



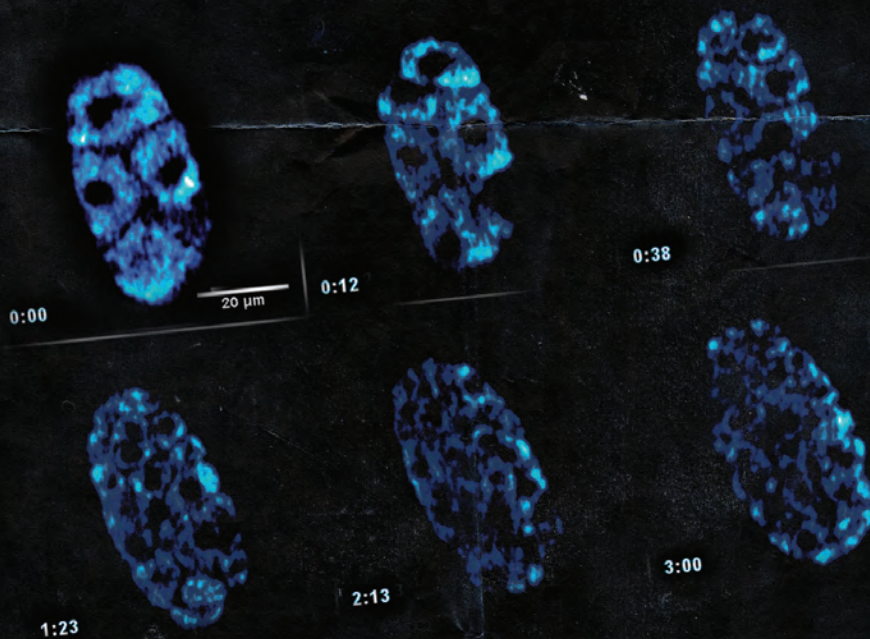
FACTION

a nyc nanopunk thriller

Supreme Headquarters
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.
Office of the Supreme Commander

SECRET

Supreme Headquarters
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
Office of the Supreme Commander



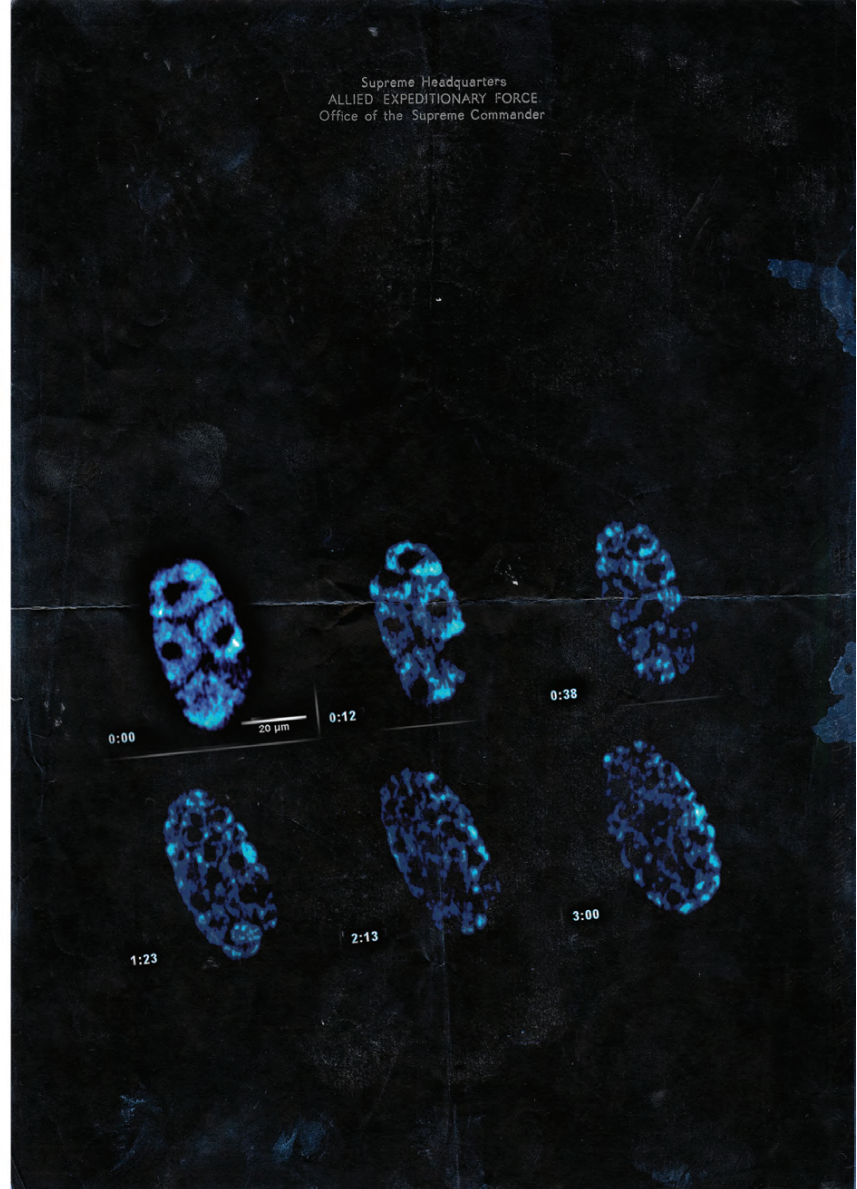
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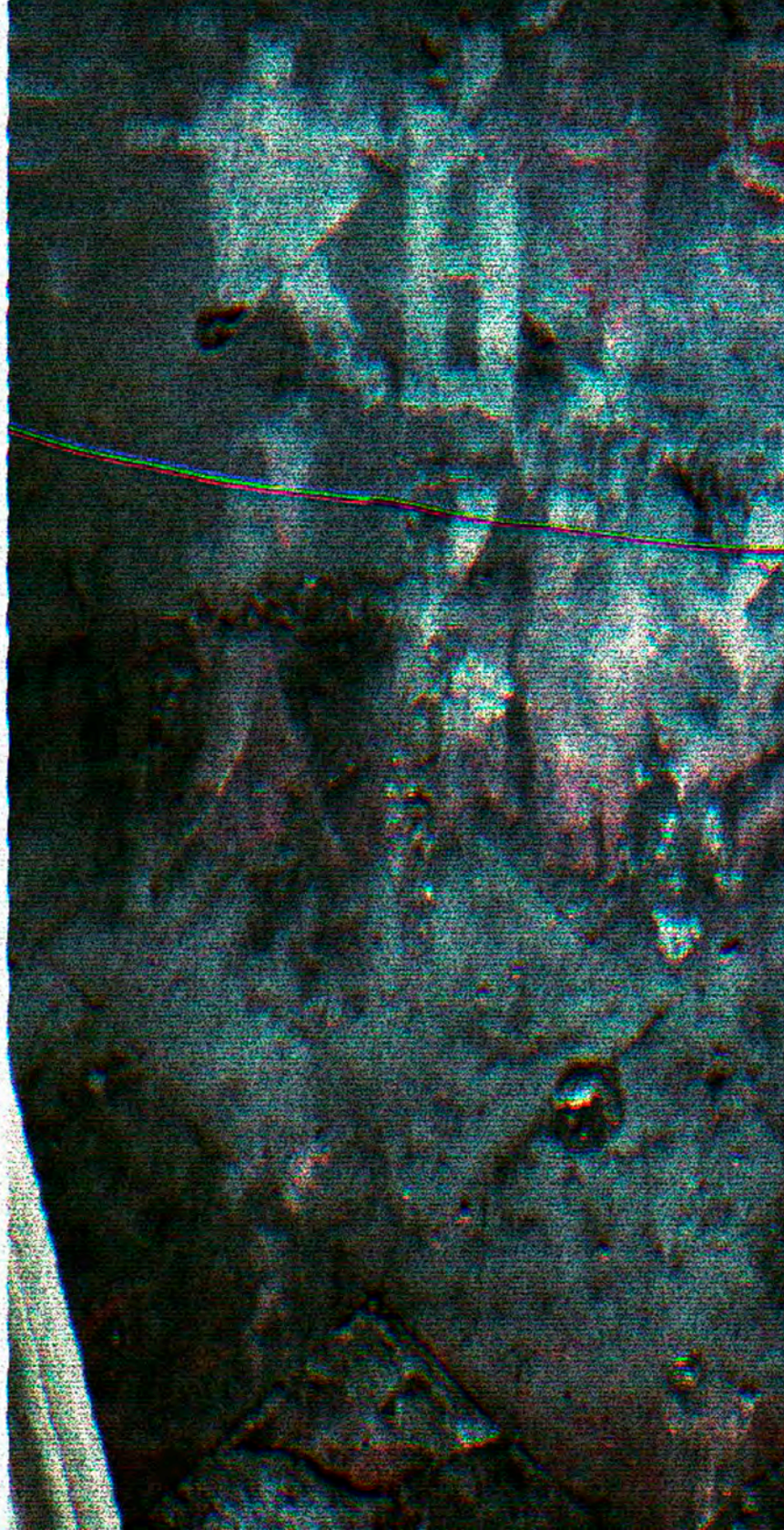
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old hong kong, october 2451





1

EXT. LAN KWAI FONG / HONG KONG - DAY

1

CROWDS OF FEET pass, people en route to work.

LEGEND: HONG KONG, 2451

Among them, KIMONA, late 20s, attractive girl with Asian features, makes her way into an office building:

2

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

2

Kimona exits an elevator, makes her way to a front door, unlocked by a TOUCH SCANNER revealing her name -- one of several bits of NEW TECH that seems to populate this otherwise present-day world.

Kimona walks through a turnstile into a CUBICLE HELL, mostly empty.

She finally arrives at her desk. The entire floor is virtually open and without walls, it's almost a miracle she's found her place.

Kimona attaches a headpiece, and she concentrates on a screen in front of her:

TIGHT ON: CUBICLE SCREEN

Names, addresses, all color-coded irregularly with different colors of the spectrum. Most of them are CRT yellow.

She touches one of the names, and the name flickers.

KIMONA

(into headpiece)

Good morning, we're sorry for your loss. Have you arranged a burial?

A RESIDENT, male, 50s, Chinese, is sitting in a chair, looking down at his deceased WIFE, also in her 50s, sprawled on the floor.

He speaks into a SPEAKER MICROPHONE on the wall, without much emotion.

RESIDENT

Thank you for calling, you are the first to call. I have a resident number.

KIMONA

(v.o.; filtered)
Yes, please go ahead.

Kimona types into a flat keypad as the Resident spells out a number.

RESIDENT

(v.o.; filtered)
Nine-nine-zero-alpha-november-four-seven-two.

PEDESTAL ABOVE: THE REST OF THE FLOOR

Scattered workers on the phone with their respective residents, calling, taking numbers.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white, form-fitting, low-cut dress, stands in the center of the frame. She is looking slightly to her right with a serious expression. The background is split: the left side shows a weathered, grey stone wall with some dark spots, while the right side shows a traditional Chinese building with a dark, multi-tiered tiled roof and red accents. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall image has a grainy, high-contrast aesthetic.

BEIJING, 2006

*SOME PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE THEIR OWN EYES, MUCH LESS
WHAT THEY READ IN THE NEWS. AND IF YOU TRY AND TELL
SOMEONE, THEY WON'T BELIEVE YOU, NO MATTER HOW YOU
TRY TO TELL THEM.*

BUT YOU TRY ANYWAY.









The particular constellations of people who comprised Beijing's more cultured, glittery star systems seemed to revolve around Madame Song Hauigui, who ran Pierre Cardin in Beijing and facilitated social events at Maxim's (also owned by Pierre Cardin). Maxim's was the cultural epicenter where Cui Jian, who himself had married into Madame Song's family, had spent time playing while his college buddy Zhang You Dai (below and far right), who also made regular appearances.



Bands would play on a stage, and between sets, You Dai would play his cassettes of whatever he liked: the Rolling Stones, U2, the Police, whatever moved him. He was given the nickname "DJ" although at the time he did not know what the term meant.



Cui Jian's legendary status was complemented by his appearance with the Rolling Stones in Shanghai. You Dai eventually went on to become the first person to play rock 'n' roll on the radio in China.



生命在泪水中流走

像是热血在冬日里冷却

直到蓝色晨曦微露时

看到温柔的你

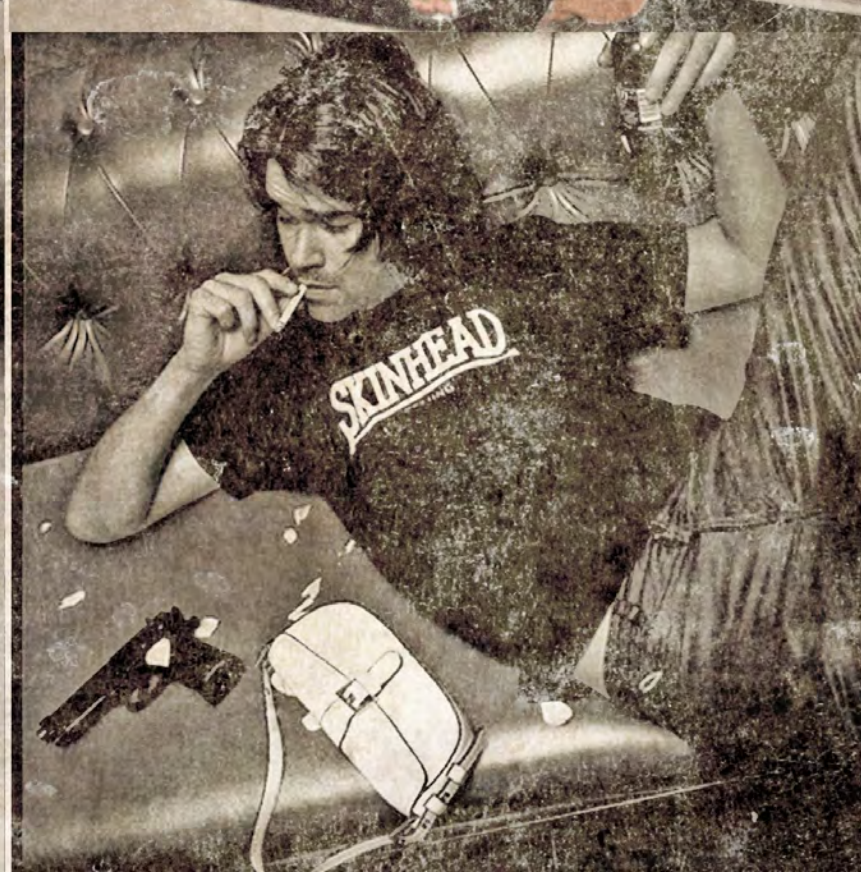


A BRAND SPANKING NEWBORN INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. CHINA'S LIKE A DOG LET LOOSE AFTER BEING STUCK IN A CAGE TOO LONG. MAYBE SLOW AT FIRST, BUT GIVE HIM A FEW MINUTES, AND THEN SIT BACK AND WATCH HIM GO NUTS IN THE OPEN YARD.

