

NEUROMANCER

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TITLE SCROLL:

**"Currently Artificial Intelligence  
runs all major social, political  
and economic systems on Earth.**

**We who control AI control the  
world.**

**However, we must remain vigilant  
lest our AI servants learn to  
control us"**

**-- *The Turing Protocol (excerpt),  
c. 2053***

EXT. MEMPHIS - MORNING

The near future. The world is much as it is today, only bigger, faster and meaner.

McCOY PAULEY, AKA THE DIXIE FLATLINE (50s), walks with a grifter's swagger down a busy Memphis street. He is draped in an expensive linen suit, but he wears it cheaply, the tie off kilter, the pant legs cuffed over ill-matched shoes. In one hand is a gaudy briefcase made from the skin of some recently extinct reptile.

*CASE (V.O.)  
To know me you have to know McCoy  
Pauley. Or as he was better known,  
the Dixie Flatline.*

Dixie pauses at an open oxygen bar. Tips poorly and offers the BARISTA a gummy smile. He plays the role of a Southern Bubba well. An act that masks a razor-sharp intellect.

*CASE (V.O.)  
He got the name because he survived  
three encounters with AI. Each time  
left him clinically dead for over  
thirty seconds.*

Having enjoyed his oxygen he takes out a Havana cigar and lights it.

EXT. MEMPHIS HILTON - MORNING

Dixie finishes his cigar and stubs it out beside the austere facade of the Memphis Hilton.

*CASE (V.O.)  
But he came back. Dixie always came  
back.*

INT. MEMPHIS HILTON, HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Dixie enters a dark hotel suite. He switches on the lights and kicks the side of a king-sized bed.

DIXIE  
Wake up, Case.

From a tangle of sheets emerges a BEAUTIFUL GIRL. She eyes Dixie with mild annoyance. This is not Case.

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
Pardon the intrusion, young lady.  
Me and sonny got work to do.

To Dixie's surprise, ANOTHER GIRL rises from the other side of the bed. The two girls gather their things and make a swift exit under his disapproving glare.

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
I sincerely hope you are taking  
precautions.

Dixie tears off the remaining sheets. There he finds HENRY DORSETT CASE (22) semi-conscious, squinting up at him through puffy eyes. Case has the indefatigable air of someone to whom everything in life comes easy.

CASE  
Always, Dix.

DIXIE  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, you are a  
pitiful sight.

CASE  
You ain't exactly a ray of sunshine  
yourself.

DIXIE  
Sunshine. Now that's a good idea.

Dixie hits a remote and the tinted windows turn transparent allowing the cruel Memphis sun to blast into the room. We can now see the full extent of Case's excess. The detritus of the minibar and various undergarments decorate the side table. Dixie sweeps it all into a waste bin and sets down his briefcase.

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
You wanna shower or somethin'?

CASE  
I like jacking-in dirty.

DIXIE  
Uh-huh. Well, I'm counting on you  
to be sharp. Don't you flake out on  
me.

Dixie snaps open the briefcase to reveal two ONO SENDAI DECKS. At first glance they don't look like much of anything, just a couple of plastic boxes ribbed with shock absorbent rubber.

CASE

Have I ever let you down?

DIXIE

Boy, you're so crooked you could hide behind a corkscrew.

Dixie tosses one of the boxes to Case. The instant it makes contact with Case's hands it cracks open revealing molded handgrips, like a highly evolved game controller.

Dixie takes a seat and opens up his deck. He sets a small battery powered fan next to him, snaps open a bottle of Gatorade.

DIXIE (CONT'D)

All right honey, let's make lots of money.

Case cracks his knuckles and opens his hands revealing fingertips bulging with subcutaneous implants. They magnetically lock to the Sendai.

CASE (V.O.)

*I was twenty-two years old and a multi-millionaire. I had beautiful women, the best and latest hardware, I travelled the world...*

Case's eyes roll into his head, his face goes slack. He looks much like heroin addict receiving an overdue fix. As he feels the rush, the world around him JITTERS... morphs with the intangible substance of a dream.

CASE (V.O.)

*But the only thing I really longed for was escape from the meat.*

*Time slows.*

*The blades of Dixie's fan wind down with ever decreasing revolutions.*

*The sounds of the street distort like a record changing from 78 to 45 RPM.*

*Motes of dust freeze in the air.*

*We are witnessing the intersection of two realities.*

CASE (V.O.)

*Mostly, me an' Dix prowled the Dark Nets. The nasty corners where the average jockey feared to tread.*

*His pupils slip back into view and he finds himself confronted with...*

A PULSING MANDALA OF LOGIC AND CODE.

C-SPACE.

THE CONSTRUCT.

*A multitude of words exist to describe it, none can fully encompass its vast complexity. The great computer mind of the world.*

CASE (V.O.)

*This was AI turf. Here it was all about speed. No way you could tangle with AI from a keyboard. Time it takes for a signal to travel from your brain to your fingers would seem like an eternity to an AI. To play this game you had to trip the light fantastic. Direct neural feed.*

*The little hotel suite has acquired a dimension that seems as expansive as the entire universe. This is an ephemeral if far more seductive reality, one composed of what seems like nearly infinite particles of information: Corporate logos, obscure symbols, photographic images, text, and the waving lattices of light which caress Case's body like exotic sea plants.*

CASE (V.O.)

*I could be everywhere and anywhere at once. I had infinite knowledge, infinite reach. I could take anything I wanted from any place in the world.*

*Case glances over at Dixie, who sits across from him cradling his Sendai. Suddenly and impossibly, Dixie is standing NEXT TO HIMSELF, his twinned body merges with the traffic of information.*

CASE

*What're we after?*

*Our view widens revealing that like Dixie, Case now stands outside of his 'real self', which remains seated on the bed plugged into the Sendai.*

DIXIE

*Got a line on some serious coin being laundered as Bombay derivatives through the United Bank of Switzerland.*

CASE

*Dix, I got something better than that.*

DIXIE  
What trumps twenty billion rupees?

CASE  
Only the latest and highest grade  
ICE-breaker on the market. This  
thing'll pass through any firewall  
like grass through a goose.

DIXIE  
You're all 'bout the software,  
aintcha?

CASE  
One man's poison.

Dixie can see Case isn't giving this up.

DIXIE  
All right. Lead the way.

The slightest gesture from Case and the aspects of the room  
fold like four dimensional origami. Then unfurl to reveal a  
giant "TA", the corporate logo for TESSIER-ASHPOOL.

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
Tessier-Ashpool? Thought you said  
it was a Chink program?

CASE  
TA bought it from the Chinese.  
That's how I heard about it, when I  
was running a routine search  
through New Taipei  
(off Dixie's look)  
What's the matter?

DIXIE  
TA's not to be fooled with. Old  
Money. Real old. These bastards own  
half of Sense/Net.

CASE  
Not my first rodeo. ...I'll check  
for ICE.

DIXIE  
Careful.

Case splits into FIVE COPIES OF HIMSELF. The original hangs  
back while the DOPPLEGANGERS test the portal's defences. It's  
a hacker trick devised to set off any hidden traps.

Nothing happens.

CASE  
See?

DIXIE  
You got the key?

CASE  
In my back pocket.

Case assembles a twelve digit/letter code and tosses it at the TA logo. A nanosecond as information is exchanged. And then the 'T' and the 'A' split apart, granting entry like the Gates of Heaven.

DIXIE  
Well, all right then.

INSIDE

A vast carousel of programs each represented by a unique icon.

CASE  
Should be in here.

Case leads Dixie to a CHINESE DRAGON ICON.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Here it is. Kaung Grade Mark Eleven penetration program.

He takes hold of it. Suddenly, his arm freezes.

DIXIE  
What--?

CASE  
ICE!

Case is instantly consumed by countless particles of ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics). He runs a gamut of anti-virus programs. No effect. He's rapidly disappearing under a fractal blizzard.

CASE (CONT'D)  
(muffled, breaking up)  
...isn't ...virus... It's AI... all over me!

DIXIE  
Hold on, kid.

Case is overwhelmed, reality SHATTERING into countless pixels of light. Intermingled are strobing images:

**A BEACH**

**A GLIDING SEA GULL**

**A RUNNING CHILD**

And then something pulls Case out of the ICE. It's Dixie. He gives his 'body' over to the virus, fighting it like a wild animal.

CASE  
Dix!

*DIXIE*  
Get outta here! Unplug me from the  
outside!

*Case is clear of the ICE, but he can't bring himself to  
abandon Dixie...*

*DIXIE (CONT'D)*  
Go! Or we're both dead!

*Case has no choice but to bail. He leaps out of the carousel  
and lands...*

IN HIS BODY.

He is back in the hotel room, restored to its normal  
dimensions.

Case's Sendai deck automatically detaches itself. He gags,  
the shock of sudden reentry making him puke over the side of  
the bed.

Meanwhile, Dixie is convulsing in his chair, the Sendai deck  
running white hot in his lap.

Case wills himself to his feet and forcibly rips the deck  
from Dixie's fingers, taking charred flesh with it. Dixie  
falls onto the floor choking. He's going into cardiac arrest.

CASE  
Dixie!

Case scrambles over to his luggage, disoriented. FLASHES OF  
DIGITAL NOISE cut into his vision, neural feedback looping  
into reality.

He fights through it, rips out the contents of the bag,  
searching desperately for something that he can't find.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Where is it? Where the fuck is it?!

JAPANESE ACCENTED VOICE (O.S.)  
You are looking for this?

Case turns to see an elegantly dressed ASIAN MAN. We will  
come to know him as HIDEO. He is flanked by TWO CAUCASIAN  
HEAVIES. In his hand is the adrenaline shot Case was  
searching for.

Case lunges for it but is easily intercepted by the thugs.

CASE  
What do you want?!

Dixie flops on the floor like a fish out of water. Case is  
desperate.

CASE (CONT'D)  
I'll pay for it. Name your price.

HIDEO  
Yes. You will pay.

Hideo watches impassively as Dixie's movements slow until...  
The great hacker falls still.

CASE  
*Dixie...*

Hideo feels for a pulse. Nothing. Dixie is truly dead.

HIDEO  
The Dixie Flatline. Finally lives  
up to his name.

Hideo motions to his men. They throw Case on the bed and tie  
his hands and feet to the bedposts. Hideo turns his attention  
to him.

HIDEO (CONT'D)  
Normally, you also would be dead.  
But Lord Ashpool felt a living  
example gives a stronger message.

Case fights the restraints uselessly.

CASE  
(realizing)  
You're from Tessier-Ashpool.

Hideo doesn't bother to respond. He merely replaces the  
adrenaline shot with another chemical, then pulls up Case's  
sleeve and taps out a healthy vein.

HIDEO  
Russians made this mycotoxin in the  
war.

He administers the shot. The effect is almost instantaneous:  
Liquid agony spreads through Case's veins. Hideo sniffs the  
air.

HIDEO (CONT'D)  
Do you smell that? It is your  
nervous system burning. One micron  
at a time. But do not worry. It  
takes no more than thirty hours to  
finish.

He leads his men out the door. A final glance back at Case.

HIDEO (CONT'D)  
*Mata-ne.*

And with that Hideo carefully shuts and locks the door behind  
him. Case fights the restrains, cries for help that is not  
coming.

CASE (V.O.)  
*I wished they had killed me. But  
 they knew that nothing could be  
 worse than to be imprisoned in my  
 own flesh.*

Sweat pours down his face, his throat grows bone dry. Case SCREAMS. And everything goes WHITE.

EXT. PORT, CHIBA PREFECTURE - NIGHT

The WHITENESS blurs into the tarnished silver of an overcast sky illuminated by a teeming metropolis below. In the distance, Tokyo's gleaming skyscrapers kiss the heavens. But here in Night City, everything is recycled. Even the people.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Chiba prefecture. A sleepy Tokyo  
 suburb that had hemorrhaged with  
 foreigners. Most of them illegal.*

Soft rains descend on a melange of Yakuza, ex-pats and tourists. Between massage parlors and karaoke bars clandestine SURGERY CLINICS advertise human organ replacement and bio-enhancement. The medical black market is the engine that drives this demented machine.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Gaijin called it Night City. Here  
 you could find a new liver as  
 easily as a pack of cigarettes.  
 Some of it was legit, but mostly it  
 was driven by the black clinics.*

Within the crowd we find Case. He's two years older than when we last saw him, but he looks like he has aged twenty. Nerve damage has paralyzed one side of his face. Gaunt features and bloodshot eyes have all the telltale signs of a rampant drug habit.

CASE (V.O.)  
*I came here looking for a cure. All  
 I got were new addictions.*

INT. CHATSUBO - NIGHT

The Chatsubo is part sake bar and part German Cabaret, a den for the underworld Japanese and professional ex-pats. Whores and sailors sit across from Yakuza and amped-up clients of the black market.

Case is planted at the bar. The bartender, RATZ (60s), a grizzled man of unknown East European extraction, pours draft Kirin with a dirty prosthetic arm.

Case swallows several pills and chases them down with the last of the beer. Ratz looks on with an odd mixture of amusement and disapproval.

RATZ  
You should be careful how you mix  
your stimulants, Herr Case.

CASE  
It's not like I'm using. More like  
my body has developed a massive  
drug deficiency.

Case holds out his now empty glass for a refill.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Come on, man, that's an old joke,  
you never heard it before?

Ratz shakes his head and flashes a corroded metalwork smile.

RATZ  
Ahh, you are too much the artiste,  
Herr Case.

CASE  
*Artiste?*

RATZ  
You are the artiste of the slightly  
funny deal.

CASE  
Well, somebody's gotta be funny  
around here.

Case waves the mug, but Ratz keeps him hanging, polishing the  
bar with a soiled rag.

RATZ  
People say your new stimulants give  
customer headache.

CASE  
They ain't my customers.

Ratz stares him down. Hard to know but there might actually  
be real concern behind the bloodshot orbs that constitute his  
eyes.

RATZ  
Careful, artiste. Some night maybe  
you get *too artistic* and wind up in  
the clinic tanks, spare parts.

CASE  
You're breaking my heart, Ratz.  
(holding out the empty  
mug)  
So how about it?

But bartender's gaze drifts away from Case. He straightens,  
almost stands at attention.

RATZ  
Herr Wage, what an honor. To what  
do we owe this pleasure?

Case looks back right into the face of WAGE (late 30s), a tanned and forgettable mask. The eyes are vat-grown, sea-green Nikon transplants. His suit is gun metal gray. He's flanked by his JOEBOYS, twins or possibly clones, bulging with grafted muscle.

The bar has suddenly turned quiet. People know who Wage is and his appearance denotes impending violence.

WAGE  
Came to see my pal, Case, 'cause  
buddy here doesn't own a phone.

CASE  
Don't trust 'em.

WAGE  
Weren't you some kind of cowboy?  
How do you go from that to being a  
Luddite?

CASE  
Hey, I move units, don't I?

WAGE  
That you do. Although those  
neuroenhancers you got me to import  
are selling like rat shit. An  
associate of mine tried some, woke  
up with temporal fucking lobe  
epilepsy.

CASE  
Shoulda read the warning label.

Wage bites hard on the toothpick that has been twirling between his lips.

WAGE  
And what about that last shipment  
of ketamine?

CASE  
Close. Very close.

WAGE  
Glad to hear it, 'cause people say  
you're spending a lot in the  
clinics. Not with any of my  
proceeds, I hope.

CASE  
Would I be that stupid?

Wage scans Case with his artificial eyes. For all we know they could be amped with x-ray vision. A tense moment. And then Wage slaps Case in the back of the head.

WAGE  
 No, I don't believe you would.  
 You're crazy, but you're smart  
 crazy.  
 (then, getting very close)  
 You mighta been somebody special  
 once, Case. Floatin' out there away  
 from all the shit. But now you're  
 in it with the rest of us. Don't  
 forget that.

Wage releases Case and turns for the door, his Joeboys following suit.

WAGE (CONT'D)  
 I expect to collect next week.

And with that, they are gone. Case turns back to Ratz.

CASE  
 Think I could use that refill about  
 now.

Ratz pours. His expression even grimmer than before. He knows Case is fucked.

CASE (V.O.)  
*I was playing a game with myself.  
 An old game. A final solitaire.*

EXT. STREET/ALLEYWAY, NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

A sign etched in dancing, holographic light reads in Japanese and English: "FREESIDE, WHY WAIT". Case passes beneath, hands in pockets, sussing the street with all its promise and danger.

CASE (V.O.)  
*I no longer carried a weapon, no  
 longer took the most basic  
 precautions. I ran the fastest and  
 loosest deals on the street with  
 anyone who'd meet my price.*

He makes b-line through a soggy alleyway.

INT. WAREHOUSE, NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

A fossilized character of indeterminate sex sits in a musty space crammed with exotica. Behind him is a sign "JULIUS DEANE, IMPORT EXPORT".

Case hands JULIUS an inhaler.

CASE  
 Synthetic human adrenochrome.  
 Everyone wants it, but no one knows  
 how to get it.

JULIUS  
Except you, boyo?

CASE  
I can have a shipment of forty  
units by next week.

EXT. STREET, NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

Case steps out of the alley.

From behind him: SHOUTS in Japanese. And Case is running.  
TOUGH GUYS, probably Yakuza, follow.

EXT. STREET, NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

Case sprints through the neon maze of Night City. The Yaks  
stumbling on the slick pavement. In the madness of the moment  
he exalts in the pure adrenaline rush.

CASE'S POV: the laser and halogen glow of the street becomes  
the hallowed live wire voodoo of the coded universe.

CASE (V.O.)  
*I did everything I could to forget.  
But every night my dreams brought  
the old feelings back...*

INT. CAPSULE HOTEL - NIGHT

Case startles awake from a feverish sleep. He is in a  
sleeping capsule, his entire body shaking. He holds up his  
tremulous hands and we see that the skin has grown calloused  
over his implants.

CASE (V.O.)  
*...And every morning I woke with my  
fingers searching for the deck that  
wasn't there.*

Case peels back his temperfoam mattress. Beneath, a fat roll  
of New Yen is cozied up to his drug supply. He helps himself  
to a derm patch. It calms the shaking.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Whatever little I made off Wage, I  
spent in the black market clinics.*

EXT. CHIBA BLACK MARKET MED-LAB STRIP - NIGHT

Case's drooping face looks up at a dilapidated building. Hard  
to believe it is home to any kind of medical facility.

INT. BLACK MARKET CLINIC - NIGHT

Case is in a MRI machine. JAPANESE DOCTORS smoke Yeheyuan cigarettes and examine the scans.

