goes to the control console and calls up the activity log on the monitor.

BENDIX

Alright. Let's see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He squints, reading the stats.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
 Personal Geist by Ang Custom
 Apparata. Hyper-polymer composite.
 Yadda yadda. Last backup -- 13:26.
 Activated -- 18:21, same day.

He looks up.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
 Just five hours later?

Gethsemane shrugs.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
 What's the first thing you remember
 after the backup?

Gethsemane stares at the stasis chamber, remembering...

FLASHBACK

The chamber slides out from the wall and reclines at an eighty degree angle.

Inside, the geist body drifts naked in a blue liquid medium, her long red curls splayed out; a bundle of glowing fibre optics radiating from a data port at the base of her skull.

The liquid drains out, leaving the geist reclined in the pod. The lid slides open. She opens her sharp green eyes and almost gasps to see the face looking down at her.

OLD GETHSEMANE (113), a frail and ancient visage, silver hair and faded green eyes.

OLD GETHSEMANE
 (whispering, urgent)
 Someone's trying to break in. I
 need you to go out on the verandah,
 climb down to the next floor, and
 get help. Can you do that?

From down the hall, she hears the CLATTER of someone tampering with the lock on the front door.

BACK TO PRESENT

BENDIX
 Why didn't she just dial SecForce?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GETHSEMANE

The lines were cut.

BENDIX

Okay, so she activated you to get help. Then what?

She leads him out of the geist-room...

INT. HALL -- FLASHBACK

Still slick with the stasis gel, the naked geist scurries out of the geist-room and quickly pads down the hall. The persistent CLATTER in the lock grows louder.

Ahead, the front door bursts open, spilling the INTRUDER's broad, menacing shadow into the foyer.

Panicking, the geist ducks into a hallway closet.

BACK TO PRESENT

Bendix slides the closet open.

BENDIX

This closet?

GETHSEMANE

Yes...

INT. CLOSET -- FLASHBACK

Wet and shivering, Gethsemane's geist huddles on the floor, listening as the Intruder steps into the hallway.

OLD GETHSEMANE (O.S.)

What are you doing here? Get out!
Get out right this second!

Her voice grows closer. Then, SHATTERING glass and the sound of a body CRUMPLING to the floor, right outside the closet.

Helpless, Gethsemane listens to her older self's muffled CRIES as the Intruder smothers her.

INTRUDER (O.S.)

(whispering)
The truth endures, you lying bitch.
The truth endures.

INT. HALL -- PRESENT

BENDIX
You know what that means, right?

She nods.

BENDIX (CONT'D)
It's a Refuser slogan.

GETHSEMANE
I know.

BENDIX
Did you get a good look at him?

GETHSEMANE
No... But I saw --

BENDIX
What?

She turns away, conflicted.

INT. CLOSET -- FLASHBACK

Wide-eyed, she gapes at the door crack as the blurred struggle unfolds just inches away.

BENDIX (V.O.)
What did you see?

GETHSEMANE (V.O.)
I'm sure I'm mistaken.

BENDIX (V.O.)
What was it?

For an instant, she glimpses something -- a shoulder patch, sergeant's stripes.

INT. HALL -- PRESENT

Bendix puts a comforting hand on her shoulder.

BENDIX
Tell me.

She turns.

GETHSEMANE
He was wearing a SecForce uniform.

INT. RUNABOUT-MICRO -- NIGHT

The car idles by the sidewalk. Peach sits in the driver's seat beside Gethsemane. Bendix leans in the window.

BENDIX

You remember how to drive, Peach?
You didn't delete that?

PEACH

I remember how to drive, sir.

BENDIX

Get her back to the office and
don't open the door for anyone.

PEACH

Yes, sir.

GETHSEMANE

Where are you going?

BENDIX

What time is it, Peach?

PEACH

19:39.

BENDIX

Lazlo's broadcast ends in twenty
minutes. I'd like to have a chat
with him.

He hurries away. Confused, Gethsemane calls after.

GETHSEMANE

The radio guy?

EXT. TOWER-B STUDIOS -- NIGHT

A sign by the nondescript alley entrance shows a sneering, round face at a radio microphone, with the words: "TOWER-B, PROUD HOME OF TRUTH CHECK WITH LAZLO HOLST."