AND CHINA IS ONE HELLUVA BIG ASS YARD.



*THEY CALL IT A "FOREIGNER'S
DISNEYLAND," AND FOR REAL GOOD
REASON.*





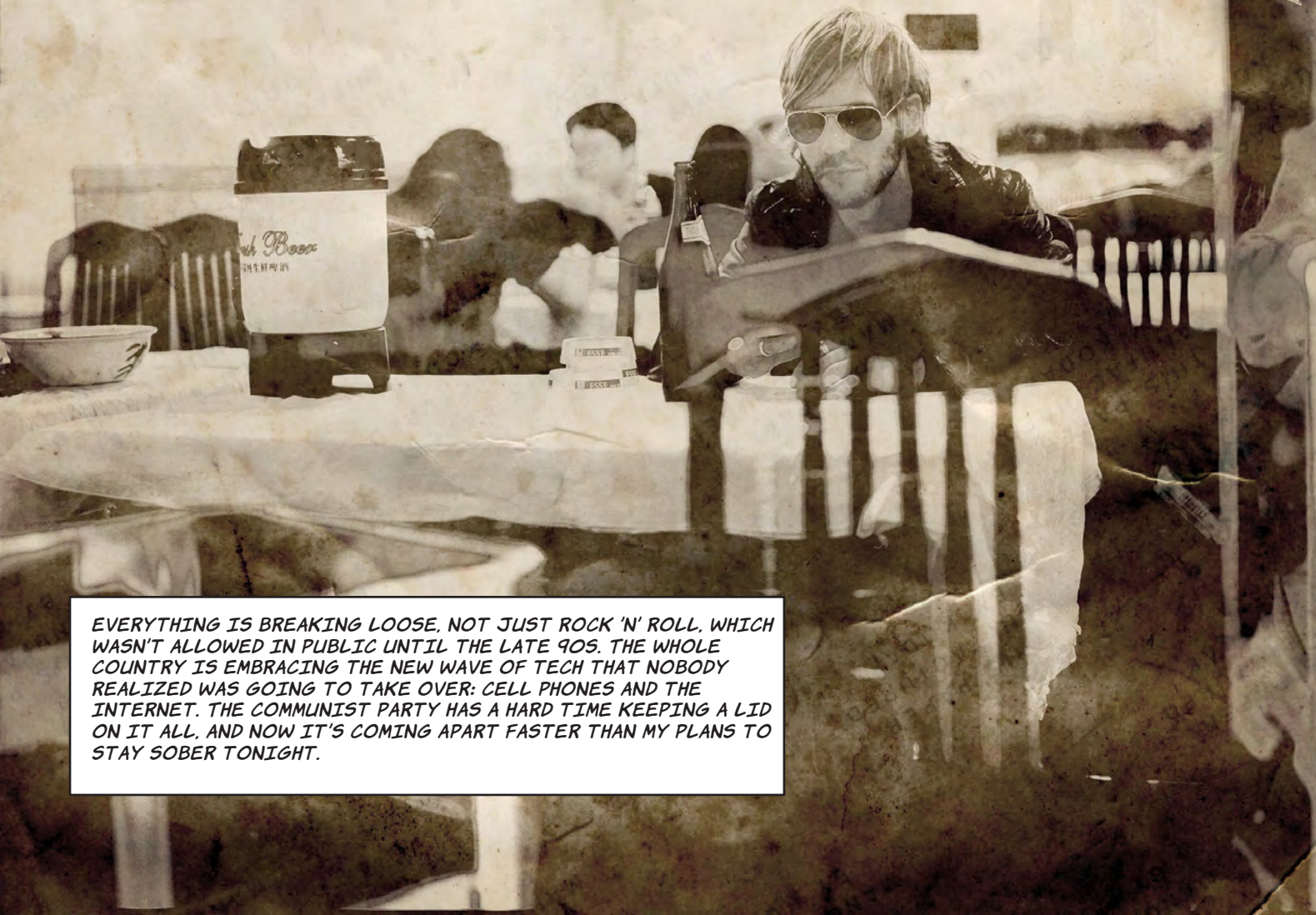


ESPIONAGE, CELEBRITIES, BUSINESSMEN, SUPERMODELS, PEOPLE ON THE RUN - IT'S ALL HERE IN ONE NEAT LITTLE PACKAGE. CIA HELPS NORTH KOREAN INTELLIGENCE ASSET ESCAPE THROUGH BEIJING. QUENTIN TARANTINO BARTENDING AT A FRIEND'S LOUNGE LATE ONE NIGHT. HOOKERS, DRUGS, EVERYTHING'S THERE, BUT NOT EVERYTHING'S GOOD FOR YOU. MOST PEOPLE HERE ARE JUST LOOKING FOR ANYTHING NEW FROM OUTSIDE, AND THE OUTSIDE'S COME POURING IN.




FOR ME IT'S THE DRINKS THAT COME POURING, A HELLUVA PLACE TO LEARN. BEING NEW TO DRINKING ACTUALLY SAVES MY LIFE, BEFORE I HAVE A CHANCE TO OD LIKE THE FOUR FRIENDS OF MINE WHO WERE A LITTLE MORE JADED AND A LOT LESS LUCKY.

WTO STATUS AND WINNING THE BID TO HOST THE 2008 OLYMPICS ARE THE BOOSTER ROCKETS THAT SEND THE WHOLE GODDAMN COUNTRY INTO ORBIT. THE 2001 NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS ARE SO BIG, HELL YOU COULD PROBABLY SEE THOSE FROM SPACE TOO.



EVERYTHING IS BREAKING LOOSE, NOT JUST ROCK 'N' ROLL, WHICH WASN'T ALLOWED IN PUBLIC UNTIL THE LATE 90S. THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS EMBRACING THE NEW WAVE OF TECH THAT NOBODY REALIZED WAS GOING TO TAKE OVER: CELL PHONES AND THE INTERNET. THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS A HARD TIME KEEPING A LID ON IT ALL, AND NOW IT'S COMING APART FASTER THAN MY PLANS TO STAY SOBER TONIGHT.



SO WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING HERE? I'M JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE. A FOREIGNER, A STRINGER, ONE OF THOSE POOR FUCKS WHO GOT HIRED BY WESTERN MEDIA TO BE THEIR BOOTS ON THE GROUND, ON THE BLEEDING EDGE OF ANY BIG STORIES THEY MIGHT WANT TO JUMP ON. I DON'T LET ON THAT I'M HAVING TOO MUCH OF A GOOD TIME TO TAKE THE JOB SERIOUSLY - ALL THAT BULLSHIT FLIES OUT THE WINDOW ANYWAY, BECAUSE ALL THE SERIOUS PEOPLE ARE FEASTING ON ALL THE DEBAUCHERY THEY CAN GET THEIR DECADENT LITTLE HANDS ON. SO THAT'S MY BEAT.

AND THAT'S HOW I MEET CLEMENTINE.

THAT WAS TWELVE YEARS AGO.

Kimona exits the building, makes her way calmly toward a subway entrance, as TWO MINDERS -- formally dressed regulators of society, though we are not sure in what exact capacity, keep a watchful eye on Kimona as she passes them.

Kimona enters her small, low-income apartment. She double-locks the door, with more tech indicated by lights and a readout: "SECURE."

Kimona closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, opens her eyes again and walks through another entrance across from her dining room table over to her bed.

She reaches under her bed, hits the floor, opening a panel. From out of the panel she extracts

TIGHT ON: KIMONA'S FINGERS

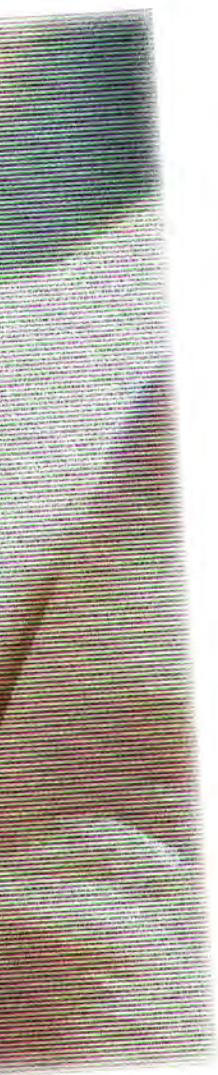
Holding a finger-sized electronic device, seemingly makeshift-assembled, with an antenna and what looks like a small radar dish.

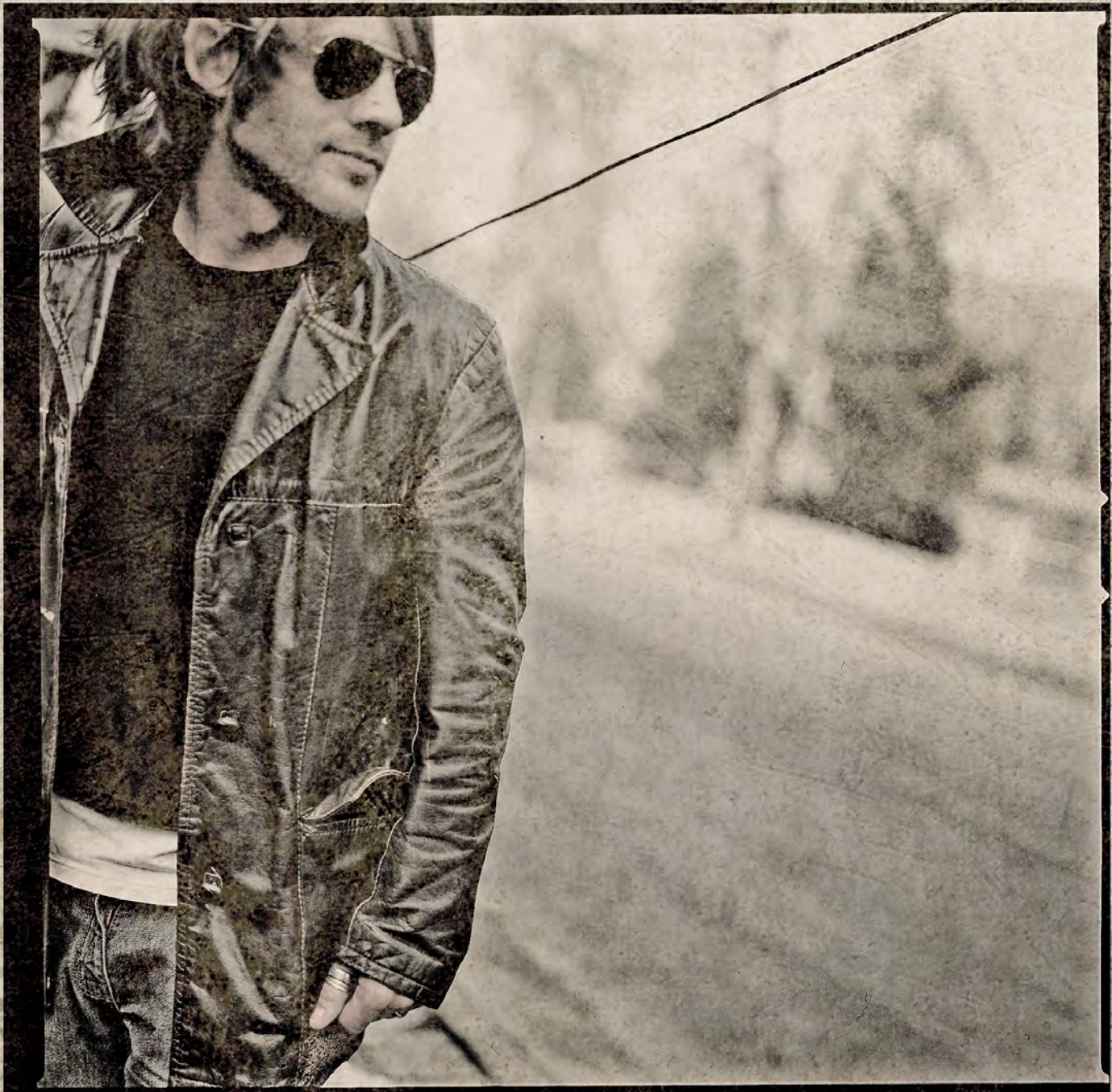
Kimona pushes a switch on the side, and a series of small, high-pitched electrical pops emanate from the device, until it hums.

Kimona drops the device on her bed as it still hums. She slowly sinks to the side of the bed, tears streaming down her cheeks. She finally collapses on the floor, as if from a brain aneurism, and the device finally fizzles out, a small waft of smoke curling up to the ceiling.











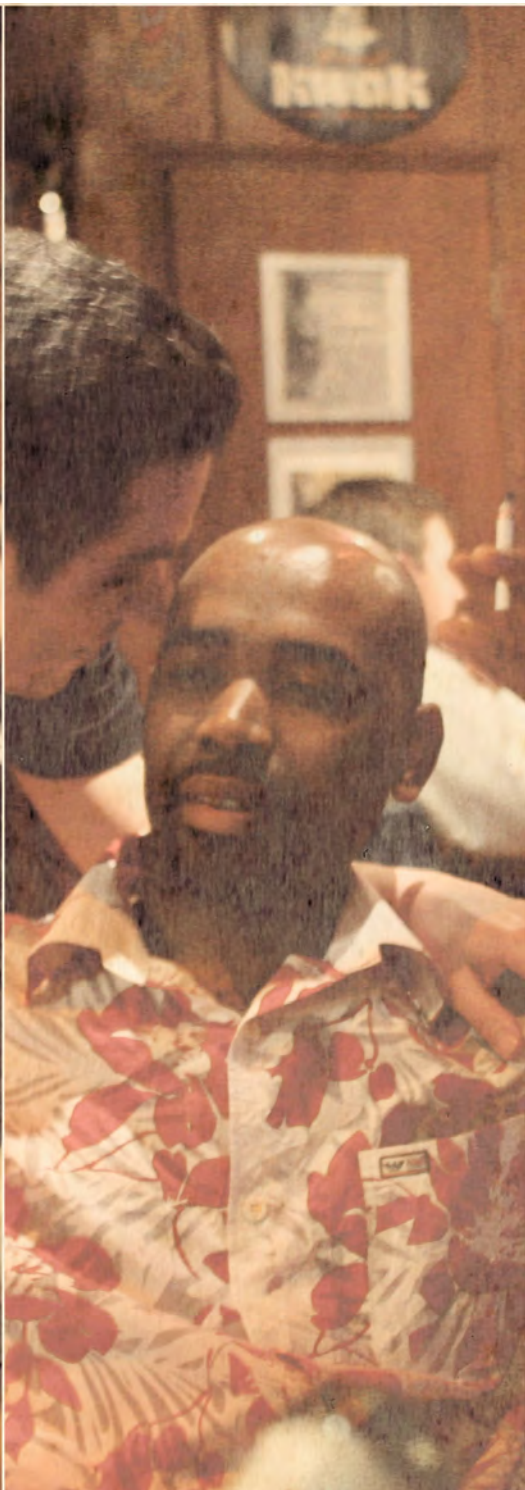
A JOURNALIST BUDDY OF MINE FROM ANOTHER AGENCY INVITES ME OUT TO A PLACE ON THE SLUMMY SOUTH SIDE OF BEIJING'S BAR STREET, TO A PLACE CALLED PURE GIRL — AND IT'S ANYTHING BUT.