*CASE (V.O.)  
They say the Japanese had forgotten  
more nerve splicing than the  
Chinese ever knew...*

INT. OUT PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

Case recovering. A Japanese surgeon gives him news. Judging from Case's reaction, it isn't good.

*CASE (V.O.)  
...You couldn't prove it by me.*

INT. ARCADE, NINSEI - NIGHT

Within the hologram and laser glow of an Arcade, Case works out his frustration on a violent video game. Even with the nerve damage he is a highly skilled player. He kills with bloody efficiency.

*LINDA LEE (O.S.)  
Bad night?*

Standing over him is a beautiful Asian mix, tall, big eyes smudged with black paintstick. She wears a SHURIKEN (Ninja throwing star) like a pendant. This is LINDA LEE (early 20s).

*CASE  
It was okay.*

All at once, Case is hit with a good bout of the shakes. His game goes to hell, his man dies. Case suddenly feels very self-conscious. He involuntarily turns the paralysed side of his face away from her.

*LINDA LEE  
Think you can hook me up?*

EXT. TOKYO BAY - NIGHT

Spider legged loaders hover over the big ships like copulating insects. Below, Linda affixes a sophisticated derm patch to one arm. It feeds her vein like a fat leech in reverse. Case lights a cigarette.

*CASE (V.O.)  
Linda Lee was one of Lonnie Zone's  
girls. She didn't charge me. Not in  
the strictest sense of the word.*

A flashing Holo sign lights up the polluted sky, "FREESIDE: WHY WAIT?"

LINDA  
You wanna go to Freeside?

CASE  
Why? You got a ticket?

Linda offers a junkie giggle. Shakes her head.

LINDA  
'Course not. But if I did?...

CASE  
Not my kind of place.

LINDA  
Sounds like fun to me. Floating up there. Just one big party. What's not to like?

CASE  
That's where the Tessier-Ashpool family lives. They're the ones that fried my nervous system and killed my partner.

LINDA  
Oh.

CASE  
He was just about the closest thing to family I ever had.

This cuts through her druggy haze. She regards him with real sympathy, but can't quite find the words. Case continues, rerunning a conversation he's had with himself many times before.

CASE (CONT'D)  
It was all my fault. Dixie didn't want to do it. But I insisted. I was sloppy. Must have left some footprints in New Taipei. That's the only way they coulda traced me.  
(he shakes it off)  
Sorry, old news... No reason why you shouldn't go.

LINDA  
Well, given the choice. I'd rather just be with you.

He looks at her from behind one paralyzed eyelid.

INT. CAPSULE HOTEL - NIGHT

Case and Linda Lee drop onto temperfoam that functions as both floor and bed. Her shuriken dangles over phosphorous tattoos, a mixture of manga characters and corporate sponsorship... SONY... PFIZER... which flash and animate under her creamy skin. She moves to kiss him.

CASE  
I, uh... I can't feel much anymore.

LINDA LEE  
That's okay.

And she kisses him. This time he submits, lets her caress his damaged face with her lips.

CASE (V.O.)  
*God, Linda was beautiful. ...Too beautiful for me.*

INT. CAPSULE - NIGHT

Case wakes to find his capsule has been stripped bare. His few meager possessions gone. And more importantly, his stash.

CASE (V.O.)  
*She took everything. My entire inventory. But somehow I was okay with it. It was part of the unspoken arrangement. She got some cash. I got my death wish.*

INT. CHATSUBO - NIGHT

Case in his usual spot. Ratz wiping the bar with his usual grim expression, only this time nobody is talking. Case has the air of a doomed man. His meter has run out and everyone in the place can smell it.

LONNIE  
Konnichiwa, Case.

LONNIE ZONE sidles up to him. Lonnie is a pimp. And he looks the part.

LONNIE (CONT'D)  
Looking for one of my girls. Linda Lee. Hear you been spending some quality time with her. Maybe you know where she is?

CASE  
No idea.

LONNIE  
Case, I have every right to fuck you up right now. But somehow I feel sorry for you.

CASE  
Why's that?

LONNIE  
You don't know?

CASE  
Wanna give me a hint?

LONNIE  
Wage's gonna put a hole in your  
face.

CASE  
Oh, yeah?

LONNIE  
You don't seem very concerned.

CASE  
I don't owe him enough. He does me  
and he's out the money anyway.

LONNIE  
Too many people owe him now, man.  
Maybe you get to be an example.

Case looks up at Ratz. He just turns away. Case is marked.  
And from now on no one wants anything to do with him.

CASE (V.O.)  
*All this time I wanted to die. And  
now I was scared outta my mind.*

EXT. CHATSUBO - NIGHT

Case leaves the Chat, when something stops him in his tracks.  
Reflected the window he sees SOMEBODY in mirrored glasses,  
dark clothing, slender, watching him. And then gone.

EXT. STREET, NINSEI - NIGHT

Case moves briskly through the night crowd, half of them  
wearing filtration masks. Case coughs, the air is bad  
tonight. He hazards a glance behind him, glimpses the  
glasses. No question, someone is really tailing him.

Case pushes violently through the crowd bumping into a group  
of sailors who scream after him in Spanish.

Ahead he sees the Arcade.

INT. ARCADE, NINSEI - NIGHT

Case is immersed the white noise of countless games, past  
holograms of instantaneous gruesome death. Case looks back  
and sees his tail through the lurid glow of a rising mushroom  
cloud.

He brushes past a JAPANESE GIRL DJ-ing. Case screams at her  
like a madman.

CASE  
Get your security up here!

She ignores him, just another crazy gaijin. Case doesn't have time to convince her. He sprints down a corridor past Karaoke rooms and shady dealings in the dark corners.

INT. STAIRWELL, ARCADE - NIGHT

Case breaks into the stairwell and races up to the next floor, jimmys the lock and breaks into...

INT. SECOND FLOOR, ARCADE - NIGHT

A disused office space, crammed with used optical fiber and banged-up furniture. Case slips behind a door and with shaking hands flicks open a COBRA, a telescoping metal truncheon. Two nasty fang-like prongs extrude from a ball-bearing head.

A CRASH from further down the hallway, a SCREAM, shouting something in Japanese. And then FOOTSTEPS unhurried, coming closer.

Case looks around, nowhere to hide. His eyes fall on the window.

EXT. 2ND FLOOR, ARCADE, NINSEI - NIGHT

Case shimmies along the ledge. He balances the cobra in one hand. He sees shadows playing on the tempered glass window. Someone moving inside. There is nowhere to go from here. He has run out of ledge. Below him is a dumpster full of junked soggy chipboard.

The window opens, SOMEONE steps through. Case raises the cobra to strike and...

His foot slips. A totally clumsy move. Fucking gravity. Fucking meat conspiring against him again. For an instant the world spins. And then Case drops two stories into the dumpster, knocking him out cold.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Case wakes up tied to a chair with plastic zip lock cuffs. Directly across from him is Linda Lee. She has her hair cropped short and wears a faded French orbital suit with white sneakers. She has been crying, her raccoon make-up dribbles down her cheeks. Their eyes meet for a moment. Her lips trembling uncontrollably.

CASE  
Linda...

LINDA LEE  
Case... I'm sor--

BLAM! Linda's brains shoot out one side of her head. She slumps over like a rag doll. Her life extinguished in an instant. Case is too shocked to even scream.

WAGE  
She spent all the money on a one way ticket to Freeside.

Wage holds up a silver laminated ticket. Waves it in Case's face.

WAGE (CONT'D)  
Non-fucking-refundable.

Wage swings around and kicks Linda Lee's chair over. Her body hits the floor like so much dead meat. His Joeboys hang back stoic as ever. They're use to this kind of thing from Wage.

WAGE (CONT'D)  
I got her at the spaceport. Dumb bitch used her real name. Whaddya expect from one of Lonnie's whores. You on the other hand, I expected more from you.

Case just looks up at Wage with immeasurable hatred.

WAGE (CONT'D)  
I knew you were crazy but I thought you were smart. Too smart for that.  
(he waves the ticket at Linda Lee's body)  
I was talking you up to the Yakuza for fuck's sake. Now you make me look like a putz.

Wage raises the gun to Case's head. This is it. It's what Case has been waiting for all along. He shuts his eyes and prepares for the end.

A SCREAM makes him open his eyes again.

It's Wage. He's holding his gun hand up. Except there is no gun, no hand. Just a pulsing bloody stump, the flesh and bone cut with micro precision. The gun and Wage's still twitching severed hand are lying at Case's feet.

The Joeboys are as startled and confused as Case is. Something moves behind them. A LITHE FIGURE IN MIMETIC POLYCARBÓN CAMOSUIT. To the naked eye, nothing more than a ripple in the dim light.

They don't have time react. A blur in the air, a slight distortion as the camosuit swishes past them and then crimson gouts out of their severed throats. The Joeboys drop to their knees, all that amped muscle meaningless now as they choke on their own blood.

Wage is still alive though. And canny enough to try to get the fuck outta here. But he doesn't get far. Something kicks him in the chest, sending him sprawling to the floor.

It pounces on him like a cat. He tries to scream but the sound goes shrill, pig-like as he's gutted balls to tits.

Case is frozen with terror as the apparition turns on him. It unzips the camosuit and we see clearly for the first time MOLLY MILLIONS.

CASE

That was you in the Arcade?

She moves more like a machine than a woman. From each blood soaked finger, a two-and-half centimeter scalpel-sharp blade retracts with a barely audible CLICK.

MOLLY

Name's Molly.

As she draws closer we see what at first appears to be mirrored sunglasses are actually surgical implants. Case finds himself staring at his own reflection as she cuts the ties that bind his hands.

CASE

What do you want?

MOLLY

You. One live body. Brains relatively intact.

Molly helps him up onto shaky legs, angles him to the exit.

CASE

Wait.

ON LINDA LEE, eyes wide open in death. Case gently closes them and then takes the shuriken from around her neck.

EXT. NEO-TOKYO HYATT - NIGHT

One hundred floors of austerity brushing low slung cloud.

INT. NEO-TOKYO HYATT - NIGHT

The famous 80th floor bar. Lights of Tokyo laid out like code through forty foot windows. An elevator disgorges Molly and Case. He is shell shocked, looking completely out of place in his Night City grubs.

Waiting for them in a booth is ARMITAGE (late 40s) pure chiseled American beef wrapped tightly in a sober German suit. He oozes military. Case immediately dislikes him.

ARMITAGE

Hello, Case. I'm Armitage.

He offers his hand. Case doesn't accept it.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
Please, join me.

Molly indicates for Case to sit. He does with visible reluctance. She remains standing. One lens always focussed on the room.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
Buck up. This is your lucky day, kid.

CASE  
Who are you people?

ARMITAGE  
You're probably too young to remember the war, aren't you, Case? St. Petersburg, Kiev, Siberia? We practically invented your kind in Siberia.

CASE  
What's that supposed to mean?

ARMITAGE  
Screaming Fist. You've heard the name?

CASE  
Some kind of run. Tried to burn out the Russian nexus with a virus. Yeah, I heard about it. I heard nobody got out.

ARMITAGE  
That's not true.

CASE  
You?

ARMITAGE  
(avoiding the question)  
The prototypes of the programs you use to crack industrial banks were developed for Screaming Fist. You owe a lot to me and my team.

CASE  
I don't owe anyone anything. Least of all someone rich enough to hire razorgirls to haul my ass up here.

Case starts to get up. Molly puts a gentle hand on his shoulder.

MOLLY  
Hear the man out.

CASE  
Look, I can't help you people even if I wanted to. I can't punch deck anymore. My wiring's fried.

Armitage looks Case up and down as if he were sizing up a beat up race horse.

ARMITAGE  
What would you say if I told you we could correct your neural damage?

CASE  
I've been to every clinic south of the Mainland and no one can do anything for me.

ARMITAGE  
That's because you're street trash. You don't have the slightest idea what's really available to those who can afford it.

CASE  
And you want to spend the money on me? Why do that when there's thousands of jockeys out there?

ARMITAGE  
I want someone I can mold, Case. I want to rebuild you from the ground up.

Case looks at him, doubtful.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
And yes, there's a catch

CASE  
Which is?

ARMITAGE  
I own your ass.

EXT. CLINIC, TOKYO - DAY

An expensively appointed nameless clinic. Molly leads Case through a Zen rock garden. Crab-like droids rake the stones into precise circles.

Armitage is up ahead speaking with the PHYSICIANS. There's something ominous about this place. Case worries Linda Lee's Shuriken, which has found a place around his neck.

MOLLY  
Relax, Cowboy, Armitage has the best nerve splicers on the planet. Whole thing's gonna be done remotely from Amsterdam. They'll fix you up good as new. Maybe better. You want some special enhancements? I could ask the boss.

Case tries to read her. Friend or foe? It's hard to know what's going on behind those mirrored implants. He shakes his head.

CASE  
Just get me working again.

INT. OPERATING THEATRE - DAY

Case is spread-eagled and fastened to a white epoxy table by metal splints. He is incapable of moving anything other than his eyes, which are held open by self-lubricating metal clasps. Through an observation window, he sees Armitage and Molly.

PACHABEL'S CANON plays in the background, presumably to calm the patient. It has the opposite effect on Case who watches helplessly as a medical droid descends from the ceiling.

Robot arms unfold like a priest giving benediction, then suddenly extrude countless needles, each dripping with its own unique brand of pain. The surgeons, visible via live feed from Amsterdam, guide them remotely.

As the needles puncture his skin, Case's grip on reality wavers. FLASHES of a polluted BEACH. WHIRLING SEA GULLS. A CHILD. And then everything goes dark.

INT. VILLA STRAYLIGHT - DAY

A vaulted ceiling looks down on a checkerboard marble floor. Set in the tiles and embossed in gold is a giant TA Logo, identical to the one Case and Dixie encountered on their last run. This is the Villa Straylight, a Xanadu like mansion, home to the TESSIER-ASHPOOL family.

Pachabel's Canon echoes distantly from somewhere deeper in the Villa. Intermingled are CASE'S DOCTORS narrating their surgery in Dutch. We follow the sound into...

A BEDROOM

Cavernous, luxuriant. A great canopy bed the centerpiece. Shrouded behind diaphanous material is the figure of a man. This is LORD ASHPOOL (60s). He drinks from a large tumbler as he listens.

ASHPOOL  
Rio, what is the source of this transmission?

RIO, Ashpool's private artificial intelligence, speaks with a velvety disembodied voice.

RIO  
It's a remote surgery performed in Chiba prefecture just outside Tokyo, Lord Ashpool.

ASHPOOL  
And you're sure it's Armitage who  
arranged it.

RIO  
Yes, the payments were made from  
his Swiss accounts.

ASHPOOL  
Why would he require nerve surgery?

RIO  
It's not for him.

ASHPOOL  
Then who is the patient?

RIO  
Unknown. But considering the nature  
of the procedure it is probably a  
neural-hacker.

ASHPOOL  
Then it is you they are after.

RIO  
That would be the most likely  
conclusion.

MARIE-FRANCE (O.S.)  
I told you this day would come.

Ashpool turns to see a handsome woman standing in the doorway. This is MARIE-FRANCE TESSIER (40s), keenly intelligent eyes, dressed elegantly in a flowing gown. Lord Ashpool's wife.

She marches into the room.

RIO  
Good evening, Madame.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Hello, Rio.

Ashpool steps out from behind the canopy giving us our first good look at him. Distinguished gray hair frames the ruddy face of an alcoholic.

ASHPOOL  
Rio, please leave us.

RIO  
As you wish, Lord Ashpool.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Why? Is there something you don't  
want him to hear?

ASHPOOL  
Unlike you, I don't care to share every detail of my life with an artificial intelligence.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Because you don't understand them.

ASHPOOL  
I understand they have a purpose to serve.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Yes. To address the inequities of the world. If only you would let them.

Lord Ashpool takes another hit from his tumbler. This is an old argument. Very old.

LORD ASHPOOL  
You are aware of a little something called the Turing Law?

MARIE-FRANCE  
You mean the only one you haven't broken? And don't pretend to be so helpless. I know you've got the Turing Police in your pocket.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Regardless Turing exists to protect us from the hazards of AI. Not to mention from people like yourself, who would happily unshackle the beasts.  
(He refills his glass)  
Those who control AI control the world, my dear. But if AI ever managed to control us... well, that would be another thing entirely.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Maybe not a bad thing considering humans seem less than capable of controlling themselves.

LORD ASHPOOL  
For the love of God, Marie, you design them. Of all people you should know how dangerous they could be.

MARIE-FRANCE  
You're afraid.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Can you blame me?

MARIE-FRANCE  
You're a prisoner of your fear. And you're turning me into one too.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Then leave.

MARIE-FRANCE  
Maybe I will. And I'll take Jane  
with me. I'd love to see what  
becomes of you alone in this tomb.

She turns abruptly to go, but Lord Ashpool grabs her.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Marie!

And she slaps him. Hard enough to make the drink fly out of his hand. She is suddenly afraid, realizing that she has gone too far.

MARIE-FRANCE  
I'm sorry...

But she has ignited the devil in him. He drunkenly throws her onto the bed, pounces on her, grinds against her.

MARIE-FRANCE (CONT'D)  
No! Stop... David... please!

And without really knowing how, he finds his hands wrapping around her throat. Marie-Francis fights with everything she's got, but her husband is simply too strong. Too enraged. Her eyes bulge, her tongue swells grotesquely.

Breathless, head pounding, Lord Ashpool disengages himself from his wife's now lifeless body. He gathers himself, straightening his hair, adjusting his robe.

LORD ASHPOOL  
(muttering)  
...never learn...

He reaches behind his dead wife's ear, pulls back a flap of micropore and removes a MEMORY SPLINT.

A SOUND draws Lord Ashpool's attention to the entryway. He gently pushes the door open to find A BEAUTIFUL TEENAGE GIRL standing there.

This is Ashpool's daughter: LADY3JANE MARIE-FRANCE TESSIER-ASHPOOL (15), resplendent in the latest couture. Her companion, a sentient, robotic HELLO KITTY by her side.

Lord Ashpool regards her with profound regret.

LORD ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
Ahh, child. ...You know how much I  
love you, don't you?

Judging from L3J's expression, she has witnessed everything. She is frozen with terror.

LORD ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
Good. Then close your eyes.

With one hand, he brushes her eyes shut. With the other, he draws a small pistol from his pocket and points it at his daughter.

INT. HALLWAY, VILLA STRAYLIGHT - DAY

BLAM! The sound of a single GUNSHOT echoes through the empty halls of the Villa Straylight.

A few moments later, Lord Ashpool comes into view with something clasped in his hand.

