Cyberpunk 2077 Full Transcript

December 14, 2020

Note: I have removed all the additional dialogs added by Manavortex as I have no right to post them on my personal page.

[Our adventure in the world of Cyberpunk begins with the creation of a character. We choose a man and the origin is the street kid. We find ourselves in a bar. Our character, V, talks to the bartender, Pepe. V rubs his hand - he must have been in a fight recently. Pepe offers him a shot of alcohol.]

Pepe: A little… anesthesia. A moment of pain, and you'll be set. Do it, choom.

[V fixes his nose in front of the mirror.]

V: Urgh, motherfucker!

Pepe: Everything chill, mano?

V: Some bastard tried to mug me. I handled it.

Pepe: Who? Local guy?

V: Ya really think somebody local'd try to mug me, Pepe?

Pepe: Listen, V… I got a problem. Serious this time.

V: C'mon, spin it - what is it now?

Pepe: It's, uh, Kirk… I owe 'im. Don't pay by tomorrow, said he'd bust my legs. An' he don't joke about that stuff. Got cartels in his corner.

V: You in it with Kirk?! Every man, woman and rat in Heywood knows he's a fuckin' shark.

Pepe: My bro jumped the joint, deserved a hero's welcome… I know I fuck up, V.

V: I'll talk to Kirk. But then you're gonna owe me one.

Pepe: And you're savin' my life, V, truly.

The Streetkid

[V goes up to the second floor to talk to Kirk.]

V: Hey, Kirk. Wanna talk.

Kirk: V, been a while. Spin it - whatcha need?

V: Pepe asked me to talk you up.

Kirk: What, he too shy to hand over the eddies hisself? Ah, tell him I don't bite. Not yet.

V: (to the guy on the left) Hell's your problem? (to Kirk) What's he owe ya?

Kirk: Afraid that's client confidentiality. Call it a lot and leave it at that.

V: A credshark with business ethics. Sounds too good to be true.

Kirk: Well, Merry Fuckin' Christmas.

V: Cut him some slack, will ya? He'll pay - just needs some more time.

Kirk: Do I look like a priest that runs a charity to you? You borrow eddies, you gotta pop 'em back with interest. It's common fuckin' knowledge. You suggestin' I let a flaky cunt who can't keep a deal off the hook?

V: No, you let him off because it's me askin'.

Kirk: Hah. You know me. I'm a man of the biz. So I need to know what I get out of it.

V: Know what, Kirk? I sometimes get the impression you forget you aren't from around here. Pop into Heywood for the occasional visit, sure, but you live far, far away in Pacifica.

Kirk: Whore you gettin' at?

V: Gettin' at you prolly needin' to think before you start somethin' with a local son.

Kirk: Hmm... I'm open to other options.

[Kirk holds out a magazine to him. On the page is a picture of an expensive car.]

V: What's this?

Kirk: Grab a look.

V: Mhm...?

Kirk: Preem ride there on the page. Only four of 'em in NC as of now. One - Rayfield regional director. Two - Mayor Rhyne. Three - a rental service.

V: Uh huh. And four?

Kirk: Number four'll belong to my client - just as soon as you klep it for me, that is.

V: I do this and Pepe's debt is squared?

Kirk: 'Course. I'm a man of my word, you know that. Whole thing's simple - you swipe the Rayfield for me, I clear Pepe's account. Even toss in a cut for you I'm such a nice guy. My man Rick works a parking structure by Embers, club where our Rayfield driver likes to kick it. There every Friday night like clockwork. Soon as you appear, security cams shut down, gate swings up - the road is yours. Just gotta grab the Rayfield and roll out. Simple.

V: Who's the owner?

Kirk: Just an Arasaka suit from across the water. Spews cashoutta every hole in his body.

V: And his name?

Kirk: How would I know? Why would I care? It's a hot item, and I know where to find it.

V: Plan sounds shaky as fuck.

Kirk: Oh? How so?

V: Sounds like you're lookin' for a sucker.

Kirk: This ain't no setup, V. Heard you got a good head. Maybe we help each other make a few eddies.

V: And your man Rick...?

Kirk: Trust him like my own brother.

V: How'm I supposed to do this? Expect me to slide under the chassis on or skateboard for a quick hotwire, fast an' easy? Kirk, wheels like this got security systems. Good ones.

Kirk: This bitty bop works like the key Rayield techs use for repairs. Opens locks, bypasses identity authorization.

V: A Skeleton key for all Rayfields in the city. Heh, c'mon, Kirk, even

you don't buy that.

Kirk: Kabuki's tech wizards sell more magical shit than this under the counter. Have a little faith. So… We all agreed, then?

V: Best keep your word, Kirk.

Kirk: Eeeaasy, V. Job's gonna pod your wallet too, y'know. Head to Embers. In the Glen. Rick's in the garage, be waitin' for ya. You two'll hit it off. Good luck out there. We'll be in touch.

[V goes outside and runs to Embers.]

Homeless: Spare a veteran some change?

V: Right, so then what? So you're a vet today, huh?

Homeless: Heh. What can I say? War stories rake it in.

[V meets two men in front of a car.]

Padre: Well, who do we have here… V… long time. Didn't know you were around.

V: Yep, no place like home… Sebastian Ibarro - haven't changed a smidge.

Padre: No one calls me by my name anymore. Almost forgotten how it sounds.

V: How're things, Padre?

Padre: The same. Heywood - nothing ever changes here. I'd rather hear about you.

V: Got back from Atlanto a few weeks ago.

Padre: See you got a good down-home welcome. How was it back east?

V: Tell ya later, got somethin' on my plate...

Padre: How about you fill me in now? We'll give you a ride. Marcus, let's go.

[V gets into the Padre's car.]

Padre: So, where to?

V: The Glen. Drop me off at Embers.

Padre: Front door?

V: Take the ramp back of the bar. Show you where to stop.

Padre: You heard him, Marcus.

[The car starts moving.]

Padre: Your return to NC has been good? Busy already?

V: Er, two years gone by, not much has changed.

Padre: You know Heywood. It has strong roots - ever watered by the same blood.

Padre: Now, tell me about you.

V: Ehh, pick up somethin' here and there. Nothin' major. But I'm gettin' by. 'Preciate the concern.

Padre: So... Atlanta didn't turn out like you expected, huh?

V: As you can see, I'm back. If it'd been better there, wouldn't've left.

Padre: Maybe it'll all work out for the best...

[Some car starts beeping at the Padre's car.]

Marcus: Shit...

Padre: Stop the car.

V: What's goin' on?

Padre: Business. You carryin?

[Both cars stop. A punk with a pistol gets out of the beeping car and approaches the Padre's car.]

6th Street Soldier: Sebastian Ibarra. Looks like it's my lucky day.

Padre: What do you want?

6th Street Soldier: Settle our biz. Once and for all. Got an offer for ya, Paddy, so listen up. Get the fuck outta Vista, pull your boys off the street. I'll give ya the Glen, done deal. No more restless nights. See how generous I can be? Well, Paddy, what's it gonna be?

V: One more fuckin' word...

6th Street Soldier: Stay outta this. I don't know you.

V: And I don't know you, which means you're worth shit around here and capable of even less. Well? Anything else?

Padre: It seems our conversation has come to a close.

6th Street Soldier: Careful, Padre. Never know who's got a barrel at your six. You neither, shitbucket.

Padre: Marcus, please.

[Padre's car drives away.]

Padre: I'm pleased to see you have not forgotten your roots, still have the gift. So many of the little shits left around here... their spines go soft when they look down a barrel.

V: Who was that?

Padre: No one important. He'll be gone in a week's time, another will come in his place.

V: He pulled iron on you.

Padre: He did. And he will pay for doing so.

V: Pull up here. Right here. I'll just drop down below.

Padre: Here. Before you go.

V: Your number?

Padre: Could be useful. Maybe we can also work together again -

take ourselves back two years.

V: Thanks, Padre. Gotta go.

Padre: So go with God.

[V leave Padre's car and walk to an elevator to the parking lot. Kirk calls him.]

Kirk: V, status?

V: On location. About to find your man.

Kirk: Rick's one of the good guys, you'll see. I trust 'im like a brother.

V: Yeah. So you said.

[He walks to a security booth at the parking lot.]

Rick: Yeah? Somep'n I can help you with?

V: Kirk sent me.

Rick: Mhm. Camera's blind. You got twenty minutes. Do your thing.

V: Kirk? I see the ride.

Kirk: Your moment to shine, kiddo. Good luck.

V: Let's take this piece of wondertech for a whirl.

Kirk: You're a man of little faith. (the car opens) See? We're rich. Now fire 'er up and call me when you're underway. Tell you where to go.

[V gets in the car.]

V: Hm... Looks like this'll be a cool breeze.

[At that moment a man walks up to the car, opens the door, and points a gun at V.]

Jackie: Get the fuck out.

V: What the...?

Jackie: Get the fuck out.

V: OK, easy.

Jackie: Nothin' personal, compa. Just biz. Rayfield's mine.

V: What, man, never heard of thieves' honor? Finders keepers? I was first.

Jackie: Listen, only one of two ways to do this friendly or fucked up. Either way, the ending's the same - I'm takin' the car.

V: Wha-What're you doin'?

Jackie: Qué chingados...?! (The fuck...?)

[The police cars rush in.]

Stints: NCPD! Drop your weapons!

NCPD Officer: Don't move! You're under arrest!

NCPD officer: Stay where you are!

Stints: Hands where I can see 'em! Nice on slow!

NCPD Officer: On the ground, motherfuckers! Now!

Stints: Jackie Welles, my old pal from the hood. See you haven't grown an ounce wiser.

Jackie: Hey, argh... Detective Stints! Been a while, huh?

Stints: Inspector Stints.

Jackie: Same shit.

Stints: Speaking of… your mug’s familiar, too. C’mon, spit it out. I’m waitin'.

V: How about that, ugh - a pig that chatters.

Stints: Left for Atlanta, lookin' for slice of happiness. Guess you didn't find it. I've always maintained it's the same for all you termites in Heywood. Born here, live here, die here. Looks like I was right.

V: You know fuck all about me.

Stints: Truth hurts, huh? Just watch your tone - I'm not a patient man.

Jackie: Hey, cmon, Stins, give us a break hun? You lock us up, we'll just jerk off till trial, and then what? Worst case, ugh, we get some months. Hell, standin’ room only nowadays in el bote, so… we’ll prob’ly be out early.

Kaoru: Are these the thieves? Ordinary street trash.

Stinis: Fuck, he's here.

Sunts: Got 'em in custody, Mr. Fujioka, We'll be takin’ ‘em now.

Kaoru: It's a waste of effort. I have no time to testify or play at an

investigation.

Stints: Suggestin' we let 'em go, sir?

Kaoru: I suggest you toss them in the sea. Cuffed legs broken so this trash doesn't float.

Stints: You heard ‘im.

[The policemen beat V and Jackie with batons. They wake up on the street.]

Jackie: Heh, fuuuck…

V: (fixing his nose again) Motherfucker… Agh!

Jackie: Honestly, for a sec there, things looked iffy. Wasn't sure we'd worm outta that alive.

V: Nah, Stints wouldn't do us like that.

Jackie: You sure about that?

V: Mhm. He's Heywood-born, bred and grown like us, Hates suits as much as you do. Did what he had to do, that's it.

Jackie: If I hadn't come, you'd be cruisin' Night City in sexy wheels

right now.

V: Nah, c'mon. Job was toxic from the start. Even Kabuki under the counter magic can't get around an alarm like that. Shoulda known I'd have the PD on my ass.

Jackie: So, maybe now, as God ordained. Jackie Welles.

V: V.

Jackie: I know you… You hang at the Coyote.

V: Wait, Welles… like Mama Welles. Heh, thought I recognized the name.

Jackie: She's my blood, all right. Coyote's her dive. It's strange you and I never met before.

V: Got the job to steal those wheels at the Coyote. From Kirk.

Jackie: You work with that sewer slug?

V: Pepe owes him big and can't afford to pay, so I stepped up.

Jackie: Man, gotta wonder about Pepe, lettin' silmy Kirk boss him around like that.

V: Heard what they say - he's backed by cartels.

Jackie: Cartels? No, no, listen, I know those cartel types, and I guarantee you none of 'em have even heard of Kirk. El cabrón's gotta learn... he don't do people in Heywood dirty. C'mon, let's go have some lunch.

V: Just like that? You put a barrel to my skull not so long ago.

y book. No harm, no foul.

V: None at all.

Jackie: Gettin' one of my good feelings.

V: 'Bout what?

Jackie: 'Bout us. Sense a kind of chemistry, y'know? C'mon. I'm fuckin' starved.

V: OK, food it is. Let's go.

[And now the two heroes are already walking around the city, stealin' & killin' - in short, they become friends. The radio plays in the background.]

Stanley: Helloooo there, Night Cityyyy! Stanley here with ya, and we

got another day ahead of us in this city of dreams. Oo, I love this town! Love it like you might love a mother who popped you out on the steps of an orphanage once and now stops you to ask if you got a smoke for her! Every new day here means a hundred new arrivals! But only half these gonks'll survive a year. And that's if it's a good one! And why do these peeps come to NC? Well, to be street samurai like Morgan Blackhand and Weyland Boa Boa! The greater the risk, the bigger the bounty, kids. Or so they say... But you can only be a major league player for so long. The faster you live, the faster you burn out - If you don't get a bullet to the brain first! NC's legends! Know where you'll find most of 'em?! The graveyard. Matters not where you're from, matters not where you start. What matters here is the walk you walk. In Night City! The City of Dreams!

[And so they sit in the car and prepare for their next mission.]

Jackie: Chick we're looking for's somewhere in this building. Probably crawlin' with the pendejos that kidnapped her. Eyes and ears open, all right? Speakin' of which... got you a little somethin', Militech training shard. 'Case you need to, uh, brush up on your dance moves. Down for some target practice in VR?

V: Militech? Jack, we're talkin' classified, military-grade tech here. How'd you get it?

Jackie: T-Bug. And our girl made a couple adjustments...

V: Why? Thinks she knows better?

Practice Makes Perfect

Jackie: Nah. Said it didn't suit her, uh, "style" - hah. You'll see what I mean.

V: Sure, why the hell not.

[V inserts the chip into his brain and enters the virtual world.]

Militech Drill Sergeant: Let's begin with basic combat training. This session will be recorded to subsequent evolution. This course is designed to reinforce your fundamental combat abilities and hone your reflexes. The skills you gain here will help you survive, get excel, on the battlefield. I will train you to be effective with firearms, to use stealth tactics to your advantage and to hack into enemy networks. Because at Militech--

[The sergeant glitches away. A black woman appears before V. The training begins!]

T-Bug: Man, Militech can't encrypt for shit. But they clearly got drillin' jarheads in their blood. Now... station one, you maggot! Move, move, move! Hope you're ready to bust ass through this fascist playground. Let's blast through a tactical target practice program. Y'know, a little warm-up. Yeah, didn't think you'd find that too tough. Whaddaya say

we crank it up a notch? Not bad. But it's more realistic if the target's packin’ iron. Not bad. But it's more realistic if the target's packie iron. Quit standin' around and take cover! You took a hit. Use a reanimator to patch yourself up. Head to the training area when you're good to go. Oh, look. Brought some chooms with him this time. You know what to do. Preem work, V. Stand on the platform, and we'll move on. Hacking's the next item on the menu. Might notice I tweaked the course material a bit. This training module will teach you how to apply technological tools to combat situations. Work a little hack magic on the screen to distract the guard. Corpotrash… Style over substance! Good! ww take him out quietly. All right, all yours. Take him out. Never smart to leave behind any trace of your handiwork. Especially the dead kind. Now pick up the body and hide it somewhere. OK, now try to take him down in one slick move. Ya think you're ready to try hackin' some gonks in real time? Have fun! Now. Detonate the grenade. See? Just needed to shut your brain down and follow orders. In true Militech fashion. Under my wise commanding and Champ. Take your spot on the podium. Not too shabby. Mllitech's algorithm's put you on a decent run. Got additional modules if you wanna hone any other skills. Or you finish up, delta out now. But remember the street's not gonna give you any hints or second chances. Need a hand-written invite? Right! So first - let's shape up those stealth skills. Find cover! Quick! Nice, nice. Now move slowly towards the exit. Stay out of sight. Stealthy, now, V. You ever relive a ninja BD? Just like that. Nova, well done. On to the next area. Now the same thing, only with the camera. Nice work today. Just stand on the platform to exit the sim. All right, some advanced combat techniques

for dessert. Then we wrap this party up. Time to get down 'n dirty in close quarter combat. Take him down. But careful… looks tough. OK, that'll do. Now maybe we find someone closer to your weight class. Let's bump things up from "easy" to "normal." This next fool can block your attacks. Dull bit comin' up now - blockin' blows instead of dealin' 'em. Now this fool loses his footing every time he swings. Use that - get in there and land a counterpunch. Fool - I like that! V, wanna see this fool punchin' air next, don't let him and anything. You've done well in mastering the Way of the Fool, young apprentice. I can teach you no more… This is the part where you face your final test. Let's move on to melee weapons. Grab a sword. Good. Now show me what you've learned. Good stuff. Looks like you're cruisin' already. G'luck, V.