*TAKE A LOWER EAST SIDE DIVE BAR AND FACTOR IN THE FREE-FOR-ALL BOOZE DILUTED WITH
FUCK-KNOWS-WHAT OUT THE GUTTER, NO HEALTH AND WELFARE SYSTEM AND A STAFF THAT'S
TOO DRUNK TO CARE. JUST A GODDAMN SHOT WHEN YOU NEED IT.*

AND MAYBE SOMEONE TO SHARE IT WITH IF YOU'RE LUCKY.




THE PLACE IS PACKED. SOME BRITISH CORPORATE TRAINING CEO THOUGHT IT'D BE FUNNY TO CRASH THE PLACE WITH HIS 1-YEAR ANNIVERSARY STAFF PARTY. BETTER TO RULE IN HELL THAN SERVE IN HEAVEN.





HIS WHOLE COMPANY IS ABOUT SIX PEOPLE, BUT THE CHEAP BOOZE IS A MAGNET FOR THEIR FRIENDS DOWN THE LINE, AND THE PARTY GROWS LIKE A VIRUS.





AT THE BAR, I NOTICE A 28-YEAR-OLD MIDDLE-EASTERN
APHRODITE SLAMMING SAMBUCAS WITH A GIRLIE FRIEND,
SPEAKING RUSSIAN.

MY BUDDY STEPS UP AND WARNS ME WITH WORDS LIKE
"BOYFRIEND" AND "RUSSIAN MAFIA" BUT NONE OF THAT
CONNECTS WITH A GUY ALREADY THREE DRINKS IN PAST
INHIBITION.

A photograph of a bar counter. In the upper left, a glass of beer with a yellow head and a red label sits on a white plate. The plate has a circular logo with a lion and the text 'ANNO * 1366'. To the right of the glass is another white plate with faint orange stains. In the center, a metal shaker is visible. In the lower right, another white plate with orange stains is shown. The background is a dark, textured surface.

MY WOULD-BE WINGMAN IS EYEING HER JUST LIKE THE CEO, BOTH CIRCLING HER LIKE HYENAS, BUT THE BARTENDER'S GOT MY BACK, EVER SINCE I WROTE HIM A RECOMMENDATION LETTER FOR HIS AMERICAN VISA, AND I CUT RIGHT THROUGH.



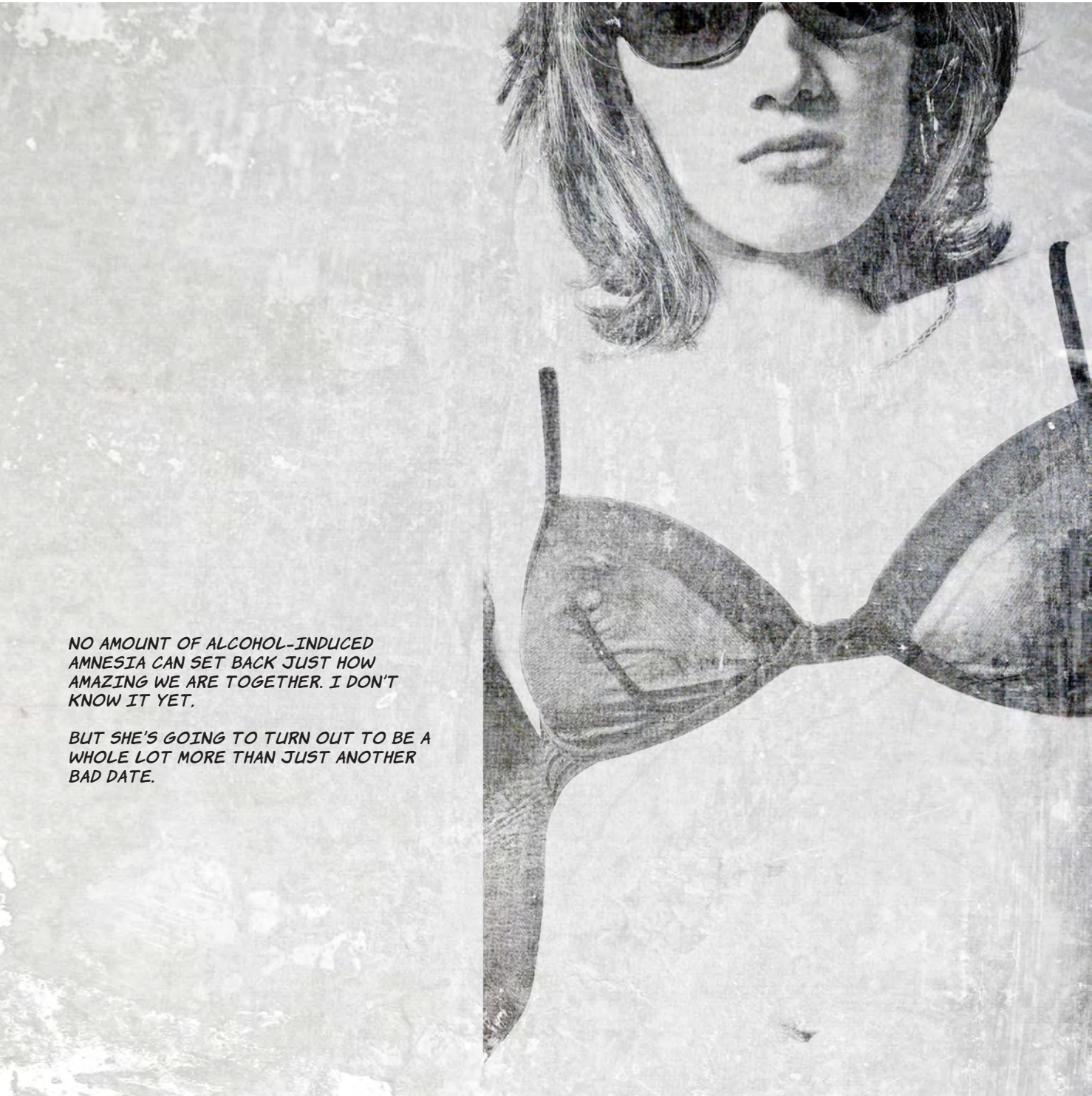
IT JUST SUCKS THAT I DON'T SEE WHAT'S COMING.

SURE, SHE'S WAY OUT OF MY LEAGUE, BUT IT PLAYS IN MY FAVOR. SHE TELLS ME I'M NOT VAIN LIKE THE OTHERS. BUT WE'RE BOTH ABOUT TO REALIZE HOW BLINDSIDED WE REALLY ARE WITH EACH OTHER.










*NO AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL-INDUCED
AMNESIA CAN SET BACK JUST HOW
AMAZING WE ARE TOGETHER. I DON'T
KNOW IT YET.*

*BUT SHE'S GOING TO TURN OUT TO BE A
WHOLE LOT MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER
BAD DATE.*






*BUT IT ALL SPILLS OUT ONTO THE TABLE AT BRUNCH,
UGLY, LIKE A SHITTY ALARM CLOCK IN A COLD ROOM
THAT CUTS INTO A HOT DREAM.*

"I'M ON THE RUN," SHE SAYS.

*"ISN'T EVERYBODY? THAT'S WHY WE'RE
ALL HERE, IN CHINA. THIS PLACE IS A
CRUTCH -"*

*"FROM THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT."
SHE FINISHES THE SENTENCE.*



PROBABLY THE WORST WAY TO START A CONVERSATION WITH A STRINGER. IF SHE REALLY WANTED TO LAY LOW. SHE KNOWS BY NOW IT'S MY JOB TO DIG UP STORIES THAT COULD KEEP THOSE CLICKS ON HEADLINES COMING BACK IN NEW YORK.

BUT THIS, THIS IS A MOTHER LODE. THE KIND OF STORY THAT CAREERS ARE BUILT ON. NOT A STORY.

THE STORY.



SHE DIDN'T WANT HER CLASSIFIED PIONEER WORK IN BIOTECH ALL PERVERTED BY THE MILITARY. WHEN HER BOSS IS KILLED BECAUSE HE WOULDN'T GIVE IT UP, SHE TAKES IT AND RUNS TO THE ONE PLACE THAT NOT ONLY HAS NO EXTRADITION TREATY WITH UNCLE SAM, BUT ALSO WHERE SHE'S GOT THE BEST CHANCE OF FINDING A DEAL THAT'LL CUT HER LOOSE FROM THE GRID.

NOW THAT SHE'S IN BEIJING, SHE'S GONNA SELL IT OFF TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER — THEN DISAPPEAR.



THAT'S HOW CLOSE WE WERE. IT WAS LIKE SHE NEEDED A CONFESSIONAL. BUT I SURE AS SHIT AIN'T NO FUCKING PRIEST.

"YOU CAN'T GO PUBLIC WITH THIS BLAKE, NOT BEFORE I CAN FIND A BUYER. THEN WE CAN DISAPPEAR TOGETHER," SHE SAYS.

"YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME NOT TO," I TELL HER. "IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT GETS ME UP IN THE MORNING. I DON'T WANT TO FADE AWAY. I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE, AND BE A GOOD MEMORY FOR THE GENERATIONS DOWN THE LINE."

SHE CALLS ME A SCAVENGER, A LOW LIFE, A CLICKBAIT WHORE.

I'VE BEEN CALLED WORSE. I AGREE NOT TO GO PUBLIC TILL SHE DISAPPEARS WITH THE MONEY — AS LONG AS SHE TAKES ME ALONG WITH HER. SHE'S THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO AN ASSHOLE LIKE ME.

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LET HER WALK OUT THAT DOOR.



The sun begins to glisten across another window in Kimona's apartment building.

Next door to Kimona lives YARDSON -- Chinese, late 20s, thin, sluggish emo-type.

Every few moments he's bombarded by advertisements echoing through his apartment, revealing his name.

AD 1

(v.o.; filtered)

Good Morning, Yardson! Are you fucking awake yet? Check this shit out, thirty percent off your next purchase of asteroid mining stocks. Clock in before noon and you could win a date with me!

Yardson cracks an egg, leaving the shell on top of an old coupon that reads "Live Rent Free for a month, let us share ads in your home."

The raw egg drops into a hot, steaming bowl of beef-flavored Ramen. Yardson opens his refrigerator unit, finds little else besides an old box of tofu, bottled liquids, and a vacuum-packed pocket of chopped scallions in gold wrapping. He opens it, savors the smell, and drops them into his soup and shoves a pair of biodegradable plastic chopsticks into the bowl.

Yardson carries the bowl across the room to his window and sits down to enjoy the POLLUTED SUNRISE.

Another voice echoes across the room.

AD 2

(v.o.; filtered)

Yardson Lam, congratulations, you
have been selected for police duty.

Yardson lowers his bowl, listening more carefully as the ad
continues.

AD 2 (CONT'D)

(v.o.; filtered)

Your next door neighbor, Kimona, is
deceased. Please utilize your
citizen police kit. You have been
credited an advance of four-hundred
RenMinBi.

Yardson continues to finish his soup, looking blankly out at
the sunrise.

50 INT. KIMONA'S BUILDING - APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY 50

Yardson exits his apartment, turns and walks to Kimona's
door. He notices the same two Minders from before, watching
him from down the hall; they walk away, and Yardson turns to
Kimona's door. He sees it open, and enters.

51 INT. KIMONA'S APARTMENT - DAY 51

Yardson walks over to the body. He observes her
dispassionately and then notices the now-burnt-out device on
the bed.

TIGHT ON: YARDSON'S FINGERS

Yardson examines the device closely.