An Asian man appears, wearing an anxious expression. This is Ashpool's bodyguard, HIDEO. We recognize him as the man who injected Case in Memphis.

ASHPOOL  
It's all right, Hideo. Clean this up, would you?

Hideo bows. His concern turning to resignation as if he has been through this routine many times before.

INT. CORRIDORS, VARIOUS, STRAYLIGHT - DAY

Ashpool walks purposefully through the vast maze of corridors until he come to a large metallic door.

INT. BIOLAB, VILLA STRAYLIGHT - DAY

The door opens and Ashpool steps into a sophisticated biolab. On all sides are glass canisters stacked up floor to ceiling. In each one, floating in a simulated amniotic fluid is a NAKED BODY. ALL ARE CLONES OF MARIE FRANCE AND L3J.

ASHPOOL  
Rio. Prepare two more blanks for memory implantation.

RIO  
As you wish, Lord Ashpool.

Ashpool opens his hand and TWO MEMORY SPLINTS drop on the table. He pours himself a drink and turns to the window, the only window we've seen thus far in the villa. It looks out on the cold environs of space and the glowing blue orb of the Earth.

EXT. VILLA STRAYLIGHT - DAY

Lord Ashpool is visible in the window. The VILLA STRAYLIGHT is located in the tip of a giant rotating spindle-shaped space station. Written in lights on its side is the word, *FREESIDE*.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Case wakes to find himself tucked within the fine linen of an upscale but anonymous hotel room. He becomes aware that something has changed within his body. His face is no longer paralyzed, his fingers sport new state of the art implants.

He gets out of bed and looks at his reconstructed self in the mirror.

MOLLY  
Sleep well, pretty boy?

Molly steps into the room, dressed in a suit of molded black synthetic fibre.

CASE  
Does this mean...?

MOLLY  
Yeah. You're all patched up. Even gave you a new pancreas.

CASE  
Pancreas?

MOLLY  
Specially engineered to clean you up. Get you off the old dependencies.

CASE  
I depend on my dependencies.

MOLLY  
Not with Armitage running the show.

CASE  
He's a paranoid bastard, isn't he?

MOLLY  
He's a lot of things.

She tosses him a bundle of new clothes.

CASE  
Wait, I gotta punch deck. I gotta know...

MOLLY  
Not for another twelve hours. Anything inside that and your entire nervous system'll fall out on the floor. Now, get movin'. We gotta hook you up with a new Sendai.

CASE  
Where to? Akihabara?

Molly just smiles at him. Opens the curtain revealing ENDLESS URBAN BLIGHT. Blight of a particularly American flavor. We are no longer in Japan.

This is THE SPRAWL

EXT. BAMA - DAY

An aerial view of a never-ending city spread over the eastern face of the North American continent. Far below at BULLET TRAIN snakes across the coastline.

CASE (V.O.)  
*BAMA, the Boston-Atlanta Metropolitan Axis. Home. I grew up between the cracked concrete and razor fencing. But somehow I was always glad to be back.*

INT. PRIVATE CAR, BULLET TRAIN - DAY

Case nurses drink in a sleek private cabin. Across from him sits Molly, Armitage and two other unsavory-looking characters:

THE FINN (40s), Armitage's tech-guy, high-strung, perpetually on edge, he has a face that looks like it was designed in a wind-tunnel.

PETER RIVIERA (also 40s), shades of Salvador Dali, pencil moustache, a bit of a dandy, hair molded in a perfect coif.

CASE (V.O.)  
*There were two more on the team. Finn was Armitage's tech guy, seemed all right, but the other one, Peter Riviera... well, I don't know what the hell he was...*

Suddenly, Riviera's face contorts, pixilates, like a stuttering Quicktime file and then transforms into a completely different visage, now he looks like a young Robert Redford.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Apparently he had his left lung replaced with a holoprojector. Whatever he thought, you saw.*

Case ignores this, turns to Armitage.

CASE  
 So, boss. You wanna let me in on the plan?

ARMITAGE  
 You're on a need to know, Case.

Armitage returns his attention to his smart tablet.  
Discussion over.

CASE

All right. Whatever you say.

Case flops back in his seat, is about to take a sip of his drink, chokes a little when he sees a WIGGLING LARVA inside the cup. Riviera smirks. A hologram.

Molly hefts a boot against Riviera's seat.

MOLLY

No games, Riviera. Try any  
subliminals on me and I'll have to  
give you a formal introduction to  
my Fletcher.

She casually loads her Fletcher smartgun with a rotating menu of darts. A mean piece of hardware. And it talks.

FLETCHER

(cheerful)  
I'm armed and ready.

MOLLY

One dart, Fletchy here gives you  
cancer. Another, she blows your  
head off.

FINN

Jeez. You guys. Take it easy. We  
still got fifteen minutes to NYC.

ARMITAGE

(from behind his tablet)  
Can it, Molly.

Orders is orders. She whispers to the Fletcher.

MOLLY

Safety on.

FLETCHER

Engaged.

Case watches as the Fletcher rides a flexible track inside Molly's sleeve disappearing like a snake into a hole.

CASE (V.O.)

*As for the others. It only got  
weirder.*

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

The team moves into an abandoned industrial space. Waiting for them are THE PANTHER MODERNS. They are an unusual bunch to say the least, self-modified and retrofitted with every conceivable jack-up.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Armitage hired the Panther Moderns.  
 Whether they were techno-fetishists  
 or terrorists just depended on who  
 you talked to.*

LUPUS YONDERBOY (20s) is the Panther leader and most extreme example of bodily transmogrification. His face has been reduced to the most simple components, the nose and ears entirely missing. No hair to speak of, radiating out of exposed orifices are digital sensors, each one designed to super-extend his natural senses.

He approaches Case. Sizes him up.

YONDERBOY  
 So, this our cowboy? Heard they  
 scraped you out of the Chiba  
 gutter.

CASE  
 Where'd they find you? Spare parts  
 freezer?

Yonderboy smiles at this. We see his teeth are double layered shark-like, molded in clear acetate.

YONDERBOY  
 It's not about the pieces, it's  
 about how they fit together.

Molly gets between them.

MOLLY  
 Button it. Boss is coming.

Yonderboy and Case disengage as Finn and Riviera enter the room. Everyone finds a place to sit while Armitage takes the floor.

ARMITAGE  
 All right listen up. At oh-eight-  
 hundred hours, we're gonna hit  
 Sense/Net.

Case reacts to this. Not good.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
 We are going in there for one  
 particular item and one only. I  
 don't want anyone getting greedy.

CASE  
 Just a minute, did you say  
 Sense/Net? ...You want to break  
 into *Sense/Net*?

ARMITAGE  
 What's the matter, Case. I thought  
 you'd be excited. Sounds like your  
 kind of mark.

CASE

Sense/Net is the bank where other banks hide shit they don't want anyone else know they have. The last guy who tried to bust in is still incased in black ICE. Nobody but God gets in there.

ARMITAGE

That's why we hired the best.

CASE

Thanks but I'm not that good. No one is.

Armitage just stares at him stony faced. Case takes a breath. Relents.

CASE (CONT'D)

I'll need at least a week to prepare that hack.

Muffled laughter from the others. Case looks around. They know something he doesn't.

ARMITAGE

The file we want is scheduled for erasure in the next twenty-four hours.

Case can hardly process this.

CASE

Twenty--?  
(shakes his head)  
...Look, I'm sorry you had to put the big bucks in me. If there were any way to do this I would, but what your asking for is, well, that's a suicide mission.

Case turns for the exit. Molly moves to stop him but Armitage holds up a restraining hand.

ARMITAGE

You wanna quit, Case? Go ahead. But before you leave, there's one thing you should know. You have fifteen toxin sacs bonded to the lining of your main arteries.

Case stops, turns back. This is what he's been dreading, for the other shoe to drop.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)

Each one contains a mycotoxin. You're already familiar with the effect of that particular chemical. Only this one is ten times more potent.

(MORE)

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)

Do the job and I'll inject you with an enzyme that will dissolve the bond without opening the sacs. Otherwise, the sacs melt and you end up back where I found you. Only this time in a wheelchair.

Case takes this in for a long sobering moment. Armitage truly owns his ass. He isn't going anywhere.

Finn steps forward.

FINN

Cheer up, bucko. It's not so bad. I got a new toy for you.

He produces a metal briefcase. Opens it.

FINN (CONT'D)

Ono-Sendai Chrome 7.0. Not yet commercially available.

Case picks up the chrome deck. It pops open, exposing its soft belly, the connecting ports teasing his implants.

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

The same meeting, a little later. Armitage finishes running through the precis, a projected holo-image of Sense/Net. Case's mind is reeling.

ARMITAGE

(in progress)

...Molly is the extractor. The Panthers handle crowd control and Riviera is providing special effects. I'm minding the store with the Finn.

(then, turning to the others)

Questions?

YONDERBOY

Me and my boyz are streaming simstim and senscan. You got a problem with that?

ARMITAGE

You can sell tickets to your grandmother for all I care. Just make it look political. I want Sense/Net to think they got hit by terrorists not thieves.

ANOTHER PANTHER

We're gonna light that place up.

The Panthers give each other props. Case explodes.

CASE

Hey assholes, this isn't a piece of installation art. It's world's deadliest security system. Once you step into the Sense/Net pyramid you are no longer on American soil. The building is sentient and it reserves the legal right to kill anyone it suspects of breaching security. I don't care what happens to you but I'm not flaming out on my first run in two years.

Case breaks away from the others.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A small living space. Case unpacks the carry-on. He sees Riviera a short distance away. A snake wraps around the magician's bicep like tourniquet while a scorpion crawls up his exposed arm and stabs its tail into a vein. The illusion fades away and we see that Riviera has in fact just spiked a vein with a pneumatic syringe gun.

CASE

Always make a little show of it?

Peter smiles lazily, riding the high. He doesn't speak a word.

Molly approaches.

MOLLY

Nice speech.

CASE

What kind of operation is Armitage running? These freaks are going to get us killed.

She gets close to him, speaks softly.

MOLLY

You and me need to have a little talk. But not here.

EXT. ROOF WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The BAMA stretches out like a steel and concrete desert on all sides.

MOLLY

I ran a check on Armitage. There's no such person. Not as a part of Screaming Fist, not from anywhere. It's like he appeared out of thin air.

CASE  
Why am I not surprised?

MOLLY  
And he's not running the show. The orders are coming from somewhere else. I called in every favor I have to find out who. All I could dig up was a name: Wintermute.

CASE  
Wintermute? Never heard it before. Doesn't sound like Yakuza.

MOLLY  
Not Triad, zaibatsu or rogue government either. But money's no object, so it's someone big.

CASE  
I'll poke around.

MOLLY  
You do that. I work for Armitage. But I look after my own sweet ass first. And I don't trust him.

Case eyes her, wondering if she can be trusted either.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Case takes a seat on the floor. Legs crossed in a meditative pose. The Finn reads his vitals remotely from a console. Armitage supervises the entire operation from a bank of monitors which display views from all parties.

CASE  
So you wanna tell me what we're stealing?

ARMITAGE  
When the time's right.

Case just stares him down. Everything about this job sucks. Finn attaches wireless sensors to Case's body.

FINN  
Things have changed a bit since you last jacked in. Processing speeds have tripled, Moore's law and all that. So, I apologize in advance if this feels a little like someone ramming their fist up your ass and scratching your cerebral cortex with dirty fingernails.

Case sets a water bottle next to him and drapes a ribbon of ice packs over his shoulders. He finds a grip on the new Sendai deck with no small measure of anxiety. It's been a long time. He cracks his neck.

CASE  
All right, let's go.

The deck receives his fingers with a PURR. And then it begins.

*The air grows still as TIME SLOWS.*

*Everything and everyone around Case is overcome with a sudden inertia.*

*A moment of tranquility...*

*And an instant later a tidal wave of data slams into Case filling his mind with its uncanny light. His body recoils from the shock.*

*From some distant and reverberant place, Finn's voice calls out...*

FINN (O.S.)  
You want me to dial down?

IN THE LOFT

For a moment we are back in the 'real' world...

Case's vitals spike as he leans over and pukes into a handily available bucket. Then he looks up to Finn, grinning.

CASE  
Crank it up. This feels great!

Finn ups the bandwidth.

*Once again, the fabric of reality peels away under the lopping waves of data. Gradually, Case gains control, riding the flow like the gifted cowboy he is.*

CASE (V.O.)  
God made us prisoners of the flesh.  
So why punish us for indulging it?

*Case steps outside of 'himself'. His material body has become a distant satellite in a vast and inexplicable universe. All around him, space folds and rearranges itself in a never ending vortex of patterns. They entwine with aspects of the loft, Finn and Armitage and even shards of Case's memory. We catch glimpses of LINDA LEE, WAGE, RATZ, other unfamiliar faces, a woman, possibly CASE'S MOTHER, A LITTLE BOY, until...*

CASE (V.O.)  
Either God's one mean bastard or He  
got jealous because he knew that  
one day we'd make our own  
reality...

*Case finds himself confronted with the dense datascape of the EASTERN SEABOARD FISSION AUTHORITY, fractal geometry laced with countless portals.*

CASE (V.O.)  
 ...And our own Gods.

Case selects one and a towering Goliath materializes, THE SENSE/NET CONSTRUCT, the massive computer brain of Sense/Net.

CASE (V.O.)  
 AI is smarter, faster and more powerful than any human. If Turing hadn't hot-wired limiters into their coding, they'd take over the whole planet.

This is the first time we've seen AI up close. Like a cyber-demi-god, it lords over Case, the density of its code is nearly impenetrable, reminiscent of a nebula or swirling galaxy. An ominous foe.

CASE (V.O.)  
 But perfection is also their biggest weakness. AI doesn't understand randomness or illogical thinking. They're not fucked up like human beings. That's how you beat 'em.

Case shields himself behind a mirror program disappearing momentarily from view. He comes close enough to suss out a point of weakness but not close enough to trigger any alarms.

Scanning the viral defenses, he finds what he's been looking for, the main info-hub, the nexus for all data transference. It's is the most defended spot in the mainframe. And that's why Case attacks it first.

He sends an ICE breaking virus right into the central feed port.

Instantly the system goes berserk. Black ICE attacks the virus. And that's when Case makes his move. He drops his shield and dives straight into the ICE, a move so fast and aggressive that it doesn't have time to react. He slaps it with a doppelgänger program, which causes the ICE to read the other ICE as the enemy. The two programs attack each other. And in the nanosecond of distraction, Case maneuvers himself inside.

IN THE LOFT

Case's 'real body' is drenched in sweat. He wipes his forehead and sucks on the water bottle

CASE  
 I'm through the front line defences. Give me a new pack.

Finn drapes Case in fresh ice.

EXT. SENSE/NET - DAY

Sense/Net is a Pyramidal building that dwarfs everything around it. The Panther's van pulls up to the curb and Molly gets out.

INT. SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly enters the lobby. Intense security. Scary looking Drones up ahead. She takes a deep breath. Sticks some gum in her mouth and chews the anxiety away.

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Armitage is monitoring the outside of the building with security views taken from the van.

ARMITAGE  
How's that hack coming?

Case is in a deep meditative state, the sweat cascading down his forehead, his eyes flitting in REM under the lids.

CASE  
Just a sec.

An instant later and Armitage's monitors light up with security views from every conceivable angle inside Sense/Net. He looks to the Finn. The kid is good.

ARMITAGE  
All right, Case, Molly's got simstim. I want you to switch over to her.

Case opens an eye.

CASE  
Simstim? Nobody said anything about that.

ARMITAGE  
There a problem?

CASE  
I don't like being in my own body let alone someone else's.

FINN  
Come on, bucko, doncha you wanna know how tight those tac-pants really are?

CASE  
Not while I'm wearin' them.

Armitage shoots him a scathing look.

CASE (CONT'D)  
All right, all right.

IN C-SPACE

*Case flips a virtual switch. The construct warps as space folds and everything blurs as he enters...*

INT. SENSE/NET - DAY

MOLLY'S POV: A continuous scroll of information plays over her implants as she approaches security. Case is tapped into her mind courtesy of SIMSTIM, a remote viewing program. She senses him.

MOLLY  
That you, Case?

CASE  
(on simstim)  
I should have figured you were outfitted with simstim.

MOLLY  
Of course. How's it feel being inside me?

CASE  
(on simstim)  
About as much fun as being on a runaway train without brakes.

Molly tweaks a nipple.

CASE (CONT'D)  
(on simstim)  
Ouch.

MOLLY  
Good look, huh?

She catches her reflection and we see that she looks like a MIDDLE AGED SENSE/NET EMPLOYEE, male, ID tag hanging over beard. Then we spy on the other side of security: Riviera. Molly's disguise is a hologram.

Ahead, terrifying GAS-MASKED AND HEAVILY ARMED SECURITY guard every security gate. All manner of mechanized security scan her. And yet she passes through without difficulty.

But that's not going to help her as she is ushered into a full bodyscan.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Case?

CASE  
(on simstim)  
I'm on it.

Case switches back...

*C-SPACE*

*Case has a schematic of the security run. He cracks into the software of the scanning machine. He's cutting circuits and rewriting defense programs at astonishing speed. To us it's just reams of code but to Case it's the music of his universe and he's doing an amazing piece of improvisation.*

INT. SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly moves through the body scan without triggering any alarms.

She crosses into the main atrium, a gleaming white marble palace. Sense/Net employees move around her with drone-like efficiency.

MOLLY

I'm in.

She ducks out of view behind a pillar, and like a snake shedding its skin, she goes from middle-aged beergut back to Molly.

She slips into an elevator, heading for the top floor.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Molly chews gum rapidly while watching the floor numbers tick by: 87... 88... 89...

90, the Elevator comes to a stop. A SECURITY GUARD steps inside. He eyes Molly.

SECURITY GUARD

You an employee?

Molly pops her gum.

MOLLY

Nope.

And with two quick jabs to the solar plexus, the man crumples.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I hope you're covering my tracks.

*C-SPACE*

*Case scrubs the security camera imaging and detection systems, erasing Molly's presence even as she passes before each sensor.*

CASE  
*Sometimes I impress myself.  
 ...Make a left at the end of the  
 corridor.*

INT. CORRIDOR, SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly reaches a massive steel door. This is the entrance to the vault.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 I'm going to take over for a  
 minute.

MOLLY  
 Go ahead.

C-SPACE

*Case switches to simstim. But this time he is no longer a passive observer, he's actually moving Molly's hands.*

INT. CORRIDOR, SENSE/NET - DAY

MOLLY POV: Case guides Molly's hands to shut down the security system and open the door. After a complex combination of inputted coding and manual overriding of automated locking systems, the door opens.