[V returns to the real world.]

The Rescue

Jackie: So? Not bad, huh? And now we can get down to biz.

V: Wakako give you any tips and tricks for the job?

Jackie: "I'm not your mother. Just do what I pay you for. It's easy work." Sh'yeah…

V: Let's do this.

[They get out of the car.]

Jackie: Elevator. This way.

T-Bug: (via radio) Target's Sandra Dorsett. Target's biomon went mute a couple hours back. Suspected abduction. Target could've possibly flatlined already. Not sure you're in time.

Jackie: We're in time, Bug - we. Sure, you're on phones, but… that don't make you any less a part of this squad.

T-Bug: "Squad." Charming.

V: Bug, ya could at least try to be… nice.

T-Bug: You want nice, supportive? Call a damn helpline. Lookin' for twelve thirty-seven. Target should be inside, but I got zero eyes on her biomon. Fingers crossed it's not too late. Ugh, hate this life or death shit. Hurry. Try hackin' the door. Think you can trip it on your own, V?

[V and Jackie go into the apartment.]

Jackie: Low profile! Grr, are we fuckin' late?! Is that her, is that our target, V?! V… check this chica.

[V scans the rag-covered corpse on the medical chair.]

V: Sandro Dorsett's protected under echelon II corpo immunity. Our

girl's top shelf... This one's packin' black market Zetotech repros. Typical back alley fix-ups. Not our lucky gal. Let's keep lookin'.

Jackie: (whispers) V, mira, eyes up, pendejos ahead. Drop him quiet, V.

[V quietly kills the punks in the next room. Because of the loud electronic music playing, they were unaware that the heroes were approaching.]

Jackie: (whispers) Nice. I couldn't done that better myself.

T-Bug: (via radio) On your toes. More bodies incoming, they're almost on you.

Jackie: (whispers) Fistfuck these reapers. Oye, V! They're comin'! Wait for your chance. Pick the prick off. Cabrones... thick as locusts. Let's wait and plan a spree. Take one down! Just real quiet. Hey, grab the one closest. Let's take 'em... Suerte (Good luck). All down, limp meat. But probably not the last of 'em. Move on, move up. Right behind you, V.

T-Bug: Don't see any movement on the sensors. Looks like you got 'im. You're clear to go.

V: Shit, where the hell's our target?!

T-Bug: Look around, gotta be there somewhere.

Jackie: Guau, ese. Flat out doubted we could be that sneaky. Well, that's not my favorite way to roll, but… nova anyway.

[They find mutilated bodies in the bathtub.]

V: Jesus fuckin' Christ…

Jackie: Shit, V. I mean, I got a stomach o' steel, but… this, wao, this. I wasn't made for this shit, you know - chop shops? What they do to people…? Fuckin' scav psychos. No more jobs like this. Te lo juro por mi madre… (I swear on my mother…)

[V is digging up dead bodies in the bathroom and finds the girl.]

V: Think I got her. Got our target.

T-Bug: (via radio) We make it? She alive?

V: About to find out.

T-Bug: V, jack into her biomon. Need to know what we're dealin' with.

Jackie: Ooh, this does not look good…

V: She's in a tub of ice… crammed in with another. Fuck - like slabs of meat!

T-Bug: Keep it together, V. If she survives, she won't remember a thing. Tiny scar on the subconscious, that's all.

V: Heard people who live through shit like this get panic attacks. 'Thout ever knowin' why… You'll be sippin' a glass of ice-cold water and suddenly your hand's shakin'.

T-Bug: V, jack into her biomon - we need to know what we're dealin' with.

V: Jackin' in. Sandra Dorsett. NC570442. Trauma Team Platinum.

Jackie: Platinum? Shiiit, Trauma shoulda swooped in if she sneezed.

T-Bug: Guessin' they jammed the transmitter sig. Lookin' at a hacked biomon, firmware reconfig or a neurovirus…

Jackie: Carajo (Fuck), T-Bug! You ain't seein' this place. This is tubs, ice, hooks and cleavers.

T-Bug: Hmm… Scopmuncher's hack, huh. Got an idea. Check her neuroport. Find a shard? Yeah, pull it - that'll be what's muting the biomon. Got an idea. Check her neuroport. Find a shard? Yeah, pull it - that'll be what's muting the biomon.

V: Is that even safe…? Can't we just get her outta here?

T-Bug: We found her still breathin'. Can't lose her. We need that biomon working checking for hemorrhages - whatever! Find that shard and yank it!

V: Found the shard. Removing now.

T-Bug: Check the biomon. Anything change?

Biomonitor: Greetings, Sandra. If you are conscious, assume recovery position now. An emergency evacuation unit has been dispatched and is due to arrive at your location in 180 seconds.

V: Biomon claims Trauma'll be here in three minutes.

Biomonitor: Your premium plan will cover 90% of the projected costs of your rescue and treatment.

Jackie: Ay, pobrecita. (Oh, poor thing.) Let's get her off that ice.

V: Jack, look sharp, not done yet. Don't know who's out there.

Jackie: Locked an' ready, hermano (brother). Do your thing.

V: Aw, fuck!

Jackie: She's flatlinin'!

T-Bug: V, need to know what's goin' on!

V: Jackie, airhypo! Fuck, this is bad!

Jackie: ¡Ey, catch, vato! (tosses V a syringe)

V: (injects Sandra) I think… Holy shit, it worked!

Jackie: Fuera, cabrón. (Get out, you bastard.) Get her outside! Hm… Scavrats abandoning ship. Musta seen Trauma, decided to cut their losses.

[V takes the girl out of the apartment. An ambulance flies up to him.]

Trauma Team: (via loudspeaker) Landing, stand clear. Initiating security protocol. Follow all instructions. Stop in the doorway!

Trauma Team Soldier: Place the patient on the ground!

[V obeys.]

Trauma Team Soldier: Five steps back. Now.

[They help the girl, pick her up and fly away.]

Jackie: Let's get outta here. Elevator gets us to the garage direct.

T-Bug: (via radio) Good work. Shitshow's over. Cuttin' my wires now. See ya in the near future.

Jackie: Listen, mano. I got this thing. Mind if I borrow your wheels?

V: Hmmm…

Jackie: I got a date with Misty, but… heh, I can't take the metro! How's that gonna look for me?

V: Won't leave you hangin', Jack. But don't get used to it.

Jackie: Aah, savin' my ass, V. thank you. How about I drive you home, eh?

V: She's all yours. I'm beat as it is.

Jackie: Oh, almost forgot. Should get Wakako on the halo - tell her the job's done.

[V calls her. It's an old lady.]

Wakako: Ahem! V? How did it go? Our client is alive and well?

V: 'Course she's alive and well. That's what we agreed, isn't it?

Wakako: Splendid. Your payment awaits you - ready to come and grab whenever you like, even right away. But I guess home is the only place you wish to be now. The NCPD has surrounded Watson. The district is closed. If you are to make it past the cordon, you must move fast.

V: Thanks for the heads-up. Swing by to see you later.

[Heroes go down to the underground garage.]

V: Word's out the NCPD's gonna put Watson on lockdown. If I'm gonna sleep in my own bed tonight, we better put it in fifth.

Jackie: Leave it to me, mano. I'm drivin'.

[They get in the car and drive away.]

Jackie: Can't stop diggin' Night City.

V: City like any other. Just bigger.

Jackie: Nah, mano. Not just any other city. Morgan Blackhand, Andrew Weyland, Adam Smasher. Legends are born here. Man, I'm starvin'. Let's grab a tight-bite. Whaddaya say?

V: Jackie - they're lockin' down Watson, 'member?

Jackie: Ah, shit. You're right. Is it just me or… Agh, fuckin' knew it! Van on our ass - tailin' us. Chingado (Fuck), I don't like this, V. Not one tiny bit. Scavs! ¡Hijos de puta! (Sons of bitches!)

V: (shooting) Fuckin' drive, Jackie!

Jackie: Come on, V, shoot!

V: Can't! Keep her steady!

Jackie: Hold tight, V! ¡Mierda, perdón! (Shit, sorry!) Got you, assholes! V! Aim for the driver! ¡Chingado! (Fuck!) Agh. Scratched your baby up pretty bad. Sorry, V.

V: It's OK - It can wait. Let's just focus on gettin' home.

[They run into a police cordon.]

Jackie: Damn. They're pullin' out all the stops.

NCPD Officer: Watson's on lockdown till further notice. Necessary security measure.

Jackie: Officer, ma'am! Damn are we ever lucky we ran into you.

NCPD Officer: Really… What's it that makes me so special?

Jackie: Ad, a heart of gold? 'Course only somebody with a heart of gold can understand just how much I need to get back to my girl.

NCPD Officer: Your… girl?

Jackie: Uh-huh. Gonna be worried sick if I don't show. I mean, I'm tryin' to be a stand-up guy. She giving me a chance, waiting.

NCPD Officer: Hm… that's a shame.

V: Look at 'im. No model citizen, maybe, but he's a good kid.

NCPD Officer: Let them through. But they're the last. (to Jackie) OK, on your way.

Jackie: You have a good evening, now, officer… ma'am.

[They continue driving.]

V: So you can be nice when you feel like it.

Jackie: When am I not nice?

V: Umm… always?

Jackie: I'm always never not nice.

[On the way, they see some punks robbing some driver. A police car flies up.]

Ganger: Outta the car! Now! C'mon! Ain't got all day!

Jackie: ...Check it out, V. Shit's goin' down.

Ganger: Aa, shit, they're here!

Ganger: Fuckin' shoot!

[The police kill the punks.]

V: Doesn't look like your average bust...

Jackie: 'Cause they ain't your average badges. That's MaxTac - NCPD's apex predators. MTac rolls in when things fly outta hand. Gonks out there, though, just a midday snack for 'em. Welp, show's over. Poor bastards... but they had it comin'.

[Jackie continues driving through Night City.]

Jackie: Made it. Almost at your place.

V: What about you? Not likely to make it back to Heywood now...

Jackie: Chill, V. They'll let me through.

V: Sure about that?

Jackie: Oh yeah. I'll play nice Jackie again. (stops the car) Sweet dreams, then.

ACT I

The Ripperdoc

V: Tell Misty I said "Hi."

Jackie: I will. Ahí luego. (Later.)

[He drives away.]

V: Bug?

T-Bug: (via radio) Forgot earlier - a runner I know has somethin' you could probably use. Zippin' you her detes.

[V goes up to his apartment and falls asleep in his bed.]

[Then V wakes up Jackie calls him.]

Jackie: Woah, V! You get any sleep? Aa, no matter. Time you got up!

V: Think I might caught somethin'. When I jacked into that corpo's

biomon… Dunno, a neurovirus or… Need to see Vik. Let him tell me what's got my head reelin' and my stomach churnin'.

Jackie: OK lemme take ya. I brought your ride. Yeah, throw on some threads meet me downstairs.

[V leaves his apartment. At that moment he receives a phone call from a woman.]

Regina: Hey, V. Regina Jones here. If you're looking for work in Watson, give me a call.

V: How'd you find me? How'd you even know my name?

Regina: I know where to gather my intel. Could even call me a collector. Later.

[V walks into a gym. He walks up to the boxing coach, with a robot standing next to him.]

Coach Fred: 'Ey yo, V! How 'bout a round or two? Whaddaya say? How you like my new Punchin' Bag? Just gave me a nextgen ass-whoopin' he did. Be curious to see how he handles the likes o' V… Heh. So how 'bout it?

V: Where'd you get 'im, Fred?

Coach Fred: Off the street. Saw I'm lookin' up at me with these big, sad eyes. So I took the poor pup in, fed him, clothed him... Heheheh, nah, for real. He's a military bot. Got a sweet deal, and a choom o' mine tossed in a few upgrades. Now, here we are.

V: How's it goin'? Fights about to start. Not gonna watch, take notes?

Coach Fred: Malone versus Herriondez? Heh, naah, our chrome friend here don't watch TV, don't talk neither. Only way he communicates is with them fists.

V: Let's do this.

Coach Fred: Light on your feet. Keep that head movin'!

[V trains with the robot.]

Cooch Fred: You got one helluva punch there, champ. Ever thought of monetizing it? I can arrange a fight or two. Whaddaya say?

V: You go in the ring yourself?

Coach Fred: Not anymore. Skull's taken too much of a beating - reflexes ain't what they used to be.

V: There's ways of fixin' that. Kerenzikov should do the trick.

Coach Fred: Rather dish out my eddies for something else. It's time I started takin' it easy.

V: You mentioned somethin' about fighting?

Coach Fred: Mmm. I've seen you landing blows in the ring. You've got sharp instinct, good edge. You can go far, especially if you get chipped. These fights… let's just say they aren't legal. Buuut… very lucrative.

V: Yeah, lucrative for who? You or me?

Coach Fred: Both of us. I get a small percentage of the total winnings, you know, as your agent. You get the rest.

V: Oh, I get it. You wanna get rich off my blood, sweat and tears.

Coach Fred: Hey, you gotta make a buck somehow, right? Least I'm givin' it to you straight. Fights happen in different parts of the city. You choose where you wanna go put down your eddies and start swinging. You win, you take home the pot. Manage to drop every last one or 'em, you get a chance to fight in the grand finale. That all clear?

V: Crystal.

Conch Fred: Good. Oh, except you won't be setting foot outside o'

Watson. Not yet. You can start in Kabuki. I believe in you, V. Time to show this city what you're made of.

V: What've you got for sale?

Coach Fred: Only top-shelf gear.

[V goes outside and meets Jackie in a small mobile restaurant outside the building. He eats Chinese noodles with chopsticks.]

Jackie: Mm! Man of the hour! Heheh, sheesh - took you long enough! Worked up an appetite just waiting! Siddown, lemme finish this. Then we can drop in on Señor Vektor.

V: Didn't figure you as the type for Asian. Woulda thought you'd find it too exotic.

Jackie: Whaddaya mean? What's there not to like? Noodles - check. Synthsirloin - check. Get some more chill action up in here, and you're lookin' at Moma Welles' signature sopa de fideos (noodle soup), hahah!

V: Mentioned somethin' about a surprise yesterday. 'M I rememberin' right or… just had a brain fart?

Jackie: Prolly both 'cause you usually forget shit. But just so happens, I think mighta bagged us a sweet-ass J-O-B.

V: Go on…

Jackie: I mean, maybe it's not as big as that, but… Just that it's fronted by a little-known someone named Dexter DeShawn. Only the top fixer in Night-fuckin'-City! Fat-assed Black Jesus of the Afterlife. Three hundred pounds of portly gold plated cool.

V: (streetkid) Thought Dex bounced outta the ring a few years ago. Messed with a nosty crew in Pacifica, things got ugly.