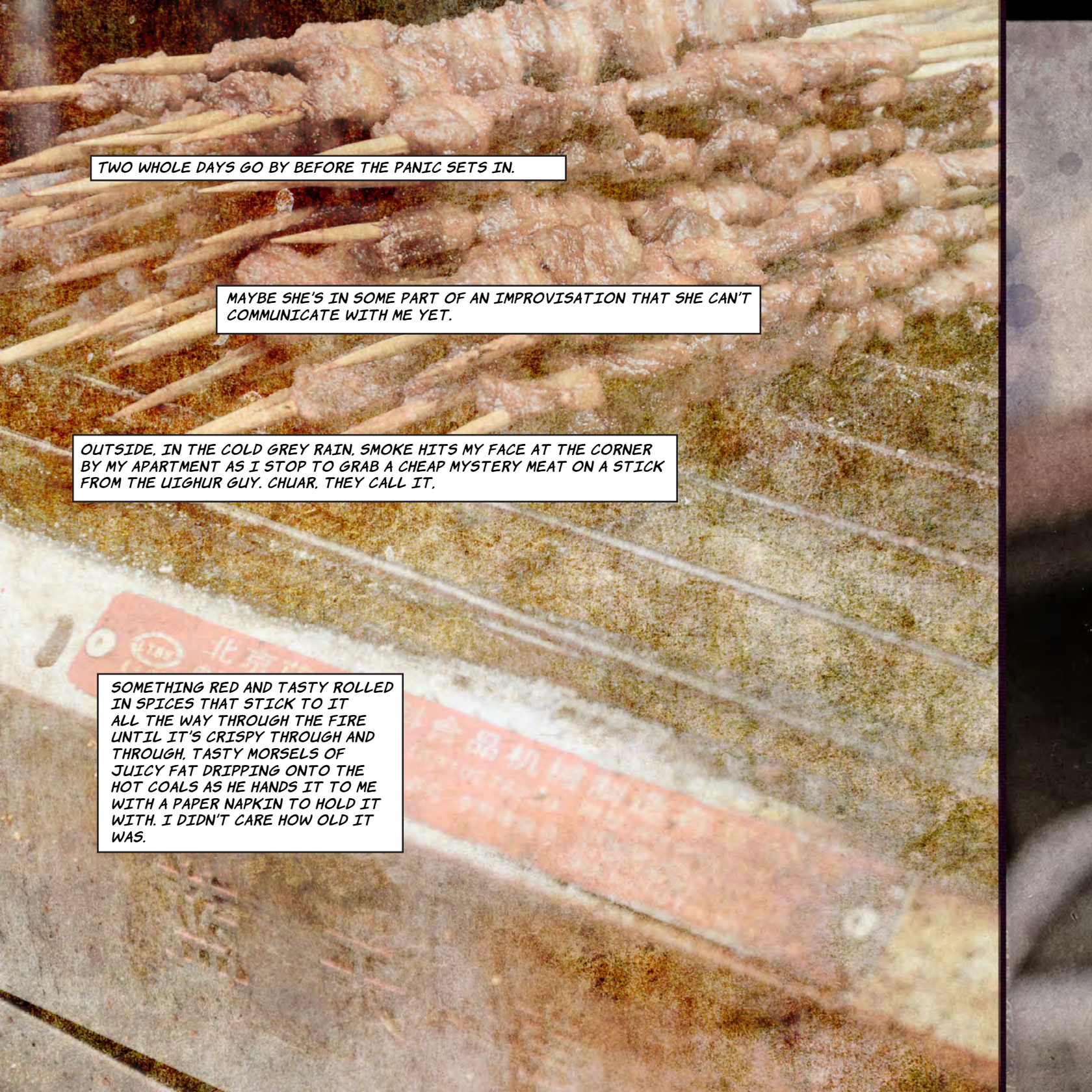
3

中國電腦軟件城
CHINA COMPUTER SOFTWARE TOWN









TWO WHOLE DAYS GO BY BEFORE THE PANIC SETS IN.

MAYBE SHE'S IN SOME PART OF AN IMPROVISATION THAT SHE CAN'T COMMUNICATE WITH ME YET.

OUTSIDE, IN THE COLD GREY RAIN, SMOKE HITS MY FACE AT THE CORNER BY MY APARTMENT AS I STOP TO GRAB A CHEAP MYSTERY MEAT ON A STICK FROM THE UIGHUR GUY. CHUAR, THEY CALL IT.

SOMETHING RED AND TASTY ROLLED IN SPICES THAT STICK TO IT ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE FIRE UNTIL IT'S CRISPY THROUGH AND THROUGH, TASTY MORSELS OF JUICY FAT DRIPPING ONTO THE HOT COALS AS HE HANDS IT TO ME WITH A PAPER NAPKIN TO HOLD IT WITH. I DIDN'T CARE HOW OLD IT WAS.





20. 47 第一行动组
对一号犯罪嫌疑人王



*I TEAR INTO IT AND DOWN THE FIRST BITE JUST AS I GLIMPSE A TV SCREEN IN
A CHEAP FASHION STORE WINDOW.*

*IT'S CLEMENTINE'S FACE, MIXED IN WITH A BUNCH OF FOOTAGE SHOWING A
POLICE RAID ON SOME PRIVATE CLUB ON NORTH BAR STREET.*

接到指令
坚章实属抓捕



BACK INSIDE, I'M PREPARED TO USE MY LAPTOP FOR SOMETHING ILLEGAL TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH, BUT THE HEADLINE HITS LIKE A HARD PUNCH IN A SOFT STOMACH.

"FOREIGN BIOTECH SCIENTIST KILLED IN POLICE DRUG RAID!"

NOTHING MAKES SENSE. CLEMENTINE WAS A MYSTERY, BUT A NIGHT OF MUTUAL EXPLORATION IN EVERY DEEP SENSE TOLD ME SHE'S NO DRUG DEALER.



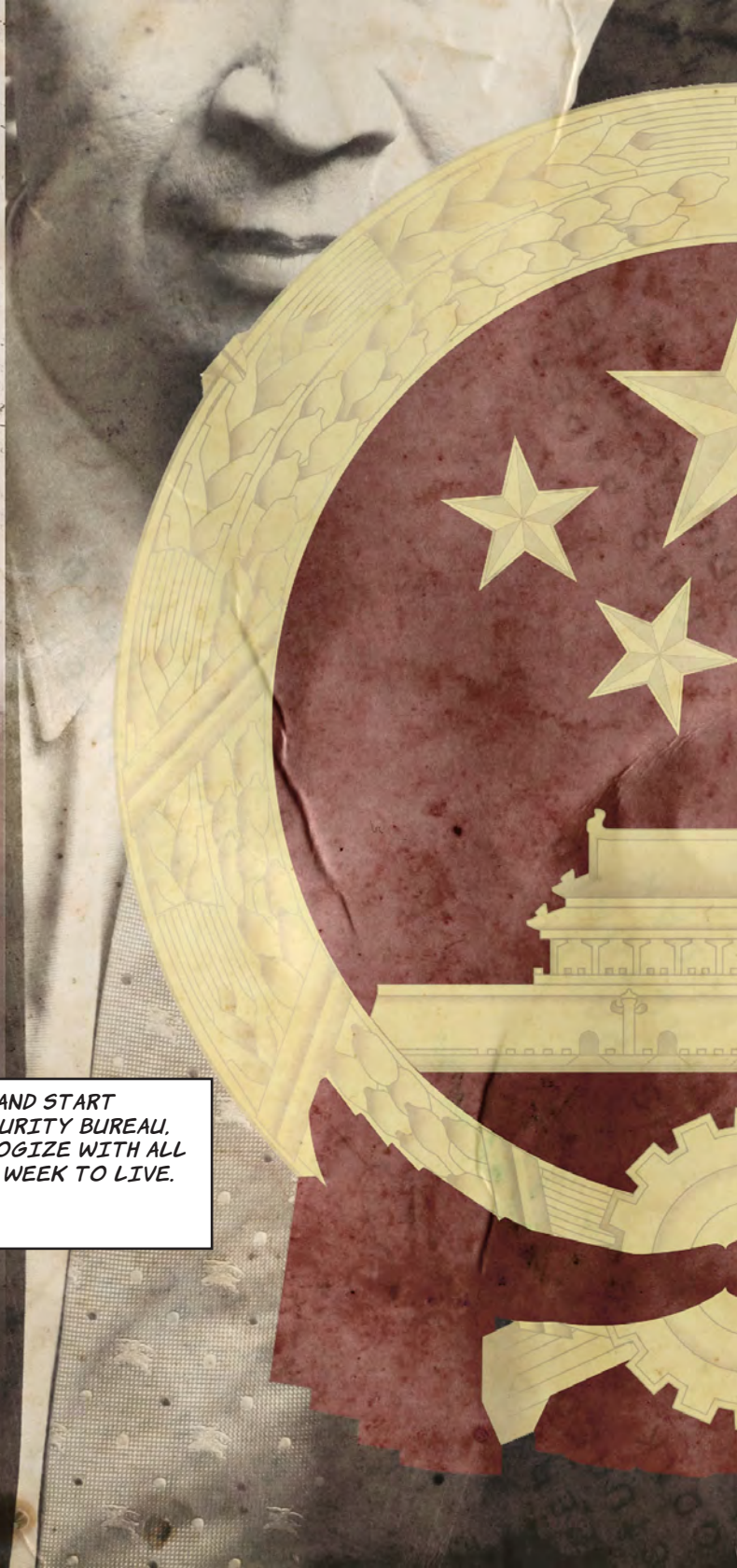
20. 47 第一行动组
对一号犯罪嫌疑人王



*FIVE MINUTES LATER, A KNOCK AT THE DOOR SEEMS PRETTY URGENT,
SO I OPEN IT.*

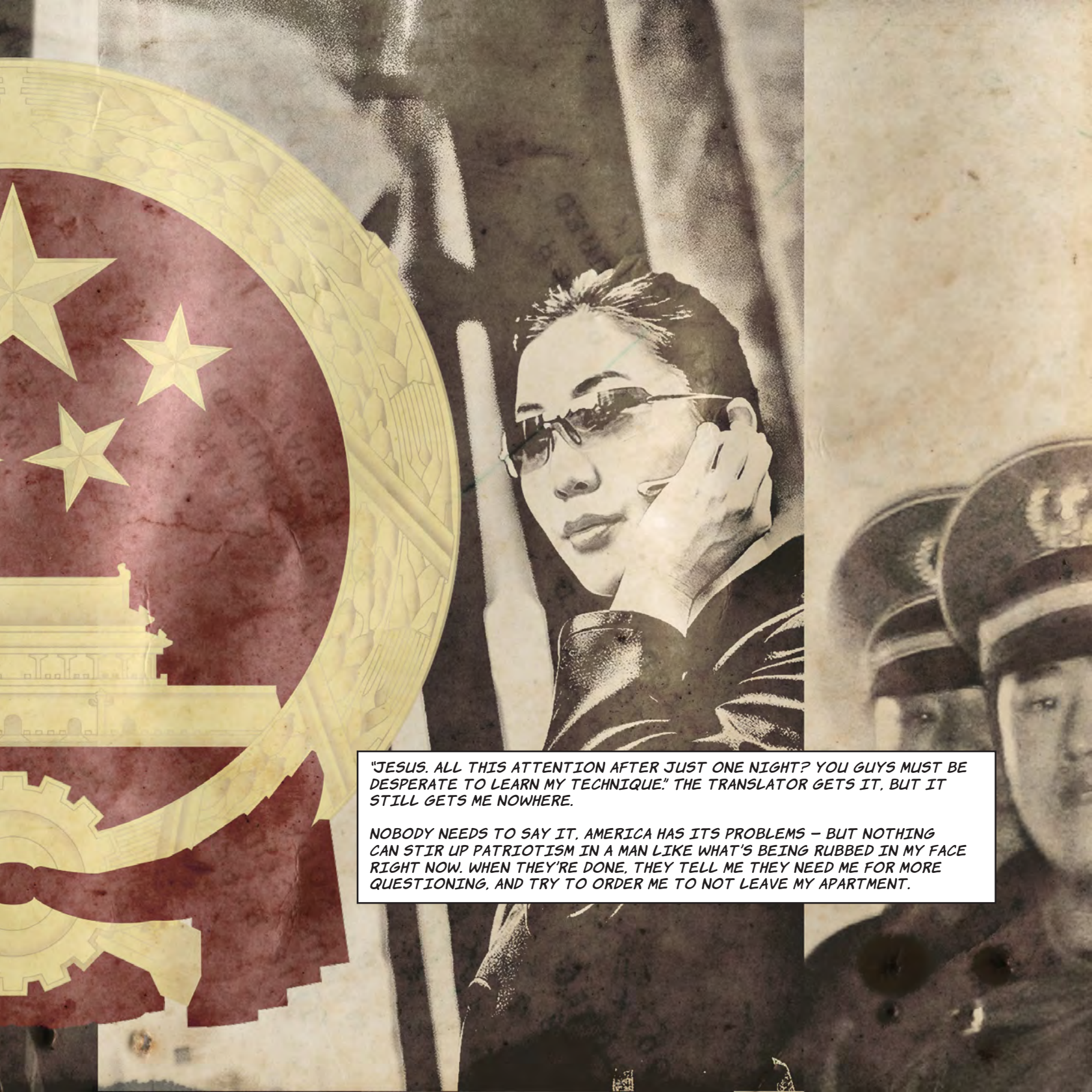
接到指令

立即实施抓捕



TWO UNIFORMED BEIJING POLICE OFFICERS PUSH PAST ME AND START TEARING THE PLACE APART. AS A SUIT FROM THE PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU, AND HIS NECESSARILY CHARMING FEMALE TRANSLATOR, APOLOGIZE WITH ALL THE SINCERITY OF A DOC THAT WON'T TELL YOU YOU GOT A WEEK TO LIVE.

OF COURSE. IT'S BECAUSE I'D BEEN SEEN WITH HER.



"JESUS. ALL THIS ATTENTION AFTER JUST ONE NIGHT? YOU GUYS MUST BE DESPERATE TO LEARN MY TECHNIQUE." THE TRANSLATOR GETS IT, BUT IT STILL GETS ME NOWHERE.

NOBODY NEEDS TO SAY IT, AMERICA HAS ITS PROBLEMS – BUT NOTHING CAN STIR UP PATRIOTISM IN A MAN LIKE WHAT'S BEING RUBBED IN MY FACE RIGHT NOW. WHEN THEY'RE DONE, THEY TELL ME THEY NEED ME FOR MORE QUESTIONING, AND TRY TO ORDER ME TO NOT LEAVE MY APARTMENT.



THEY'VE BEEN WATCHING ME BEFORE, SO IT MAKES SENSE WHEN A COUPLE MORE SUITS COME RUNNING AFTER ME WHEN I MAKE A BREAK FOR THE AMERICAN EMBASSY DOWN THE STREET.

I MADE IT A POINT TO LIVE THAT CLOSE IN CASE SOMETHING LIKE THIS EVER CAME DOWN ON ME, AND IT'S A SWEET MOMENT, WATCHING BEIJING'S FINEST RUN INTO A BRICK WALL MADE OF SOLID AMERICAN RESOLVE.