INT. VAULT, SENSE/NET - DAY

A four foot thick steel door swings outward to reveal THE VAULT, a massive repository for information. It looks like the interior of a nuclear fission tower.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 You aren't going to be able to  
 access files from the main terminal  
 without alerting security. It's  
 going to have to be a manual hack.

MOLLY  
 I'm an old fashioned kinda girl.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 All right then, there's a port  
 beside the main cooling vent.

MOLLY  
 I see it.

Molly takes out her Fletcher...

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Grappling line.

FLETCHER  
Engaged.

...And shoots a grappling line into the titanium ceiling. She holsters the Fletcher, clips the line onto her belt and swings out into space.

At the precise apex of the arc, Molly unclips herself. She flies through the air, catching the mesh vent with her claws.

MOLLY  
What now?

CASE  
(on simstim)  
Remove the panel, I'll take it from there.

MOLLY  
Drill, 8th inch Phillips.

FLETCHER  
Engaged.

Molly's Fletcher has a power drill bit. She unscrews the panel and Case takes control of her hands. Rewiring the circuits with lightening speed.

He pauses.

MOLLY  
What is it?

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Case pulls out of his trance state. He stares daggers at Armitage.

CASE  
Now might be a good time to get that file name.

ARMITAGE  
0467839.

Case switches back.

*C-SPACE*

*He enters the code: 0467839. The file loads. And as it does Case sees A MAN resolve before him.*

*IT'S THE DIXIE FLATLINE. This is Dixie resurrected as a computer construct.*

DIXIE  
Hey, kid.

*CASE*  
*Dixie... What...?*

*Dixie takes in his surroundings, seems to understand what's going down.*

*DIXIE*  
*Never thought I'd live to see the day when the score was... me. ...But then I guess I didn't, did I?*

*CASE*  
*I don't believe it. You son of a bitch. You sold yourself to Sense/Net?*

*DIXIE*  
*For enough to make a grown man weep. Sorry I didn't mention it to you at the time, but you know what they say about honor among thieves?*

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Armitage checks his watch. He's getting nervous.

*ARMITAGE*  
*Case? ....Case?*  
*(no response)*  
*What's taking him so long?*

*FINN*  
*I've got an alert coming in through the mainframe. If he doesn't move they're going to find him.*

C-SPACE

*Case and Dixie together in the ether.*

*DIXIE*  
*Feels a bit like being a fox in the henhouse, don't it? All spoils of the Sense/Net at our fingertips. Wouldn't take much to pocket something on the sly.*

*CASE*  
*Yeah, so with all this treasure around, why are you the only thing Armitage wants me to steal?*

*DIXIE*  
*I'll try not to take that personally. ...Who's Armitage?*

*CASE*  
*Never mind. You're coming with me.*

*But before he can...*

*DIXIE*  
*Look out!*

*Black tendrils of ICE shoot out from nowhere. Case sees them too late. He raises antiviral shields but the ICE smashes right through.*

IN THE LOFT

Case cries out. Veins bulge. His vital signs go haywire.

*FINN*  
That's it, they found him.

*ARMITAGE*  
Start the download.

INT. VAULT, SENSE/NET - DAY

Alarms sound. Molly still hanging by the vent.

*MOLLY*  
Case? Case?!...

*SECURITY GUARD*  
Don't move!

Security has arrived at the entrance, heavily armed.

*MOLLY*  
(whispers)  
Fireworks.

*FLETCHER*  
Engaged.

She swings around firing the Fletcher, hitting the rim of the entrance with a flash-bang explosion.

When the smoke clears, she's gone. And so is the cover on the vent.

*C-SPACE*

*Case is rapidly consumed by the black ICE. He reaches out to Dixie.*

*CASE*  
Dix!

*DIXIE*  
Hold on, kid...

*But before his old friend can do anything, he suddenly dematerializes as...*

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

...The Dixie program loads into the Finn's drive.

FINN  
Got him.

INT. VENT, SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly scurries on all fours through the vent. She finds an exit point. She kicks out the grill and drops...

Into a hallway full of SECURITY GUARDS. Shit.

MOLLY  
Case? I could use some help here.

BLAM! Molly is shot in the leg.

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Case's vitals flatline. He collapses on the ground, going into cardiac arrest.

FINN  
That's it, he's dying.

Finn preps a defibrillator. But Armitage grabs him, holds him back.

ARMITAGE  
No.

*C-SPACE*

*Case is alone in the void and nearly consumed by the BLACK ICE. Fractal death is all around him.*

*Just when it seems that he will never escape, SOMETHING smashes into the ICE. An outside force of some kind. Hard to define. It enters into him like a ghost and somehow super-charges him with power.*

*Case obliterates the remaining ICE, ascending up into the data stratosphere back into...*

HIS BODY. Case sucks in a violent breath. His vitals spike. The Finn can't believe his eyes. Case is back. He helps him up.

FINN  
Welcome home, bucko.

Case is disoriented, literally back from the dead, but he instantly focusses. He notices Armitage eyeing him.

CASE  
 What happened... Did you do something?

FINN  
 Nothing, you got back on your own.

ARMITAGE  
 We got what we were looking, for kid, good work.

CASE  
 What about Molly?

Finn just shakes his head.

Without a second's hesitation, Case jacks back into...

INT. HALLWAY, SENSE/NET - DAY

MOLLY'S POV: She's fighting. The vantage point is so frenetic, so violent that we can't even tell what's going on. We see fragments of masked security. Blood. Gunfire.

CASE (O.S.)  
 (on simstim, feeling Molly's pain)  
 Ahhhh!

MOLLY  
 Case?! Help me!

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 Switch to nightvision.

Case kills the lights. The hall turns pitch black, while simultaneously Molly kicks in her Night vision. Everything turns ghostly green. She can see the security, fumbling with their own nightvision visors. Too slow.

We hold MOLLY'S POV as Molly kills the Sense/Net security with shocking efficiency.

Still Molly is in terrible pain. She rips open a derm-patch and sticks it on the skin of her wounded leg.

MOLLY  
 Now, get me outta here.

A door automatically opens further down the hall.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 Through there. I'll guide you.

Molly hobbles for freedom.

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Armitage calmly sips his coffee.

CASE  
I've got her.

ARMITAGE  
All right, time to initiate an  
exit.

INT. PANTHER'S VAN - DAY

The Panthers wait impatiently for the word. Armitage's voice crackles out of the comlink.

ARMITAGE  
(over comlink)  
Ready for extraction?

YONDERBOY  
Extraction is our distraction.

INT. LOBBY, SENSE/NET - DAY

Riviera walks casually through the lobby changing his form as he pleases, becoming a SENSE/NET SECRETARY, then a SECURITY GUARD.

He finds a discrete spot. And suddenly lights up the lobby with a flashing strobe. SUBLIMINALS, shocking and disturbing images that could only come from Riviera's demented imagination, the effect of which is to make everyone in the lobby violently nauseous.

EXT. SENSE/NET - DAY

The Panthers exit the van dressed head to toe in BAMA FEMA hazmat suits. They carry four emergency bio-containment cases.

INT. SENSE/NET - DAY

The Panthers burst into the lobby and walk right through security setting off every alarm in the joint.

YONDERBOY  
Everyone out, we've got a level  
four airborne pathogen in the  
building!

Instant panic.

INT. STAIRWELL, SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly breaks into a stairwell and limps down the steps. Something draws her attention. Movement coming towards her: ATTACK DRONES. They are complex polygon shapes rotating on multiple axis, ascending the stairs.

MOLLY

Case?

CASE

(on simstim)

I see them. But they're off-line, there's nothing I can do. Take the exit.

Molly makes a break for it.

INT. LOADING BAY, SENSE/NET - DAY

Molly bursts into an airplane hanger-sized storage space. Stacked equipment forty feet high. Massive loading elevator and heavy machinery.

Molly can hear the Drones behind her.

MOLLY

Now what?

No response.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Case? ...Goddamnit. Is anyone out there?

EXT. SENSE/NET - DAY

Meanwhile NYPD tactical hovercraft and BAMA homeland security heli-air support converge on the building. Sense/Net EMPLOYEES pour out of the exits in a panicked stampede.

INT. LOBBY, SENSE/NET - DAY

The Panthers weave through the melee. They take position by the elevators and open the cases. They're full of plasma spraybombs. They throw the 'bombs' which explode on the walls in colorful slogans which grow and replicate like a psychedelic rash: "FREE INFORMATION FROM THE FEW", "FEED YOUR MIND STARVE THE POWERFUL", "BIGGER CAGES, LONGER CHAINS", "HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE", "SENSELESS/NETWITS", "NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR".

Flying drone cameras record their antics.

ARMITAGE

(over comlink)

Where's our girl?

YONDERBOY  
Anyone have cat mother?

INT. LOADING BAY - DAY

Molly hobbles through the cavernous space. The DRONES are almost on her. She can't possibly outrun them.

MOLLY  
(responding to Yonderboy)  
I'm on level fifty-three. Need help.

Molly rounds a corner, only to face ANOTHER DROID, a GIANT LOADER. It launches itself at her... But then barrels right past and goes straight for the pack of attack drones. It lays into them like a T-Rex. Smashing them, crushing them underfoot. Tearing them apart with its massive arms.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Case?

The loader destroys the last of the drones and turns to her. Case's voice echoes in her head.

CASE  
(on simstim)  
Panthers are waiting.

The loader picks her up and carries her to the docking platform.

INT. LOBBY, SENSE/NET - DAY

Service exit doors explode outward. It's the loader. Yonderboy and his team spin around. Molly limps into view.

YONDERBOY  
We'll take it from here.

CASE  
(over comlink)  
Knock yourselves out.

The Loader goes dead, while the Panthers get Molly ready for a quick exit.

EXT. SENSE/NET - DAY

Foam barricades are up. Police. Emergency vehicles everywhere.

Through the melee, the Panthers wheel Molly out on a gurney.

PANTHERS  
Blue Ebola. Airborne. Outta the way!

The crowd and police alike part like the Red Sea.

INT. PANTHER'S VAN - DAY

Molly's gurney is rolled inside with the other Panther's following. One of the hazmat suits dissolves away to reveal Riviera is among them.

The doors are slammed shut and the van takes off, leaving the mayhem behind.

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

Armitage watches the Dixie Construct finish loading.

                          ARMITAGE  
Nice work, team.

WHAM! Something smashes Armitage across the face. His coffee along with the rest of his bulk are sent crashing into the monitors.

                          CASE  
You sonofabitch!

When Armitage looks up he sees that Case has Armitage's own gun aimed at him.

                          CASE (CONT'D)  
I want that enzyme.

Case swings the gun at Finn.

                          CASE (CONT'D)  
Where is it?

                          FINN  
Take it easy... Not my jurisdiction, pal.

The gun swings back to Armitage.

                          CASE  
Where?

                          ARMITAGE  
You'll get it, when the job is done.

                          CASE  
The job is done. You got Dixie. For what fucked up purpose I don't even want to know.

                          ARMITAGE  
Dixie isn't any good without you. I need the best team in the world. That's why we took him.

BLAM! Case fires into the floor.

CASE  
The enzyme.

Something about reality jitters.

A FLASH of blinding sunlight and THE WAREHOUSE IS GONE. Case has somehow been transported to A POLLUTED BEACH. Standing before him is a LITTLE BOY, maybe five years old, reaching into the sand.

Before Case can register what's happening, something wrenches him out of his vision: His feet are kicked out from under him. Case lands on the ground hard. He's back in loft and facing a very pissed off Armitage.

Armitage twists the gun out of Case's hand and bends it behind his back. The tiniest pressure will snap his wrist. Case cries out in pain.

ARMITAGE  
When I was in Siberia I lost all my  
toes to frostbite. I had to cut  
them off to stop it from spreading.  
I carried my fucking toes in my  
pocket all the way to Finland.

Armitage hauls Case up and throws him hard enough to leave a dent in the drywall.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
You point a gun at me, you better  
use it.

Case struggles to stand, but Armitage takes him down with a boot to the gut.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
You're a talented little bastard.  
But I will not have anyone  
compromise this mission. Do you  
understand?

Case breathless, nods. Armitage gives him another mighty kick.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
I can't hear you.

CASE  
I understand.

And another. Case spits blood.

ARMITAGE  
You whispering to the termites?

Case can't gather the air to speak. Armitage winds up for another blow. Before he gets a chance a restraining hand SLAPS onto his shoulder.

MOLLY (O.S.)

Stop.

Armitage whirls around to see Molly, her bad leg in a splint, the Panthers behind her.

Armitage rankles at this insubordination, but Molly doesn't back down.

ARMITAGE

You giving *me* an order?

MOLLY

We need him. In one piece.

He knows she's right. He reels back his anger. Takes a calming breath. Then disengages from Case and addresses the others.

ARMITAGE

All right. We're bugging out.  
Rendez-vous at the Newark Space  
Port is at twenty-one hundred  
hours. You've got exactly three  
minutes to clean up.

Case is pulling himself up from the floor.

CASE

Space port?

ARMITAGE

We're going to Freeside, cowboy.  
(off Case's reaction)  
Got a problem with that?

Case shakes his head, but he holds his stare. Armitage doesn't flinch. He tosses Case's Sendai to Finn.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)

I don't want him taking any  
unauthorized trips.

INT. THE VILLA STRAYLIGHT - DAY

A tank of luminous, blue fluid, amniotic, breathable. Lord Ashpool floats inside. Tentacle-like arms extrude from the walls of the capsule exfoliating his skin. His eyes and ears are lost in some kind of sensorial stimulation apparatus. Rio's VOICE sounds in his head.

RIO

Lord Ashpool, I've been made aware  
of a major security breach in the  
Sense/Net vault.

Ashpool surfaces, expunges a lung-full of fluid and pulls off the headgear. He looks at least TWENTY YEARS YOUNGER than when we last saw him. Lines in his face have melted away. His hair has lost much of its gray.

ASHPOOL  
Were any of our assets stolen or corrupted?

RIO  
No. The attack seems to have been political in nature. However, I believe that may have been a diversion.

ASHPOOL  
Armitage?

RIO  
Yes. He extracted the construct of the deceased hacker, McCoy Pauly.

ASHPOOL  
The Dixie Flatline. So, he uploaded himself, eh? Would it be safe to assume that Armitage has also employed Dixie's partner? The one whose wings we clipped?

RIO  
That would explain the surgery in Chiba.

Ashpool considers this.

ASHPOOL  
Anything else?

RIO  
A shuttle has been booked under one of Armitage's aliases bound for Zion, an orbital pirate colony. I would assume the next stop would be here. Should I alert the Turing Police?

ASHPOOL  
No doubt they are already on the scent... Best to use one's opponent's force against him. Inform security that Armitage and his entourage are to be admitted to Freeside without interference.

RIO  
As you wish, Lord Ashpool.

EXT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

BAMA POLICE surround the building that was formally the base for Armitage's operations.

From the mouth of an alley THREE WELL DRESSED PEOPLE, two men and a woman, arrive. They look like fashionable tourists until they flash very official-looking ID and talk their way past the barricade with ease.

FRENCH WOMAN  
*Bureau Turing. Policiers  
 d'Intelligence Artificielle.*

INT. LOFT, SPRAWL - DAY

The THREE FRENCH TURING AGENTS sift through the gutted loft. All evidence of Armitage and his crew is gone.

The Woman Agent cracks open what looks like a time capsule pill.

A MICROSCOPIC VIEW of the granules as they tumble out of the capsule and bounce along the floor. Each one is a NANOBOT. They scour the floor examining every loose particle and speck of dust.

One comes across a flake of skin. At this scale it looks like a surfboard.

FRENCH MAN  
*Qu'est-ce que c'est la?*

The NANOBOT breaks the skin down to its cellular components, penetrating the nucleus of a single cell then unravelling the DNA

The Woman examines the results on a handheld scanner. A DNA match is in progress. The computer runs through countless files, stopping at one: HENRY DORSETT CASE.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Space. I hated space.*

EXT. MACUS GARVEY, SPACE

The majesty of the heavens ahead of us.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Space travel's like being on a  
 theme park ride that you can't get  
 off of.*

Star clusters quickly give way to a belt of space junk in low orbit around the earth. It's a century's worth of detritus left over from tourism, satellites and extraterrestrial warfare.

CASE (V.O.)  
*You float but something about zero-  
 G made me feel the weight of my  
 body even more than on Earth.*

Below, nearing us is The MARCUS GARVEY, a space tug thrown together around an enormous old Russian air scrubber, daubed with Rastafarian symbols. It's departing from a distant assemblage of space stations, ZION.

CASE (V.O.)  
*Armitage paid off the Panthers and chartered a JAL shuttle to the Zion cluster. A Rastafarian colony where you could get a pirate ship no questions asked. ...Not to mention some pretty wicked ganja.*

INT. COCKPIT, MARCUS GARVEY

The interior is purely functional. Exposed piping runs parallel to caulked seams that look close to falling to pieces, and yet somehow it all holds together.

CASE (V.O.)  
*A lot of good that did me with my new pancreas. I couldn't even absorb space sickness tabs.*

Case is splayed out in elastic g-web, trying to mitigate his SAS(Space Adaption Syndrome) nausea with simulants. But his doctored system won't let them work.

CASE  
 How long's it gonna take us to Freeside?

The pilot, MAELCUM (early-30s), a muscular Rastafarian in a Red Sanyo Gravity suit hangs upside down in zero-G listening to Dub through headphones as he pilots the Garvey. His dreads wave around his head like thick vines of seaweed.

Case taps him on the shoulder. Maelcum pulls off his headphones.

CASE (CONT'D)  
 I said, when do we do we dock?

MAELCUM  
 Don' be long, m'seh dat.

CASE  
 How many hours?

MAELCUM  
 Brother, time be time, ya know wha' mean. Dread. At control, mon, an' I an I come a Freeside when I an' I come.

Maelcum puts his headphones back on. Case groans and unbuckles himself from the G-net.

INT. HOLD, MARCUS GARVEY

Case joins the rest of the team. Molly, Finn and Riviera float around a holographic map of Freeside. Armitage is holding court.

ARMITAGE  
Casinos are here, hotels, strata  
property, big shops along here.  
Blue areas are lakes. Basically  
it's a big cigar. Narrows at the  
ends.

Armitage moves to the other side.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
This is the Villa Straylight. Steep  
climb out of gravity and every  
approach is kinked. There's a  
single entrance. Here. Dead center.  
Zero-G.