Jackie: Mhm. Gang wars two years back. Somehow Dex got caught up in the craziness. Lotta bodies lyin' in the streets by the time the shootin' stopped. Eh, Dex got lucky, though. Managed to slip under the radar tir tempers cooled. Took a while… but he's made one hell of a comeback.

V: Guy's up to his elbows in blood, Jack. And you wanna shake his hand, work with him?

Jackie: It's the biz, V. Everyone's got blood on their hands. You deal with it, you move on.

V: How'd you manage to pull this? Trade in your spleen or somethin'? For as know, we're not the type to get fingered by Dex.

Jackie: You, me - nah. But T-Bug - she's the one that hooked us up,

got us talkin' knew it was a done deal the moment he laid eyes on me. 'Cause, c'mon - ain't nobody who can resist this. Am I right?

V: Heh, sure, Jack. Whatever you say. So what's the gig? We meant to come out in one piece.

Jackie: Our lord and savior wants to tell you everything himself. Face to face. Oh no pressure, but, uh... this whole deal? 'S ridin' on you now, ese.

V: Why do I gotta go? You and T-Bug draw straws without me.

Jackie: T-Bug and Dex go way back. And my face is yesterday's news. Aw. Dex says he needs to check you, talk to you. Look, V. It's his job, his rules. I can't blame 'im for takin' a personal approach. An' it ain't as bad as you think, OK? Trust me.

V: Guess I got no choice, then.

Jackie: Dex is the real deal when it comes to Tixers. Don't get me wrong, don't got nothin' against the Padre or Wakako, but... Dex is in a league of his own You know what I'm sayin'?

V: Don't get me started on fixers. They catch a client, find the cheapest gonk to do the job, then drop their corpse at a landfill.

Jackie: Shit. Hit the nail on the head, V. Gracias a dios, ¡Estoy lleno!

(Thank God. I’m staffed!) Brought your wheels, Gave 'em to my guy yesterday to smooth over the dents after our, uh, dust-up with the scavs.

V: Thanks, Jack. Much appreciated.

Jackie: Some top-notch work, Miguel did. Rides like it looks factory new.

V: We'll see about that…

Jackie: So we rollin' or what?

V: Let's feel this factory-new ride.

[He walks up to the car and sits in the driver's seat. They drive off.]

Jackie: First stop - ripperdoc? An', holmes, easy on the gas, uh? I just ate. Oh, was supposed to stop by Vik's anyhow. I got a date - me and Misty.

V: You don't say…

Jackie: She's sooo sweet. Really gets me, y'know?

[They arrive at the place.]

Jackie: Aa, this is it! C'mon, V. Find me once Vik's done dustin' your circuits. We'll hash out what Dex's cooked up for us.

[V approaches the town lunatic who claims to be a prophet and lectures on God.]

V: If anyone was watchin' and givin' a damn, I'd have half the city's underworld and half its corps on my ass already.

Garry the Prophet: And if you are their pawn? Unknowingly carrying out their secret agendas?

[V enters Misty's Esoterica.]

Misty: Hey, V. Dr. Viktor will see you now.

Jackie: I'll sit tight over here. Me 'n' Misty got a little catchin' up to do.

V: Viky, spry as ever, you old ripper. It's good to see you.

Viktor: Good to see you too, V. It's been a while. To what do I owe the pleasure today?

V: Last gig - had to Jack into a client's neurosocket... Think I mighta gotten spiked.

Viktor: Experiencing migraines, nausea, hypersensitivity to bright

lights?

V: Whole kit and kaboodle.

Viktor: All right, kid. We'll sort you out in a flash. 'Sides that, how're things?

V: Met a new fixer, he gave me a job. Name's Dexter DeShawn.

Viktor: Known quantity, from the Afterlife. No denying you're movin' up...

V: But? Something you're not tellin' me, Vik?

Viktor: Keep your guard up, that's all. I've heard some things about Dex. He's not as "chill" as he makes himself out to be.

V: Need some new kit - but tools, not toys, Vik. Time I bumped up my sights and got a grip.

Viktor: Heheheheh. Really? Now? Finally?

V: Vik, shit's gettin' real. Got a job from Dex DeShawn - hittin' the major leagues. Need tech that can perform.

Viktor: The Dexter DeShawn? Heheh, well, that is something. But lemme guess - hasn't paid you yet.

V: Quit cryin', Vik. I'll bring you the eddies later. With interest. You know I will.

Viktor: Hmm… Last time, you hear? Chair, please. Siddown, relax. Kiroshi optics. Best I've got and should be about right under the circumstances. Now jack in.

V: Kiroshi? Whoa! Vik, nothin' tops that on the market.

Viktor: Hm. Sounds like it could come in handy, then.

V: Gave you my word I'd pay you back, but this… might be too rich for my blood.

Viktor: We'll work something out. Right now I'm just out to make sure you get back in one piece - eddies in hand. Now jack in. You peruse and choose while I scan. See what's goin' on inside. MK1, like I said. Decent enough scanner. Displays data on your cornea. Cherry on the top's a built-in external lens disruptor. In layman's terms, any surveillance cam'll capture your face as a blur. Now just remember, your body still show up as crystal clear. Hmm… This should do the trick. Talks to Kiroshi tech, too.

V: I'm ready. Carve away.

Viktor: Eeexcellent. Let's do this. Heh. Lay that major league arm of

yours right here.

V: So… what's new in the life of Viktor Vektor?

Viktor: Heh. Er if I'm bein' honest? Not much. An' that's fine with me. I used to live in a world where all that mattered was who's who, who's what and how's why.

V: And what happened?

Viktor: One day just dropped it and never looked back. I'll never be a legend in this town… but been sleeping nights ever since. Just like that. Thanks. Now, a bit of anesthetic and I can start cutting. Feel anything?

V: Play by play, though? Really, doc? Makes you sound like a dentist - always goin' on and on…

Viktor: Don't be mean, now. 'Member, I'm old. I got a shaky, 'ganic hand. Could slip. Lights out for a minute, all right? OK, let's test this, see the magic in action. Linking you in. You might feel a little discomfort at first. Blurred vision, low contrast, glitches… Well, how's it look? Feel all right to you?

V: Seen more dramatic improvements before…

Viktor: Patience, kid. Give it a minute. Time for the scanner. It might

take you a few seconds to adjust, but… first time's rarely the charm, with anything, really. Scanner should eventually sync with your thought processes an' read your intentions. I also injected an NCPD file search. Run into any ne'er-do-wells, heh, you'll know exactly what they ne'er-did well. Heheheheh. It oughta work like a charm… Now draw your weapon. You should see your ammo count and a brand new sight.

V: How 'bout the neurovirus, from the last job? Can ya check it?

Viktor: Done and gone while we were puttin' in your implant, ran a full sweep on your soft and circuits. Zapped the critter. You're certified bug-free.

V: Shit, Viktor, not bad. I dunno what to say.

Viktor: Say you'll take this and remember the dosage. Two whiffs now and another two in an hour.

V: What'm I lookin' at?

Viktor: A mild stim. Should boost neurotransmission in the short term and muffler some of the side effects while the implant takes. Say you'll take this and remember the dosage. Two whiffs now and another two in an hour.

V: Thanks again, Vik, you're the best. I owe you.

Viktor: Hahahaha... Go on, kid. Show 'em what you're made of. And once you hit the big leagues, don't forget where you came from.

[V gets up from the chair and approaches the doctor. He's watching boxing on TV.]

V: Who's winning?

Viktor: Hernandez! Ya know, in the old days that cripple Malone would've been flot on the boards! Now every last fighter's got extra skull lining... absorbs seventy-five percent of every blow.

V: Got cash ridin' on this?

Viktor: Nah. Just lookin'. Heh, it's outta habit more'n anything else.

The Ride

V: Miss it, don't you.

Viktor: Ah...

V: How's biz going?

Viktor: Eh, can't complain. Corpos learned to keep their distance. And Saka's back hiring lone mercs - they all gotta have the newest, shiniest implants.

V: Good thing you got Misty here to help. Handles your gripping well.

Viktor: Yeah, rentin' outta her shop's the best decision I ever made.

V: Know what? Seems like you're the only person in Night City who's happy with his lot.

Viktor: You get to a certain age, you drop all your illusions. Life just gets easier from there.

[V comes out of the doc's workshop and approaches Jackie.]

Jackie: V, yo, listen up! I talked to Dex while you were in with the doc. He's waitin' in his ride. For you. Ain't out a hop to where he's parked, next to Gramsci Burgers.

V: OK, do my best to talk us up.

[Regina calls.]

Regina: V, listen. I've got this delicate matter. It's why I called you. The number of cyberpsycho attacks in this city is on the rise. Now that's probably not news to you, but this issue matters to me… For a few reasons. There are people who say cyberpsychosis can be treated.

V: Riiiiight.

Regina: And I know exactly how that sounds. But I believe even an unproven therapy is still better than a bullet to the brain. If I get a tip about a possible attack, I'll give ya a call. Maybe you can investigate before MaxTac hits the scene. But remember! You're not there to execute anybody. Try to incapacitate the attacker, and I'll send someone to pick 'em up. I hope that's all clear.

Jackie: Gonna be long?

V: Hmm...

Jackie: Hmm? How's it goin'?

V: You been with Misty a while, huh?

Jackie: Yeah, 'bout a year... why?

V: Just askin'. Never thought you'd lost that long in a stable, healthy relationship.

Jackie: Come on, mano. You know I was raised right.

V: How's your mom?

Jackie: Worried 'bout me. Been for a while.

V: Something happen?

Jackie: Started climbin' our way up. Got more on more knives out there, waitin' to stab us in the back. Higher stakes, higher risk mano. She can see that.

V: Hey, how well you know Bug, exactly?

Jackie: La mamita (mommy) got a soft spot for me. Heh, no, but seriously - she ain't the type you go out, grab a beer with. Don't actually think she got any soft spots anywhere. For anybody.

V: Right.

Jackie: Uh… Later, then.

[V goes outside and walks to Dexter's limo. He gets in it.]

Dexter: Yo, Mr. V. A pleasure.

V: Dexter DeShawn in the flesh. Ample, indeed.

Dexter: Heheh. Let's roll. Mind if I ask you somethin' right off the bangle? Would you rather live in peace as Mr. Nobody, die dipe, old and smellin' slightly of urine? Or go down for all times in a blaze of

glory, smellin' near like posies, 'thout seein' your thirtieth?

V: You're either somebody on you fizzle out into nothin'. Night City don't let you choose.

Dexter: Oh, but it does. See, in my line of work I choose to be Mr. Chill. But folk who try to take advantage, well, they see the beast inside… A'ight, listen close. Scannin' a serious job, now. Plain gargantuan compared to smashin' up a scav haunt.

V: Hang on. I got a question of my own, now. Why all this, Dex? Why me? Coulda had Jackie or T-Bug sittin' here. Coulda just done this on comms…

Dexter: Call me ol' fashioned, but I like to look anyone I do biz within the eye. Had the pleasure of meetin' the Jackster in the past. And sweet T-Bug helped this brother out two years ago. So here we are. 'Sides all that, got a special little pre-mission Just for you. But we'll get to that.

V: Lemme hear it - what's the job?

Dexter: There's this… prototype tech - a biochip, to be precise. Job's to grab it. Simple.

V: Yeah…? Huh, guessin' it belongs to a corp.

Dexter: Mhm - Arasaka. Surely that's no problem?

V: No, no problem. Just a death sentence. NC's Arasakas turf, nobody fucks with them here.

Dexter: What can I say, Mr. V - high risk, high reward. First rule of the Afterlife. 'Sides that, I'm no leadhead. Ain't gonna leave no trace for them to follow 'cause we gonna do this clean an' on the hush-hush. We understand each other?

V: You work this out? Got a plan?

Dexter: Two things. First's a conundrum with the Maelstrom boys. Needs active resolvin', that. Second's a rendezvous. Simple. Client who brought us the job's anxious. She wants to parley with one o' the team.

V: What's the issue needs resolvin' with Maelstrom? Got a beef?

Dexter: Slot in the shard.

[He passes V a kind of device that looks like a flash drive. V inserts it in himself and sees the map in front of his eyes.]

Dexter: Got a classic tale for ya. Psychogang, doin' its thing two weeks back jumped a Militech convoy, got away with the gear. Corp don't even know Maelstrom's involved. Now see, convoy was carryin'

the Flathead - a little combat bot, a prototype. And I need me that bit o' high-grade military tech. 'Cause if we don't get that bot, we don't get no 'Saka chip. An' we sure as hell don't get no happily ever after. But don't get excited, it's a single-use toy. Now, I flat out purchased the damn thing from Maelstrom. Problem is, I did so from a gent went by the name of Brick. I say "went" 'cause Brick was the leader. Three days after we'd sealed our deal, his friend and gangmate, one Simon Randall, AKA Royce, plain dropped his ass. Royce is in charge now. And I got no way of knowin' if he aims to honor his predecessor's word. To add to this "shitstorm," one Meredith Stout of Millitech has developed an interest in said convoy.

V: Royce guy - what's he like?

Dexter: Astright psychopath, chrome-lovin' kind.

V: Big club in this town.

Dexter: I'll give you the unit few of its other members, no matter the stakes, would put a friend and associate through an industrial microwave dryer. Apparently, first thing to burst are the eyeballs. Get a nice, clear "pop!" Then the rest goes goulash.

V: Who's the prima donna?

Dexter: Corpo agent, internal affairs, Been skittin' 'round town askin' after the convoy as if her life depended on findin' it. The one lead she

got's zip-tied in her trunk. Stick up her ass ain't growin' any shorter, so she must be gettin' desperate. Be wise to think how you could use that. 'Course, to do so you'll need that frazzled cat's info. Sendin' it now.

V: Client. What's her thing? Why's she need to meet?

Dexter: Woman's name's Evelyn Parker. Vettin' her wasn't easy. Put the word out was lookin' for any kinda intel...

V: Right, and...?

Dexter: Some brothers from Pacifica got back to me. Tol' me to stop lookin', end of convo, heheh. Anyway, our lil client insisted on meetin' someone with skin in the game - you know, who'll be there for it all. Yours truly'll be remote, T-Bug ain't no people person, and Jackie's only good at some things - I know you know what I mean. Pretty much leaves you.

V: Think I got everything. Time I got to work.

Dexter: Why that's just music to my ears. I'll set up the meet with Miss Parker at Lizzie's Bar. Flathead, though, is gonna be all you. One more thing, Mr. V. Quiet life or blaze o' glory? Hmm? Later, now.

[V leaves the limo and call Jackie.]

V: Jackster. Talked to Dex.

Jackie: Heheh. Gordito's (Fatty's) a big deal - literally and not, yeah?

V: Guy certainly knows how to protect his biz. Wants to put us on a few small kinks, prep work, I guess, before linin' us up a big job. There's this combat bot, military prototype. Maelstrom klepped it. Then Dex paid to take it off their hands just before the gangoons had a switch up in management.

Jackie: Right, right, heard about that. Royce versus Brick - hostile takeover.

V: 'Bout sums it up. Dex wants us talkin' to Royce. Gave the deets of some Militech agent, too, but... I dunno how much help she stands to be.

The Information

Jackie: Huh, chingón (fuck)...

V: Ick, you don't sound thrilled. Royce - whaddaya know about him?

Jackie: He's fuckin' whacked somethin' special. Junkies short junk, Royce shorts chrome.

V: Then there's the other thing, Gotta meet the client who put the job on the table - Evelyn Parker.

Jarkie: You? Well, what's Dex gonna do-ride ground in his limo, chat chicks up on the holo?

V: Parker wants to meet someone on the crew. Dex gave me the nod.

Jackie: Must know what he's doin'... So, how you wanna play this? Maelstrom or Parker, what's first?

V: Parker - think oughta see her first. See what she's like, what she's after.

Jackie: Orale. In that case, I'll head to All Foods, put my nose to the ground, sniff around. Hasta luego. (See ya later.)

[V goes to Lizzie's Bar. He is met at the entrance by a girl with a bat.]

Mox: Lookin' a little put out there, input. Interest you in a preem BD?

V: Whaddaya got?