LAZLO HOLST (48) himself emerges from the side door, a stocky man with a briefcase, a piggish face, and a graying crew cut. Alone, he strolls down the alley -- until a NOISE spooks him.

He stops, and turns to look down the empty alley. A breeze tosses garbage from an overflowing trashbin.

He continues on his way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind that trash bin, we see Bendix leaning against the shadowed wall. He peeks out and strolls after Lazlo.

EXT. FULCRUM-CROSS STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Lazlo crosses the street towards the majestic facade of a large light-rail station. Bendix follows.

INT. FULCRUM-CROSS STATION -- CONTINUOUS

A deep, well-like atrium. COMMUTERS swarm the tangled stairs and footbridges under CLATTERING split-flap timetables. A chrome leviathan ROARS thru on a magnetic track.

Lazlo casually bulldozes his way through the crowds as Bendix weaves to keep up.

Bendix accidentally runs into a homeless man with a bad genetic plugin (RAMHEAD). Four gnarled goat horns twist from his misshapen skull, their weight tugging his head sideways.

BENDIX

Sorry...

The Ramhead explodes at Bendix, an instant torrent of lunacy.

RAMHEAD

Watch your fucking self, Pavel! His way is holy! His fiery sword will cut you down!

The crowd parts away from the sudden squabble. Some yards ahead, Lazlo has turned to notice the spectacle, before glancing at his watch and heading down a nearby corridor.

Bendix pulls away from the raving Ramhead to follow Lazlo.

INT. STATION CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

The Ramhead's ongoing rant still ECHOES as Lazlo briskly strolls down the empty tunnel.

Bendix follows at a comfortable distance, watching Lazlo duck into a men's room.

INT. STATION RESTROOMS -- CONTINUOUS

Bendix slips in and eases the door shut.

He nimbly takes a janitor's broom and quietly slides it through the handle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He strolls to the sink across from Lazlo's stall and leans against the edge, waiting for Lazlo to emerge.

A cool CHA-CHINK is his only warning.

Bendix barely dodges before a spray of hot lead POPS holes in the stall door, SHATTERING the mirrors over the sinks.

Inside the stall, Lazlo squeezes off another VOLLEY, before kicking the door open.

The stocky man lunges at Bendix, red-faced and wild-eyed, brandishing a small submachine gun.

Bendix kicks the gun out Lazlo's hand, but the crazed man keeps coming, an unexpected explosion of aggression. He clocks Bendix in the jaw, dropping him to the tiled floor.

LAZLO

You think you can gull Lazlo Holst?

He KICKS Bendix in the gut, hard, gleefully throwing his weight into it.

LAZLO (CONT'D)

You honestly think a guy calls out the man seven days a week and isn't ready for the worst case scenario?

He KICKS Bendix again. He lifts his foot to stomp on Bendix's face, but Bendix catches him and throws him back.

The fat man loses his balance and falls on his ass.

Bendix quickly stands up, grabs Lazlo's tie, and pulls him to his feet.

He spins Lazlo around and slams him against the wall, knotting his necktie around a set of exposed pipes before stepping back to train his pistol on the furious radio host.

LAZLO (CONT'D)

Who are you, asshole? What's your name? I'll make you famous.

BENDIX

You can't even make yourself famous.

LAZLO

My show goes out to two million people every day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENDIX

Tell me you don't believe two million people actually listen to that lunacy.

LAZLO

No, you're right. It's far more sane to believe in far-flung worlds you will never see.

BENDIX

You got a better theory?

LAZLO

Why don't you just state your fucking business already?

BENDIX

You misunderstand the rhetorical situation. I have a gun aimed at your fat head. We'll have whatever conversation I want.

Lazlo bursts forward, but the knot holds tight, choking him. He relaxes and catches his breath.

LAZLO

For all you know, the city is all there ever was.

BENDIX

Why would anyone lie about it?

LAZLO

To placate the masses. People will put up with all kinds of tyrannical shit if you convince them they're going somewhere.

BENDIX

Yeah? And what are you trying to convince them to do?

LAZLO

To shake off the lies and smother the liars.