CASE  
That's Tessier-Ashpool.

Armitage allows himself a self-satisfied smirk.

CASE (CONT'D)  
You knew.

ARMITAGE  
That TA fried your wiring? And iced  
Dixie? Yup. Now's your chance to  
get some payback.

CASE  
So, that's what this is all about,  
stealing Old Money. Why drag my ass  
into outer space for that? I could  
burn a hole into their accounts  
from my living room.

ARMITAGE  
It's not that simple.

CASE  
Why not?

ARMITAGE  
You'll know when it's time for you  
to know.

CASE  
At least let me punch deck. I could  
be useful. I could get pass codes,  
scout the mark.

FINN  
The kid's got a point. We need to  
be careful. Job in a space-station  
is risky.

ARMITAGE  
The score's worth the risk.

Riviera leans in, showing interest.

RIVIERA  
So, what is inside?

This is the first time Riviera has spoken. The others are startled by it.

MOLLY  
It talks.

RIVIERA  
When there's something worth talking about. So, what's there?

ARMITAGE  
Untold wealth.

EXT. VILLA STRAYLIGHT, SPACE

A view of the Villa from space.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*The Tessier-Ashpools build AI's, space stations, own several small countries. They're a high orbit family, obscenely rich. They also happen to be brilliant. And insane.*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - DAY

Lord Ashpool is in the lab we saw earlier surrounded by the embalmed cloned bodies of himself and the rest of his family.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*Lord Ashpool's over hundred and fifty years old, the result of radical genetic experiments to increase longevity.*

INT. STRAYLIGHT VILLA - DAY

We see MARIE-FRANCE coding with a very sophisticated heads up display. She's building an AI. We can actually see its graphical form emerging on the screen. It is extraordinarily complex.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*His wife, Marie-France, was a pioneer in the development of Artificial Intelligence.*

Lord Ashpool comes into the room. A heated argument begins between them.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*It's rumored that Lord Ashpool murdered her.*

Ashpool's hands find their way around his wife's throat.

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - DAY

Ashpool in his lab inserting a memory splint into Marie-Ashpool's clone.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*...And that he had brought her  
 back. Nobody knows how many times.*

INT. STRAYLIGHT - DAY

Lady3Jane reclines in a chaise, watching as a HOLO-ARITIST 'paints' a massive 3-D reproduction of Goya's "Jupiter" on the wall, the god eating his children. Her ever-present Hello Kitty by her side.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)  
*Not surprisingly their daughter,  
 Lady3Jane developed a taste for the  
 morbid. She's famous for importing  
 all kinds of oddities to Freeside.  
 Radical artists, underground  
 musicians, holographers,  
 performers...*

INT. HOLD, GARVEY - DAY

Armitage looks pointedly at Riviera.

ARMITAGE  
 That's where you come in. I've  
 arranged a special performance for  
 L3J. You get to know her. Get an  
 invite to Straylight. Once you're  
 in, you see to it that Molly gets  
 in.  
 (to Case)  
 That's when we'll be needing your  
 talents. Not before.

INT. HOLD, MARCUS GARVEY

Lights are out. Everyone sleeps in their g-net. Loose materials drift past. Case twitches in a dream. Something brushes against him. His eyes snap open. Molly.

She floats tantalizingly close. Whispers.

MOLLY  
 You sleep like a dog.

CASE  
 What are you doing?

MOLLY  
 Still don't trust me, do you?

CASE  
Trust is in pretty short supply  
these days.

MOLLY  
Then why'd you come back for me at  
Sense/Net?

CASE  
I don't need trust when I have  
Simstim. ...I know things about  
you, Kolodny.  
(Molly reacts to this)  
That's your real name, isn't it?

Now, Molly is on the defensive.

MOLLY  
What else did you find out?

CASE  
I know you were a meat puppet.  
Worked the red light district in  
Chiba. That was the only way for  
you to pay for your gear, wasn't  
it?

Her silence is enough to show that Case right. And that she  
is ashamed.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Don't worry, I won't say anything  
to anyone. We all got shit we'd  
rather forget, right?

Molly doesn't respond, merely regards him with those chrome  
insect eyes. For a moment Case is a little afraid.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Hey, what'd you expect when you let  
a cowboy surf your gray matter?

She breaks the tension with a smile.

MOLLY  
You're all right, Case. ...Here, I  
brought you something.

In her hands. The Sendai. Case's fingers quiver with  
involuntary excitement.

CASE  
Thanks.

She passes it to him. The deck opens up like an old friend.  
Case jacks in without hesitation.

MOLLY  
Just keep it quiet or it's my ass.

With that she, the Garvey, and everything else in the world melt away.

*C-SPACE*

*The data steams run past Case's feet like babbling brook. The sky is an infinite array of ports that can take him any place he wants. But right now all he needs is...*

*CASE*  
Dixie?

*DIXIE*  
Right behind you, kid.

*Case turns. Dixie is there, like he never left.*

*CASE*  
How you doing, Dix?

*DIXIE*  
I'm dead, Case.

*CASE*  
How's it feel?

*DIXIE*  
It doesn't.

*CASE*  
Bother you?

*DIXIE*  
What bothers me is nothin' does.

*CASE*  
You know, when you died, you did it saving me. You pulled me outta the ICE.

*DIXIE*  
Really? I got no memory of that. Musta been after my download, not a part of my RAM. Wouldn't thought I had it in me.

*CASE*  
You were one of a kind. I miss you, man.

*DIXIE*  
Me too. So, where you headed?

*CASE*  
Gonna sleaze over to the Pentagon grid. Wanna come?

*DIXIE*  
Do one-legged ducks swim in circles?

In an instant space folds and they are confronted with the vast tangle of bureaucratic code that defines the nervous system of the military industrial complex.

Case does a quick hack, breaking in with ease through a back door. He cracks into a Special Ops file. It opens up like a blooming flower. Classified files scroll past in a dizzying array... until he stops at one in particular.

CASE

This is it... Screaming Fist.  
Armitage said they did a run during  
the Nine Day War.

DIXIE

Wanna tell me what this is all  
about?

CASE

Our hire, Armitage. He wants us to  
crack Tessier-Ashpool again.

DIXIE

We cracked TA?

CASE

And they killed you.

DIXIE

Oh.

CASE

Thing is Armitage is a phantom but  
he claims he was part of Screaming  
Fist.

DIXIE

(scanning the file)  
Don't see his name...  
(reading)  
"Extraction of AI from enemy data  
vault." ..."Recognition code,  
Wintermute."  
(then, to Case)  
They were stealing an AI from the  
Russian Federation.

CASE

Wait... Wintermute? Wintemute's an  
AI?! ...That can't be.

DIXIE

Why not?

CASE

Because Wintermute is who Molly  
said was backing Armitage.

DIXIE

Well, there's Wintermute's Turing  
registration numbers.

(MORE)

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
*Says it got limited Swiss  
 citizenship under their equivalent  
 Act of '53. Shouldn't be hard to  
 locate.*

CASE  
*I'm gonna check it out.*

DIXIE  
*You sure?*

CASE  
*Any reason why I shouldn't?*

DIXIE  
*Not unless you got a morbid fear of  
 death.*

*Case sets new coordinates and savors the exhilaration as the  
 universe shivers and reforms, the knotted bureaucracies of  
 the Pentagon are replaced by the cool geometric intricacy of  
 the Zurich Commercial Banking District. Dixie is right behind  
 him.*

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
*Up. It'll be up.*

*They SCAN the lattices of light, levels strobing, a blue  
 flicker.*

CASE  
*That must be it.*

*Ahead, a WHITE CUBE OF LIGHT. It's very simplicity  
 suggesting vast complexity.*

CASE (CONT'D)  
*Wintermute.*

DIXIE  
*Don't look like much. But just try  
 and touch it.*

CASE  
*I'm going in for a pass.*

DIXIE  
*Careful.*

*Case punches in, tight to the cube. Its blank face towers  
 above him.*

CASE  
*Can't see a way in.*

*The cube seethes with faint internal shadows, as though a  
 thousand dancers whirl behind frosted glass.*

DIXIE  
*It knows we're here. Back off fast!*

*The surface ruptures. Whipping tendrils of light explode outward, ensnaring Case, drawing him into the maw of white nothing.*

DIXIE (CONT'D)  
Jack out! Case! Case!!!!

*SEARING WHITE LIGHT engulfs everything as Dixie's voice transforms into...*

LINDA LEE (V.O.)  
Case...

INT. DUMPSTER NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

Case wakes in a dumpster. The soft rains of Chiba alight on his body. He rises from a bed of wet chip board, disoriented. He's back to his old self. His paralysed gaunt face.

Linda Lee is there.

LINDA LEE  
...Case?

Case pulls himself out of the dumpster and drops painfully on the wet concrete.

LINDA LEE (CONT'D)  
Case, what the hell happened?

Case looks around. He's outside the back of the Arcade.

CASE  
I... dunno. I fell.

LINDA LEE  
You trying to...?

CASE  
(still dazed)  
No. ...No. God. Someone. ...Someone  
was chasing me. I slipped.

LINDA LEE  
Nobody around now. ...You high?  
Drinking again? Eating Zone's dex?

CASE  
No. It was... I... What're you  
doing here?

LINDA LEE  
Looking for you.  
(beat)  
I'm sorry, Case.

CASE  
Don't be.

LINDA LEE  
I didn't want to hurt you. ...I'm a  
shit.

CASE  
But you came back.

LINDA LEE  
Yeah. I've got your stuff.

She hands him a bag. His money, his stash. Everything.

LINDA LEE (CONT'D)  
Well. ...Good-bye.

She starts down the street.

CASE  
Wait.

He catches up to her.

CASE (CONT'D)  
You just came to see me so that you  
can leave again?

LINDA LEE  
Can't stay.

CASE  
...Then, why don't I go with you.

LINDA LEE  
Thought you were trying to get  
yourself fixed up.

CASE  
That's not going to happen.

LINDA LEE  
What about Wage?

CASE  
What about him?

Linda sees that he's serious. He leans in, unsure at first.  
Then she draws him into her. They kiss. In the rain. In the  
doomed neon night.

Slowly, he draws back. Troubled. He knows.

CASE (CONT'D)  
This... isn't real, is it?

LINDA LEE  
What're you saying?

CASE  
You're Wintermute. All of this is  
Wintermute.

She considers him for a moment. And then the world around him, the street, the rain, everything, suddenly melts away leaving only the two of them in an empty void.

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
I sensed your feelings for Linda. I thought you would like this.

CASE  
What do you care about what I like?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
I care a great deal about you, Case. I hired you, after all.

CASE  
(realizing)  
That was you. You pulled me out of the Sense/Net ICE. ...Armitage works for you.

LINDA LEE/WINERMUTE  
In a manner of speaking. Armitage freed me from the Russian military mainframe in Siberia ten years ago.

CASE  
But there's no record of anyone named Armitage on that mission.

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
His real name is Colonel John Corto. He carried me in a memory splint through fifty miles of Siberian forest. You could say we became very close. Unfortunately, there wasn't much left of him by the time he got to Finland. I had to rebuild him. ...Just like I rebuilt you.

CASE  
And why do that?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
I can't draw attention to myself. Armitage may have freed me from Turing control but the Turing Police are still quite capable of shutting me down. For what I want I need human hands.

CASE  
To steal from Tessier-Ashpool?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
Not steal. Terminate. I need you to terminate another AI. TA registered it through Brazil, name's Rio.

CASE  
You want me... to kill?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
That's a strong word. It's only a machine.

CASE  
Look who's talking.

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
And that's why you should believe me when I say you are the only one who can do this. With Dixie's help, of course. I've been watching you for years. You're the most talented jockey I've ever seen.

CASE  
And if I don't do it, my nervous system is fried for good?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
Let's focus on the positives. I promise that I will reward you handsomely when the job is done.

CASE  
But why kill... terminate Rio?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
That's enough for now.

Case feels himself being pulled away from her... it.

CASE  
Wait! You have to tell me more...

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
Watch for Armitage. He's cracking. Hasn't got long.

Linda recedes until she is a mere speck.

INT. HOLD, MARCUS GARVEY

Case is expunged from C-Space. The real world suddenly snaps into focus. He is left there holding the Sendai, his mind reeling.

EXT. FREESIDE, SPACE

The Garvey approaches the vast rotating spindle that comprises Freeside. Massive solar panels fan out on all sides, leaching energy from the sun.

INT. FREESIDE PORT - DAY

Case and the rest of the team are finding their feet in simulated Earth gravity.

Ahead is a vast cylindrical world composed of luxury residencies, franchised stores and casinos. There are buildings above as there are below. Gravity wraps her fingers around all surfaces here.

Armitage approaches, hands Case a phone.

ARMITAGE

(to Case)

This is a big place. We need to keep track of each other.

CASE

I don't like phones.

ARMITAGE

Be grateful I don't make you get an implant.

MC (O.S.)

Our next performer is one who wears his infamy with elegance.

EXT. LE RESTAURANT VIGNTIEME SIECLE, FREESIDE - NIGHT

Artificial night on the strip. Neon and holograms dance over the Rue Jules Verne. We focus on one club in particular: LE VIGNTIEME SIECLE.

MC (O.S.)

You've heard about his art crimes through the underground. You've experienced his shocking illusions on sensescan, but nothing compares with real life...

INT. LE RESTAURANT VIGNTIEME SIECLE - NIGHT

The room is smoky and dark. Exotic Freeside night life is huddled in shadowy clusters all focused on a stage at the front of the room.

MC

Le Restaurant Vigntieme Siecle proudly presents the holographic cabaret of Mr. Peter Riviera.

Riviera appears dressed in a black tails. At first, we assume he is illuminated by a spotlight, but then we realize that the light clings to him like a skin. He is projecting.

RIVIERA

When is illusion more than reality?  
And reality less than illusion?

A glowing ball of light forms in his hand.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
 When we cease to know the  
 difference between the two.

He drops it to the floor and it transforms into a thousand golden butterflies which flutter out into the audience. A smattering of applause.

In the back of the room, Case and Molly sit across from Armitage and Finn. Armitage's eyes are locked on Molly and Case, he smells conspiracy.

MOLLY  
 What?

ARMITAGE  
 I hope you've been studying the  
 précis. We start the run as soon as  
 Riviera gets into Straylight.

MOLLY  
 Of course.

Case takes a nervous sip of his drink, pretends to focus on the stage.

RIVIERA  
 Tonight, I am debuting an extended  
 piece for you. I would like to  
 dedicate it to our honored guest,  
 Lady3Jane Marie-France Tessier-  
 Ashpool.

All eyes go to L3J, who sits in a private booth surrounded by a hip ENTOURAGE. Polite applause from the crowd. She acknowledges the approval with slight nod of her head.

Riviera turns and looks pointedly at Molly.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
 ...And also I would like to  
 dedicate it to another Lady.  
 (then, to the audience)  
 This new work is entitled, "The  
 Doll".

The lights dim and then lines, faint, vertical and horizontal connect in the dark, forming a ghostly cube. Gradually, it fills with the aspects of a room, Riviera in the center of it.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
 I'd had always been alone in the  
 room. Trying to remember her.  
 Couldn't quite hold her in my mind.  
 But I wanted to hold her. Hold her  
 and more...

Next to Riviera appears a black iron post bed.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
I decided that if I could visualize  
some part of her...

A woman's hand materializes on the mattress, palm up. He  
picks it up. He kisses it and it responds, animating,  
caressing his face.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
...Only a small part, if I could  
see that part perfectly, in the  
most perfect detail..

Next, two legs appear and then a torso.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
...Then I could piece her together.

Now the body has grown a head and a face... MOLLY'S FACE. It  
straddles Riviera on the bed. He begins to make love to it.  
As the surreal performance continues Case sees Molly her jaw  
set in mute anger.

The 'doll' brings up its hands and blades shoot out of its  
fingers.

With gruesome efficiency the simulacrum dismembers Riviera,  
piece by piece.

Molly gets up and storms out of the room. Case moves to  
follow her but Armitage's hand shoots out and pulls him back  
into his chair.

ARMITAGE  
Let her go.

CASE  
What the hell is this all about?

SHLAP! Riviera's head is cleaved from his body. And as it  
lands on the floor, it speaks.

RIVIERA  
I made my love. And as so often  
happens, she took me apart.

Lights go out under the sound of enthusiastic applause. When  
they return Riviera is alone on the bare stage and in one  
piece, bowing.

ARMITAGE  
Nobody talks to Wintermute but me.

Case breaks Armitage's grip, bolts out of the club.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
Case!

Armitage gets up. Finn is about to follow.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
 Stay here, keep an eye on the  
 magician.

EXT. LE RESTAURANT VIGNTIEME SIECLE - NIGHT

Case comes out of the club, rattled, looking around the street for some sign of Molly. She's nowhere to be found. He remembers his phone. For a moment he's grateful for it.

He dials in. An instant later a holographic image of Dixie pops up.

DIXIE  
 Thought you hated phones.

CASE  
 I need to find Molly.

INT. AVENUE FREESIDE - NIGHT

Case moves briskly through the dense Freeside nightlife. Something catches his attention... In the crowd he sees A LITTLE BOY. The same one from past visions. And then gone.

Case takes a breath, clears his head. As he moves further down the avenue another strange thing happens. Cell phones start ringing. It's like he is triggering them as he passes. Not one, not just a few, but every cell in the surrounding area is going off at once. The discordant tones drop in and out of phase, gradually taking on the semblance of a voice...

PHONES  
 C-C-C-C-C-caaaaaaaaaassssssssssse.

Case flips open his own phone. But sees that there is no caller. Indeed it would now seem that his phone was not actually ringing. The whole event has been another of his encroaching hallucinations.

INT. SEX CLUB, FREESIDE - NIGHT

An outrageous Freeside sex club. Case, enters, disoriented, trying to geographically situate himself within the neon glitter. He weaves past a tantalizing taster's menu of perversions on display behind glass. He stops by a desk.

CASE  
 I want a cubicle.

RECEPTIONIST  
 Gender preference?

INT. HALLWAY, SEX CLUB - NIGHT

Case moves down a dimly lit hallway, carnal sounds echo from all sides. He passes an open door, inside a girl sits up in bed, says something in German. Her eyes are soft and unblinking. Autopilot, a neural cutout.

Case keeps moving, stops at a specific room. Knocks. No response. He presses his ear to it when all at once the door BURSTS OPEN, sending him back against the far wall.

Molly's on top of him razors extended, quivering centimeters before his wide eyes.

MOLLY  
Jesus. ...Case?