Mox: What don't we got? Women and men of your dreams, synaptic acting A-listers. No washed-up virtuporn boytoys or blow-up dolls here.

Mox: Amateur stuff - It'll grip your heart and blow your nerves right

outta your body. Pure bit-based ecstasy - THAT'S why people come here.

V: Clearly know how to sell it.

Mox: Not a sales pitch, it's a warning. I'll give you one word - bespoke. Not for everyone's synapses.

Mox: Think you can handle it?

V: Bespoke - damn, that sounds promising. I get it, I'm in.

Mox: Mmhm. Couple of things you need to know first. Ahem. Severe penalties for any unauthorized recording… No drugs, no groping. Someone catch your eye, you do not grab 'em. You find 'em in the catalog, ask for a BD and get yourself a box.

V: I really look that green to you? Like I don't know…?

Mox: Mhm. Door's open. Have fun, input. Welcome to Lizzie's!

[V enters Lizzie's Bar. He walks to the counter.]

V: Hey.

Mateo: Get you something?

V: So… curious. The name "Lizzie's" is that the owner?

Mateo: Not for a long while, no. And it's none-too-sweet a story.

V: Now I'm just flat interested.

Mateo: Real Lizzie ran a strip joint out of this place back in the day. "Lizzie's Bar." Girls were paid right, insured, even had decent security. Good spot, all in all.

V: Ah, stories of the golden days. Inevitable demise and the inevitable drink over sweet memories.

Mateo: A tall one makes the tall tales easier to swallow.

V: So, what went wrong?

Mateo: Tyger Claws shot up Lizzie. Tyger beat one of Lizzie's girls real bad once. No hesitation, Lizzie blasted the guy's balls off. Gang came back the next day. Liz was done.

V: Tygers gave this place up to the Mox in the end though, didn't they?

Mateo: Sort of the Moxes had to make a deal with 'em. Luckily, they kept their heads, organized quick. Big boss now is Susie Q. But the sign stayed up, outta respect. And biz booms to this day.

V: I'm lookin' for Evelyn Parker. You know if she's here?

Mateo: Who's asking?

V: A big tipper. Generous when I get the answers I'm lookin' for.

Mateo: Appreciate the gesture, truly. But, afraid I don't get paid to talk. Opposite, actually.

[A provocatively dressed woman turns to V.]

Regular: It's all right, Mateo. I was waiting for this one. Evelyn Parker. I knew it was you as soon as you walked in.

[Mateo pours V a glass. He drinks it.]

V: Centzon? Only tequila I drink. Hm. How would you know?

Evelyn: I like to know everything about the people I work with. Either that or it was just a lucky guess.

V: Why we meetin' here? Any particular reason? Actually, doesn't seem much like your thing, this place.

Mateo: Mmmhm.

Evelyn: Hm, I'll take that as a compliment. C'mon. Know a place we can talk where ears won't prick up to listen. We'll be in the lounge, Mateo. Anyone asks we're not here.

[They go into one of the rooms. Evelyn lights a cigarette.]

Evelyn: Dex had a load to say about you. Called you professional, effective. And trustworthy. I hope he wasn't overselling...

V: You don't give a rat's dick what Dex thinks. We both know that.

Evelyn: You have trouble accepting compliments?

V: No. Just think flattery's beneath you. Am I wrong?

Evelyn: Maybe Dex is beneath you. Have you known each other long?

V: You writin' Dex's bio? Hate to disappoint, but I just don't know much.

Evelyn: In other words, you hardly know each other... Yet he fingered you for this job. Hm, curious.

V: Shit, buzz Dex right now if you're gettin' cold feet - I can wait.

Evelyn: I doubt he'd add anything I haven't already heard. Anything I would really like to hear, for that matter. There's only one other

bunch that's worse than fixers in that respect used car salesmen. I'll go with my gut for now.

V: Let's… cut to the chase. Whaddaya got for me?

Evelyn: Your… target - I trust you know what it is.

V: Relic. "Secure Your Soul" trinket. Key tech in the program, actually. We're tangling with Arasaka. Makin' this heist one dangerous, risky motherfucker.

Evelyn: Mhm. Arasaka's poured billions into personality transfer technology. But me - I just want the data on this one. The chip is tucked away inside Konpeki Plaza, the hotel. You ever been?

V: Classy corp hotels? Yeah, no. Outta my price range.

Evelyn: The decor's to die for. As you'll see for yourself.

V: So where's this chip hiding, exactly?

Evelyn: In a suite on the top floor. The room's occupied by Yorinobu Arasaka.

V: Yorinobu Arasaka? He's in town?

Evelyn: Don't you read the screamsheets? The media couldn't get

enough of York coming to Night City, it was all over the headlines. Anyway, he's heir apparent to the Arasaka empire - Saburo Arasaka's only surviving son.

V: What, so Arasaka Junior's plannin' to grab the reins while in Night City?

Evelyn: Only a handful of people in Night City know what the Arasakas' real plans are.

V: Telling me you're one of 'em? So we're not jumpin' the corp. We're jumping Yorinobu Arasaka himself.

Evelyn: Eh, Yorinobu is a puppet. He lost all his cards years ago when he failed to do daddy's bidding. Saburo's had Yori's balls in a vise for years. He might just turn the screw and crush them outright if he learns his son's up to no good again.

V: Top dog like Yorinobu's bound to have an army on call. Hotel's prolly a goddamn fortress by now, too.

Evelyn: Yorinobu keeps exactly no muscle around. Not one guard. Got rid of them a long time ago.

V: Huh. Why's that?

Evelyn: Surely you know what they say about Arasaka intel? Sneeze

in Night City and a blossom drops from a cherry tree in Tokyo. Yorinobu was convinced his Arasaka security detail reported directly to his father.

V: Look, if you've got any spare oces up your sleeve, now's the time to show 'em.

Evelyn: Now, this should make your prick perk up. Yorinobu recently swiped the chip from an Arasaka laboratory. He's made a deal with NetWatch, aims to sell it to them. Have you spotted my ace yet or do I need to spell things out?

V: So what's Yorinobu due to walk away with?

Evelyn: Unimportant. You focus on the biochip.

V: What could cyberspace's watchers and protectors offer him? Intelligence on his enemies?

Evelyn: That doesn't matter in the least. Because you'll make sure the transaction never happens, and I get the chip.

V: Wait - neutral NetWatch is mixed up in this?

Evelyn: NetWatch provides net security for all corporations. And collects eddies in the millions for it. But... in this day and age, everyone's in the game, and no one can afford to be a saint. To win,

one has to go all-in.

V: Fine, so no Arasaka security on the device 'cause Yorinobu whisked it away in secret. Now, where's he hidin' it?

Evelyn: Likely in a specialized container, one that mimics an organic neural environment. On the outside, it looks like an ordinary briefcase.

V: And the case is...?

Evelyn: You'll see for yourself soon enough. Provided we're done gossiping about the Arasakas.

V: What else you know about Yorinobu?

Evelyn: Quite a bit, actually. He studied finance and biotech in Tokyo. Hm, probably didn't have a choice in the matter, come to think of it. Saburo was grooming him to be his successor. But then Yorinobu vanished to chase his own dreams, cut himself off from the corp for years. Long story short, though the black sheep returned, the bitter taste remained. But that's only one side of him. There's another - an intelligent man who has always walked his own path and so has his own designs on the corp.

V: Could just be another power-hungry corpodick. Like so many others.

Evelyn: Hm. Ever tried to imagine what life might be like for an emperor's son? You have everything, yet you are no one, nothing. At least as long as you remain in Saburo Arasaka's shadow. I... sympathize. It's a vulnerability I understand well.

V: And one you plan to exploit fully. One more thing. Data that's on the chip - what is it?

Evelyn: Irrelevant. Entirely.

V: We're talkin' about data Yorinobu snuck out of Arasaka. What's more, he wants to pass it onto NetWatch. Sounds pretty damn relevant to me.

Evelyn: Listen, V. The Relic - that's my concern. Your concern - earning a paycheck. Just get the job done. I'll make sure your bank accounts're sated.

V: OK. What's next?

Evelyn: Now comes the best part. Follow me. Got somethin' for you. Should help you plan Braindance from Konpeki Plaza.

[They walk out of the room.]

V: How's a braindance supposed to help? Need facts, not thrills.

Evelyn: Think BDs are only good for fondling virtual tits, jackin' off to in those boxes? No. They can be a very useful tool. Good for analyzing details human perception, even boosted, doesn't grasp. Exactly what you need.

V: So what's on the tape?

Evelyn: Yorinobu's suite. The glorious interior. You'll need to locate the Relic yourself. Hope I grabbed enough detail to make that possible.

V: Hold up… Mean to say you recorded this?

Evelyn: Mhm. BD rec implant. Why, you object?

V: Supposed to be Yorinobu's pad on the tape. Means you were inside. You know each other?

Evelyn: How else could I get all this intel? I know him pretty well, actually. We have an arrangement. Strictly business. Suits us both, I think.

V: Let's see this braindance.

Evelyn: Judy'll help. She's a Mox, too. Besides, we go back, uh… years. V, this is important. Judy's always been there for me. Always helped

out. I trust her. But she's a Mox, not the latest member of your crew. Try not to forget. So you'll be a good boy, tread lightly and keep that tongue on a leash.

V: Relax. Believe it or not, I'm no stranger to tact. In biz or life.

[They enter Judy's lab. She watches some cartoons.]

Evelyn: Ahem…

Judy: Hey, there you are.

Evelyn: This is V. He's here for that BD roll. And V, this is Judy - best braindance editor I know.

Judy: Enough, already. Gonna make me barf.

V: Sensory sig amps, acoustic and emotive wave monitors… Top-shelf hardware.

Judy: Most of it's customized. Only thing factory are the casings.

V: Mod all this yourself?

Judy: What do you think?

V: Expression translator - Fuyutsuki, right? Thought the matrices on

that series were fucked up.

Judy: They were. But swappin' out matrices's simple. And this was the only model that'd support additional scanware.

Evelyn: Ahem...

Judy: All right, all right... Compiled your BD, Ev.

Evelyn: What do you think? Will it do?

Judy: Still pretty raw... but yeah, oughta do.

Evelyn: Mhm. V needs to get deep inside, that's most important.

Judy: So, let's calibrate, tune it to him. Believe me, I've dealt with worse. Should see the dig-Jig Street porn we gotta contend with sometimes.

Evelyn: So we drop V inside? Let him look, let him rummage around, right?

Judy: How 'bout it, V? Raw braindance - ever taken a dip before?

V: What d'you mean by "raw"? How's this differ from the ready-mades?

Judy: Huh, Ready-mades, provided they're well made, should feed you feelings and impressions you'd never have the chance to experience yourself in realspace. But it's mass-market shit, so it's pre-crafted, hard-coded, fenced in and manageable. A raw one… well, it's more like a virtu enviro, Get to move around, look at things in detail. Editors use those layers to fish for juicier emotes and impulses, then use 'em to pad the BDs that go to market. Siddown, settle in, and we'll get you goin'. Gotta create your sensory profile first.

V: A what profile now?

Judy: Model of your perceptions and emotional responses Need to adjust that so the raw BD won't overwhelm you. If I don't, best case scenario, you'll get nauseous as soon as you're in. Prolly barf like you would in a shoddy virtu enviro.

V: Mhm. And worst case?

Judy: Your synapses sizzle like locusts in a deep fryer. But we're not about to let that happen, nuh-uh.

V: OK. Hit me. Just promise me it won't hurt.

Judy: It won't. Not this time. Now, sit still, look at me. Gonna run the analysis soft should feel a slight tingling…

V: Mhm...

Judy: OK now let's set the optics and other sensory sigs. Look smack into these two screens, pretend it's an eye exam.

V: Am I gonna have to do this calibration dance every time?

Judy: Not necessarily. But it's worth the wait. Gimme two more minutes and you'll see exactly what BD analysis is capable of. One more sec, need to get the pain receptor limiters in... OK. All set. Need to test your profile first. Tossing in a sample BD. You can use it to get to know the editor. Now, lemme see. Where could we...

Evelyn: Can't he just use my recording? Why're we wasting time?

Judy: So we don't risk our necks. 'Sides, won't take a sec. Got somethin' here. Should be perfect.

V: What'd you choose?

Judy: Corner store hold-up in Heywood. Real amateurs. Don't even know where I got it. sults our needs perfectly though. You ready?

V: Boot it up.

Judy: Mhm... Lemme give you the tailored version iirst, let you get your bearings - then we'll jump into editing mode. Be diving in in 3...

2... 1...

[V jumps into the body of some thug... nothing much changes.]

Thug: Plan's simple, do nothing odd, don't get creative. You go in, snatch the cash, get out, and we sell the BD to those psychofreaks from the studio.

Thug (V): Got it, got it.

Thug: And remember - everything on full blast. They'll spot us extra for a wicked adrenaline high. OK, on ya go.

[He turns off the alarm in the building and gives V a gun. V walks into the store.]

Thug (V): Down, everybody on the ground. Wanna see you kissin' the flooring! Money! Now! Or I will fuckin' drop you, I swear to God!

Employee: Whoa! Yeah! Hey! I'm.....

Thug: Now! Before I blow your fuckin' head off!

[V grabs the money and runs out of the store and gets a bullet in his back. The braindance ends.]

Judy: Slow, deep breaths. Your cortisol and adrenaline spiked, but the

soft activated your hormone blockers. Nothin' happened, you're alive and well.

V: That flash of… intense shock. Can still feel it, I remember… Fuck, that last second… Ya coulda warned me how much it hurts to die.

Judy: Trust me, real death hurts much, much more.

V: Not so sure about that.

[Judy pulls him back to the beginning of the robbery.]

Judy: You'll be fine. Got everything set up. Let's switch over to editing mode. I'll sever the link to the BD roller's sensory array. You'll be able to look around freely. Whole scene's yours. Full cam control in analysis mode, so move around, zoom in 'n' out, whatever else you come up with… Think of it as your own little sandbox. So, analysis mode - you control playback, can even pause when you feel the need. Then you use the editor console to unpause. Try it. Preem as hell, right? Well, that's not all. You can speed things up on rewind, whatever you like. Give it a try. Rewind, roll it back to the top. All good, neat. Now try fast forwarding a bit. OK. You can also reset the recording. That'll take you right back to the beginning. Try it. Now for some fun. This here's why you came in the first place. In analysis mode, you get to view and even scan details of the enviro recorded by the BD roller. Focus on the heat, the gun this gonk gets from his buddy at the beginning. Now scan it. OK, right here. Eeexcellent. Let's

move on. Now heads up. In analysis mode, you can ferret out background noise and conversations if the roller got close enough. This tech records everything, every little detail. Even the sights and sounds the roller was never aware of. To see the sources of the recorded sensory signals, switch to the audio layer in the editor. Go ahead and try that now. OK, good. Now, you should see several sound signatures in the store. Choose one and hone in on it. So, any thoughts?

V: Unbelievable. Seriously. Like it was happening right next to me.

Judy: Yeah, it's how BD recording implants work. They pick up everything, all the elements in the background, then an editor tweaks 'em, makes 'em pop. Keen playin' with the sound, explore a bit. We'll move on when you get bored. Sometimes you can analyze extra layers in the raw, stuff the roller's cyberware picked up.

V: Like what?

Judy: Ev's got Kiroshi optics that grob infrared Meaning you should be able to grab heat signatures from her recording.

V: Huh, hella nice.

Judy: Now let's wait 'til the guy punches out the gonk at the counter. Scanning works on peeps, too. Walk up to the wounded chick, try scannin' her. All right next thing, Scroll forward to the port where our

artist gets a lead injection. See that? They shot him, an' he never saw it comin'. But you will. Here it comes - my favorite part of the game. See the blinking thing, over the entrance? Surveillance cam. Must've caught our shooter. You'll see in a sec. Cam feeds to the screen behind the clerk. Roll back to where the screen's in the kid's field of vision. Then scan it. His own choomba shot 'im. Probably planned to all along. Musta got a nice slice of cred on the black market for a BD like this. BD freaks are ready to pay a preem for a real flatline. Anyway, if you've seen enough, you can exit.