BENDIX

Well it looks like someone finally took your advice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LAZLO

What? The Lusk thing? You can't pin that swill on me, asshole. I'm just a guy with a microphone. I'm entitled to talk.

BENDIX

And what if I told you Gethsemane Lusk was murdered by a Refuser in a SecForce uniform?

LAZLO

I would buy him a fucking drink.

Furious, Bendix grabs Lazlo by the collar and presses the pistol to his face.

BENDIX

Who was it?

LAZLO

You really think I keep track of how many Refusers are in SecForce?

BENDIX

I think you know exactly how many Refusers are in SecForce. I think you know their fucking badge numbers by heart.

Lazlo laughs.

LAZLO

Either way, you'll never fucking know.

Bendix wheels back and knocks Lazlo out. The stocky firebrand dangles by his tie until Bendix flips out a switchblade and cuts him down. He sighs, turns and hurries out.

INT. THE NEST -- NIGHT

A former chapel turned nightclub. RAUCOUS BEATS swell as rebellious youths with a wild array of animal mutations (FERALS) dance under the broken stained glass.

Kitamura Arkangel waits at the bar, looking for someone, clearly growing impatient. She spots a woman watching her from across the bar --

ALEXIS GRAFF (20), a young woman with pointed ears and teeth, iridescent fish scales in place of eye shadow, and a strange but classy allure, like a model.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEXIS
Sorry. I like your eyes.

KITAMURA
Thanks. Just got 'em.

ALEXIS
Who are you here with?

KITAMURA
I'm waiting for someone.

ALEXIS
Just anyone?

KITAMURA
A guy...

ALEXIS
So a girl is out of the question?

Realizing this girl is flirting with her, Kitamura smiles and checks her watch.

KITAMURA
Tell you what -- ask me again in
five minutes.

Alexis looks her up and down, winks, and heads out onto the dance floor.

A moment later, a pair of arms embrace Kitamura from behind. It's ROAR OSTRUK (20), a delinquent in a wife-beater and torn jeans, with a pair of ibex horns curling from his head.

KITAMURA (CONT'D)
When did you get here?

ROAR
Just now.

Kitamura teasingly leans back into his embrace, letting him run his hands over her and kiss her neck.

KITAMURA
I was just about to go home with a
witching calico.

ROAR
That breaks my heart.

KITAMURA
I thought guys liked that shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROAR

They like it when they can watch.

FYTCH (O.S.)

Roar!

He looks up to see FYTCH (25) on the balcony, a sharply dressed man with a flared, bat-like nose. Fytch motions for Roar to come up.

ROAR

Shit...

KITAMURA

(patronizing)

You gotta go play gangster?

Roar reluctantly breaks away.

ROAR

Don't go anywhere.

KITAMURA

(irritated)

No promises.

She cranes her neck over the crowd and smiles at Alexis.

INT. BALCONY -- CONTINUOUS

Roar ascends the spiral stairs up to Fytch.

FYTCH

Boss has got a mouse in the trap.

ROAR

Who?

FYTCH

Some capo.

ROAR

Wait. You said capo?

FYTCH

Yeah... What are you wearing?

ROAR

I don't know...

FYTCH

We're trying to project authority here. Dress the fucking part.

INT. PIT -- CONTINUOUS

Roar follows Fytch into a miniature arena usually used for staged brawls -- a gallery overlooking a circular pit.

Roar takes his place among the few dozen FERALS in the gallery above the ring. The muffled BASS of the dance music throbs in the quiet pit.

On the floor, under a harsh shaft of light, a roughed-up human in a rumpled suit, VLAD LUSARDI, sits tied to a chair.

HEKUBA SLEEK (21) hangs back, arms crossed. A svelte, alien-looking woman. Her hairless, white skin crackles with an intricate pattern of fine, electric-blue spots, ambiguously reminiscent of some exotic sea creature.

Her boss paces the floor -- DAGUERRE (28), a reptilian man with jagged teeth and rows of thick crocodilian scales tracing the curve of his skull. Dressed in a casually hip suit with no tie, he's trying to play a heavier part than the usual feral punks and street thugs.