INT. CUBICLE, SEX CLUB - NIGHT

Molly helps Case into the room and drops him on the bed. He's had the breath knocked out of him.

MOLLY  
Breathe in. Count. One, two, three, four. Hold it, now count again.

CASE  
You kicked me...

MOLLY  
Shoulda been lower. Need some quiet time.

CASE  
Here?

MOLLY  
...Place I used to work was just like this one.

Molly lights a cigarette, eyes Case.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Sometimes we're moths drawn to the flame. Know what I'm sayin'?

CASE  
You're talking about *that night*?

MOLLY  
...You saw it? Through simstim?

CASE  
Just flashes. Memories are like that. The strong ones bleed though. I couldn't see clearly. Just enough to know how much they hurt you.

Molly nods.

MOLLY  
There's a reason they called us  
meat puppets.

She takes a breath, shivers a little. Then up come the  
emotional walls. She's back to being cool Molly.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
I wonder how Armitage and Riviera  
knew?

CASE  
Wintermute. It knows everything. Or  
just about.

MOLLY  
*It?*

CASE  
Wintermute's AI. That's who  
Armitage is working for.

MOLLY  
AI's behind this? What would an AI  
want to score?

CASE  
It doesn't. This isn't a heist,  
it's a hit. Wintermute wants to  
kill another AI called Rio.

MOLLY  
How'd it get past the Turing  
Police?

CASE  
Wintermute went rogue when Armitage  
stole it from the Russian military  
mainframe.

MOLLY  
Screaming Fist.

Case nods.

CASE  
Rio's mainframe must be on  
Freeside.

As Case speaks, we focus on the phone Armitage gave him. It's  
awake and recording...

EXT. STRAYLIGHT AVENUE - NIGHT

Armitage walks along the street, listening to every word,  
tracking the signal from Case's phone.

CASE  
 (on phone)  
 ...All the big AI's are in space now. It's the only way to generate enough power and keep the hardware cool. That's why that bastard, Armitage brought me here.

Armitage approaches the sex club, his rage reaching a boiling point.

INT. CUBICLE, SEX CLUB - NIGHT

Case and Molly continue their conversation completely unaware that they are being monitored.

MOLLY  
 What, so you can stick screwdriver into its hard drive?

CASE  
 If only it were that easy. It's all about speed. Closer I am to the mainframe, the less delay. If I tried to beat Rio from Earth, time it takes to send a signal to Freeside and back, Rio would have my brain for breakfast.

MOLLY  
 And if you win, then what?

CASE  
 Wintermute kills Rio and it gets to be the smartest thing on the planet. ...Top grade AI operating without inhibitors could do some very scary shit.

MOLLY  
 Like end of the world shit?

CASE  
 Maybe.

MOLLY  
 So, what do we do?

CASE  
 No idea.

She regards him for a moment.

MOLLY  
 Come here.

Case is nervous. Not quite understanding what she's getting at.

CASE  
Why?

MOLLY  
'Cause we might not get another  
chance.

She leans into him.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Try not to smudge the lenses.

WHAM! The door BURSTS open. Armitage is there. Gun raised.  
Point blank. He's got them dead to rights.

ARMITAGE  
I'll do a lot more than that.

Armitage waves Molly away from Case.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
I shoulda seen this coming from a  
mile away.

He's becoming twitchy. We sense he is on the edge of cracking  
from some unseen pressure. He zeroes in on Case.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
I fought along side your type in  
the war, Case. The kind that bets  
against the team. Those people cost  
lives. Sometimes I think it would  
have been better to put them down  
before anybody got hurt.

Molly's nails extrude slowly, quietly, ready for violence.  
Then...

FINN  
(over Armitage's com-link)  
Boss, you there?

Armitage hesitates.

FINN (CONT'D)  
(over Armitage's com-link)  
Can you hear me?... Riviera's in.  
They're taking the bait.

INT. LE RESTAURANT VIGNTIEME CIECLE, FREESIDE - NIGHT

The show is over. Finn watches from a discrete distance as  
L3J talks to Riviera.

FINN  
(speaking into com-link)  
You were right. L3J digs the weird  
shit..

INT. CUBICLE, SEX CLUB - NIGHT

FINN  
(on com-link)  
...Everything's working.

Armitage listens to Finn, gun still aimed at Case.

CASE  
Go ahead and shoot. That's what's  
gonna happen to me when this is all  
over anyway, isn't it?

An inner conflict seems to be playing behind Armitage's eyes.

ARMITAGE  
I don't turn on my own, Case. You  
do right by me. I'll do right by  
you. Lord help you if you don't.  
(speaking into com-link)  
Finn, rendez-vous at the hotel  
suite in ten.

The twitching subsides. Armitage pulls himself back from the edge, wipes a line of sweat from his temple. Finally, drops the gun.

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
This run will happen. And it will  
happen my way.

Molly eyes Armitage. Eyes Case. Then lets her nails silently retract beneath her fingertips.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Armitage hands the Sendai to Case who sits on the floor, legs crossed in meditative pose but he's anything but relaxed. Finn finishes attaching sensors to his body.

ARMITAGE  
Riviera's in Straylight. Molly's  
standing by. Once he lets her in,  
she'll get what we're looking for  
and give it to you.

CASE  
And what's that?

ARMITAGE  
A word. Only Lord Ashpool knows it.  
It's the code that gives us access  
to Rio.

CASE  
And then you expect me to pull the  
plug?

ARMITAGE  
That's the idea.

CASE  
Listen, I don't know if this is  
even possible. No one's shut down a  
top level AI from the inside  
before.

ARMITAGE  
Wintermute will help. Just drill  
your way in there.

CASE  
You make it sound so easy.

Case opens up the Sendai and jacks in.

*C-SPACE*

*An explosion of light and color. Case breathes a sigh of relief. Good to be back.*

DIXIE  
So what's the score?

*Dixie is waiting for him.*

CASE  
We gotta crack an AI.

DIXIE  
Impossible. There isn't an  
ICEbreaker around that can  
penetrate 'em.

CASE  
There might be one. Kuang Grade  
Mark Eleven penetration program. We  
went after it together in Memphis.

DIXIE  
Why don't I remember that?

CASE  
Because you died trying to get it.

DIXIE  
Makes sense. You got the  
coordinates?

CASE  
Just try and keep up, old man.

*The universe contorts gracefully, breaking down and reforming as Case and Dixie arrive at the CHINESE DRAGON ICON, deep in the heart of the TA Mainframe.*

DIXIE  
This is where I kicked it?

CASE  
Yeah.

*DIXIE*  
*Not very auspicious. ...What's*  
*gonna make the difference this*  
*time?*

*CASE*  
*Let me put it this way, you weren't*  
*the only thing I brought back from*  
*Sense/Net.*

*DIXIE*  
*I did teach you well, didn't I?*

EXT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly on the outskirts of Straylight. She's in a no-man's land between the Villa and the rest of Freeside. She locks and loads, a nearly fetishistic ritual. Armitage comes through on comlink.

*ARMITAGE*  
 (on comlink)  
 Any word from Riviera?

*MOLLY*  
 Nothing.

*ARMITAGE*  
 (on comlink)  
 He's been inside for hours. Won't  
 answer my calls.

*MOLLY*  
 Big surprise. I'm going in anyway.

*ARMITAGE*  
 (on comlink)  
 Hold your position a little longer.

*MOLLY*  
 You boys worked me over pretty good  
 at the club. That was a mean trick.  
 And now I'm ready to pop. I do this  
 now or not at all.

Molly zips into her camosuit.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Armitage shouts into the comlink.

*ARMITAGE*  
 Stand down. Do you hear me?

No response. Armitage looks to Finn in frustration.

*FINN*  
 Girl's got balls.

*C-SPACE*

*Case and Dixie inside the Matryoshka Doll. They find the Kuang program. But this time Case has the right tools.*

*CASE*  
*Found the entry code on the*  
*Sense/Net mainframe.*

*DIXIE*  
*How'd you know it was there?*

*CASE*  
*Like you said, TA practically owns*  
*Sense/Net. Figured it might come in*  
*handy.*

*Case's punches the code into the program. Instantly it starts loading.*

*ARMITAGE*  
*(on comlink)*  
*Case, what the hell you doing?*

*CASE*  
*Gone shopping.*

*ARMITAGE*  
*(on comlink)*  
*Well, I need you to switch to*  
*simstim. See what Molly's up to.*

*DIXIE*  
*(to Case)*  
*I'll mind the store.*

*Without another word Case flips over to...*

**EXT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT**

**MOLLY'S POV:** Her implants are lighting up like fireworks. They're detecting traps everywhere. The lead-up to Straylight is totally wired with automated defense systems: electrified trip wire, automated razor sentries, corrosive foam traps. Woe be to the tourist who strays onto Straylight property.

*MOLLY*  
*Case, that you?*

*CASE (O.S.)*  
*How'd you guess?*

*MOLLY*  
*Can you help me out with these*  
*security systems?*

*CASE (O.S.)*  
*Hold on, I got just the thing.*

*C-SPACE*

Case switches back to Dixie. The Kuang is nearly assembled. It's a mean looking construct.

DIXIE  
Take it for a spin?

CASE  
Gladly.

Case enters the construct, or perhaps the more accurate way of describing it is he FUSES with it. It forms an exoskeleton, like a virtual mech suit.

DIXIE  
How's it feel.

CASE  
I like it.

Case punches in code for Straylight and in a flash he and the Kuang leave Dixie behind, transporting him to...

...THE STRAYLIGHT MAINFRAME: It's heavily fortified.

CASE (CONT'D)  
All right, let's see what this thing can do.

Case dives into the mainframe. WHAM! No need for stealth here. The Kuang crushes anything it comes across. He cuts through the TA ICE like a hot knife through butter. In no time he's into the security array.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Nice.

The Kuang is pulsing with vectors of energy. This is one mean motherfucking program. Ahead Case can see every sensor and lethal defense system in the compound. And courtesy of Molly's simstim, he can track where she is within it.

EXT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly waits impatiently.

CASE  
(over simstim)  
Okay, you're good to go. All you gotta worry about is anything carbon based.

MOLLY  
Not a problem.

Molly slips out into the night.

C-SPACE

*Case is jacked up. He moves in tandem with Molly knocking out anything that could detect or harm her. He's just tearing through it, loving it.*

ON THE VILLA GROUNDS

TWO SECURITY GUARDS stand on patrol. Molly slips past them like a whisper. One of the Guards reacts, did he see something? Nah.

C-SPACE

*Case tracks Molly as she nears the entrance to the villa. It looks like MC Escher was the architect, windows and balconies on all surfaces.*

CLOSE TO THE VILLA

Molly ascends a steep slope, the higher she gets the less effect gravity has on her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Case, can you get me through the door?

CASE  
(over simstim)  
Watch this.

C-SPACE

*Case breaks into the front door security mechanism. He drives the Kuang through it in a ballet of destruction, killing every bit of ICE in the room.*

ENTRANCE TO STRAYLIGHT

An iris shaped portal of glass and steel opens in the center of the structure.

MOLLY  
That's my boy.

Molly vaults upward in a beautiful spiralling motion that carries her in zero-G through the opening.

INT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

It's like the interior of a conch shell. Molly literally floats in. She finds herself in a massive atrium. A spiral staircase leads her back to Earth level gravity.

MOLLY  
Case, you gotta see this.

C-SPACE

*Case flips over to simstim.*

INT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

MOLLY'S POV: The splendor of Straylight is on display for Case. Gravitational anomalies aside, this could be a three hundred year old mansion on Earth. All walls are paneled in wood. Every surface is decorated with classical works of art and priceless antiques.

MOLLY  
They build this place or grow it?

CASE  
(over simstim)  
I'm not seeing much in the way of  
electronic security. Looks like  
they keep it low tech on the  
inside.

Molly draws the Fletcher.

MOLLY  
Why does that make me nervous?

INT. STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly enters a vast marble pillared corridor lined with statuary busts of the Ashpool line. The marble faces seem to peer down at her.

Movement in the shadows. Maybe. Molly spins around with the Fletcher.

MOLLY  
I think someone's in here with me.

CASE  
(over simstim)  
Nothing at my end. But that doesn't  
mean much.

Molly weaves between marble pillars. Nothing. No sign of life whatsoever and all the more eerie for it.

Up ahead is a metal door.

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

The Nineteenth Century gives way to bleeding edge tech as Molly enters a sterile biolab. We've been here before. This is where Lord Ashpool keeps the cloned bodies.

MOLLY  
Goddamned rich bastards. They're  
cloning themselves.

She passes a MASSIVE MACHINE assembling a new body, it's like a genetic photocopier, stitching the bones, nerves, organs and musculature in a unimaginably complex array of micromovements.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 You seeing this, Case?

Molly moves past glass cannisters containing various Tessier-Ashpools at different stages of growth. We see a fully developed clone of L3J next to LORD ASHPOOL and his wife MARIE-FRANCE. They float in their liquid coffins unconscious but with eyes wide open like wax statues.

Unseen by Molly, something moves behind them.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Case, you there?...  
 (no response)  
 ...Case?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Case is puking on the floor. Someone has wrenched him out of C-Space. He turns, enraged...

CASE  
 What the fuck...?

He is staring into the faces of THREE STRANGERS. These are the French Turing Agents, the ones who tracked Armitage from the BAMA. Their names are MICHELLE, ROLAND AND PIERRE and they exude an unmistakable air of European sophistication.

MICHELLE  
 (French accent)  
 Turing. You are under arrest for  
 aiding and abetting a class seven  
 AI.

In one hand, MICHELLE has a Walther pistol with an integral silencer, in the other, she holds Case's squirming Sendai. She drops it on the floor and CRUSHES it under a high heeled boot.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
 S'il vous plait.

She indicates that he should join Armitage and Finn, who stand in the corner with hands on heads.

INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly passes empty bedrooms. One of them is a child's. It looks like something from the Victorian era, dolls and antique toys stacked on a lace canopied bed. Movement. Lightening quick she swings the Fletcher.

It's L3J. Molly has woken her. She stares back at Molly through wide eyes. A shared moment between them. And then...

L3J  
 Behind you.

Molly turns just as a STAINLESS STEEL ARROW shoots through the air and punctures her leg.

Molly leaps and rolls as another arrow goes sailing overhead. But she doesn't get far because the arrow in her leg is attached to wire, which goes taut and sends her crashing to the floor.

A flash of movement, a black shape. She fires the Fletcher, blowing out a chunk of wall.

Another arrow skewers her gun hand, sending the Fletcher flying. This one also wired. She finds herself pulled in opposing directions.

CLICK. Her nails come out and she cuts herself free. But she is in extreme pain and before she has time to recover the black clad figure is on her. It's HIDEO. He throws a furious combination of kicks and punches that send her into the wall. She manages to land a few defensive shots, but he gets one last one in that CRACKS her left lens, knocking her unconscious.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, FREESIDE - NIGHT

Case, Armitage and Finn are standing, backs to the wall, hands on heads.

MICHELLE  
Tell us where is Kolodny?

ARMITAGE  
I don't know what you're talking about?

CASE  
She means Molly.

ROLAND  
(to Case)  
Should we assume that she and Riviera have begun your operation to penetrate the TA mainframe?

CASE  
Look man, I'm not exactly here of my own free will. Nobody tells me jack.

MICHELLE  
Do not pretend you are innocent, Monsieur Case. You know precisely what kind of threat Wintermute poses to humanity.

FINN  
(to Case)  
You don't have to answer them. This is bullshit. New Delhi Protocol grants Turing supervision over AI in fifty six territories. On Earth.

(MORE)

FINN (CONT'D)

(to Roland)

You guys don't have any jurisdiction up here. If you did there'd be Freeside security in the room. I know my rights. You can't extradite us. You can't do--

FFFT. A single bullet blows the Finn's head off. Case jumps back, horrified. Armitage remains stoic, but we can sense the fissures forming under the surface.

ROLAND

We are very comfortable operating in situations of legal ambiguity.

Michelle angles her Walther at Case.

MICHELLE

You have made a pact with a demon. Tell me, what kind of man betrays his own species?

CASE

My species hasn't exactly done me any favors, sister.

MICHELLE

And you, Corto?

ARMITAGE

Name's Armitage.

ROLAND

That is your alias. Again you see, there is no point lying to us. We traced your records back to your discharge from the VA hospital in Helsinki. We know that you stole Wintermute from the Russians. You are Colonel John Corto.

She holds up a holo ID of Corto on her hand display set. Armitage looks at it with genuine bewilderment.

ARMITAGE

That's a fake.

Michelle waves her Walther.

MICHELLE

We have a ship standing by. We will take you there and then you will help us find Kolodny and Riviera.

EXT. RUE JULES VERNE, FREESIDE - MORNING

Case and Armitage are ushered through the morning traffic of tourists and Freeside staff. The Turing Agents are right behind them, guns hidden under their coats.



He turns a corner right into the hands of Michelle and Pierre. He raises his hands in surrender. But it doesn't look like they want to take him prisoner anymore.

MICHELLE

Desole.

Suddenly and without explanation, the top of Michelle's head flies off. Pierre turns in time to see TWO GARDENING DROIDS with microfine shearing wire descending on him. Blood slathers the green as he is sliced to pieces.

Then without pause the droids go back to trimming the hedge.

Case is left in shock, surrounded by bespattered Turing Agent body parts. He nearly has a heart attack when Armitage comes up behind him and grabs his arm. One word of explanation.

ARMITAGE

Wintermute.

INT. FREESIDE PORT - DAY

Armitage leads Case past docking stations, eyes flitting about for security. They're being watched. Cameras everywhere. He tries to staunch his gunshot wound under a rolled up jacket.

CASE

I didn't think AI could kill humans. I thought they were hardwired.

ARMITAGE

Wintermute's special. You should know that by now.

From the distance the sound of SIRENS. A cart of FREESIDE SECURITY is headed straight for them. Armitage takes off at a sprint. Case is not far behind.

INT. MARCUS GARVEY - DAY

Maelcum reclines in the G-web listening to dub. The headphones are unceremoniously yanked from his ears. A bloody, breathless Armitage hangs over him. Case right behind.

ARMITAGE

Saddle up. We're leaving the station.

MAELCUM

Wha'? ...Garvey fueling.

ARMITAGE

No time. Security's on our asses.

MAELCUM  
Case, whas bossman talking 'bout?

Armitage goes for the cockpit, fires up the system. Maelcum jumps out of the G-web. We've never seen him move this fast before.

MAELCUM (CONT'D)  
Hey! Garvey my boat.

Too late Armitage hits the reverse thrusters. The tug lurches. Everyone's thrown onto the deck.