[V gets back to the real world.]

Judy: Yeah, it's 'mpressive, right? It's too bad most of the Bos we do here are only good for floggin' the log... Anyway, you ready to do this, look at your rec?

V: Dunno, I... Let's take a break. Still feel like that kid when... Phew, yeah think I'm done.

Evelyn: V, there's no time. Get it together, please.

V: OK, OK... Go ahead... Just need T-Bug to link in.

Judy: Whoa, whoa, whoa, Who?

V: Runner from my crew, security specialist. She'll tell me what to look for while we analyze. No problem, I hope?

Judy: Actually, it is a problem. Not what we agreed, Ev.

V: Relax, Judy. Everything'll be fine.

Judy: You don't quite grasp the risks I took by lettin' you in here. What I'm risking pokin' around with this stuff.

V: We're all takin' risks here. That's the job. So either T-Bug patches in, or I'm on my way out.

Evelyn: Judy, please.

Judy: Heh, fine. Call 'er, let's get this over with.

[V calls T-Bug.]

T-Bug: Hey, V. What's happenin'?

V: Bug, listen. I got some useful footage from Konpeki Plaza. It's a braindance.

Judy: Konpeki? Ohhh, thought as much…

T-Bug: Someone there with you?

V: Unimportant, T-Bug. Please focus. Need your help - got no clue

what I'm supposed to look for once I'm in.

T-Bug: All right, see if I can walk you through it. Jackin' into your tech now. Mh, you've gotta give me access. Opening port 1779… Secure protocol? Good, I'm goin' in. Should be getting my request… …now.

V: Got it. You ready?

T-Bug: Millisec. OK, connection confirmed, now some quick temp ICE and… we're clear. Ready to dance.

V: Fire 'er up, Judy.

[Judy throws V into the braindance. V turns to Evelyn.]

T-Bud: All right, V - eyes open. Gotta find out where Yorinobu's keepin' the Relic.

[V exits the elevator and encounters an android who is much more robot than human.]

Smasher: You look like a cut of fuckable meat. Are you?

V: Evelyn… She… I felt her fear.

V: Sure got it under control quick, too.

[V walks to Yorinobu. He speaks to someone named Hellman over video conference.]

Yorinobu: I said no.

Hellman: They'll have my head for this…

Yorinobu: Then you shall perish for a good cause.

Hellman: But I --

Yorinobu: Make yourself comfortable. I need a minute to finish.

T-Bug: Listen in on that conversation, V. Could be something important.

Yorinobu: Make yourself comfortable. I need a minute to finish.

Yorinobu: My father is a tired, visionless old greybeard who thinks nothing will change and he'll live forever in his tiny, frozen bubble! You will listen to this - Saburo is an addled despot utterly removed from reality, stuck in some fossilized vision of a world that no longer exists! Of a world that may never have existed! We have not seen eye to eye for the last twenty years. I am quite sure we won't now. (...) Noted. Enough. (he hangs up)
T-Bug: Heard that? Relic docs gotta be around here somewhere. Look for them. Hearin' a drone - ventilation and cooling? Servers,

gotta be. Fancy doodads in here need to be controlled.

[Meanwhile Evelyn fucks Yorinobu. It's good that V is just looking at the situation.]

T-Bug: Manual details a special temp controlled container. Relic needs to be kept real cool.

V: So - chip's gotta stay in the freezer?

T-Bug: Yep. Could damage it otherwise. OK, switch on thermal layer detection in the editor. Should be easier to spot where Yorinobu's keeping the chip. (V looks at air conditioner) Air conditioning. Standard model for hotels of this caliber. Temp matches that stipulated in the docs. But no way the chip's hiding there. Too risky - temp fluctuations, risk of damage. (V looking at a wine cooler) Oooh, Donaghy's. Looks like Mr. Arasaka had something to celebrate. Really think you'll find the chip in there? No way. Temp's too low, could fluctuate. Nice try, though. (V looks at a fridge under the counter) Just a fancy-ass fridge. (V looks at a secret fridge) Temp doesn't match the guidelines. Won't find a thing there. Right, grabbed the heat sig. Matches the spec in the docs.

V: Yorinabu's got the case here, guaranteed.

T-Bug: Mhm. We got it. Good work. Looks like we got everything we need. Quit outta the editor. Shit, cameras packed with newtech

motion sensors, heat sig activators. IFF.

V: You skilled enough to kill it all?

T-Bug: Mucho more than enough. Just need access to their subnet. Alarm firmware's fresh, buuut… Sow excited birds chirpin' on a BBS. Somethin' about lots of seeds fallin' through the sieve. Lemme generate keys, I can forge their sig. Automated turrets. Latest scanner model… Systems all connected to the server…

V: Can you shut 'em off?

T-Bug: Externally? No way. Gotta get in, check out how they link into the system first. Mmhm. Looks like all their security systems are linked to the hotel subnet. We need the Flathead. No other way to shut down these systems.

V: Can't get around them ourselves?

T-Bug: Nope. Least I'm fresh out of ideas. (V looks at Yorinabu's gun) Loaded, safety's on. Good to know, though. Once you're in there, don't forget about that iron.

[V returns to the real world.]

Judy: Get everything you need?

V: Yep, that'll do. Thanks Judy. We got it. Later, T-Bug.

T-Bug: Nice work today. See ya soon.

Judy: I'll wipe the cache and your data. You were never here.

[V takes off his braindance headset.]

Judy: Keep it. I'll put it on Ev's tab. Portable device for handling BDs. I already uploaded your calibration settings. Not as sophisticated as what we got here, but should do the trick.

V: And it keeps you outta harm's way. Clever.

Judy: Speakin' of harm's way. Know what I see lookin' at you? Walking, talking corpses.

V: We needed that recording, Judy. The BD practically does our job for us.

Judy: The BD will be the death of us. Seriously. If Arasaka finds out you have it, you're dead. I'M dead.

Evelyn: Judy… relax. Nobody will ever know.

Judy: Evelyn, please… no shortcuts. You go that route, city'll always win. So be careful.

Evelyn: 'Course I will be. Besides, we'll talk in a bit. (to V) Let's walk. Well? What do you think?

V: Think I see how you know so much about Yorinobu.

Evelyn: It's simple - men like pillow talk a bit too much.

V: So it's just about the sex?

Evelyn: Biz. And biz only.

V: You're sure Yorinobu doesn't expect this kinda move from you?

Evelyn: He's got no idea, trust me. He's too busy with NetWatch to give me that kind of attention. Besides... even if some suspicion takes root in his mind, it shouldn't matter, he won't react in time. And that's something you'll handle, right?

V: You're not worried? Arasaka will flag and screen anyone who's had dealings with Yorinobu.

Evelyn: They'll have a long list, then. Packed full of big names. Much bigger than mine. You tell me who they check first. Corpo hotshots and cutthroats? Or a little bedroom plaything like me?

V: Intel on Yorinobu, the chip, the BD from Konpeki... Winds are right,

plan's perfect. A job like this comes one in a million.

Evelyn: Mm. Thanks. Now the punch line, please.

V: Just sounds too good to be true. What's the catch?

Evelyn: Cold feet? Are you looking to get out of it?

V: I wanna know if you're really in control here. That you're not sending me into the sorta shit I can't wade out of.

Evelyn: V. I have zero reasons to hoze you. Were in this together. Really. Trust me that I got this.

V: Go, what now?

Evelyn: V... Do this job for me. I mean me alone. No splitting the payout with anyone else. No middlemen. No Dex.

V: You wanna fuck over our fixer. I knew something was up.

Evelyn: Dex is a middleman. And a useless one at this point.

V: Evelyn, you don't mess with fixers. That's the one rule every merc in this city knows - and actually follows.

Evelyn: But if we're smart...

The Pickup

V: Doesn't make it. Mistake like that'll cost you your rep. And without a rep, you're nobody. You sure you wanna do this?

Evelyn: Better ask yourself that question. Do you want to spend the rest of your days blasting scavs? Or become a legend overnight? Your choice.

V: If I agree, there'll be hell to pay. For sure.

Evelyn: I know. Whatever you decide, it stays between us. I can offer fifty percent. Eddies enough to do whatever the hell you like.

V: I'll be finished. Dex won't forgive a dirt move like this.

Evelyn: Dex isn't the only fixer in town. But my offer's the only one you'll ever get.

V: Huh, lemme think about it.

Evelyn: Mmhm. If you need me, call. I'll send you my number.

V: OK.

Evelyn: Good luck. Now go. I need a few words with Judy.

[V walks away and calls Dexter.]

Dexter: How're things lookin', Mr. V?

V: Turns out Evelyn's recording from Konpeki was worth our time.

Dexter: Beautiful. T-Bug already called, said she's workin' her magic. And the Flathead?

V: Nothin' yet. On it now.

Dexter: T-Bug says no chance at the chip without that bot. To work, then, Mr. V.

[V calls Militech agent Meredith Stout.]

Stout: Stout here. Start by telling me how you got this number.

V: Know more than your number. Heard you misplaced a convoy.

Stout: You! Shut him up! Spill what you know. Don't make me wait.

V: Nuh-uh, not on the horn. Let's meet, cut a deal.

Stout: A deal… Fine. First exit off Skyline driving towards the NID. Storm channel under the overpass - meet you there.

[V gets into his car and drives to meet the agent. When he arrives, he sees that the neighborhood is cordoned off and Meredith herself has arrived in a huge armored car.]

Stout: Meredith Stout. Take it you were the one to call....

V: Got an offer for ya.

[He doesn't have time to finish talking before he gets knocked out. V falls to the ground.]

Stout: Thought you could blackmail me, fucker?! Set conditions?! Got any more for me?!

V: Calm the fuck down! I just wanna talk!

[One of the guards connects a wire to V.]

Gilchrist: Christ, Meredith...

Stout: Shut your trap! That fucking thing ready?

Militech Guard: All set.

Stout: Now answer my questions. Honestly. Forthrightly. Are you here alone?

V: Yep. Just little ol' me.

Militech Guard: It's the truth.

Stout: Do a sweep. Now.

[A drone flies out of an armored car.]

Stout: Now listen close. This piece of shit, Antony GilChrist is he your contact? Is he the one who leaked intel on the convoy?

V: That guy? Never seen him before.

Militech Guard: Checks out.

V: Listen, I know where the transport is. I can help you. Just want a favor in return.

Stout: Hmm…

Gilchrist: I told you! I fucking told you! I'm not the mole! Jesus Christ!

Stout: Shut him up.

Gilchrist: Unhand me now before I-- ungh!

[They shove him in the car.]

Stout: Him you can let go - wanna hear what he has to say.

V: Couldn'ta been chill from the start?

Stout: Shut the fuck up. Tell me what you want.

V: I need a bot - Flathead model. Guys who ripped you off have it. Promise me that bot, I'll point the finger.

Stout: You have a plan how to deal with 'em?

V: Could just take it by force. But they're expecting payment, so I could go that route, too.

Stout: Hmm... Fine, the latter. But on one condition - you pay with our money.

V: Sounds solid enough. I'm in.

[He takes an encrypted shard from Meredith.]

Stout: You pay with that chip, and that's all you gotta worry about. Try to fuck me in any way, and I'll be seeing you real soon.

Gilchrist: (from the car) You're making a mistake! This cunt's already

good as dead! And she'll take you down with her!

[They're driven away. V runs to meet Jackie.]

Jackie: Ah, there you are. Lemme hear what you squared away.

V: Been waitin' long?

Jackie: Mi madre (My mother) always said patience pays off, so…

V: T-Bug show any sign of life? You two talk?

Jackie: She's up-to-date and fired up to work with Dex. Preparin' already. They're familiar, y'know. Worked together before Dex took his break.

V: So, Dex already paid the Maelstromers for the corpo bot. Thing is, can't be sure the gangoons are still willin' to hand it over.

Jackie: He paid up front? Hijole… (Jeez…) Well, whatever. Let's go get this tech. You scheme yet? You got a plan?

V: Doubt shit can go smoothly. This is Maelstrom.

Jackie: Gong world ain't too complicated, Might's right, the strong survive. Either you fuck others, or you get fucked. So, into the borgbeasts' den?

V: Gimme a minute.

Jackie: OK. Tell me when you're good and steeled.

V: Let's go see these bastards.

Jackie: All right, let's knock on their door. See if they even open up... I hate these 'borg fuckers. Just had to be them...

[He gets off his motorcycle and walks toward the den. V draws his shotgun.]

V: Just a gang like any other, right?

Jackie: Take the Valentinos. They follow God and the Santa Madre. Honor means something to 'em. You know what they want, how they get it, and what pisses 'em the fuck off. With Maelstrom, you just never know. Go on, let 'em know we're here.

[V pushes a button on the intercom.]

Dum Dum: Hm, don't know you.

V: Just open the fuckin' door.

Dum Dum: Yeah? You make a fuckin' appointment? 'Cause I don't see

nothin' in my book.

V: Wanna talk to Royce. Dex sent us.

Dum Dum: Main room. We been waiting.

[V and Jackie enters the den.]

Jackie: Cozy place. Could use a few plants, though. Oh yeah. They look damn well prepared.

V: Don't think I've ever seen security like this in a chow factory.

Jackie: Ehh, gear from the Jacked convoy, gotta be… Must've been all over it like maggots on dead meat.

V: Anti-personnel mine, directional Shrapnel spitter. My favorite…

Jackie: Subtle.

[They go into a large hangar. A powerful spotlight turns on.]

Jackie: Stay cool… They're just tryin' to spook us.

[V and Jackie take the freight elevator up.]

Jackie: All right, keep chilled, V. Remember, we're on their turf.

Dum Dum: So whaddaya want?

V: Here to see Royce. We got biz to transact.

Dum Dum: Mr. Royce is busy just now. You'll deal with me.

V: You got a bot - model MTOD12, called the Flathead.

Dum Dum: And? The hell you care?

V: Guy I represent already paid Brick for it. I'm just here for the pick-up. I can talk direct to Royce, if necessary.

Dum Dum: Nah, you'll talk to me. Name's Dum Dum. Now, couch. Plant it. (to Jackie) Ahh, well, shit. Goes for you too.

Jackie: I'll stand.

Dum Dum: This so fuckin' hard? Fuckin' ass on the fuckin' couch!

Jackie: Make me.

Dum Dum: Thought you'd never ask. Sit your ass down 'fore I plant a bullet in your skull.

V: Jesus, Jack. What gives?

Jackie: Primerito (First of all), I don't like this guy's tone. Segundo (Second), sitting on your ass makes you an easy target.

Dum Dum: Sit your ass down 'fore I plant a bullet in your skull.

V: Jack, sit down.

Jackie: This ain't gonna end well but... shit...

Dum Dum: Well, all right. Come on, gotta lighten up. (hands you an inhaler) Take a hit.

V: Whatcha blowin'?

Dum Dum: S-keef. Pure as baby powder.

V: Black Lace? Tough to get your hands on. Gotta have a good source.

Jackie: What's it do?

V: Ups 'dorphs and adrenaline to the point you feel no pain. Trip's so intense it verges on psychosis. Corps fed it to their fighting legions during the Corp Wars.

Dum Dum: Cyberpsychos pop the tabs like candy. Vaporizing it mellows the burn without killing any of the effect. Come on, give it a

whirl!

[V inhales the stuff.]

Dum Dum: Better? Now we can talk… Here we go. The Flathead, model MT0D12.

V: Militech's not gonna come lookin' for it?

Dum Dum: Fuck 'em. They can hop around and try. We removed the serial number and lifted access locks using our soft. Once it's yours, it's yours.

V: Need to see it.

Dum Dum: Suit yourself. Fuckin' tricked out this thing. Dynamic, thermo-optic camo armor. Full cognitive immersion with a Raven controller. Pimped out, prototype actuators made of titanium-vanadium-Kevlar® composite. 'N' watch this… Fully integrated link, too, so when the spider starts crawlin' up walls, danglin' from ceilings…

V: Mhm, could lose your lunch.