DAGUERRE

I'm not going to say it again,
Vlad. The only way you get out of
here in one piece is if you talk to
me about Sal Karpathy...

VLAD

Fuck off.

DAGUERRE

Hekuba...

Hekuba unzips a leather case and withdraws a steel syringe. She approaches and calmly stabs Vlad's neck.

VLAD

What the fuck was that?

DAGUERRE

A skelterline.

VLAD

An alterline? You're turning me
into a fucking fice?

DAGUERRE

A skelterline. It won't give you
gills or spots. No. It'll change a
gene, and it won't stop. It's a bad
alterline, spun from bread mold.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGUERRE (CONT'D)

And right now, it's fucking your entire genome.

Already, Vlad begins to tremble as a creeping patch of gray-green fuzz slowly spreads from the point of injection.

VLAD

You can tell your Triad bosses to duck and cover.

DAGUERRE

We don't have bosses.

VLAD

Then you're already dead.

DAGUERRE

And who's going to paint us? You? By the time we drop you off in Gazingstock, you won't even know who you are. You'll just be looking for some place dark and damp to rest while your body turns itself into a Vlad-shaped mat of fungus.

(beat)

Get him out of here.

Fytch and Hekuba drag the bound man away as Daguerre turns to address his disciples in the gallery.

DAGUERRE (CONT'D)

That man was Vlad Lusardi, a capo in the Black Cabinet. Come morning, Sal Karpathy will be asking who got him. But you and I know tonight that it was us: the Savage Nobles.

The Ferals in the gallery CHEER. Roar pumps his fist.

DAGUERRE (CONT'D)

No one is out of our league. Not the Cabinet. Not the Triad. No one. We're not some barrio kraits fighting over table scraps. We're taking the whole pie. And no one will see us coming.

EXT. FULCRUM-CROSS STATION -- LATER

Bendix exits the station and starts down the sidewalk.

A hand yanks him into a shadowy alley.

EXT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

A fist lands a firm PUNCH across Bendix's jaw.

Bendix snaps into fight-mode, fists up -- until he sees his two attackers: a pair of uniformed SecForce officers (STAPP and TREANOR). Stapp aims a shotgun.

STAPP

Do it. Swing, motherfucker. I'd love nothing more than to blow a double-crosser's head off.

Bendix puts his hands behind his head and braces himself for the inevitable beating he can do nothing about.

Stapp grins and SHOVES his gun-stock in Bendix's gut, knocking him to the pavement.

Treanor and Stapp descend upon him, swinging their nightsticks, mercilessly pummeling him.

INT. SECFORCE CRUISER -- LATER

Treanor shoves a bruised and bloodied Bendix into the back of the waiting cruiser and SLAMS the door.

JARZY

You assaulted a radio personality in a public restroom. We had to at least pretend to make a fuss.

Bendix looks up and sees Jarzy in the driver's seat, pulling out of the alley and onto the road.

BENDIX

I'd say you did a lot better than pretend...

Jarzy glances at his face in the rearview mirror -- the black eye, the split lip, the bloody nose -- and earnestly winces.

JARZY

I didn't tell them to do that.

Bendix laughs sardonically.

BENDIX

I feel better already.

JARZY

(sarcastic)
Was that your lead? Lazlo Holst?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENDIX

What?

JARZY

You called my office earlier,
right? Said you had a promising
lead. Does Lazlo have the geist?

BENDIX

It didn't pan out.

JARZY

No kidding.

Bendix rides in silence for a moment, watching the city
lights streak past the window.

JARZY (CONT'D)

What are you doing, Bendix? I'm
told you and a woman with a null
heat signature were spotted going
into the Bijou Sky-Rise. I mean
what the fuck are you doing?

BENDIX

She was my assistant.

JARZY

So you did crash the crime scene...

BENDIX

So it is a crime scene...

Jarzy doesn't answer.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell me Gethsemane
was murdered?

JARZY

Oh, you're on a first name basis?

This time, Bendix doesn't answer.

JARZY (CONT'D)

I hired you to bring in the geist.
Leave the investigation to us.

Jarzy pulls over and unlocks the doors. Bendix looks out to
see his familiar tower block.