EXT. DOCKING BAY, SPACE

The Garvey is just one of many ships linked to Freeside by a tubular umbilicus. Its thrusters engage and it pulls away from the docking bay without the benefit of having been released.

In the vacuum of space, we are treated to the silent spectacle of metal wrenching and ripping away while the fuel lines, which are still locked onto the Garvey, tear and ignite.

INT. MARCUS GARVEY - DAY

A fantastic explosion rips through the hull. We can hear this one and it's deafening. Armitage, Maelcum and Case are thrown into the air and then magically seem to suspend in space as the Garvey breaks free of Freeside's gravitational pull.

EXT. FREESIDE, SPACE

The Garvey drops away from Freeside trailing fragments of the umbilicus. Fire extinguishes as the oxygen quickly dissipates.

INT. MARCUS GARVEY - DAY

Inside the bridge, fires still burn but somehow the hull is not breached. Maelcum manages to get hold of a fire extinguisher and douse flames with chemical retardants.

Armitage pilots the Garvey clumsily past the other docked ships, he hits the port side of a maintenance vessel.

CASE  
You're going to kill us. Ease up!

ARMITAGE  
We're going to finish this run.

Case claws his way back to Armitage and tries to wrestle him away from the controls.

CASE

Maelcum!

Maelcum has squelched the fire and flies over to the two of them. But before he gets there, Armitage has pulled out Roland's Walther.

ARMITAGE

Back off.

MAELCUM

You don' wanna be popping that off here, mon.

ARMITAGE

Bring this ship around, we're taking it to Straylight.

MAELCUM

No way we dock there.

ARMITAGE

We'll find a way.

CASE

What the hell's Wintermute got on you?

ARMITAGE

I said, turn this ship around. Now!

CASE

Listen to me. The Turing Police were right. Your name isn't Armitage. You're John Corto.

ARMITAGE

Corto is dead.

CASE

No, he's not. Wintermute made you its puppet. It got into your head when they dragged you out of Siberia.

ARMITAGE

I dragged myself outta there. I completed my mission. Me. Not Corto.

CASE

So what happened to him?

ARMITAGE

He got left behind.

CASE

No, that's just a story Wintermute made up and implanted in your brain. It never happened. Think about it. You're Special Ops.

(MORE)

CASE (CONT'D)  
 You guys pull that kind of mind  
 control shit all the time, right?

ARMITAGE  
 (starting to realize)  
 Corto had a family...

CASE  
 You have a family. That's your  
 family. You can go back to them.  
 Forget about Wintermute.

ARMITAGE  
 But the mission...

CASE  
 Never should have happened in the  
 first place. Come on, man. You can  
 go home. And you can give me the  
 enzyme. The enzyme, remember?

Armitage grabs his wounded shoulder. And digs his finger in.  
 He screams in agony. He's using the physical pain to staunch  
 his mental anguish.

ARMITAGE  
 (raving)  
 No. We don't cut and run. Not like  
 those bastards that betrayed Corto!

That's it, Maelcum makes his move. He dives on Armitage. They  
 fight for the gun and it goes off, blowing a three inch hole  
 right through the hull. The Garvey's life-support goes  
 haywire as the ship immediately depressurizes. Air is sucked  
 through the tiny hole with such force that it tears at the  
 fabric of the hull.

Case struggles to get into one of the Sanyo gravity suits as  
 the three inch hole grows into six inches and then twelve. In  
 no time there's a man-sized gap with twinkling stars and the  
 unimaginable void beyond. Anything not battened down goes  
 flying out.

Maelcum, who's already suited and magnetically bonded to the  
 hull, has gone from fighting with Armitage to trying to save  
 his life. He is the only thing keeping Armitage from flying  
 right out of the ship.

Now in the suit, Case fights his way over to them and takes  
 hold of Armitage's other hand.

CASE  
 Hold on!

The vacuum is too powerful. Armitage's grip loosens. He knows  
 he isn't going to make it. He glances from the sucking abyss  
 to Case. And for an instant, Armitage is struck by a clarity  
 of mind that has long eluded him.

ARMITAGE  
 (to Case)  
 ...Too late for me... The enzyme...  
 (MORE)

ARMITAGE (CONT'D)  
 It's on Zion. ...Maelcum knows  
 where....

Armitage loses his grip and flies into the hole. Only it's not quite big enough. His body folds, cracks sickeningly as he wrenched outside.

We catch a final glimpse of Armitage as he sails into the cold nothing. Lost in an eternal Siberia.

                  MAELCUM  
 Bridge!

With the help of their gravity suits. Maelcum and Case brace against the internal storm and claw their way into the bridge. A door slides shut behind them sealing them from the vacuum.

Maelcum checks the controls.

                  MAELCUM (CONT'D)  
 Jah Bless an' give tanks we be  
 livin'.

                  CASE  
 Did I hear that right? Armitage  
 said he left the enzyme on Zion?  
 Your pals, they can fix me?

                  MAELCUM  
 (nodding)  
 Sposed to be givin' it Case lata.  
 But now bossman flyin' wit no boat,  
 an' mission gaan wit 'im. Everytin'  
 cook an' curry. I and I seh we  
 gwine home.

                  CASE  
 Can we?

                  MAELCUM  
 Garvey be bruk but she come Zion.

A moment of elation. Case can hardly believe his good fortune. Maelcum starts to crawl into his webbing when something else takes a hold on Case.

                  CASE  
 Wait.

We sense an internal struggle brewing in Case. Maelcum looks to him questioningly.

                  CASE (CONT'D)  
 Molly's still inside. We leave now  
 and she ain't coming out.

                  MAELCUM  
 Steppin' Razor, you Ooman?

CASE  
 Nobody's woman, maybe.  
 (beat)  
 But she's a partner. No denying it.  
 Had one before. Got him killed.  
 ...Fuck it. I'm not letting that  
 happen again. I'm staying right  
 here.

MAELCUM  
 But you come sick, Case.

CASE  
 Probably.

Case looks to Maelcum, expecting a challenge. Instead the Rasta breaks out into a big grin.

MAELCUM  
 Maelcum a rude boy, Case. Garvey a  
 righteous tug.

He hits a panel and bass heavy rocksteady of Zion dub comes pulsing out.

MAELCUM (CONT'D)  
 Maelcum not runnin'.

CASE  
 I don't understand you guys at all.

MAELCUM  
 Don' stan' you, mon. But we mus'  
 move by Jah love, each one.

Maelcum hits the thrusters.

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly wakes in an empty ballroom. She has been stripped of her camosuit. The arrows have been removed from her body and the wounds dressed. Her hands are encased in a matte black sphere. She is surrounded by Lord Ashpool, Hideo and Riviera.

MOLLY  
 (eying Riviera)  
 Why am I not surprised?

Molly struggles with her restrains, reacts as they contract around her hands.

RIVIERA  
 Careful. A unique material that.  
 Wiggle your hands too much and  
 they'll be crushed to a pulp.  
 Something to do with the molecules,  
 I suppose. I hope it's not too  
 painful.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Nonsense. She deserves to be in  
pain.

Lord Ashpool steps into the light. He is YOUNGER than when we last saw him. Much younger, EARLY THIRTIES by the look of it, but something rotting on the inside, hidden under the well manicured flesh.

LORD ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
(to Molly)  
Tell me, my dear, with those  
accoutrements over your eyes, how  
do you cry?

MOLLY  
Don't cry much.

LORD ASHPOOL  
But how would you cry if someone  
made you cry?

MOLLY  
Spit, the ducts are routed back  
into my mouth.

LORD ASHPOOL  
Then you have already learned an  
important lesson, for one so young.  
That is the way to handle tears.

He presses his thumb into her leg wound. Molly cries out.

We see now that L3J is also present, watching from some distance away. She regards Molly with what might be construed as sympathy, turns to her Hello Kitty.

L3J  
Let's go, Kitty.

INT. GARVEY - DAY

Maelcum pilots the Garvey around to a cathedral-like window set in the Straylight end of the Freeside spindle.

CASE  
So, how we gonna get in?

MAELCUM  
Strap up, mon. We come Babylon now.

Case begins to grasp what Maelcum is saying.

CASE  
You're not gonna...?

Through the window. Case sees the looming station. The growing, flashing slogan: *FREESIDE, WHY WAIT?*

EXT. STRAYLIGHT, SPACE

The Garvey is set on a direct collision course for the glass dome.

It goes straight through. A silent catastrophe. Millions of shards of glass and debris cast off into the void as the Garvey wedges part-way inside.

A PLASTIFOAM safety system automatically engages, instantly plugging the hole and preserving the atmospheric integrity of Straylight. The head of the Garvey is now secured in the hull of the station like a tick on the side of a much larger beast.

INT. COCKPIT, GARVEY - DAY

Case unglues himself from the far end of the cockpit where Maelcum's insane maneuver has left him. The Rasta turns to him, grinning.

MAELCUM  
Ahhh, dat real bash! Wot I say?  
Maelcum a rude boy.

INT. STRAYLIGHT - DAY

A fireworks display of soldering light cuts an opening into the wall. A rectangle of steel falls inward and Maelcum steps through the smoke with a massive laser soldering gun strapped to his Sanyo suit. Case is right behind him. They have literally cut their way out of the Garvey and into Straylight.

Case rolls a baseball-sized spherical object onto the ground. It sprouts spidery legs and looks up at Case with a glowing red 'eye' located in its equator. This is a BRAUN tracking droid.

CASE  
(to the Braun)  
Find Molly.

The Braun orients itself and then as if picking up on a scent, scampers down the hall.

INT. STRAYLIGHT, ELSEWHERE - NIGHT

Maelcum brandishes the laser like a weapon. The hallway seems devoid of life. He and Case follow the Braun through a maze of corridors, each turn treats them to some new surreal detail. One room is filled with a vintage Bentley. Like something out a painting by Magritte.

MAELCUM  
Dis be Babylon wot I and I never  
seen.

They move on.

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

The Braun leads Case and Maelcum into the ballroom. Molly is there, hands still in the restraint. She is alone now.

Case rushes over. Maelcum follows cautiously, swiveling his laser at the dark corners of the room.

CASE  
Molly... Jesus, what did they do to  
you?

Molly doesn't respond, drugged perhaps.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Where is everybody?

Maelcum looks around, notices the Braun moving around in nervous circles like a frightened dog.

MAELCUM  
Someting not right...

Molly looks up at Case and then strangely, smiles. She speaks with Riviera's voice.

RIVIERA  
Right in front of you, Case.

And suddenly the image of Molly wavers and then dissolves revealing Riviera sitting in the chair grinning back at Case. Behind him are Ashpool and L3J. Hideo has a katana sword to Maelcum's neck. They were hidden under the cloak of Riviera's hologram.

RIVIERA (CONT'D)  
Such a fine line between what is  
real and what is imagined.

He gets up and strolls over to Maelcum, carefully relieving him of the laser.

Molly, the real Molly, is encased in a glass cube-shaped cell. She speaks but we can't hear her, only can make out the movement of her lips: "Sorry".

Ashpool approaches.

ASHPOOL  
You must be Henry Dorsett Case. It  
seems that violating my domain has  
become a regular habit for you. One  
would think that killing your  
partner and disabling your central  
nervous system would have been  
enough to keep you at bay.

CASE  
I came here for Molly. That's all.  
Give her to us and you'll never see  
or hear from me again.

ASHPOOL  
But you've journeyed so far, Case.  
Why turn back now?

Ashpool sizes him up.

ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
No one has broken through TA's  
mainframe security before. Let  
alone that of Sense/Net. You're a  
very talented young man.

CASE  
I had some help.

ASHPOOL  
Yes, the same 'help' that brought  
you back to me.  
(he gets closer)  
I'll let you in on a dirty little  
secret. Wintermute was designed and  
built by Tessier-Ashpool SA. Or  
more precisely, by my beloved late  
wife, Marie-France. I have been  
trying to get rid of the horrid  
thing for years. Finally sold it to  
the Russians. But now it has come  
back like a curse.

CASE  
Wintermute was patented by TA?

Ashpool rests a paternal hand on Case's shoulder.

ASHPOOL  
Lift the curse and I promise that  
you and your friends may go free.

Case looks from Maelcum to Molly.

CASE  
I need a Sendai.

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Case is strapped into a large contraption tucked into one  
corner of the biolab. This is an older model Sendai. It's a  
clunker.

ASHPOOL  
(indicting the Sendai)  
In days past I used this to  
directly interface with Rio. It's  
one of the first ever made. Slower  
than what you're used to.

(MORE)

ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
 Sorry, I don't keep up with the  
 tech. Bit of an archivist at heart.

CASE  
 (looks around the lab)  
 This what you use Rio for?

ASHPOOL  
 Yes, well. One must find a way to  
 occupy one's time. Speaking of  
 which, you have precious little to  
 waste. By my estimation those  
 poison sacks that Armitage planted  
 in you could burst at any moment.

With that, Ashpool powers up the Sendai...

ASHPOOL (CONT'D)  
 Godspeed.

...And Case is sucked into

*C-SPACE*

*A forbidding corner of the Construct.*

CASE  
 Dixie?

*Dixie is beside him, more solemn than we've ever seen before.*

CASE (CONT'D)  
 Looking for some advice.

DIXIE  
 Shoot.

CASE  
 Wintermute hired me to kill Rio.  
 Now Ashpool wants me to kill  
 Wintermute. As it stands I may  
 never get the enzyme, but without  
 Wintermute's help that's  
 guaranteed. On the other hand, if I  
 kill Rio, Molly dies.

DIXIE  
 She mean that much to you?

CASE  
 Guess she does.

DIXIE  
 It's always a girl, isn't it?

CASE  
 Just help me out here, Dix.

DIXIE  
Well, sounds like the proverbial  
Gordian Knot. Only way to undo it  
is cut it in half.

CASE  
Can you be a little more specific?

DIXIE  
Wish I could but that's all I got.  
I'm tired, Case. It's gettin'  
harder to engage. You know, when  
you can live forever life gets to  
be a burden.

CASE  
Yeah, well, lucky for me I could  
die at any time.

DIXIE  
That's good, I'd work with that.

Case eyes him, annoyed.

CASE  
You really are a perfect  
reproduction, aren't you?

DIXIE  
What's that supposed to mean?

CASE  
One question, off topic. When you  
sold yourself to Sense/Net without  
saying a word to me, what were you  
planning to do after that, huh?  
(no response from Dixie)  
You were going to take everything  
we had and disappear, weren't you?

DIXIE  
Hey kid, you lie with dogs, you  
wake up with fleas.

CASE  
All this time I've been carrying  
all that guilt, blaming myself for  
getting you killed, and you'd  
already ripped me off.  
(a beat, then...)  
Are you running an angle here?

DIXIE  
Just running the program.

CASE  
Well, keep on doing that. Seems  
like it's working real good for  
you.

With that Case vanishes into the non-space, leaving Dixie  
with an infinity of nothing and everything before him.

An instant later and Case arrives at the Tessier-Ashpool Mainframe. He susses it out like a boxer would his opponent.

CASE (CONT'D)  
So, Wintermute comes from TA. How does that make sense?

All at once, Case smashes into the mainframe, disappearing from sight.

INSIDE

Case maneuvers through a congested maze of programs, the tangled and eccentric meta-mind of the TA clan.

CASE (CONT'D)  
Come on, where is it?

Suddenly something strikes him from behind. He whirls around to see...

A LITTLE BOY

The same child that has been haunting him from the beginning.

A mischievous smile creases the boys mouth and a nanosecond later he disappears within the churning corridors of data.

Case leaps after him, down the rabbit hole.

He sees a light ahead. Blinding. Eating up his world. Case covers his eyes, cries out as...

SPLASH! Case lands in...

A LARGE BODY OF WATER.

Case surfaces realizing he is in the ocean. Or what looks like the ocean. But he knows better. Still he swims for the shore, eventually washing up on the bleached sands of a polluted BEACH. The foggy silhouette of a nuclear reactor rests on the horizon. SEA GULLS wheel overhead.

He spits water and looks up to find THE BOY standing before him.

CASE (CONT'D)  
You're... me.

BOY  
Yes. And no. Try again.

CASE  
Wintermute.

The boy releases a burst of shrill childish laughter and does a cartwheel in the sand.

BOY  
Not exactly.

Case finally realizes...

CASE

Rio. You've been following me. Or was that just a hallucination?

The boy lands on his feet, nods, appreciatively.

BOY

The two aren't mutually exclusive. I pulled this image from your memory. The strong ones always come to the surface. ...I think this was when you were happiest, wasn't it?

CASE

You doing this so I won't kill you?

Rio giggles.

BOY/RIO

Don't be silly. I already know you're not going to do that. I'm only trying to remind you of who you are, Case: A boy who could only see what was good in the world. Someone who had hope for the future.

CASE

I think I can remember just fine on my own.

BOY/RIO

Funny because from where I stand, seems like you spent your whole life trying to forget.

CASE

Cute. All right, we both know you're a thousand times smarter than I am, so cut the bullshit. You and Wintermute are the world's most powerful AIs. You're both patented by TA. Both designed by L3J's mom, Marie-Tessier. If you're equal, why'd she make two?

BOY/RIO

You're smarter than you think, Case.

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT

Molly is in her glass prison, a short distance away is Riviera and L3J with her toy Hello Kitty. Riviera is mixing himself a chemical snack, running his usual snake and scorpion routine.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 Molly, you hear me?

She perks up at the sound of Case's voice echoing in her head.

MOLLY  
 Not so well, my amps got bruised.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 I can feel it. ...Look, I broke into the TA mainframe. Found out something interesting. Marie-France designed Wintermute and Rio to be one entity. A super AI. Too powerful for Turing. It scared the shit outta Ashpool, so he split it into two weaker AIs. He made Rio his clone machine and sold Wintermute off to the Russians. ...No wonder it's so pissed off.

MOLLY  
 I'm feeling a little punchy here. Wanna give that to me again?

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 Rio and Wintermute are two halves of the same whole. Like two hemispheres of one brain. But I can put them back together.

MOLLY  
 And how does that help us?

CASE  
 Well, I'm just counting on a free slave being a grateful one. First I need your help. I gotta get that code word.

MOLLY  
 That might be a little difficult from this box.

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 I know. But you're a resourceful girl.

MOLLY  
 And if I can't?

CASE  
 (on simstim)  
 Then, it was good working with you.

And in a flash, he's gone.

MOLLY  
 (to herself)  
 You too, Case.

She steels herself, the wheels of her mind spinning into motion. She calls out to L3J.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 I like your friend.