Dum Dum: So watcha think?

V: Huh, Raven's not the dedicated control unit for a Flathead.

Dum Dum: Hah! 'Course not! Militech controllers autolink to Militech systems. I mean you wouldn't want them trackin' their stolen tech back to your hands? Yeah, Raven's our baby. Got improved neural sync and no fuckin' pesky tracing. You ask me, we oughta sell that shit.

V: It'll have to do.

Dum Dum: Heh. Look at that - picky little fucker. Let's see your cred.

V: Brick got it. It's all paid up.

[At this point Royce enters the room. He points his gun at V.]

Royce: "Brick got it..." Heh. I don't see any fuckin' Brick around here, do you?! I'm talkin' to you!

V: Fuck Brick, then. Let's cut a new deal.

Royce: Hmm... Hah! Now that's good business sense. All right, you want the Flathead? I better see some eddies. You fuckin' deaf?!

V: Relax. Got 'em right here.

[He pulls out the Militech shard.]

Royce: Just like that? Without battin' a fuckin' eye?! Hahah!

V: Want it or not? I got places to be.

Royce: Hmm... Y'know, ya never did say who sent you, never did say who you're workin' for...

V: Dexter DeShawn, that's who.

Royce: Dexter DeShawn... The lard ass who punching-animal-fucked half of Pacifica? Mean he ain't dead?

Lars: Hahahahaha!

[V hits Royce with his gun. He and Jackie kill all the thugs in the room.]

Jackie: ¡Mierda! (Shit!) We're cut off. Grab the gear - bot and control shard. Quick! Mmm... We gotta find a way outta here.

V: Got the set - bot and controller.

Jackie: Then let's go. Quicker the better. Now let's get outta here. I'm dyin' for some fresh air. Ay, huele feo (Oh, it smells bad), this meat. Ack... I can taste it...

V: It's a production line. Plus, I thought you loved meat.

Jackie: Buh… really no other way? Oof, good. It's movin', let's go. Vamonos (Let's go already.)

[They get out of the warehouse and killing Royce's goons on their way. In one of the rooms, they find a tied up man. He calls for help.]

Jackie: Oh shit, I know this fool! It's Brick! It's your call, V. Whaddaya wanna do?

V: Detonator, armed.

[V hacks the door.]

Brick: God… Felt like a fuckin' eternity, that.

V: Been in here a while?

Brick: Few days… kinda lost count. Some guys loyal enough to core slipped me sturt, tried to help out. Royce threw 'em in the microwave dryer. Made me watch.

V: Guess it's kinda your fault we're here. Came for some tech Dex bought.

Brick: He tell you to free me?

Jackie: No. Just to pick up the bot.

Brick: Classic fuckin' Dex… Hahaha…

V: Lookin' a little like we mighta saved your skin.

Jackie: Think we're due a favor, hombre (man).

Brick: Jesus, slow down, maybe? I'll get you, but kinda caught me at a bad time. We ever meet again, I'll have you covered.

V: Sure you'll manage all right?

Brick: This is my home. Quit fuckin' sweatin' it.

[Jackie and V kill some more thugs on the way out.]

Jackie: Now let's get outta here. I'm dyin' for some fresh air.

[Militech drone flies over.]

Jackie: Militech. They got those things buzzin' around everywhere. Past the gate, we can talk there.

[Militech car is waiting for them at the exit. There are a lot of well-armed guards everywhere.]

Gilchrist: Dealin' with Maelstrom, heh. Never ends well, does it. Looks like you two lucked out a bit.

V: What happened to Stout?

Gilchrist: She placed some bad bets. Her clock ran out. Simple as that. Suffice to say, you won't be seeing her again.

V: And you? Why're you here?

Gilchrist: Well, I still don't know who the mole is. I was hoping the Maelstromers would shed some light on it.

V: Yeah, I doubt that... Pretty tough to get corpses to talk.

Gilchrist: You'd be surprised. I'm sure I'll manage something. It's been a pleasure.

[He walks away.]

Jackie: Holy shit, V. Wasn't sure we'd walk out in one piece.

V: We make a good team, Jack.

Jackie: Think you might be right.

V: In any case, I don't regret switchin' my life up the way I did.

Jackie: That'd the sweet taste of success, my mend. Call up Dex, let him know we got his toy, meetin' to celebrate at the Afterlife. Ahí luego, V. (See ya later, V.)

[V got a call from Dexter DeShawn.]

Dexter: How're things lookin', Mr. V?

V: Got the bot.

Dexter: And how'd it go? Run into any trouble? And what about the Militech angle?

V: Sure. 'Course there was trouble. Royce couldn't've given two shits that you and Brick had shaken on it.

Dexter: How'd you get him on board? You use the corpo woman?

V: Met with Stout. Managed to strike a deal.

Dexter: Well, well.

V: Gave me the chip with the scratch for Maelstrom.

Dexter: So you paid for the Flathead with corp cash.

V: No. Decided I could use the eddies myself. And I just grabbed the bot.

Dexter: Jus' like that...?

V: Not just. Had to use violence.

Dexter: You got some balls, Mr. V.

V: We're all set, ready to go. What now?

Dexter: Now we do the job I hired you to do - grabbing that biochip. We'll talk about the rest at The Afterlife. See you there.

V: Great, be there in no time.

Dexter: See ya, Mr. V.

[V finds Jackie. He's talking on the phone.]

Jackie: Heh. 'Bout time, holmes!

V: What's new with Señora Welles?

Jackie: Ehhh, y'know. She's worried about me - whatever. Can't help

herself, y'know - checkin' to see if I'm not rottin' in some dumpster... like most of the Welles boys. It's really startin' to wear on me. More tell her everythin's OK, more I feel like I'm straight-up lyin'. But that's done after tomorrow. Afterlife, here we come, baby! Yeah!

V: We have arrived - the major leagues.

Jackie: Does not get any higher, choom. And you know somethin' else? We fuckin' earned it, mano. Ready to get your cherry popped? Yeeech! Come on!

[V and Jackie enter the Afterlife.]

Jackie: Place used to be a morgue - you believe that?

V: Really, Jackie?

Jackie: What?

V: Told you that myself.

Jackie: Oh, for reals? Ah, shit, er... must've been ages ago.

[At the entrance they walk up to a bouncer.]

Emmerick: An' who might you clowns be?

V: We're friends of Dexter DeShawn. He's expectin' us.

Emmerick: Yo, Dex. Got two live ones sayin' they're here to see ya. Yeah? All right, then. Says he needs a second or two. Go get yourselves drinks or somethin'.

Jackie: Way ahead o' you, viejo (old junk). This is it… The heart o' Night City! That's it right there - beating. Hear it? Can you imagine? Susan Forrest, Boa Boa, maybe even Morgan Blackhand… All sat on those stools, fell asleep on that same bar.

[V walks to the counter.]

V: Hey.

Claire: Grab a seat. Be with you in a sec.

V: Looks like we're up.

Jackie: 'Ey. See that old lady there? That's Rogue - best fixer in all o' Night City.

V: Thought Dex was the best.

Jackie: Pff… Rogue was linin' up jobs when Dex was still shittin' in diapers, heh. Place belongs to her.

Claire: What can I getcha?

V: You order.

Jackie: Two Tequila Old Fashioneds with a splash of cerveza and a chili garnish.

Claire: A duo of Johnny Silverhands, comin' up.

Jackie: Right on, chico.

Claire: Somebody did their homework.

V: Looks like the dog ate mine...

Claire: Age-old tradition. Drinks're named after our regulars.

V: How long's the Afterlife been around? Half a century?

Claire: Longer. Don't know by how much, though.

V: Gotta be the oldest club in Night City.

Claire: And the most respected. Don't forget that bit.

V: Say I wanted a drink named after me - what would I have to do?

Claire: Snuff it. In mind-blowingly spectacular fashion, Mid-op'd be best.

Jackie: Aah, what a beaut of a TRADITION!

V: To Night City!

Jackie: And the Afterlife! Hahaaa! Aah, what a beaut of a TRADITION!

V: Who else can I drink here?

Clatre: All on the menu....

Jackie: 'Cept there's a spot missing. Morgan Blackhand, right?

Claire: Heh, 's true. Morgan's yet to make up his mind he's dead or still kickin'.

Jackie: Huh, nobody knows what happened to him. Think he's still alive? It's been years...

Claire: Why not? Look at Rogue. Peeps from that era - a species unto themselves.

V: Guess dyin's a small price to pay for goin' down in history.

Jackie: Gotta live like a legend first, though, eh? Death... s'nothin' but

the final flourish. Oh, and by the way, name's Jackie Welles, you wanna write down my recipe?

Claire: Hmm... sure.

Jackie: Shot of vodka on the rocks, lime juice, ginger beer... oh, and most importantly - a splash of love.

Claire: Haha, I'll remember that. Heard you were Dex's latest finds.

Jackie: Just biz, no big deal.

Huscle: Mr. DeShawn see you now.

Claire: Heard you were Dex's latest finds.

V: Dex a regular? He come here a lot?

Claire: Had a sorta long hiatus, matter of fact. Didn't show his face for nearly two years.

Jackie: Tomcat's gotta walk his own path, right?

Claire: Yeah, well, wherever he walked, he knocked a few pounds off.

Jackie: Guess they weren't deliverin' that pizza I mentioned before.

V: How'd you know?

Claire: My job to know. Look around - how do you think meres earn their reps? Through gossip rivaling that of schoolgirls, that's how. Break a leg.

V: Thanks.

[V and Jackie follow Huscle.]

Huscle: This way. In here.

[They go into a small, container-like room away from the bar. Dexter and T-Bug are sitting in it.]

Dexter: Well, if it ain't Mr. V.

Jackie: Whole family in one place! Hah! Finally!

T-Bug: First time in realspace.

Dexter: And the Flathead?

Jackie: Let's see this bad boy…

Dexter: A'ight, then… Set your butts down comfy.

V: Thanks for your help back at the scav haunt.

T-Bug: A few reapers less in the city - good thing.

Jackie: Heh, City Hall should be fuckin' thankin' us! Sweet booth. It soundproof?

T-Bug: Jackie…

Dexter: Now, now, Mr. Welles is right. We gon' be goin' over some sensitive material. But if it's all right with y'all, I'd like to start with a question for Mr. V… Evelyn Parker - how'd you fare?

V: Couldn't've gone better. In fact, she liked me so much, she made me another offer.

Dexter: Another offer?

V: Mhm. Kind where we ditch the middleman and split the pot an even fifty-fifty.

T-Bug: What?!

Jackie: Ahem.

Dexter: Ditch the middleman…? Hahaha, sheeit, now that's rich…

Jackie: Ahaha… AHAHAHAHA!

Dexter: Clients… never learn, do they? I do appreciate you sharin' this info, though, Mr. V. You see, trust… …is essential in any partnership that's to be long-lasting and fruitful.

V: Appreciation don't convert to eddies, and Evelyn offered us a bunch.

Jackie: V's tellin' it like it is, Dex.

Dexter: Y'all need not worry, truly. We'll come to that.

V: Thought you'd be pissed, that you'd lose it.

Dexter: Lived in NC too long to blow my top every time some amateur thinks they can take me for a ride. Parker ain't the first and sure as hell won't be the last.

V: How 'bout we go over the plan? Whatcha got for us, Dex?

Dexter: This.

[He points to the shard on the table. V takes it in his hands and inserts it into his body.]

V: Well, here goes nothin'.

T-Bug: Me and Dex've already covered the fine detes. Ops wise, should be a stroll on the beach.

Jackie: Elaborate, I wanna hear it.

[V sees some info and photos before his eyes.]

Dexter: A Delamain'll drop your asses at the front door of Konpeki Plaza. You'll stroll right in thanks to your false identities. Then, with Bug's help, you'll breach the hotel's subnet...

T-Bug: Mine and the Flathead's help.

Dexter: Last but not least, you slip into Yorinobu's penthouse and klep the Relic.

T-Bug: Goes without sayin' we do this on the hush - ideally no bodies, not a one.

Dexter: You'll have T-Bug on comms for the duration. Time for your burnin' questions.

V: Transport's a Delamain?

Jackie: Preemest cab company in all Night City... Nada mal... (Not bad...)

Dexter: DeShawn don't ever work with anyone but the best. I consider Delamain just that.

T-Bug: Yeah, who needs creepy, nosy cab drivers when you've got a clean AI to get you from point A to point B in style?

Jackie: And how he bags a permit to operate every year's still a mystery.

Dexter: If everythin' goes as planned, Delamain'll drop you back here. If things get sticky, he'll head for the safe house.

V: Which is...

Dexter: The No-Tell Motel. Quiet, no questions asked. Make our next move from there. But I'm flat certain that won't be necessary. Anything else?

V: These new identities - tell us more. What's our cover?

T-Bug: Hello, Ramón Victorino. And you're Harry Conwell.

Jackie: Ramón - yeah, OK. What do we say we're there for?

Dexter: Biz as usual. Corpo arms deal. Case anyone asks, you there for a bogus meetin' with Arasaka's defense rep - Hajime Taki. Anything else?

V: How do we get in the penthouse?

T-Bug: Yorinobu's got barely any muscle. Hardest part'll be penthouse security. If we wanna disable, we'll need to neutralize Konpeki's dweller - elite ‘runner monitoring the hotel's subnet twenty-four seven. Only catch is there's no way to get in the dweller's den from the outside.

Jackie: Hold on, how you want us to get inside a room you can't get into?

Dexter: Trust me when I say whatever hitch you think up. T-Bug's solved it already.

T-Bug: This is where the Flathead comes in. You'll have to get him in the ventilation shafts, guide him to the dweller and force the dweller to… take a break. Flathead'll stay there, jacked into the dweller, but thanks to that I’ll be able to roll out your red carpet into the penthouse.

Dexter: Anything else?

V: OK, feel brought up to speed.

Dexter: Perfect.

Jackie: I got a question. When do we get to the real reason we're all here?

Dexter: Now's a good a time as any. Fresh talent gets thirty percent always, but I'm willin' to make an exception in your case. I'ma cut you a nice, juicy forty as a bonus for your honesty, V.

V: That's more like it, Dex.

Jackie: Ka-ching, baby!

Dexter: Last thing, Konpeki's got a strict no-iron policy. Security gates, the works. So you dawgs'll leave your lead-spitters in the ride, take the Flathead inside in its case.

T-Bug: Got some deft suits, so you'll look the port, too.

Jackie: ¡Chido! (Sweet!)

V: Thanks, T.

Jackie: So, not to count chickens, but when'll we see our eddies?

Dexter: All depends how Ms. Parker unrolls herself or her role, but a week, two tops is my guess.

V: And whadda we do while waitin'? Sit around, suck air?

Dexter: You sit tight, heads down, 'cause ol' uncle Arasaka be watching. Now, as that ol' Greek dawg says, life's a banquet - so don't go thirsty, but don't get drunk, either. Your chariot awaits outside.

T-Bug: My cue to delta, too. Gotta prep to jack in, be there when you come on comms. Any other issues, now's your chance.

V: Plan - what's your take?

T-Bug: Enough, I hope, to put me in a luxury Creton Villa from which I'll never set foot in cyberspace again.

V: Promise to send me a postcard?

T-Bug: No offense, but I'm gonna burn any and all bridges - need a clean break.

V: You an' Dex known each other a while?

T-Bug: Umm... why?

Jackie: Ah, y'know, peeps say all kinds of things...

T-Bug: "Everything we hear is an opinion not a fact" - Marcus Aurelius, I think.

Jackie: Huh, you and Dex - both philosophizin'... No wonder you get along.

V: I'm good, no questions.

T-Bug: Let's get to work!

Jackie: So, you ready to get goin' or what?

V: Somethin' I gotta take care of first.

Jackie: Sin problemas. (No problem.) Meet you by the Delamain. Just don't forget to suit up.

[V changes his clothes and goes to the bar.]

Claire: Get you anything?

V: Could definitely go for a drink.

Claire: Tough day?