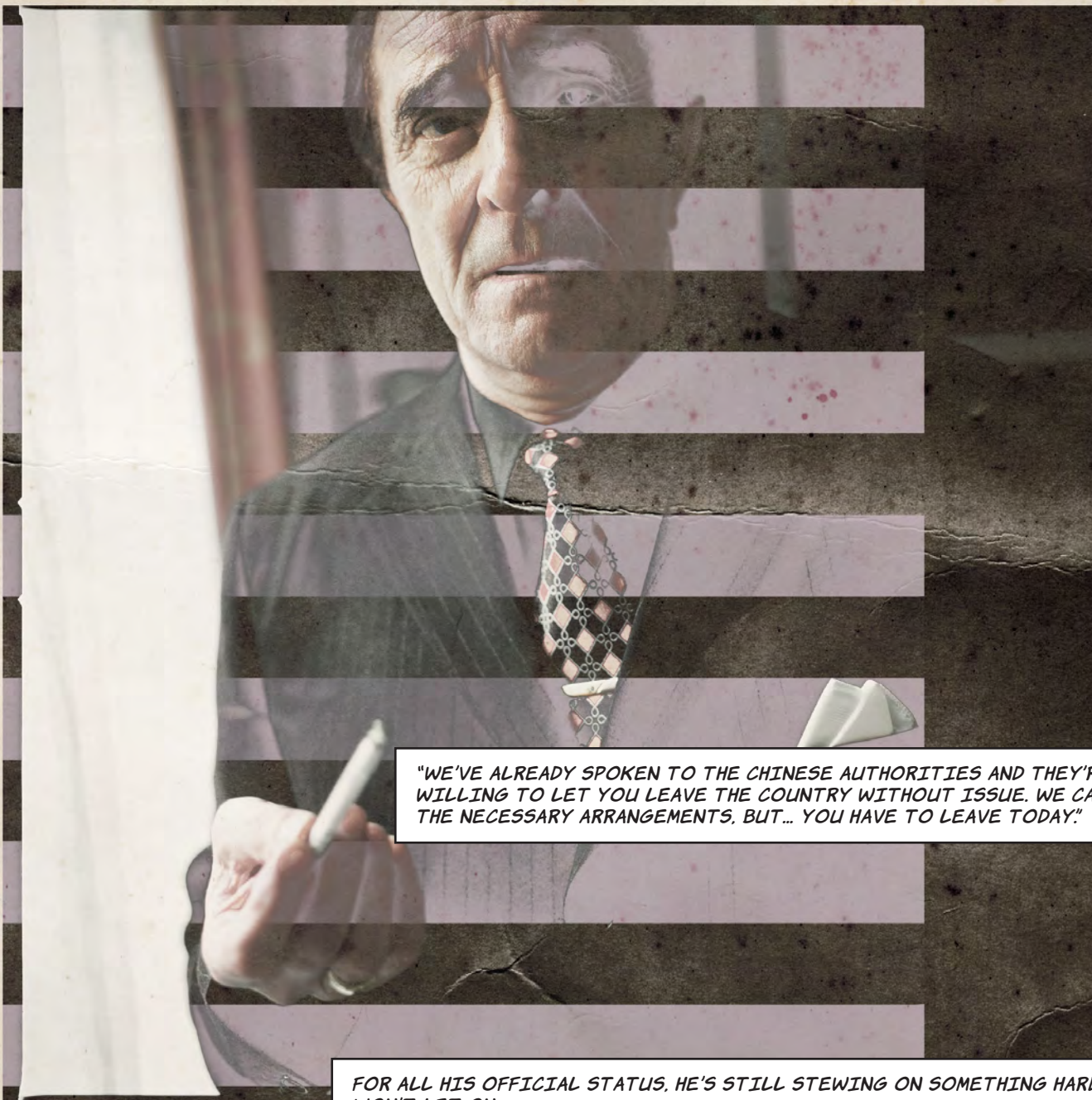


I JUST WASN'T PREPARED FOR AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES TO BE JUST AS FRUSTRATING AND A LITTLE MORE FOREBODING. THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT CLEMENTINE AND WANT TO QUESTION ME TOO.

"HOW GOOD'S YOUR MANDARIN?" HE ASKS.

I WOULD PROBABLY ENJOY WORKING AS A SPY THE MOST SINCE EVERYTHING AT STAKE IS THE MOST I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT.

MOVIE REFERENCE: SNAKE PLISSKEN'S JOB INTERVIEW WITH BOB HAUK.

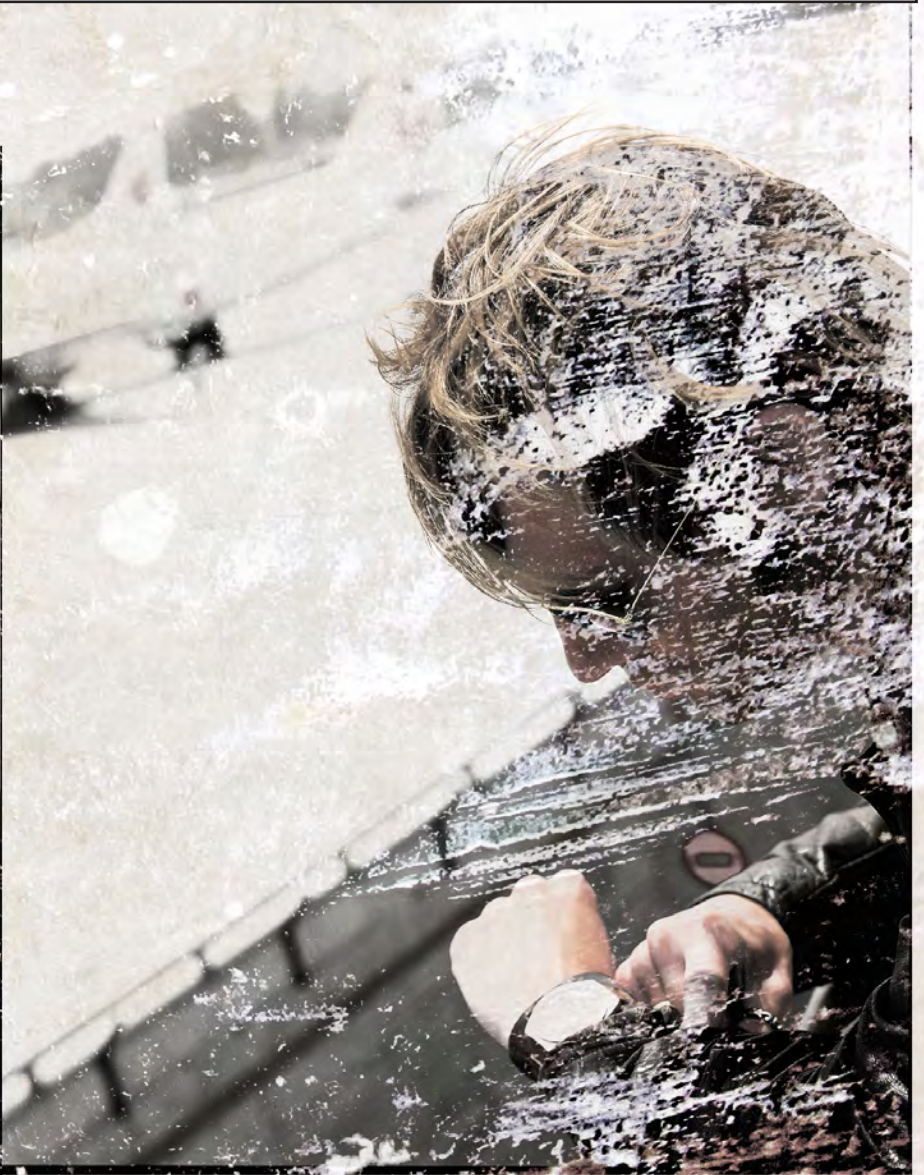


"WE'VE ALREADY SPOKEN TO THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES AND THEY'RE WILLING TO LET YOU LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITHOUT ISSUE. WE CAN MAKE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS, BUT... YOU HAVE TO LEAVE TODAY."

FOR ALL HIS OFFICIAL STATUS, HE'S STILL STEWING ON SOMETHING HARD THAT HE WON'T LET ON.



THEY SIT ME ON A CHEAP FLIGHT THAT STOPS OVER IN PARIS. THEY MUST HAVE THOUGHT I WASN'T SO IMPORTANT.



THEIR MISTAKE.

6^e Arrt
RUE
MAZARINE





I SKIP THE CONNECTION AND HIT TOWN INSTEAD.

THE NEED FOR CLOSURE HAD BEEN BUILDING ALL THE WAY FROM BEIJING. NOT TO MENTION THE NEED TO EXERCISE A LITTLE PERSONAL FREEDOM AFTER HAVING SO MANY MORONS WALK ALL OVER IT.

A CREPERIE ST. AN

VOLUME

LOW MED HIGH

MAKE SELECTION TO HEAR

stereo


speakers

A B C D E F G H J K

L M N P Q R S T U V

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8





A COUPLE MONTHS BEFORE IN BEIJING,
I'D TRADED ALCOHOL AND STORIES WITH A
VISITING SECURITY CONSULTANT TO THE
FRENCH EMBASSY WHO WAS ON LOAN FROM
INTERPOL AND THE U.N. OFFICE ON DRUGS AND
CRIME, ALEXIS JOUVENEL.

HE'S THE FIRST PERSON I CALL FROM A CAFE
ON RUE MAZARINE.



MISS FRANCE OF ALL PEOPLE SITS DOWN NEXT
TO ME AND ASKS ME FOR A CIGARETTE.

DUMBASS AMERICAN. I DON'T HAVE ANY AND I ASK
HER TO WAIT WHILE I HIT THE NEAREST STORE
FOR A PACK OF SOBRANIE.

ALL I GET IS HER EMAIL ADDRESS.

BUT IT'S NOT WHY I'M HERE.





AFTER WE AGREE TO MEET, I GIVE JOUVENEL WHAT I KNOW ABOUT CLEMENTINE, THE DRUG RAID, HER STATUS, HER BIOTECH PAST.

HE KNOWS SOMETHING BUT DOESN'T WANT TO BET HIS REPUTATION ON IT. ALMOST LIKE THE GUY AT THE US EMBASSY IN BEIJING.





*"EVERYTHING GONNA BE CHANGE, IN THE DRUG BUSINESS. EVERYBODY'S SCARED,
ALL THE DEALERS AND..."*





"YESTERDAY A PROSTITUTE CALLED ME.



WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE GOT MY NUMBER BUT... I'VE SEEN HER..."





"SHE TOLD ME ABOUT HER FRIEND WHO DIED. WAS FROM A DRUG. BUT NOT A CHEMIST DRUG."





"WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, IT DOESN'T LEAVE ANY TRACES..

*I WENT TO THE MORGUE TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE CORONER REPORT. HE
QUIT HIS JOB THAT DAY.*

THE NEXT DAY, IT WAS HIS BODY SHOWING UP AT THE MORGUE."

METROPOLITAIN

SEX



METROPOLITAIN





"THE PROSTITUTE TOLD ME ABOUT HER BOSS. WE'VE BEEN WATCHING HIM FOR TWO MONTHS NOW. HE GOES BETWEEN PARIS, BEIJING, FOR WEAPONS TRAFFICKING, SOMETIMES HUMAN TRAFFICKING."



"WE THINK HE'S IN NEW YORK AT THE MOMENT."













4

HEARING
 BEFORE THE
 PERMANENT
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS
 OF THE
 COMMITTEE ON
 GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
 UNITED STATES SENATE
 ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
 FIRST SESSION

OCTOBER 3, NOVEMBER 5-6, 2008

Printed for the use of the Committee on Governmental Affairs

147409

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WASHINGTON : 2008

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DR. MORGAN. My father created a program called called SPECTRUM. Nanoscale robots, operating on the molecular level, and triggered by an external signal, work together to change the electrical activity in the brain. It was an ambitious project, but --

SENATOR SEVERIDGE. Doctor Morgan, if I understand you correctly, then this was a major advancement in the war on drugs. Remove the demand, this is what you're talking about, isn't it?

DR. MORGAN. That was the original goal, Senator. Not weaning the addict off of one substance onto another, SPECTRUM was a departure from the previous paradigm of physically identifiable agents, into an emphasis on neuro, bioelectric frequencies. A real cure for addiction, to... anything.

COL LANDRY. Senator Severidge, I'd like to interject here if I may. We're seeing applications beyond what Doctor Morgan is proposing, like --

DR. MORGAN. The Program wasn't created to turn our enemies into mind-controlled zombies, Colonel.

LT CDR VALDEZ. Some of the applications we have identified include increased morale, under any conditions, blocking pain, increased stamina and mental functions during missions, and no more PTSD or PTSD related conditions. Second. The SPECTRUM program was financed under an appropriations bill passed several years ago and approved in an appropriations hearing in 1992. Third, the program should not be discontinued because if a foreign adversary were to develop it, we would not possess the means to defend against it.

SENATOR SEVERIDGE. Lieutenant Commander Valdez, could you provide the specifics of that bill and its allocations, for the record, please? I believe the original program was under the directorship of Doctor Morgan, which is why we've asked her to be present at today's hearing. And while we're waiting for those specifics, Doctor Morgan, would you be willing to issue a recommendation for the SPECTRUM program?

DR. MORGAN. Yes, Senator. I'm recommending the SPECTRUM program for immediate termination.

COL LANDRY. Dr. Morgan, unfortunately this program is under DoD supervision, and not under civilian control.

DR. MORGAN. Colonel Landry, since you assert control over the Program, can you explain how your servers were compromised by Chinese non-state actors? There are reports the schematics are now in the hands of a criminal organization operating in southern China.

COL LANDRY. There's nothing to substantiate that report. It's fake news. In fact, if I recall correctly, it was your own chief biotech engineer, Clementine Kadir, who defected to China and put the schematics up for sale to the highest bidder. That's why your father's brainchild is now in the hands of Chinese criminals, being reverse-engineered for God-knows-what.

DR. MORGAN. Given your stated intentions for my father's research, she chose the path of whistleblower, and since there is no extradition treaty between the U.S. and China, I don't see how she had much choice. She chose to protect the research from being weaponized and I applaud her for that decision. Unfortunately the compromise of your servers, documented here by the British cybersecurity firm RedVoyant, is the real reason my father's work is being weaponized. There is no evidence Miss Kadir made any deal or met with any members of any criminal enterprise in China.

SENATOR SEVERIDGE. But Miss Kadir has gone missing, is that correct?

DR. MORGAN. Our best intelligence tells us she was killed in a police raid. But we were able to use one of our assets to execute a buyout before the Chinese took action.

SENATOR SEVERIDGE. I've watched for decades as technology has gradually eroded the lives of those who will inhabit the future. Superseded the need for truth, fragmented our sense of reality. I am recommending immediate closure of the SPECTRUM program. These proceedings are now closed. Thank you all for your attendance.

DR. MORGAN. Thank you, Senator.

68

EXT. "FAMILY" HEADQUARTERS - DAY

68

Another building, as faceless, immaculate as the rest of the city is not.