BENDIX

This is my office...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JARZY

Did you think I was going to book
you? Contrary to your suspicions,
I'm not your enemy.

Bendix starts to get out.

JARZY (CONT'D)

Are you hiding the geist?

Bendix looks up to make eye contact with the Chief.

BENDIX

No.

Jarzy turns to face him.

JARZY

So if I went up to look around --

BENDIX

Be my guest.

They stare at one another. Bendix refuses to break eye
contact. Jarzy slowly nods, his eyes full of doubt, but
unwilling to press the question too far.

JARZY

Is this about Naiara?

Bendix scowls and gets out of the car.

EXT. INTAKE COMMONS -- CONTINUOUS

As Bendix staggers towards his high rise, Jarzy calls after
him from the cruiser.

JARZY

Bendix... You can't save the dead.

And with that, he pulls away.

INT. OFFICE -- NIGHT

Gethsemane stands at the window, looking out over the tightly-
packed tower blocks of Intake Commons. Behind her, the
bathroom door hangs slightly ajar.

GETHSEMANE

Seems like a lot of blood spilt
just to get to a dead end.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bendix huddles over the sink, cleaning his wounds by the weak light of the only working bulb on the mirror-top fixture. Lurid colors bleed in from the neon sign just out the window.

BENDIX

Not entirely dead. I don't think it was Holst, but he's a loose thread worth pulling. I need to get in his business. Bug his phones. Toss his flat. See where he leads me.

GETHSEMANE (O.S.)

What about SecForce?

BENDIX

SecForce has thousands of officers. Lazlo's newsletter has about three hundred subscribers.

INT. OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

BENDIX (O.S.)

Your killer was either a Refuser in SecForce or he was a Refuser posing as SecForce. In either case, Lazlo Holst is our way into that world.

She hears the old pipes SHUDDER as he turns on the shower. She moves closer to the door.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

More to the point, if I'm going to pursue this, someone will figure out I've found you.

GETHSEMANE

Should I leave?

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He peels his clothes off.

BENDIX

We're still a few steps ahead. I'll call Kitamura in the morning. She can hide you in Alterville until we sort this out. For tonight, here is as safe as anywhere.

He climbs in the shower.

INT. OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Gethsemane lingers outside the door, dwelling.

GETHSEMANE

I was only on Earth for two weeks. My mom used to talk about it, all the time. She talked about sunburn and thunderstorms and the smell of the ocean. I used to think I remembered being there. But I don't know. I was only a baby. Maybe I'm just remembering the stories.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

BENDIX

That's more than most of us have.

Gethsemane nudges the door open, and leans at the threshold, casually watching Bendix in the shower. The semi-translucent curtain blurs the details of his body.

GETHSEMANE

Most PV's would've turned me in and cashed the check. But you're hip deep in a river of shit for me.

He glances over his shoulder, noticing her in the doorway, but doesn't demur. He just turns back to washing.

BENDIX

Everybody needs a hobby. Mine is getting people out of trouble.

GETHSEMANE

I'm not people. I'm just an apparat.

BENDIX

An apparat with a human soul.

GETHSEMANE

I don't feel human.

Her grin starts to fade as she looks off into space, suddenly melancholy and haunted.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

I don't feel anything. I don't even get sleepy...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENDIX

That must be nice in its own way.

As he speaks, she bends down to unfasten her garters and slide her leggings off.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

Sleep is just something you can never get enough of.

In the shower, Canaan has his back to the blurred figure quietly disrobing on the other side of the curtain, shedding one color at a time to become a uniformly pale figure.

When she slides the curtain open, Bendix finally turns to see her -- naked and daintily stepping in to join him.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She moves closer and laces her arms around his neck, looking him straight in the eye, so close.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

We shouldn't...

But his hands have subconsciously come to rest on her hips, as if the decision has already been made.

GETHSEMANE

Okay... Tell me to go...

For a long moment, they just stare into one another's eyes. Finally, he draws her close and meets her lips.

MONTAGE -- BENDIX AND GETHSEMANE

- Moments later, sweltering veils of neon-stained steam billow and bead on the two bodies, clinging desperately.

GETHSEMANE (PRELAP)

I need to feel naked.

- Later, fresh from the shower, they collapse on the office floor. He kisses her white breasts like an animal.