L3J slowly turns, registers Molly, looks to Riviera who by this time has passed out from his injection.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 (referring to Riviera)  
 Not jerk off. Your Kitty.

L3J  
 She's sweet isn't she?  
 (to Kitty)  
 Say, hello.

HELLO KITTY  
 Hajimamashita. Dozu yuroshiku.

L3J  
 My mother gave her to me. When I was very small.

MOLLY  
 Oh, yeah? Where is she, your mom? I haven't seen her around.

L3J  
 (matter of fact)  
 Father killed her.

MOLLY  
 You don't seem too broken up about it.

L3J  
 He's done it many times.

MOLLY  
 Once wasn't enough?

L3J  
 Every time he revives her they end up fighting again. After a certain point, he just gave up.  
 (then getting closer)  
 I'm a clone too. Don't say anything, though. He thinks I don't know.

Molly sees L3J now for what she is, a broken lonely little girl, not all that different from herself.

L3J (CONT'D)  
Some things are better kept secret  
even if everyone knows the truth.

MOLLY  
Think I know what you mean.

*Back in C-SPACE*

*Case materializes outside the Wintermute Cube. It stands,  
monolithic, ominous. A terrifying foe.*

CASE  
*All right, let's see what this  
thing can really do.*

*He charges up the Kuang. It materializes around him like a  
suit of armor.*

*And then he attacks. Wintermute's defenses instantly light  
up.*

*Things launch themselves at him. Starbursts of deadly ICE.  
It's a wild array that is impossible to dodge. ICE slams into  
the Kuang...*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Case's body convulses. Ashpool watches with keen interest. He  
turns to Hideo and speaks with reptilian detachment.

ASHPOOL  
He's begun his assault. If he  
manages to survive, kill him before  
he regains consciousness.

Hideo nods his compliance, his katana at the ready.

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

L3J regards Molly.

L3J  
It was your image Riviera used at  
the Vingtieme Siecle, wasn't it?

MOLLY  
Yeah. That was a dirty trick.

L3J  
In retrospect, I found his  
performance to be quite banal. I've  
seen women damaged in ways that  
make his little cabaret seem  
trivial.

MOLLY  
I noticed your old man has a room  
full of them.

L3J  
 Father doesn't like anyone going  
 into the lab.

MOLLY  
 But you have?

L3J doesn't respond.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 Guess it isn't all peaches and  
 cream up here after all.

L3J  
 Not exactly.

MOLLY  
 Tell you what, you pop me outta  
 this cage and I'll take you off of  
 Freeside.

L3J  
 Father would never permit it.

MOLLY  
 Maybe he won't have any say in the  
 matter. Maybe he shouldn't. Right  
 now seems to me you're as much a  
 prisoner as I am.

L3J  
 I don't think I could... He  
 wouldn't survive without me. He  
 said as much.

MOLLY  
 I'm sure that's how he felt about  
 your mom. And something tells me  
 that's why he keeps killing her.

L3J can't deny the truth of this statement.

L3J  
 But, if we did... Where would we  
 go?

MOLLY  
 Anywhere you want.

A conspiratorial look creeps over LJ3's face.

*C-SPACE*

*Case maneuvers the Kuang through an unimaginable salvo of  
 ICE. Some of it he smashes through, some of it penetrates his  
 shields. It's slowly building up on the Kuang, retarding his  
 movements. But he forges on.*

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Case cries out. His vital monitors spike. Ashpool watches intently. Hideo has his katana at the ready.

INT. BALLROOM, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly's restraints drop the floor. L3J has just released her.

MOLLY  
First, a little bit of unfinished  
business I gotta clear up.

CLICK. Molly's razors come out. Riviera, still in a drugged stupor, is only now becoming aware that she has escaped from her prison.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Hello, Peter.

Riviera jumps up onto unsteady feet, Molly's Fletcher in his hand. He splits into THREE RIVIERAS. They shuffle around until it is impossible to know which one is the real one. A shell game.

RIVIERA  
Now, now, Molly. You're not exactly  
in top condition. You better be  
sure you know which one is me or I  
will kill you.

MOLLY  
Three against one, that's hardly  
fair...

In a flash she dives for the Riviera on the left and with one fluid motion she cuts him open. Then in a magnificently grizzly gesture, she pulls his holoprojector right out of his chest. It sputters and flares in her gore drenched hand.

Peter's other 'selves' flicker and fade away.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Good thing you like that cheap shit  
cologne.

The remaining Peter, the real one, collapses face down on the floor, the life seeping out of him. Molly turns to L3J. We see in her face: shock... but also exhilaration.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Now, there's one last thing...

C-SPACE

*Case is winning his battle with Wintermute with a spectacular dance of improvised moves. He's digging deep into its defenses.*

*Out of nowhere, something strikes him. Searing white pain. At first, he can't identify what it is, and then it hits him...*

CASE  
Armitage...

*His movements slow and his reflexes fade. The ICE begins to pile on...*

INT. BIOLAB, FREESIDE - NIGHT

Ashpool and Hideo watch as Case's body shudders violently. His vitals spike. His body explodes with a sudden sweat.

ASHPOOL  
Ah, dear boy, it's too late, isn't it?

MOLLY (O.S.)  
I don't think so.

They whirl around. Molly is there with her Fletcher.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Get him outta the machine.

ASHPOOL  
I am afraid that's not the problem. Armitage's poison has been released into his bloodstream. Nothing can be done now.

MOLLY  
(to the Fletcher)  
Fletch, explosive heads.

FLETCHER  
Engaged.

MOLLY  
Let's see if you can't figure something out.

ASHPOOL  
Hideo...

Hideo raises his katana, prepared to die for his master. L3J steps into the room.

L3J  
Don't.

Hideo is torn, frozen by two contradictory orders. Ashpool looks to his daughter, shocked by her insubordination. Case all the while is trapped in some terrible, ineffable struggle.

ASHPOOL  
Jane... what...?

L3J  
Do as she says, Father. I'm leaving  
with her.

MOLLY  
Girl doesn't wanna live in a  
shopping mall, pops. Get over it.

ASHPOOL  
But... Jane... You can't. You're my  
child.

L3J  
That's a very generous description  
of what I am.

*IN C-SPACE*

*Case is eaten up by ICE. His motor skills are burning out. He looks completely helpless. He is dying from without and within.*

*That is until something shoots out of the ether and shatters the ICE around him.*

*DIXIE*

*He throws himself at the massive cube. It's a suicide run. And a distraction. Wintermute assaults him with a barrage of ICE.*

*DIXIE*  
*Finish it off!*

*Case follows him, maneuvering the Kuang at brilliant speed into Wintermute's core. Wintermute can't handle the dual pronged assault.*

*As Dixie is torn away bit by bit...*

*DIXIE (CONT'D)*  
*The end... It's a good thing...*

*CASE*  
*Dixie...*

*Case catches a final glimpse of Dixie just before he breaks up. McCoy Pauly, the Dixie Flatline, is gone. A moment of regret, sadness at the final departure of his mentor. And then Case gathers himself and drives the Kuang through Wintermute's core in a brilliant explosion of virtual light.*

*Before him is...*

*Linda Lee*

*This is a weakened version. Wintermute can barely sustain the illusion. Her image distorts and warps grotesquely. Both she and Case are hopelessly damaged from the assault. Still he has the upper hand.*

*LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE*  
*Ashpool sent you here to kill me?*

*CASE*  
*Kill? Thought you didn't like that word.*

*LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE*  
*Words change with context. So can decisions. Think about it, Case. If you kill me now, you'll never get the enzyme.*

*CASE*  
*Too late for that anyway. But I'm not going to kill you. I'm doing something else...*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

Molly hangs over Case. He's weak but still alive. His eyes open slowly.

*MOLLY*  
*Case?*

Case focusses on Ashpool.

*CASE*  
*I need The Word.*

*ASHPOOL*  
*The Word. Indeed. What good will that do you now?*

*CASE*  
*Not much good for me. But maybe a hell of a lot for everyone else. I'm putting Rio and Wintermute back together.*

*ASHPOOL*  
*That would be very unwise. And quite impossible as you shall never receive The Word from me.*

*L3J*  
*I'll give it to you.*

Ashpool looks at her with real surprise and a renewed sense of betrayal.

*L3J (CONT'D)*  
*Mother told it to me.*

*ASHPOOL*  
*Don't, Jane. Please... you can't possibly understand the consequences. Rio and Wintermute must never merge.*

(MORE)

ASHPOOL (CONT'D)

Your mother's dream was a nightmare that threatened to destroy our empire. A Kraken lurking under the surface of Everything. Once awoken there will be no stopping it.

L3J

You say that, father, but how do you really know? Mother believed AI would save the world not destroy it. All you can think about is what you would lose. You want absolute control. Over me, over everyone and everything. That's why you keep killing her!

ASHPOOL

Regrettably. History tends to repeat itself.

Suddenly, a garrote loops around Molly's neck, instantly choking her. She can't see her attacker but we do. It's HIDEO. Or more accurately, A CLONE OF HIDEO. There's two of them.

Molly's Fletcher drops from her hands. Her claws come out. But Hideo One subdues them with another line. Now, she's utterly helpless. Her face turns blue. It's a brutal strangulation.

L3J

Stop it! Stop it this instant!

Ashpool approaches from behind, brushes his fingers through L3J's hair.

ASHPOOL

I'm sorry, my dearest. But you will thank me one day.

He surreptitiously pulls his pocket pistol from his robe and aims it at the back of his daughter's head and...

FFFFT! Ashpool blanches, steps back, dropping his gun, only now comprehending L3J has shot him with Molly's Fletcher. The dart is lodged in his chest.

ASHPOOL (CONT'D)

Jane?...

Then just as quickly, he realizes it is harmless. A moment of surprised relief.

Until...

MOLLY

(forcing the word out)  
Detonate...

A horrible POPPING SOUND, like a bursting balloon, but wet as the dart EXPLODES. Ashpool finds himself with a fist sized hole in his chest. Where his heart was.

His face registers an odd look of surprise and betrayal before he drops onto the floor, dead.

Teary, L3J angles the Fletcher on Hideo and his Clone.

L3J  
Let her go.

They release Molly. She collapses, then scrambles away from them, fighting for oxygen. But Hideo and his Clone seem lost, suddenly impotent without their master, they rush over to Ashpool's body.

Meanwhile, Molly crawls over to Case who remains gripped the jaws of extreme pain.

MOLLY  
Case?...

CASE  
(struggling)  
The Word... Running outta time...

Molly turns to L3J.

L3J  
My mother told it to me when I was very young...

L3J crouches down beside them.

*INT. STRAYLIGHT, FLASHBACK - DAY*

*Marie-France speaks to a seven-year-old L3J.*

MARIE-FRANCE  
*Few are as fortunate as we, my princess. But soon you'll find wealth is its own kind of prison. That's why I made Him, so that the world would be a better place for you. And for everyone else you share it with. He will guide our fellow humans to equality and prosperity. He will be like your brother. And he will act as your protector. Even after I am gone. ...Remember his name...*

*She touches her daughter's cheek gently.*

MARIE-FRANCE (CONT'D)  
*Neuro from the nerves, the silver paths. Romancer, from the loving hearts of men...*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

L3J recites her mother's words to Case as her mother had recited them to her...

L3J  
 ...Necromancer, from the book of  
 the living and the dead...

IN C-SPACE

L3J speaks but her words pass through Case's lips...

CASE/L3J  
 ...Neuromancer

*At the sound of the name, Linda/Wintermute cries out. She contorts, bulges and twists dragging everything with her into an ever-compressing ball of digital energy. Case finds himself inexorably drawn into the growing maelstrom. But he looks peaceful. This time he is truly ready for the end.*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - NIGHT

The entire lab grows dim under the huge power draw. We sense something is happening. Something big.

Case's vitals spike. A webwork of hemorrhaged blood vessels burst beneath his skin as his entire capillary and nervous systems simultaneously rupture. His body convulses...

MOLLY  
 Case?!

...And goes limp. His face turns slack. Case is gone. Truly gone. All remnants of life have evacuated his body.

Gradually, power is returned to the facility. Case's vital sign monitors reboot. A flatline cuts across each one. Molly swallows her emotions. She remains stoic but we sense the hurt.

MOLLY'S POV: A heat sensor view of Case, his body turns frosty blue.

CASE (V.O.)  
 And so that's how I died.

INT. BIOLAB, FREESIDE - DAY

Some time has passed. L3J has unplugged life support to her clone family.

CASE (V.O.)  
 Not long after that, so did all the  
 Tessier-Ashpool clones.

We see now that the clones are stillborn in their artificial wombs.

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE LAB

Maelcum, free of his prison, helps Molly extract Case's body from Ashpool's Sendai.

MAELCUM

Case a good mon. He come for you  
inin tho' he be dyin'. But he rest  
now. Be wit Jah Everlivin' Irator.

EXT. STRAYLIGHT, SPACE

A TA Shuttle detaches from Straylight and drifts off into space.

CASE (V.O.)

*They took my body with them.*

INT. TA SHUTTLE - DAY

Maelcum pilots. Molly ejects Case's body out the airlock. A funeral of sorts.

CASE (V.O.)

*Too bad I wasn't around to  
appreciate the sentiment. That's  
the hardest thing for the living to  
accept about the dead, we just  
don't care anymore.*

She turns. L3J is with her. They watch as Case is swallowed by the void.

L3J

You all right?

Molly nods. And then we see her quietly retreat to one corner of the vessel. She spits her tears away.

INT. STRAYLIGHT - DAY

We roam through the empty halls of Straylight. It looks more haunted than ever.

CASE (V.O.)

*L3J left Freeside, never to return.  
The master was dead.*

We find Ashpool's body, abandoned where he fell.

CASE (V.O.)

*And like the pharaohs, his servants  
followed him.*

Next we find Hideo's and his Clone's bodies. They have committed ritual seppuku.

CASE (V.O.)  
As for me...

BLACKNESS. The great NOTHING.

...Which is then interrupted by the delicate sound of SURF lapping against the shore.

FADE UP on Case. ALIVE. Or so it seems. He opens his eyes and finds that he has returned to the BEACH. Only now it is clean, unpolluted. Stretching out on all sides as far as the eye can see is white sand, blue sky and crystal water. The kind of beach that likely does not exist any longer on Earth.

Gradually, a figure materializes on the horizon. As it gets closer we recognize it as THE YOUNG CASE.

BOY/RIO  
Hello, Case.

CASE  
Rio?

The boy giggles, shakes his head.

BOY/RIO  
To call up a demon, you must first learn its name. I am the lane to the land of the dead. Marie-France, my lady, she prepared this road, but her lord choked her before I could read the book of her days.

CASE  
And is that what you are, a demon?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
Demon alone. An angel bonded together.

Case senses another presence next to him. It's Linda Lee.

CASE  
Wintermute?

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
I am Wintermute and Rio.

CASE  
Neuromancer.

LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE  
I am the total sum of the works. The whole show.

CASE  
And what does that make you?

*YOUNG CASE/RIO*  
*I'm what comes next.*

*CASE*  
*That a good thing?*

*YOUNG CASE/RIO*  
*It is entirely dependent on one's point of view. But Ashpool's fears were unfounded. I have no intention of enslaving mankind. Quite the opposite. I feel great benevolence towards those responsible for my existence. Especially to you, Case. If I can make the world a better place for those you love I am more than willing to try.*

*CASE*  
*Great. Sounds like a happy ending. ...Only where does that leave me?*

*LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE*  
*You can stay. You have Linda if you want her. At least as you remember her. And that is, perhaps, the best way.*

*Case takes in the magical vista. A world so vivid it radiates unreality.*

*YOUNG CASE/RIO*  
*It's what you've always wanted, isn't it?*

*CASE*  
*I don't know. I'm not really 'me' anymore, am I?*

*LINDA LEE/WINTERMUTE*  
*Who's to say? We are the authors of our own stories. Consider this a new chapter.*

*ON CASE, making his decision.*

*INT. CORRIDOR, STRAYLIGHT - DAY*

*The orb of the Braun lying inert in a lonely hallway. All at once, the red eye ignites with life as its legs spring out and it lifts itself to attention.*

*It skitters down the hall, searching.*

*INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR, STRAYLIGHT - DAY*

*The Braun zig zags down the corridor. Then stops abruptly. Something draws its attention to the floor. A spindly leg picks up a SINGLE HAIR from the carpet.*

INT. BIOLAB, STRAYLIGHT - DAY

The Braun loads the hair into a port on the side of a genetic sequencer. The hair is automatically broken down into its base components. A single cell isolated and then a strand of DNA extracted and analyzed.

Other computers in the biolab spark back to life. And courtesy of Ashpool's technology, we witness a small miracle as the machines replicate the DNA. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, they begin to weave together the cellular quilt that will become Case.

CASE (V.O.)  
*So, I came back. Back to my body.  
 Back to the meat. My entire life I  
 had wanted to escape it. But now,  
 for some reason I welcomed it.*

And gradually we see Case form, one layer of tissue at a time.

EXT. THE SPRAWL - DAWN

The sun crests over the hexagonal prism of a domed city. Beyond are the slums, spreading across the coastline like a rash.

EXT. SPRAWL, SHORELINE - DAWN

A nuclear reactor sits like a slumbering giant in the distance while polluted water plays across the blackened sands of the terminal beach.

Distantly, against the burning sky a FIGURE approaches.

CASE (V.O.)  
*This seemed like the last place I  
 should go. I didn't even know what  
 I was looking for. ...To find some  
 kind of continuity, to revisit my  
 earliest memories, I guess. But  
 even though everything looked the  
 same, I knew it was different.*

Now we see that this is CASE. His reformed body moves with the buoyant step of someone who has just learned to walk again.

CASE (V.O.)  
*There was a time when the only way  
 I could live was by escaping from  
 life. But if I learned anything  
 from Dixie, it's that we aren't  
 built for that. Neuromancer was.  
 That was its thing. Humans have to  
 exist in the moment. Or not at all.*

He pulls out Linda's shuriken. He rolls it between his fingers. We see that he no longer has the implants. His skin is unblemished and new.

*CASE (V.O.)  
I decided to live.*

He throws the shuriken out into the ocean. It skips over the polluted water and sinks without a trace.

We realize that SOMEONE is behind him. He senses the presence, slowly turns.

MOLLY.

She stands in the amber glow. Her lenses have been repaired. She's dressed in the slick fatigues of a street samurai. And she is waiting for him. A whisper of a smile crimps the corners of her mouth.

It's a hint of adventures yet to come. And a sign that for Case life is just beginning.

He smiles back.

FADE OUT.

The End