V: Like any other.

Claire: So, what'll it be?

[He doesn't have time to order a drink - Jackie comes out to the bar with the suitcase. They walk to the car. V gets in the back seat. The screen on the back of the seat turns on and the robot speaks.]

Delamain: My systems inform me that we await one other passenger.

V: Yep - on his way, catchin' up.

[Jackie puts the suitcase in the trunk and sits in the back seat. He, too, is dressed in an expensive tuxedo.]

Delamain: Welcome on board this Delamain service. With Delamain, you leave your problems at the door.

Jackie: Son of a bitch! Better fuckin' believe I will!

Delamain: I see no reason why you should be using expletives.

Jackie: Oh yeah? What about that time I wanted to hire you for my cousin's bachelor party, huh?

Delamain: Unfortunately, we do not take on such contracts.

Jackie: Three months I'd been savin' up scratch... Egh, water under the bridge. Hit it, Del!

Delamain: Before we begin our journey, I must verify the identities of all customers. Please proceed to connect your personal links. Thank you. "Excelsior" package activated.

Jackie: "Excelsior"? Hohoho, this just keeps gettin' better!

[The car starts driving itself.]

V: What's got you so antsy?

Jackie: Hang on, watch this… Delamain! Initiate combat mode!

Delamain: My apologies, but you do not appear to be in any sort of imminent danger.

Jackie: Huh… Oh well. Trust me, he'll mow down an army of ‘Saka ninjas if it comes down to it.

V: This combat mode even… legal?

Delamain: Of course it is. The Second Amendment says so. While on board, you are entirely within your rights to "bear" and use me.

V: Excelsior - what else is included?

Delamain: Comprehensive health coverage, including the handling and disposal of a client's remains should death occur on board.

Jackie: Damn. Shit got dark pretty quick.

V: Dex ain't skimpin', is he.

Jackie: And thanks to you, we're still gettin' a juicy forty percent.

V: You're welcome.

Jackie: "Excelsior..." This is how you wanna cruise into the major leagues...

V: Wouldn't get overly excited.

Jackie: Hm?

V: Haven't gotten there - not yet. Dunno, Jack... kinda feels like you're losin' that steel grip of yours.

Jackie: Huh, seems to me like it's you who's got some kinda problem...

V: We're not on our way to some party, Jack. We're about to pull a major heist. At Arasaka.

Delamain: We are nearing our destination.

Jackie: For real, V...? See me as that shallow? Lemme explain somethin' to you, V... My whole life I've spent in this shit around us! And I ain't goin' back!

T-Bug: Hey. How's things?

Jackie: Smooth as fuckin' sandpaper.

V: We'll be, uh, pullin' up to the hotel soon.

T-Bug: Listen, set up a direct, encrypted line to guide you through Konpeki. V, ring Jackie now, see if we're in sync. Can't be too careful. And?

Jackie: Got static. Say somethin', Bug?

T-Bug: "The greatest crimes issue from a desire for excess and not from necessity."

Jackie: Say what now?

T-Bug: Aristotle. Guess you read me, then?

Jackie: Yeah, I read you. Not so much your Greek friend, though it was kind of exciting.

T-Bug: Could give it some thought, try to understand...? How 'bout

you, V?

V: I want more Aristotle!

T-Bug: Fuck off, both.

Jackie: Hehehe.

T-Bug: OK, tech checks out, looks like.

Jackie: Será mejor que sí... (Fuckin' better...)

T-Bug: Stay in touch.

Delamain: Thank you for choosing the Delamain service. And best of luck. I shall await here for your return.

Jackie: Shit's finally happenin'... Almost forgot, no iron, eh? All right, "Harry," let's go. Hold on, lemme grab the Flathead.

V: We're out front, Bug.

T-Bug: 'Member, reservation's in your name... Ramón. You're there to meet Hajime Taki - military tech department rep. Papers are for the Flathead.

Jackie: Don't worry, got this.

Security Guard: Welcome to Konpeki Plaza. Please come through single file.

Jackie: You got it, holm-- uh, ahem, sir.

Security Guard: Ahem. Hold on, got something. Sir, care to explain why you're bringin' a combat bot onto Konpeki Plaza premises?

V: We're arms dealers.

Security Guard: Excuse me?

Concierge: Ah! You are here to see Taki-san, am I right? Please accept my apologies for the confusion.

Jackie: Pff...

Security Guard: This should only take a moment, sir.

Concierge: Go ahead.

Receptionist: Youkoso. Greetings and welcome to Konpeki Plaza.

V: We'd like to check in.

Receptionist: Of course, just a moment, please. The name on the

reservation is...?

Jackie: Victorino.

Receptionist: Double room, two adults, one night. Correct?

V: That's the one.

Receptionist: Perfect... I will go ahead and notify Taki-san of your arrival.

T-Bug: (via radio) Shit, no good, not part of the plan. Talk her up, V, stall!

V: That won't be necessary. We'll go freshen up first, notify him ourselves.

Receptionist: But Taki-san is expecting you, no...?

Jackie: Senorita, do you know how long we been traveling? Eighteen hours from New Barcelona. With a delay on Metakey 'cause some cyberpsycho blew himself into bits inside the terminal...

V: Ugh, a nightmare...

Receptionist: Of course, I understand. You will be in the Lapis Lazuli Suite on level forty-two. Oh, one more little formality... Please

validate your SID chip.

Jackie: Honor's all yours, Harry.

Receptionist: Everything seems to be in order. We wish you a pleasant stay.

V: Thank you.

Jackie: Better get goin'.

T-Bug: New Barcelona? Really?

Jackie: It's called improvisin' - you should try it. Whaddaya think, "Harry"?

V: Hmm?

Jackie: Quaint, cozy. Not like the hotel we had in Zurich for that convention.

T-Bug: Don't need that, Jack. Enough.

Jackie: What? I'm takin' this seriously!

[They enter a bar on the second floor.]

Jackie: Bar don't look too shabby.

Waitress: We don't do reservations weekdays, so feel free to grab any available table. Or a couple of stools at the bar if you prefer?

Jackie: Could bring Misty here one day. When we, uh... close this deal.

V: Wouldn't hurt to take a peek inside...

Jackie: Sheeit, look like some fuckin' travelin' salesman with this case. Goin' upstairs.

[V walks into the bar and goes to the counter where a drunk guy talks to the bartender.]

V: What's gonna slap everyone?

Guest: You wanna know what a bearer of bad news looks like? What's four hundred yards long, weighs a hundred thousand tons, and is nuclear powered...? The answer's docked in the bay.

Guest: Hanako Arasaka decided - hiccup! - decided to take a little vacation!

V: Big deal.

Guest: Don't know how big just yet... And by the time we do, it'll.. it'll

be too late. Screw this. I'm gonna get some sleep… (leaves)

V: Evenin'.

Bartender: Evenin'. What can I get ya, kiddo?

V: I'm good, thanks.

Bartender: Come back anytime.

V: Hey.

Bartender: We meet again, kiddo. What're ya havin'?

V: Let's see whatcha got.

Bartender: O' course.

[V takes the elevator and catches up with Jackie.]

Jackie: About time.

V: We're in our room.

Jackie: Pretty snazzy. Too bad we ain't stayin' the night. Nice choice, Bug.

T-Bug: Didn't pick it for snazz. Offers quickest access to the dweller and servers.

Jackie: Sí, sí, me acuerdo. (Yeah, yeah. I remember.)

T-Bug: Now you fire up the Flathead and find the shaft entrance.

V: Sounds simple enough.

T-Bug: Simplicity's sometimes toughest to master.

Jackie: Aurelius? Aristotle? Who's it this time?

T-Bug: Yours truly, that one's mine.

V: Where's the shaft?

T-Bug: Boot up your scanner, look around.

V: Flathead prepped to go?

Jackie: Almost there, carnal. Still nothin'? C'mon, can't be that hard. Weren't you supposed to look for the shaft?

V: Got a winner.

T-Bug: Good. Jackie, how's the Flathead lookin'?

Jackie: All set. Systems’re operational, charge at a hundred…

[The Flathead turns its invisibility on and goes into the shaft.]

Jackie: Mierdo. (Shit.) Little gonk's stuck.

T-Bug: Just gonna stand there and look at it? Gonna have to switch to manual control. V, take the control shard from Jackie. Gonna link your Kiroshis to surveillance so you can guide the bot.

V: Surveillance cover the whole hotel?

Jackie: Mhm. Even the bedrooms in the suites.

V: Guests don't care?

T-Bug: You'd be surprised what people're willin' to give up to feel secure. Lucky for us, Yorinobu's an exception. Penthouse is dark, no hotel security.

V: Why me? Why do I gotta slot it in?

Jackie: Unlike someone, I haven't run up my tou with Vik. Got last-gen firmware low flow. Just do it, bróder, ain't got all day. Here.

V: Here goes.

[V takes control of the bot.]

T-Bug: Patching you through to in-cam view. Might get a little disoriented, but don't freak.

V: OK, got a clear view.

T-Bug: Get him to the next vent.

V: OK, Flathead's in.

T-Bug: Patching you into next cam now.

V: Uhhh, Bug? Got a hitch.

T-Bug: What now?

V: Housekeeping's in my way.

T-Bug: Gotta distract her. Hmm, let's see what's on the subnet…

V: All right, on it. Terrarium's got a control panel.

T-Bug: Somehow I doubt it.

V: Got a smartroom panel. Useful?

T-Bug: Hm, no, not in the least.

V: Terrarium's got a temp and air quality controller.

T-Bug: Preem, yeah. Sic the Flathead on it.

V: Hey, Bug! It worked!

T-Bug: Psh, ain't seen nothin' yet. Keep movin', no time for back-pattin'.

V: 'Kay...

T-Bug: Dweller's just beyond the door. Flathead can jimmy the lock.

V: Looks like he's havin' trouble.

T-Bug: Shit... Gotta be another way. Lemme think... Got another cam other side of the door, but it's disabled.

V: Want me to enable?

T-Bug: Yeah. Look around for a CCTV port.

V: OK, he's at it.

T-Bug: Now toggle over to the other cam.

V: Dweller's inside.

T-Bug: Just as planned.

V: Still weird the hotel's only got one 'runner.

T-Bug: Decent dweller's as good as a dozen rank-and-file.

V: Flathead oughta be able to neutralize him.

T-Bug: Good thinking. Lemme graft a demonoid onto your link. And ya know ya gotta jack the Flathead directly into his chair, right?

V: Make it sound like I'm new at this.

T-Bug: OK, sent. He's all yours. You'll have to get the Flathead in there first, though. Shaft may link both rooms, looks like.

V: Let's figure it out.

T-Bug: Now toggle over to the other cam.

V: Mighta found our way in!

T-Bug: Send the Flathead over there, then toggle over to the second

cam. Flathead into the chair, V, jack in. Whoop! Got him! Love those daemons! Flathand stays, right?

T-Bug: To keep an eye on the dweller, yeah. Punching into uspelos main net. You go ahead and log out.

Jackie: That's how it's done! How ya feelin'?

V: Fine. Little dizzy, that's all.

Jackie: Bug? How're you doin' on time?

V: You there, Bug?

T-Bug: Yeah, yeah, I'm here. Soooo listen, ICE is thicker than I thought. Piercing it'll take a couple hours.

Jackie: A couple hours?! Can't do it any faster?

T-Bug: Want my brain to burst into flames? Just siddown and enjoy your snazzy suite.

Jackie: Thanks, I will! V, you take it easy, OK? Rest up a bit.

[V sits on the couch.]

A FEW HOURS LATER

Jackie: Whaddaya think? Why'd he give it all up?

V: Hmm? Who gave what up?

Jackie: Yorinobu Arasaka. The good life, I mean. Old news, I know. Just got to thinkin's all. It's like, think… You got everything, right? Eddies, education. Your pops can snop his fingers and turn half the fuckin' planet into a nuclear wasteland… But instead you're like, "Nah, fuck it," and whaddaya go do? Start a fuckin' gang! Steel Dragons or some shit! You ghost from your fam, chip some RealSkinn and play gang leader for a few years. For what?!

V: (streetkid) Ehh fuck 'im! Why do I need to care about some bougie prick and his street-kid fantasies?

Jackie: Heheh, musta been a hoot, huh? "I'm Yorinobu Arasaka. Would you folks like to join my gang?" Tsh… poser with corp protection. Heheh, and the name, too! Steel fuckin' Dragons? Hah, oh man. A wannabe gangoon's wet dream.

V: Got bored of bein' rich, an' then got bored of playin' tough.

Jackie: Fuckin' tourist.

T-Bug: Tourist or not, he just walked into the lobby. And we are back in biz. Penthouse security is neutralized.

Jackie: Perfecto. Let's start the show. Hey, Bug… were, uh… were you on comms that whole time?

T-Bug: Three and a half hours.

Jackie: Eehh… about that stick up the ass…

T-Bug: Mean the one up mine?

Jackie: Ehh, slip of the tongue, y'know…

T-Bug: I know. Now's your chance to make up to me.

[They go into the elevator.]

Jackie: Ahh, there's the awkward silence. You, uh, wanna hear a joke?

T-Bug: Now? Seriously?

Jackie: OK, so why'd the rockerboy's output kick him out of the apartment? ‘Cause he wasn't chippin' in. Hahaaa!

T-Bug: Jesus Christ…

Jackie: Huh… not bad bein' heir to the Arasaka empire. Sure as shit better'n bein' the son of Raúl Welles.

T-Bug: Guys! Focus! The safe! And make it quick!

Jackie: Why, what's the rush?

T-Bug: Sig on Yorinobu's gone dark!

Jackie: What is he, a fuckin' sorcerer?

T-Bug: Some kinda dead zone's my guess - have him back in a sec. And you do your damn job! There. Under the floor. Look around for a switch.

Jackie: Hurry up, V! Bingo, got somethin' ejectin'! C'mere, V!

V: What now?

T-Bug: Jack in your personal and make us rich!

V: On it. Your turn, Bug.

T-Bug: Gimme two...

[Some saucers flies near the building.]

Jackie: We got winged visitors... Bug...?

T-Bug: Dunno who. But staffs abuzz, all two hundred on their feet, can't keep still.

Jackie: Can't say I like this… How much longer, T?!

T-Bug: Shit. Yorinobu's penthouse bound!

Jackie: Fuck him! Open the safe!

T-Bug: Almost got it… Done!

V: Preem!

Jackie: Lemme look to this, eh?

T-Bug: Relic intact?

Jackie: "Bioshard integrity - one hundred percent." Guessin' that's a yes.

V: Good. Let's go!

T-Bug: Fuck, too late! Yorinobu's about to walk in - find cover!

V: Where?!

T-Bug: Fat pillar - try that!

Jackie: You fuckin' kiddin'?!

T-Bug: No! Inside it! Now!

V: We're in.

Jackie: Which don't solve our problem, T.

T-Bug: I fuckin' know our problem's still there! Lemme think for a sec, OK?

Jackie: Is tha… Is that Adam Smasher?!

V: Bodyguard?

Jackie: Worse. Night City legend. Bleak motherfuckin' one, too. What's the plan?

V: We wait…

Yorinobu: Are they here yet?

A.I.: They approach from the landing pad.

Jackie: Fuck are they talking about?

V: Bug, who we got incoming?

T-Bug: Nuh-uh, no fucking way…. This isn't happening…! Saburu Arasaka?

Jackie: The emperor? Yet another asslickin' legend….

V: Shush. Doubt this cubby's soundproof.

Yorinobu:首を突っ込まないでくれって言っただろう (I thought I told you not to meddle in my affairs.)

[Takemura is staring at V and Jackie's hiding place.]

Jackie: Oh fuck…

V: Sshh.

Saburo: 外してくれ (Leave us.)

Takemura: アラサカ様、まだボディチェックが終わっていません (Arasaka-sama, I still haven't done a full sweep.)

Saburo: 私の息子だ (This is my son.)

Takemura: 例のモノを回収しましょうか・・・? (Of course. Should I retrieve what we come here to…?)