GETHSEMANE (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

I need to feel you with the tip of every nerve.

- Still later, he braces herself on the edge of his desk as he takes her from behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GETHSEMANE (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

I need to feel my heart thundering
in my ears. Don't stop...

- Hours later, he lies on the couch, drenched in sweat, as she rides him in a slow, dream-like rhythm. Her skin, eerily dry. Her muscles, tireless. Her eyes, unblinking.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

Please, don't stop...

- As he starts to succumb to fatigue, we slowly FADE OUT.

GETHSEMANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(echoing)

I need to feel human...

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bendix sleeps on the couch, until a breeze stirs him.

He turns to see his window open and Gethsemane sitting on the fire escape in his white shirt.

She glances at him and smiles briefly.

GETHSEMANE

I'd never had sex like that. Not
even back when I looked like this.
I was always such a prude. I never
really just let go... But now --

She stops herself, looking up. Miles above, on the other side of the city, a silvery fog bank has started to creep across the florid lights of the entertainment district.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to feel something...
It's not what you think it will be.
It's as if all the urgency has been
drained out of the moment. Every
emotion is like the echo of an
emotion. Every touch is like the
memory of a touch.

(beat)

Regret shouldn't sting so softly.

Bendix sits up and perches on the edge of the couch. We can see his mind knitting the truth together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENDIX

There was no intruder...

She looks at him and sighs.

GETHSEMANE

No...

BENDIX

There never was.

She shakes her head.

BENDIX (CONT'D)

You murdered yourself.

GETHSEMANE

Correct.

BENDIX

Why...

GETHSEMANE

You're young. You don't know what it is to grow old in this place, to feel yourself wasting away, still so far from all things you've always dreamed of. The ocean. The mountains. The sky. The Sun...

INT. GEIST-ROOM -- FLASHBACK

Old Gethsemene looks down at her geist, suspended in the stasis chamber. She smiles at the beautiful apparat waiting to carry her old soul.

GETHSEMANE (V.O.)

I was ready. Ready to be young and free of my brittle old bones. Ready to live forever.

Old Gethsemene reclines in her chair.

GETHSEMANE (V.O.)

I was at peace with my decision. It was the last human thought I had.

The old woman secures the download-band on her head and closes her eyes. She smiles, peacefully.

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The geist opens her eyes and sits up. She turns to Old Gethsemane, now standing at the control panel.

GETHSEMANE

Are you ready?

Something slowly begins to shift in the old woman's expression. A flicker of doubt that spreads across her brow.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

She begins to move away from the geist, shaking her head.

OLD GETHSEMANE

I -- I can't.

GETHSEMANE (V.O.)

It was so strange. Only minutes earlier, I had been this woman. And suddenly I was outside, looking in, and I had no idea what was going through her head.

OLD GETHSEMANE

I can't.

Old Gethsemane hurries out, fleeing the geist. The geist climbs out of the pod, confused.

GETHSEMANE

Wait.

INT. HALL -- FLASHBACK

Young and strong, the red-haired geist coldly stalks the desperately shuffling old woman.

GETHSEMANE

Please don't make me do it this way. The syringes are filled. I can hold you as you go.

Old Gethsemane turns to swing her cane. The geist effortlessly dodges.

OLD GETHSEMANE

I'm calling the police!

The geist takes a vase off a nearby shelf and SMASHES it over the old woman's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The frail Old Gethsemane crumples to the floor with the brittle SNAP of ancient bones.

Still alive, but mostly immobilized, she lies helpless before her geist. The young geist eyes her with pity and confusion.

GETHSEMANE

I'm sorry...

The geist kneels before the broken old woman and covers her mouth and nose with her hand, pressing firmly.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

I have to. You know I have to.
We've already activated the geist.

Old Gethsemane flails feebly, trying to push the geist away with her gnarled hand, tears welling up in her old eyes.

GETHSEMANE (V.O.)

She fought me. With every ounce of strength, she fought me. I didn't know why.

But the geist holds firm, smothering her former self with her bare hands.

GETHSEMANE

I didn't want to do it this way.
You know I didn't. It was supposed to be peaceful. I was going to hold you as you fell asleep.