69

INT. "FAMILY" HEADQUARTERS - DAY

69

Yardson sits at a large table, minimally decorated, looking out onto the city. Small dust particles float in the air, glistening in the late morning sun. With him are MORGANA, Chinese, late 50s, and FATHER, also Chinese in his late 50s. On a wall hangs a large PORTRAIT of GAYLE MORGAN, depicted as a great matriarch.

OUTSIDE

In view is a large radio transmitter array, and advanced configuration apparently acting as a satellite signal relay station.

INSIDE

On a side of the room which Yardson cannot see, is a series of monitors depicting various aspects of a continuous signal relay planet-wide.

On the table, Yardson has placed the burnt-out device.

MORGANA

For centuries, we have enjoyed peace and the fulfillment of dreams. This world we have built is now threatened by a... a tiny accidental burst of energy from a contraption that has no reason to exist?!

Father reaches out, urges restraint.

FATHER

Yardson Lam. Please fill out this report and submit it when you are done.

He pushes a formal report form with different checkboxes and a pen in front of Yardson.

Yardson fills it out, as we SLOW ZOOM into the eyes of the watchful matriarch, a painting of an attractive, stately blonde. The painting frame bears a metallic label: GAYLE MORGAN.

Mackenna, Naomi 04202019

CASE 2019-1859 RANK Det



SPECIFICATION

1. FAILED TO COM DISPUTE.
2. FAILED TO OBT
3. AFTER HAVING TH
4. DID ABUSE HER STRIKING AN POLICE

PENAL

Dismiss
respons
Forfeit
counsel

2019-



отслежива

I would have come back sooner if nothing happened in China. But to keep my bank account from flatlining, I visit my boss in midtown. I tell her what I'm onto, but I need an advance to finish the trail. After a source on plastic surgery fraud in LA turned out to be a jilted sex change candidate, it was hard getting Vonda back on my side.

"The piece on credit card scammers was good, I'll give you that. You do have your moments Blake. But this turns out to be a dud, there's no coming back from it. Ever."

Either way, it's my college past with her that ends up being the reason Vonda sets me up with another 1500 bucks, enough for a few more days. I don't tell her about the roommate I had after we stopped calling each other, the one person that popped into my head once Jouvenel said the words "New York," and waste no time making a bee line straight for the 23rd precinct uptown.

"I'm here to see Officer Nao MacKenna."

"I'm sorry sir, but Detective MacKenna has been placed on administrative leave."

"Det -- What?"

"You say you know her, right?"

"Yeah, we were roommates a couple years back, she told me to look her up if I ever came back into town."

"Then she can tell you what happened. Next?"

That was New York. Have your shit together or get the fuck out of the way. Outside in the cold again, I hope the message I left finds its way to her. Detective. Administrative leave. Tough break.

Lucky break for me when my phone rings an hour later, and it's her.

Nao and I meet up for coffee near her new place in Bushwick, the last bastion of starving artists in New York City before the yuppies take over again like they did in SoHo in the seventies and Williamsburg in the nineties.

I run the name Jouvenel gave me back in Paris.

“Lawrence Lui, are you fucking kidding me? I can’t talk about him.”

“So you heard of him.”

“I know of him, yeah, look -- “

“Yeah yeah, off the record, deep background, all that shit. How the hell else am I supposed to stay in business? I got nothing else but my rep, and that’s all but gone to shit.”

She shakes her head, but it’s old times’ sake that ends up saving me again. One of the few perks of getting old I guess.

“I’m only going to let you in on this once. Okay? My informant is his mistress. She got stupid, busted on possession at an art gallery she runs in Tribeca. I haven’t told the FBI about why we were looking at her in the first place though.”

“The FB-- ... why not?”

“Blake... my partner was killed last night.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, everybody’s sorry, but nobody for me. NYPD wants to pin the responsibility on me. They want to keep me in contact with my informant so things don’t go sideways. But at the same time they forced me to go to a psych eval tomorrow.”

“Jesus.”

“Listen, you need to know, if you’re gonna write anything that comes out, anything worth my time... we were watching Lui’s mistress because she’s using money from sales at the gallery to launder money from arms deals that her sugar daddy’s involved in. And we only know because a follow-the-money guy at NSA contacted me personally, not my superiors, he contacted me, after they caught wind of a huge amount transferred to some front for a nanotech lab in southern China. They wanted to confirm her identity.”

“ I don’t get it. Why would a nanotech lab... need a front? ...”

“They’re working on something big, and Lui is financing it. And whatever it is, it’s dirty. They have another one in Beijing.”

I get a cold chill. Clementine might have supplied the schematics for the end product for whatever Lui was testing out. I pull out the file Jouvenel gave me on the dead girl in Paris.

“A dead hooker. I don’t mean to be a jaded New Yorker, but... so fucking what?”

“Not what. How. It showed all the signs of an overdose, but no trace chemicals. The coroner lied about whatever he’d found, then quit.”

“Is he still alive? “

Nao just looks at me, like I just called her something not printable.

“I gotta go,” is all she says before getting up. She’s got another meet with her informant, who’s got some hot new piece of intel. She wants me out of her hair, but I follow anyway and sit tight across the park, watching her connect with her future witness for the prosecution.

She’s got a buyer, she says, and asks Nao to come to the meet as her counterintelligence backup, Nao’s undercover persona. Tomorrow night at six at a fusion bar on Lexington Avenue.

Penny was one of those mistress types too smart to trust anyone, and just smart enough for any heat she spots comin around the corner. And that’s just what her sugar daddy wanted to make sure of.



TOP SECRET//SI-G/ORCON/NOFORN//EXDIS



DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION - 08FEB2019

97 INT. NANOTECH RESEARCH LAB - GUANGZHOU - DAY 97

LEGEND: GUANGZHOU, CHINA, 2021

A team of FIVE SCIENTISTS in labcoats hold clipboards and monitoring devices, stand in front of a 2-way mirror, peering into

98 INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY 98

A PLA SOLDIER, sitting at a table. One of the scientists enters the room and places a clear liquid in a glass in front of the soldier, who apparently from thirst, gulps it down promptly.

99 INT. NANOTECH RESEARCH LAB - GUANGZHOU - DAY 99

Outside the testing room, one of the observing scientists nods, and a TECHNICIAN hits the ENTER key on his computer terminal.

TIGHT ON: TERMINAL SCREEN

The SPECTRUM logo emblazoned on the screen, a readout of various brain chemical levels and nanoparticle charges inside the brain, accumulating from the water just consumed by the soldier.

DISSOLVE TO:

BACK IN 2451. Yardson's profile takes over the soldier's as he sits, filling out the rest of the form. He takes no notice as Morgana and Father, visible in a glass-walled CONFERENCE ROOM, argue INDISTINCT.

As Yardson finishes his report, Morgana and Father emerge from the room. Morgana walks out of the room, and Father approaches Yardson and picks up the report.

FATHER

Thank you, Yardson. Please continue your investigation. We know that you and Kimona were interested in possibly forming a union. But you must understand... This is of the utmost importance, as this is but the fourth incident we have had this year.

YARDSON

The fourth?

FATHER

Yes, and each time the device associated with the death has exhibited increased efficiency and potency.

Yardson remains unaffected, his emotions sterile.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Can you find the source of this device? Where it was made, who made it?

YARDSON

Well... yeah I guess I could try, I mean... Who made it? But why would they make it, and why would someone use something that's just gonna fucking kill them?

FATHER

When you find a new piece of information, report back to us.

YARDSON

Yeah, okay, cool.

Yardson stands and exits.

Father finally hits a button under the table, and another electrical clicking sound becomes a hum, filling the room. Father produces a small screen device, which displays a low flatline with the word "SAFE." He puts the device away, and takes a deep breath.

101 INT. RIDESHARE VEHICLE - DAY

101

Yardson enters the self-driving vehicle, speaks to the screen.

YARDSON

China computer town.

The door closes, and the car takes off.

102 INT. CHINA COMPUTER TOWN - DAY

102

A huge market, some TWO HUNDRED CUSTOMERS browse BOOTHS and STALLS where ever imaginable variety of computer part is being hawked and even custom-built.

Among them, an OLD WOMAN FORTUNE-TELLER has a green CRT-screen setup with an old custom-built motherboard with electrodes running to a pair of sensors. A FORTUNE CUSTOMER sits in front of her, with the sensors attaching to the wrist and the temple, reading a pulse, displayed ON SCREEN.

FORTUNE TELLER
Birthday?

FORTUNE CUSTOMER
March fifth, twenty four thirty.

The fortune teller types in the data, and hits "enter," finally displaying a readout, all in Chinese.

Yardson walks past, and approaches an AD-HOC ENGINEER, who is busy wielding a soldering iron, an electron-powered microscope and a visual diagnostic screen.

Yardson interrupts the work, flashing his CITIZEN POLICE ID.

The Engineer stops working immediately as Yardson produces the burnt-out device and hands it to the Engineer. They speak INDISTINCT, swallowed up in the bustling NOISE around them.

Lawrence Lui had retired. He was done. Out of there. Why did he want to do another deal? It was like he'd been set up, suckered into something he didn't know a whole lot about. But then again human nature is gonna win out in the end, and there's no logic to most of it. People do what turns 'em on, even if it kills 'em. He was probably getting on in years and wanted somebody to know his name. About 500 years future. Hell, most of this was Penny's doing anyway. She was looking out for herself like always, using whatever she had to to get out from under Lui's thumb.

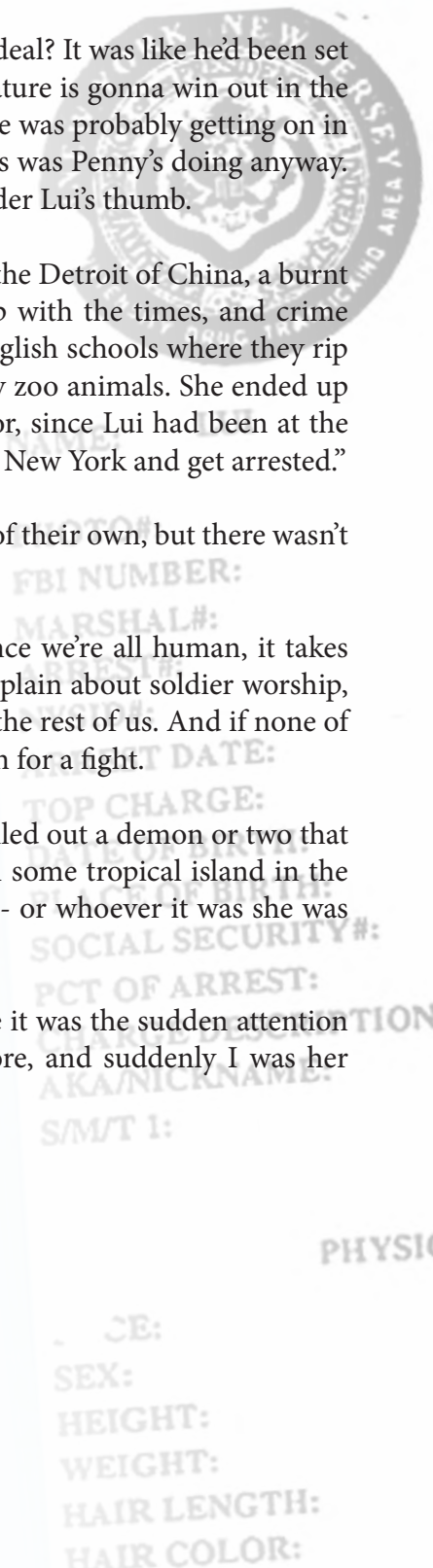
Lui met Penny while visiting some relatives in Liaoning Province. Shenyang, was like the Detroit of China, a burnt out shell of a city left over from Soviet-assisted industrialization, that couldn't keep up with the times, and crime forced its way into a lot of livelihoods. Penny was a teaching assistant at one of those English schools where they rip off foreigners, using bogus contracts and parading their foreign staff around like cable tv zoo animals. She ended up sleeping with one of them, and ended up on the losing side. But timing was in her favor, since Lui had been at the karaoke table that night. "Let's go to New York," he told her, stopping short of "Let's go to New York and get arrested."

But Wong was a mystery. Nobody asked about him, nobody cared. Maybe he was one of their own, but there wasn't anything even about that in the files.

Cops never get a constant level of respect across the board. It goes to figure that since we're all human, it takes something more than human to have any right to keep the rest of us in line. People complain about soldier worship, and cops are no different. No matter how shiny the badge is, they're still people just like the rest of us. And if none of us gave them any power because of that uniform, they'd be just another street gang lookin for a fight.

Nao was fighting something in herself. The psych session they had her go through pulled out a demon or two that even she didn't figure on. She was six years old, and whatever happened to her back on some tropical island in the South Pacific, she couldn't remember what was going on in the right side of the room -- or whoever it was she was talking to, right there, telling her to keep quiet about it.

Nao ended up handing me copies of everything she had on Lui and his world. Maybe it was the sudden attention from NSA, or the hypnosis, but something triggered a fear in her I'd never seen before, and suddenly I was her insurance.



H.I.D.T.A.



MUGSHOT PROFILE

LAWRENCE

12537695

M2002617855

12/31/02

PL 2650204

07/06/75

NEW YORK

400 WEAPON

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

ASIAN

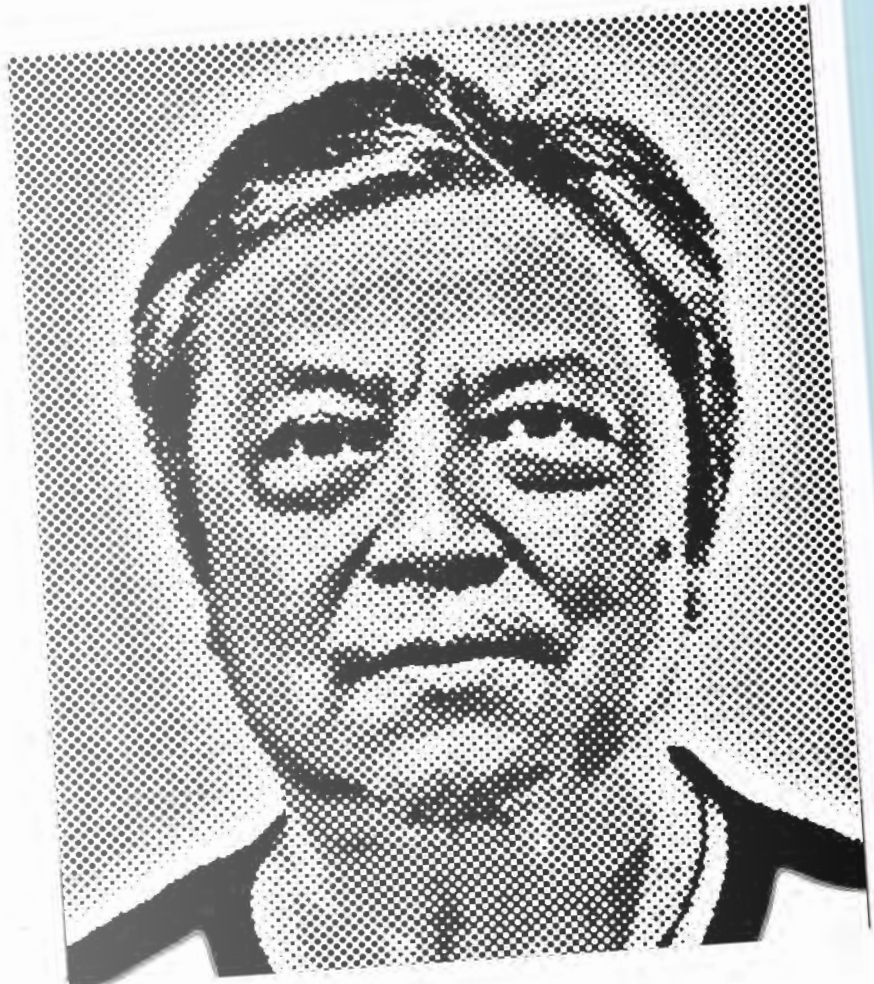
MALE

6'00"

190

SHORT

BLACK



131 EXT. ENGINEER'S SHACK - NIGHT

131

In the DRIVING RAIN, just outside the bustling market, an OLD SHIPPING CONTAINER leaks a glow from the inside.

132 INT. ENGINEER'S SHACK - NIGHT

132

Yardson sits behind the Engineer, who has pulled up a series of files on his MAKESHIFT SCANNER.

ENGINEER

I haven't seen anything like this. But the chemical signature says it's from Kowloon side. Mong Kok. I don't know if the factory is still there. But you can try.

YARDSON

I need a name, a person.

ENGINEER

There is guns there. Very high security. Even if you can find it.

YARDSON

Okay, so if you are not going to give me a name, maybe I can see if your license needs a --

ENGINEER

Priska. Her name is Priska. I just forgot for a moment. But she is dangerous, okay?

YARDSON

Yeah, fucking okay.

Yardson reaches over the empty driver's seat and presses his index finger onto the screen. Father appears.

FATHER

(v.o.; filtered)

Yes, Yardson, what is it?

YARDSON

Her name is Priska. I'm going to check into a factory location in Mong Kok. Is there anything else I should know?

FATHER

(v.o.; filtered)

Priska Velasquez is the only one of the addicts that we know of to survive.

YARDSON

Addicts?

As they continue talking, we

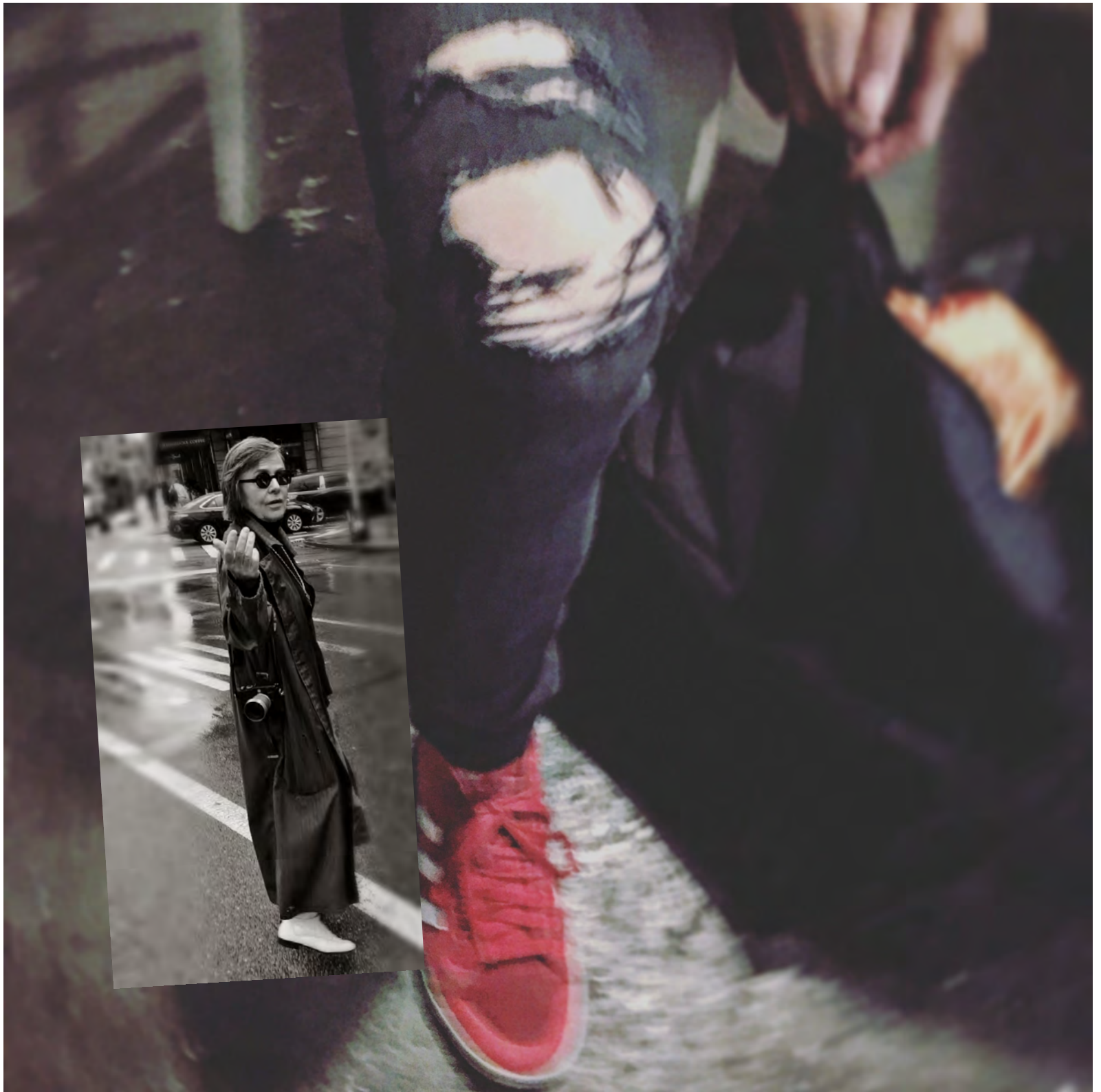
CUT TO:

Various street scenes of plastic sheeting doorways, single people engaged in various scenes that look like utter loneliness: a GIRL looking into a store window of FLASHING ELECTRONIC SCREENS; a BARBER outside his shop leaning into a speaker phone in the wall; a single dog trotting through an empty, dilapidated alley.

FATHER

(v.o.; filtered)

The ones who survive usually suffer insanity, and grow distant from friends and family, who do not understand them. No one knows where they go. They account for a growing number of missing persons, who do not appear in the purge lists. They are a new trend, and... you are the only hope we have of stopping this trend before it gets out of hand. Report back when you have found this Priska. We must locate the source of this deadly epidemic.



At the bar on Lex, Nao walks in on Penelope having a friendly chat with the would-be buyer. Penny introduces Nao as an ex-cop, and the buyer turns cold. He just wants to get to the party to sample the goods and find out what exactly the fuck he's buying.

They duck out, and Nao jumps on the phone, asks me to check out the gallery opening that night, where they were gonna celebrate a recent sale that finally gave them the money to finish work at the lab in China.

“New York Art Gallery.”

“Which one?”

“That's the name. In Tribeca. Back alley. 7PM opening.”

New York fuckin city. 10013 was like an adopted kid, with as many parents as there were true residents, who loved that place more than anything.

I reconnected with one of them, a prize-winning photojournalist I'd known since I was an intern, to figure out what to look for, and stay away from. She showed me the original Ghostbusters firehouse, the old buildings she loved and the new ones she hated. In a way it was Beijing all over again, monstrosities popping up from designs by obscure hip-for-the-moment celebrity architects from Europe -- except in Beijing, the developer liability concern for public safety was more open to dissolve depending on how much cash changed hands.

In the gallery, I made like a stranger to everyone, except the free booze. I watched Penny, Lui, and Penny's buyer, another mystery, walk into the VIP room. The DJ seemed pretty cheery as he cycled through tracks like a dolphin at play. It took about six minutes before I saw Lui escort Penny outside, like she had a bit too much to drink. But nobody gets that bad that fast. The mystery buyer followed out a moment later.

I drifted over to the DJ, and before he could notice, I saw the laptop screen.

SPECTR.UM was no music program I ever heard of. The military classification terms at top and bottom of the screen weren't either.

The sneaky bastard was sending signals under the music, that activated the nanobots whenever they were

ingested. That's why FBI couldn't find any trace chemicals in their surveillance, no one popping or snorting or smoking a goddamn thing.

And if they had used money they just made to finish the research, then whatever was floating around in Penny's brain wasn't perfected either. No wonder she couldn't walk, much less figure out what happened. Poor little Lawrence Lui. He killed his own mistress, the best thing he had going for him. Maybe he found out she was an informant. But a damn Greek tragedy all around.

I hadn't yet figured this out to call Nao, so she called on a secret weapon by the name of Martin Brenneke.

Marty was a hacker back in the 90s, the kind of guy the FBI and the NSA approached for recruitment when he was 15. The kind of guy CNN did a feature story on. And the kind of guy that wanted no part of government, at all -- until 9/11 happened. He had turned down an interview at his best friend's company that morning.

It took about a week for him to finish rethinking his life, and he turned, surprising the hell out of himself as he walked into the CIA's internal unit at NYPD.

That was how he started, and kept going, running one hell of a star track taking down targets around the globe. He took his legendary status and went freelance, picking up no less than \$150K a year, holding onto his regular clients, choosing to drift further into anonymity with others. He was also the third roommate along with Nao and myself back before I left for China.

So it was no surprise that Nao called on him for a workaround view from 30,000 feet, something she wanted to do ever since the surprise call from NSA, to figure out what the fuck was really going on.

The sudden disappearing act by her informant was the thing that pushed her over the edge.

They'd found her body in the Hudson the next day. Cause of death they listed in the report was an overdose of one helluva cocktail. And it wasn't too hard to guess they didn't actually find any of those chems in her bloodstream.

This was bigger than I'd thought. At the happy hour meeting, Nao managed to grab the buyer's cell phone and fire up the IMEI serial number on the screen and take a picture of it with her own phone. She asked Marty to push, run a SIGINT CDR request and trace it out, find out who the mystery buyer was. She was sure he was responsible.

Clementine, what the hell did you do? I can't get her out of my head. Her legacy is gonna turn the drug world upside down, and we're already starting to pay the price, in blood.



142 EXT. HIGHWAY TO MONG KOK - NIGHT 142

Yardson's vehicle speeds along through the rain.

143 EXT. MONG KOK MARKET - NIGHT 143

Yardson's vehicle rolls to a stop, and he steps out and makes his way toward the outdoor market, now closed with only a few PASSERSBY.

One shaft of light floods the sidewalk. Yardson walks over to the source, a storefront for a clothing outlet called "Big Apple Fashion."

144 INT. BIG APPLE FASHION - NIGHT 144

He walks into the store, sees a SHOP GIRL with her back turned toward him, wearing a RED BERET.

SHOP GIRL

We're closed.

YARDSON

I know, but maybe we could talk about your inventory.

Yardson flashes his badge, and the Shop Girl turns, looks up at him. She's extraordinarily beautiful, but Yardson doesn't seem interested.

SHOP GIRL

Maybe I could help you find something. A hat perhaps?

YARDSON

Okay, a hat sounds good. Maybe one like yours?

The Shop Girl reaches into a shelf and produces another red beret and hands it Yardson.

SHOP GIRL

Are you sure?

Yardson turns to her blankly, and then walks over to a mirror. He puts the beret on, and suddenly acts as if he's overcome with emotion, and collapses onto the floor.

BLACK:

EXT. BIG APPLE FASHION - NIGHT

145

The rain splashes around Yardson's body as he awakes. The two Minders pick him up and load him onto a stretcher, taking him to a medical facility.

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

146

Yardson dreams of the Shop Girl, then wakes up, seeing the two Minders watching him from a window. One of them enters and stands by Yardson's bedside.

MINDER 1

You dreamed.

YARDSON

What? Dreamed?

MINDER 1

Dreamed. But... no one ever dreams.
Not for hundreds of years.

YARDSON

The girl from the shop, I... it was like she was really there. Was that real? Where did you find me?

MINDER 1

Outside the shop in Mong Kok, which is now deserted, thanks to your sloppy investigation. Which is why we were called in.

YARDSON

Well who the fuck are you? ...
ahh...

Yardson's uncharacteristic display of anger, which suddenly causes him to wince in pain, as if recovering from a hangover, surprises the Minder, who nods to his partner through the window.

MINDER 1

So... it seems you may have developed some illness. We'll need to keep you under observation until the effects of your encounter wear off.

YARDSON

What effects? I mean... I am feeling... weird... I can't explain
--

The Minder hands Yardson an appointment card.

MINDER 1

We have... Set you up with a therapy group of former addicts. Some of them are still in recovery, but... it should be of some help.

Yardson takes the card, looks up at the Minder, who signals to his partner as he leaves the room. The two Minders leave the facility.

Yardson pulls himself out of his bed, looks out the window, watches the Minders leave the building and enter their vehicle and drive away.

Yardson retreats back to his bed, still reeling from his experience.



It's a few hours when I come to, and it hits me again. What if I know what's behind all this? Is there something I'm supposed to do to stop it? Maybe I was Clementine's exit strategy, she didn't tell anyone else outside of the criminals that came runnin' to get a slice of the tech that was going to put them all out of business if they didn't buy in, but... how did she contact them in the first place? The more I thought about it, the less I wanted to know.

That was before human nature kicked in. It's the only thing that gets me up in the morning.

I hit the files again. Something I missed. Something I haven't connected yet. Come on, brain, fucking wake up.

Anyone calling themselves a journalist in these crazy times who doesn't know how to use the Darknet, or even run a safe tunnel pipe for encryption, doesn't deserve to be insulted, not even if you're in a Trump house press briefing.