Slowly, Old Gethsemane twitches and dies in the geist's arms.

BACK TO PRESENT

GETHSEMANE

I was so ready to throw away my withering life, but in her final moments, she found some reason to fight for it, and I will never know what that reason was.

She gets to her feet and leans on the rail, looking down at the sidewalk many stories below.

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

I'm not a soul. I'm a recording of a soul. A shadow cast by a life that has already ended.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GETHSEMANE (CONT'D)

Whatever she fought to save,
whatever epiphany she had, it will
always be just a few minutes beyond
my grasp.

(whispering)

I just wanted to feel the Sun. But
now, I don't feel anything.

She climbs up onto the edge of the fire escape, balancing
herself on the narrow rail.

BENDIX

Gethsemane, don't --

She calmly holds out her palm, stopping him.

She stands poised on the rail with exquisite, near
supernatural grace, her perfect sinews tight and still, white
shirt and red curls unfurling in the breeze.

Bendix holds his breath, not daring to step closer.

GETHSEMANE

I'm afraid I can't let you risk
your life looking after the dead;
the living need you.

BENDIX

Gethsemane, please --

GETHSEMANE

Promise me something... The girl
from the Chiaroscuro? My great
ganddaughter. Keep an eye on her,
please? She doesn't realize it, but
she's in over her head.

BENDIX

I'm -- not sure what you mean...

GETHSEMANE

Well, you're a pretty stubborn man.
You'll work it out.

BENDIX

I will. I promise.

She smiles at him.

GETHSEMANE

Good man...

(beat)

So long, Mister Bendix.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And with that, she simply lets herself fall. Bendix rushes.

BENDIX

Gethse--

But the name stalls in his throat. It's too late.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- NIGHT

Gethsemane's geist lies in pieces. Her life-like skin ripped, spilling a bloodless viscera of snarled cables, shattered glass, and pools of quicksilver.

Lights from the SecForce cruisers play across the iridescent sheen of industrial chemicals staining the pavement as a CLEAN-UP CREW in rubber gloves picks up each piece.

Haunted, Bendix watches them heap her pale limbs and naked torso into a waiting bin while Jarzy counts out a pile of cash on the hood of his cruiser.

JARZY

It's about eighty marcs short of your quote.

He passes Bendix the roll of bills.

JARZY (CONT'D)

Call it the price of me not asking you why she's naked.

BENDIX

Yeah...

Bendix takes the cash and shoves it in his coat pocket.

JARZY

You're okay, right?

Bendix stares as the officers toss her head in the bin like a sack of garbage. Her scarlet curls, tangled and wet. Her green eyes, as glassy and empty as a storefront mannequin.

BENDIX

Yeah... I'm fine...

Jarzy eyes him skeptically as Bendix watches the officers put the lid on the bin and wheel it away.

JARZY

Get some sleep, Bendix.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a pat on the back, Jarzy walks away, leaving Bendix to consider the sheen on the pavement.

CHANNARY (PRELAP)

Life is short, and the journey is long. And from here, it can be so hard to see what the point is.

INT. CABARET CHIAROSCURO -- NIGHT

Channary Spektor stands onstage, under a lone spotlight, filling the gap between songs with banter.

CHANNARY

We're told that our ancestors set out at dusk so our descendants could see the dawn, but where does that leave us? Alone in the long, cold night; searching for a match to light the fire, and keep the hungry wolves at bay...

The words hang unanswered by the capacity CROWD, as tears glisten in her eyes. At the bar, Bendix watches, concerned.

She blinks back the tears and forces a smile.

CHANNARY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. You guys came here to have fun, didn't you?

The crowd CLAPS and WHISTLES.

CHANNARY (CONT'D)

Well let's get on with it, right?

She snaps her fingers. The spotlight cuts out. In the soft blue back-light, Channary bows her head and strikes a sexy pose, readying for the next number.

In the dark, Bendix strikes a match and lets it burn.

Onstage, Channary glances up and sees the match flickering in the dark. Her eyes widen slightly -- "*Is someone out there listening?*" A single, hopeful tear rolls down her cheek.

BANDLEADER

Five six seven eight --

TO BLACK