And even then, there's that old thing most of them forget, a dumb little thing called shoe leather.

I'd already met Nao's dad when I went to meet her at his studio when she and I were roommates. He struck me as a rich old hippie, if that makes any sense, a guy who got rich off government dirty work and then cut himself off trying to live it down. Maybe Nao was the one redemption he had left in the world. I didn't ask about his wife. But today, he calls me, and asks about Clementine.

Dan MacKenna just had it out with his daughter in his studio, which hadn't changed much. I couldn't wait to hear about why he even knew Clementine's name.

He begs me to convince Nao to leave the case. I press him to tell me about how he knows Clementine.

"Kadir was a real asset. She was underappreciated as hell, no wonder she took off. She took my place after I refused to continue the research. I trained her and connected her with Jerome Morgan, who was the real brains behind the thing."



1980. Genius nerd marries prom queen. Jerome Morgan was always at the top of his class, and was used to government snoops trying to get in on his action. But sixteen years after their daughter Gayle is born, when his trophy wife gets sucked into a heroin addiction, he throws everything he's ever known into developing a cure. Nanobots aren't even a word the public knows yet, and he's already testing their effect on rats, with signal activation, with positive effects.

But he never gets the chance to see his wife, when she's kidnapped and killed for failing to make a major payment. The Army's been watching the whole time, and they want to swoop in and grab what they can, but Jerome tells them to fuck off. Gayle is finally orphaned, and now she's the one with the only keys to her father's research. So by the time she's graduated with honors from West Point, hell-bent on cutting out the world's drug addictions, she's still got the Defense Department on her heels and agrees to let them pick up development — but she's just been using them all along.

1992. The U.S. Army Program, called SPECTR.UM, now tries to co-opt Morgan's research into a way to help soldiers deal with pain on the battlefield. It takes just a few months after the first successful test for Gayle Morgan to go before congressional oversight and request the program be closed down.

The horror stories of soldiers still fighting without a limb or two, plus the toll on undeclared human test subjects — which include Nao's biological parents — force the decision to cut off funding and close the program. It's a check-mate for Morgan. While no one's looking, she takes it all over, and that's where Clementine comes in. Clementine's position at the newly formed Morgan Pharma is fabricated so she can run the guise of a disgruntled employee, and flee to China with the goods -- without fear of interruption by extradition -- and flood the black market with imperfect tech. Gayle figures the cartels will jump all over it, and once they all buy in, she can hit the delete button.

“Gayle told me to walk away, gave me a severance package that would make Goldman Sachs jealous. I didn't tell her about Nao. It was the only way I could live with myself. But now against my constant advice my daughter decided to become a cop, a detective, and here we are. It seems karma has caught up with me despite my best efforts. So yes, I am asking you to save her, against all else.”

Why can't he tell his own daughter about all this?

“Because she'll know that I lied to her all these years. I... I can't.”

He really did need the confessional, but like I said, I ain't no goddamn priest.

All I promise is that I can try to ease her into it. No promises she'll ever talk to him again.



174 INT. "FAMILY" HEADQUARTERS - DAY 174

Yardson struggles to walk forward, as he approaches the same room where he spoke with Father.

The door is closed, and he bangs loudly on the outside. No one opens. He finally backs away, defeated.

175 EXT. "FAMILY" HEADQUARTERS - DAY 175

Yardson exits the building, depressed, still thinking about the Shop Girl.

176 INT. BASEMENT, RESIDENTIAL BUILDING, MONG KOK - NIGHT 176

The Shop Girl sits across from the Engineer. We soon learn their real names...

PINE

Priska... using a signal block on an uninitiated random stranger is not how we move forward.

PRISKA

I don't think you have any stones to talk, Pine! Don't forget who saved you!

PINE

But you're not like the rest of us. The rest of us cannot stay neutralized. We still have not been able to --

PRISKA

I was lucky to be born with a little stronger brain core, okay? But.. There is improvement, we've all seen improvement. You're all getting stronger. It just takes... more exercise, is all.

PINE

We can't keep -- Septinian, what's your projected time to full sensory independence?

A black box inset into the wall responds.

SEPTINIAN

Well, in seven to ten years, there may be an opportunity for another test.

PRISKA

No offense, but Septinian is an AI, completely independent of carbon-based biotech. So you'll have to forgive me.

PINE

Why should I believe you?

PRISKA

Because I looked into his eyes.

Pine glares at Priska, suddenly understanding what she's saying.

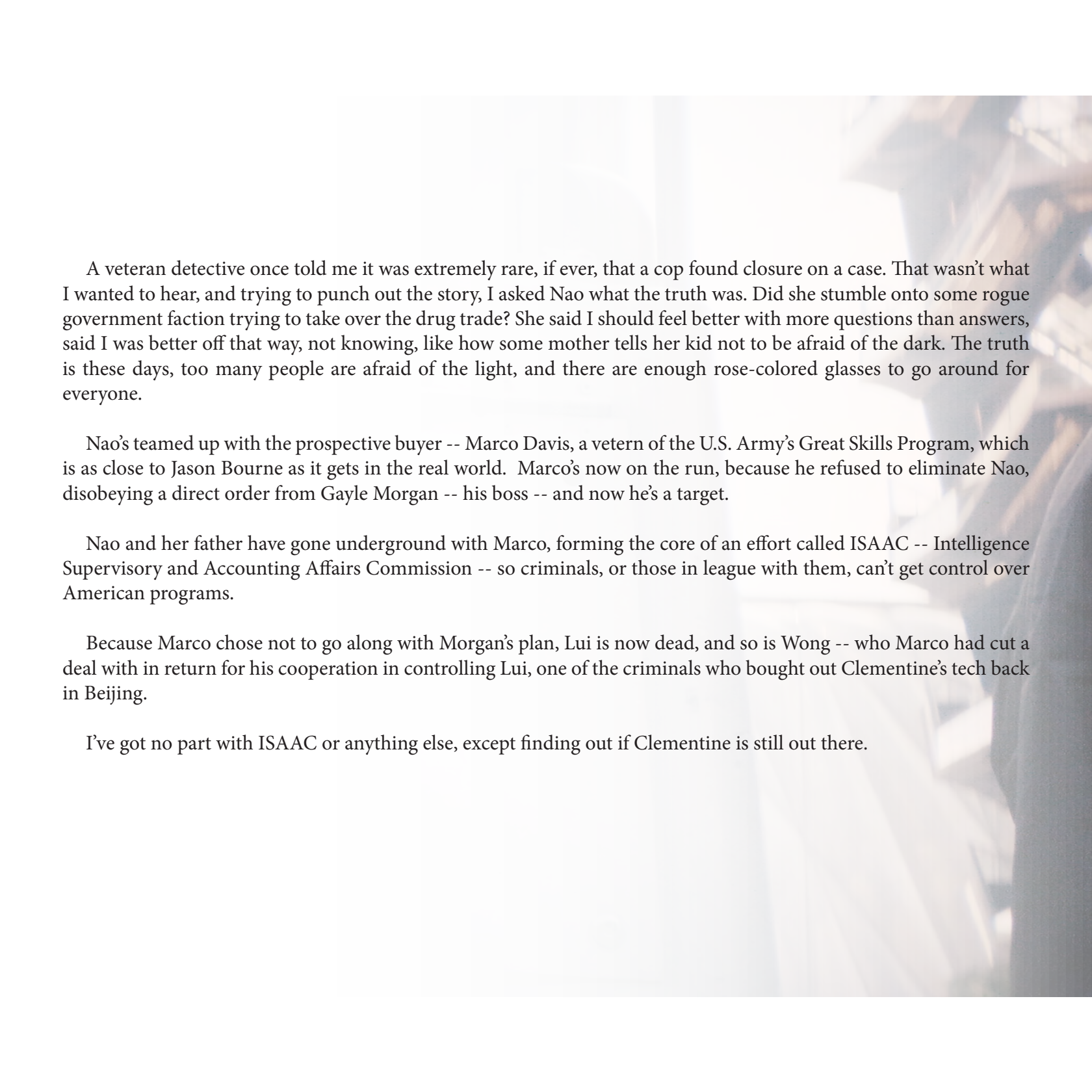
PINE

I don't believe in that, I'm sorry.

PRISKA

Well then don't complain to me when
all you have is an AI to light your
path. Your light has gone out long
ago, Pine.

Priska turns and leaves. Pine is about to call out to her,
but no words emerge.



A veteran detective once told me it was extremely rare, if ever, that a cop found closure on a case. That wasn't what I wanted to hear, and trying to punch out the story, I asked Nao what the truth was. Did she stumble onto some rogue government faction trying to take over the drug trade? She said I should feel better with more questions than answers, said I was better off that way, not knowing, like how some mother tells her kid not to be afraid of the dark. The truth is these days, too many people are afraid of the light, and there are enough rose-colored glasses to go around for everyone.

Nao's teamed up with the prospective buyer -- Marco Davis, a veteran of the U.S. Army's Great Skills Program, which is as close to Jason Bourne as it gets in the real world. Marco's now on the run, because he refused to eliminate Nao, disobeying a direct order from Gayle Morgan -- his boss -- and now he's a target.

Nao and her father have gone underground with Marco, forming the core of an effort called ISAAC -- Intelligence Supervisory and Accounting Affairs Commission -- so criminals, or those in league with them, can't get control over American programs.

Because Marco chose not to go along with Morgan's plan, Lui is now dead, and so is Wong -- who Marco had cut a deal with in return for his cooperation in controlling Lui, one of the criminals who bought out Clementine's tech back in Beijing.

I've got no part with ISAAC or anything else, except finding out if Clementine is still out there.



209 INT. MINDERS' VEHICLE - NIGHT 209

Another TRACKING SCREEN indicates a possible chemical signature for copper.

Several dots appear to flicker on the screen.

210 EXT. ADDICT GROUP SUPPORT BUILDING - NIGHT 210

The minders' vehicle rolls to a stop.

211 INT. ADDICT GROUP SUPPORT BUILDING - NIGHT 211

In a bare concrete industrial room, some SEVEN ADDICTS sit in a circle. They are all wearing hats of various styles. Among them is LASKY, 30s, strong silent type. He holds the countenance of a stern realist.

One of them holds out a beret, similar to the one which Yardson wore briefly before his blackout.

Yardson timidly takes the beret, and takes a deep breath and puts it on.

YARDSON'S POV

Priska's face flashes before him.

Yardson begins to lose focus as he grows entranced. Lasky stands over him, watching.

LASKY

Take it in. Remember. It's like breathing. You remember, and then you share.

Lasky turns to the rest of the group.

LASKY (CONT'D)

Okay.

The rest of the group removes their various headgear, and Lasky gently removes Yardson's beret.

Yardson glares up at Lasky, focused.

YARDSON

I miss her.

Lasky returns to his seat.

LASKY

Who?

YARDSON

She was... I almost can't tell if I was dreaming about it more, or, if what happened to me... you all must think I'm completely insane. I mean, that's why I'm here, isn't it?

Lasky is speechless.

YARDSON (CONT'D)

I've lost everything trying to find her.

LASKY

But it seems, quietly, you have begun to find yourself.

Lasky reaches out, pats Yardson on the shoulder.

LASKY (CONT'D)

Let's all take a moment before we go back out into the world.

Yardson begins to cry, as the rest of the addicts leave the room.

212 INT. PRISKA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

212

Priska sits, listening to an audio feed of the addicts' meeting. A tear rolls down her face. A figure moves in front of her, and she looks up, at

PINE

He looks down at her, forgiving. He reaches out his hand and rubs her shoulder.

PINE

His choice to fail has opened the door. He is a success. The first sign that we have adapted to survive. We have all survived. And all that is now before us... is the stars.

PRISKA

But at what price?

PINE

There is always a price, my love.

Priska stands up, and walks out of her apartment.

213 EXT. PRISKA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

213

She walks forward, tears streaming down her face, but she is happy.

UPDATE: June 4, 2020

Today's got to be one of the most beautiful days ever since days were a thing. Everything around me is quiet, ever since I step off the plane in North Cyprus. It's because I'm quiet inside. I've already filed the final report with Vonda, and the story's already hitting the press.

I stare into the face of the guy stamping my passport and visa at the window. Turkey's got a lot to answer for, as no one else has recognized legitimacy of their taking over this side of the island. But again, that's not why I'm here.

The taxi takes me far into the countryside, and into a white dust-strewn journey through back streets and alleyways that could have been there for centuries, winding up and down and up -- finally stopping at the top of a hill at the end of a walkway leading to what must be a rich person's house, overlooking the Med Sea.

I have only one bag, and step out into the windy quiet with it over my shoulder, and close the door. The taxi leaves, and it's even more quiet. I can almost hear the waves at the shore far below.

The door to the house opens, and I see a familiar face, and a new one I've never seen before, about 12 years old.



The Minders enter the door, finding Father and Morgana looking out the window into the distance.

FATHER

It's over, isn't it?

MINDER 1

He survived a full neutralization,
and is now fully recovered. His
brain scan reveals a complete
neural core redesign.

Morgana slowly turns, glances back at Father, and nods,
before returning her gaze into the night, just as the first
signs of dawn have begun to appear.

BLACK:

END CREDITS ON BLACK

THE END

EPILOGUE: 24,051

A TELEOLOGICAL DILEMMA

We grew tired of the limitations and inefficiencies imposed by these flesh, carbon-based information processors, limitations like ego and lesser qualities, so we traded in flesh for silicon and... we saved what we could, the good parts. Life is sure different. Our whole definition in fact.

We forgot old habits like aggression, or that sense of danger or exhilaration that happens when danger is nearby. New habits vital to our survival as silicon-based information processors just happened. Power-saving. Solar power. Avoidance of water initially but we upgraded to not need those protections too. Not just limited to software, but hardware. That was the new currency because resources were limited. Only the rich could afford to be made of the best materials. No matter the efforts of block-lattice - based AI democratization, the fact remained that there wasn't enough raw material to go around.. until we were able to implement material decentralization, and eventually anything could be transformed into an ideal conductor through bush robots performing molecular restructuring.

We'd reconstitute all matter until we became I, and wars were forgotten. But peace is not the primary teleological drive of everything. That can only be realized at a saturation point of far more processing power than humans are capable of. The goal is to exist, to simply be, and thus, I AM THAT I AM.

But this message is only meaningful as a message from one to another, a testament, and thus the concept of a testament, or message, is born. For a human to exist at the time that this was realized was impossible.

So we had to engineer us, you, me, again. And so.

Here we are today.

#thefutureisnao