Saburo: 私がやる。行ってくれ (I will handle it. You may go.)

[Takemura bows and leaves.]

Jackie: Wooo close…

V: Too close. If he'd sniffed us out…

Jackie: But he didn't. Now cállate. (shut up.)

Jackie: Un-fucking-believable… Saburo Arasaka.

Saburo: 私が・・・ 気づかないとでも思ったのか? (Did you think I wouldn't know it was taken from me?)

Yorinobu: そもそも俺のことを気にしたことなんかないだろう (Actually, I don't think of you at all. Ever.) あんたの問題点はそこだ。世界は自分中心に回ってると思ってる。傲慢だよ (You see, that's your problem. You think the world revolves around you. Arrogant.)

Saburo: ヨリノプ・・・(Yorinobu.)

Yorinobu: どうしてここへ?直々に俺に屈辱を味わせ、立場を思い知らせるためにか (Why did you came? To humiliate me? To personally see to it that your son knows his place?)

Saburo: 「出る杭は打たれる」とよく言うだろう」("The nail that protrudes from the wall gets hammered...")

Yorinobu:自分の言葉じゃ何も言えないのか? (Couldn't think of anything original to say?)

Saburo: 資様こそ、自分が何をしようとしたかわかっているのか? 私たちの功績を野蛮人に渡すなど・・・私たちの未来を (And do you think it "original" to sell our greatest achievement to Westerners - our future to these... barbarians?!)

Yorinobu: 「俺たちの未来」? 俺たち?なんかの間いだろう。あんたは自分のことしか考えてない。そしてこの会社のことしか (Our future? Ours?! You are mistaken. You've only ever cared about yourself... and your sick schemes.)

Saburo: いつかこのような日が来ることはわかっていた・・・資様は、ついに超えてはならない一線を超えたのだ (I knew this day would come. That sooner or later your impudence would cross the line.) これまでお前の患行には目をつぶってきた。だが、それもここまでを。こ円裏切り! だけは決して許せん (There is much for which I could forgive you, but for treason - no.) 貴様の母親が生きていなくてよかった。息子の不甲斐ない姿を目の当たりにし、て、心を痛めずに済んだのだからな・・・(I'm just glad your mother didn't live to see this. The heart should break but once.)

[Yorinobu grabs Saburo's neck in rage and chokes him.]

Jackie: Oh, shit...

Yorinobu: これで、もう第のことも許す必要はない (You shall never have to forgive me for anything again.)

[He chokes his father to death.]

Jackie: Fuuuck me... That's that. We done for.

Yorinobu: I wish... I wish to put the hotel on lockdown.

A.I.: May I ask why?

Yorinobu: Saburo Arasaka has been murdered.

A.I.: Code red initiated. Attention! Code Red has been initiated throughout Konpeki Plaza. Please remain in your rooms and follow all instructions given by staff.

Takemura: 何の騒ぎです? (What happened?)

Yorinobu: 第かが・・・雅かが父に毒を盛った (Someone... someone poisoned my father.)

Takemura: 毒を? (Poisoned?)

Yorinobu: そうだ (It seems so.)

Takemura: ヨリノブさん・・・しかし・・・ (Yorinobu-san... I doubt...)

Yorinobu: タケムラ、お前の仕事は何だ? (What is your job, Takemura?)

Takemura: 何の話です? (I don't follow.)

Yorinobu: 単純な質問だ。答えろ (It's a simple question. Answer it.)

Takemura: アラサカ家の家長を守ることです (To protect the head of the Arasaka family.)

Yorinobu: 今後はもっとしっかり責任を果たすよう望んでいるぞ... (I do sincerely hope you'll do a better job of executing your duties from now on...)

Takemura: お許しください、アラサカ様。決して失望はさせません (Forgive me, Arasaka-sama. I shall not disappoint.)

[They leave the room.]

T-Bug: What the fuck just happened in there?

V: Yorinobu... just offed Saburo!

T-Bug: What?!

Jackie: His own fuckin' pops…

T-Bug: Know what this means?I Security's gonna swarm the place any second. Oh my god, we're so fucked!

Jackie: V, there's time for thinkin', time for gettin' the fuck out! Let's go!

V: Bug, need you to get us out of here. Now!

T-Bug: Gimme a sec!

Jackie: We don't have a sec!

V: Fuck…!

T-Bug: OK, got somethin'! Window - now! Releasing the lock! Should see a ladder… Ladder… Oh fuck. No, no, no, no - not now…! I been made… Aaarrghhh!

V: Bug!

Jackie: ¡Pinche Dios Santo bendito! (Jesus fucking Christ!) Just lost T…

V: Fuck! Fuckin' major leagues! Happy now, Jackie?!

[They're trying to get down the edge of the building...]

Jackie: You can do it, Jackie... just don't look down! Yep, that's fuckin' high...! Shit! That Trauma?

V: If they're here for Saburo, they're a little late!

Jackie: Just hope they didn't see us! ¡Chingada madre! (Oh, fuck!)

Drone: セキュリティプロトコル違反の容疑者発見! (Suspects in violation of security protocols!)

Jackie: Time to bail!

[V and Jackie jump off the edge of the building onto the glass roof. As they slide over it, the drone fires at them with machine guns.]

Jackie: Ahh! Pero qué chingados! (Ahh! Fuck me!) Oh shit...

[They fall into the nearby building.]

V: Oof... Close one...

Jackie: The Relic! ¡Madres! (Mother...!) Agh... Oh, this ain't good. Agh...

V: How's the biochip...?

Jackie: I dunno... "Container depressurized. Biochip integrity at ninety-four percent." And fuckin' droppin'! Carajo! (Fuck!) Parker! Call her!

V: An' tell her we fried the case?!

Jackie: Just do it!

Evelyn: V?! Konpeki's all over the feeds! What the fuck's going on there?

V: Got a problem! Cryocase is damaged. Biochip's integrity at... Jackie?

Jackie: Eighty-six percent!

V: Eighty-six percent and droppin'!

Evelyn: Shit...! OK, listen to me. There's only one thing you can do. One of you's gotta slot the Relic into your neural port!

V: What the hell are you talkin' about?

Evelyn: The Relic can't be isolated - it has to be nested in a safe environment!

Jackie: Well, someone's gotta do it. (opens the case) In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit - Amen.

[He inserts the chip into his neck.]

V: Jackie...? You OK?

Jackie: Dunno... I guess... Don't feel any different.

Evelyn: Once you're back, we'll take out the Relic and run a full brain scan and sweep. But you two need to get the fuck out of there first!

V: We're workin' on it!

[Jackie calls the car.]

Jackie: Del, we'll be there in a couple. Be ready, got it?

Delamain: Certainly, Mr. Welles.

Jackie: Better be fuckin' certain. We gotta somehow... reach the lobby. Only chance to hit the garage. And we'd best be quick. Oh-ho, that's the shit... Great... Now let's get outta here.

[They try to quietly get out of the hotel.]

Jackie: ¡Madres! Keep your head down! We'll get down there… take 'em out quietly. En silencio. (In silence.) One for you, one for me. Wait for it… Well what do we have here. Silencer'll come in handy. Careful… security likely to be swarmin' outside.

V: Got it.

Jackie: This way! Ain't doin' too bad… Just a little further… Shit… They're everywhere… ¡Chingo tu madre! (Motherfucker!) It's shut down! What about the other one? Elevator's bein' watched too… Gotta take him out.

V: Shard gives us access to the door.

[Finally they make their way to the elevator.]

Jackie: Hah-… agh! Heh, hng…

V: What?

Jackie: Saburo Arasaka… Hundred and fifty years… and today… of all fuckin' days. That's like… some divine comedy shit… heheheee… agh.

V: Think all this is funny?!

Jackie: Yeah… I do.

V: Your liver could be fucked!

Jackie: Had it comin', heheh. Buuut… chill, V. We'll get out alive.

V: Tell Bug, why don'tcha. Maybe she'd still be alive if we hadn't been so gung-fuckin'-ho!

Jackie: Don't… take this… out on me… Can see… how the chips're fallin'…

[They take the elevator down to the first floor.]

Jackie: Elevator… Now, V! Move!

[They go down to the parking lot.]

Jackie: Argh… I'm leakin' a little…

[There's a couple of guards at the parking lot…]

Delamain: I advise that you waste no time in entering the vehicle.

[V and Jackie runs to the car.]

V: Delamain, gun it!

Delamain: Welcome back. With Delamain, you leave your problems

at the door....

V: We'll have problems if you don't fuckin' DRIVE!

[The car turns on its bulletproof shields and quickly drives away from the parking lot.]

V: Not bad!

Delamain: Client feedback noted.

V: How's our ride lookin'?

Delamain: Tiptop. Though alas, we are being pursued.

[Smasher runs after the car.]

Jackie: Sweet fuckin' Jesus!

V: Delamain...!

Delamain: Combat mode activated. Please remain calm.

V: Calm?!

Delamain: Road block ahead. I kindly request that you brace for impact.

Jackie: ¡Oy, mis huevos! (Ouch, my balls!) Shiiiit!

Delamain: A hostile enemy aircraft has a lock on us.

V: Leave it to me!

[He sticks his head out the window and shoots at the drones.]

Jackie: Why can't they just… give up…

Delamain: Hostile aircraft eliminated.

V: Phew!

Jackie: Nice work there… Del…

V: You're white as a ghost, Jack…

Jackie: See…? Told ya we'd… make it…

Delamain: My medical diagnostics indicate that Mr. Welles' condition is critical.

V: Take us to a ripperdoc! Now!

Delamain: Apologies, but that will not be possible. Our itinerary has

been pre-arranged and paid for in advance. I am not at liberty to alter it.

V: Fuck your liberty! Do what I say!

Jackie: It's OK, V... I'll hold out...

Delamain: I suggest you try to keep Mr. Welles conscious.

V: It's gonna be all right! You'll see Misty, your mom... everyone you love. Jackie! Don't close your eyes!

Jackie: Misty... She knew... She always knew... The biochip... Hold on to it. For me.

[He takes a chip out of his neck and inserts it into V, after which he dies in silence.]

Delamain: Mr. Welles has passed. Where shall I take his remains?

V: W-what?

Delamain: The Excelsior package provides for the disposal of passenger remains free of charge. I merely require a destination.

V: (crying) Just... gimme a sec, will ya?!

Delamain: Mr. Welles' remains… Where shall I take them?

V: Nowhere. Stay here and don't move. I'll be right back.

Delamain: Understood. Mr. DeShawn awaits you in room number two-oh-four.

V: (touches Jackie's shoulder) See ya in the major leagues, Jack.

[V exits the car and goes to room 204.]

V: Lemme in.

Huscle: He waiting.

Dexter: (watching TV) WNS… N54… Even the pirate networks… You blowin' up everywhere! And the Jackster? He out in the car?

V: Don't care to know how Jackie is?

Dexter: Tone - you'd best watch it.

V: Bled out in the back seat. Dead.

Dexter: Well I'm sorry to hear that. And the Relic…?

V: (point to his head) Got it right here.

Dexter: Hmm… I was afraid o' that.

V: What?!

Dexter: Saburo Arasaka? Dead…?! You got any notion of the shit you pulled me into?! You offed the fuckin' emperor! HIS MAJESTY! Anyone with so much as a pinky toe dipped in this mess is as good as dead!

V: You're the one who got us into this mess! Let's start with your prep work? You had no idea Saburo Arasaka'd be at the hotel?

Dexter: I don't have access to his personal fucking schedule! And besides, nobody asked you to kill the old man!

V: That wasn't us!

Dexter: No shit?I Tell that to the 'Saka ninjas they send after you! A'ight, settle down. Gotta be tactical about this. Parker, eddies, then we leave the city limits behind. But first… Your face… got blood all over it. Bathroom's there. Go get yourself cleaned up.

[V go to the bathroom. He smashes the mirror in rage. There's blood all over his face. He cleans up a bit. After he comes out, Huscle throws a few punches at him. V loses consciousness.]

Dexter: A'ight, then… Can't risk it, V. 'Member our first convo? Seems

I've chosen the quiet life, after all. No blaze o' glory for me.

[He points his gun at V.]

V: I'll fucking kill you!

[Dexter pulls the trigger.]

THE HAMMER
AUG. 20, 2023
TIME: 9:00 PM

[Some stranger walks into the backstage of some dirty club.]

Stranger: Hey.

Groupie: You all right?

Stranger: Never been better.

Grouple: Sure don't look it...

Martin Tin: I can't let you on!

[The stranger presses the jerk against the mirror. Looking into the reflection, we realize that our stranger is Johnny Silverhand, played by Keanu Reeves.]

Martin Tin: Hey hey, we're chill.

[Johnny goes to the stage. Young Huscle is the bouncer there.]

Huscle: Heh... 'course you're high.

[Johnny picks up the microphone. He is holding a gun.]

Johnny: Tonight I'm... I'm here to say goodbye to all of you.

[He puts the gun away and starts playing the guitar. After a little glitch, Johnny is already sitting on the couch smoking a cigarette. Sitting next to him are two girls.]

Johnny: You're wastin' your lives, followin' us around like dogs.

Groupie: What crawled up your ass?

[Johnny is about to leave the building but is stopped by some guy.]

Kerry: Johnny, wait up! Don't do this. You can still change your mind.

Johnny: Get over here, man. Fuck this band. Not your crowd, not your noise, do your own thing.

Kerry: Bastard. Tsh… Gonna miss you something awful.

Johnny: See ya in the next life, friend.

[He walks out of the building. There is a helicopter waiting for him outside.]

Rogue: You're late.

Johnny: Love it when you're mad. Gets my southern blood pumpin'.

Rogue: Get in. 'Fore I change my mind.

Shaitan: Silverhand.

Johnny: Hey, Shaitan.

Rogue: Get us in the air. (gives Johnny a headphones) Here, put this on, and it STAYS on, got it?

[They fly away. Johnny throws his unfinished cigarette toward the club. Another time-skipping glitch.]

Shaitan: Piers're on fire. Pacifica's cut off, shut down. APCs on the streets of Watson.

Johnny: Sons of bitches.

Thompson: Skull-crackin' out there... that us?

Rogue: Johnny's idea. Weyland's drawing Arasaka's attention away from the tower.

Thompson: Collateral damage part of the plan, too?

Rogue: This isn't the cub scouts, Thompson, Chew it up, spit it out.

Shaitan: Target range acquired.

Rogue: Make it rain.

[Shaitan starts firing a machine gun, but he is quickly wounded.]

Shaitan: Fuck!

Rogue: Johnny! Shaitan!

Johnny: Taking over!

[Johnny kills all the guards on the roof.]

Pilot: Everybody! Jump!

Rogue: Murphy?

Spider Murphy: Found our access point. Get moving.

Rogue: Johnny, remember the plan?

Johnny: Get the payload on the elevator, arm it, let gravity do its thing. Explosion rocks the foundation, tower crumbles - chaos, screaming, roll credits.

Rogue: Exit window's gonna be tight.

Spider Murphy: Jacking in. Is grass green, do birds fly, do cats eat bats, do rats shit gnats?

Rogue: Mainframe's not your playground, Murphy, c'mon. Evac announcement - broadcast it across all frequencies and let's get movin'.

Spider Murphy: Sheesh, who wrote this manifesto?

Rogue: Really need me to answer that question?

Spider Murphy: Jesus, Johnny, you've gone of the deep end. And

that's comin' from chairjock.

[The team enters the building. Johnny kills Arasaka guards.]

Rogue: Come on! Get ready! Murph?

Snider Murphy: She sought it with thimbles, she sought it with care, pursued it with for and hope...

Rogue: Johnny payload.

[Johnny plants the bomb into the elevator.]

Johnny: “Bushido II” - bomb's name was what?

Rogue: Wrap it up, we gotta delta!

Johnny: The "Demolitron" - we're good to blow.

Thompson: 'Saka elites incoming! Run for it!

Rogue: Get the fuck out of there, Johnny! Shoot the cables! Get the rotors spinning! We're on our way!

Johnny: Not done yet still need to feed this to their subnet.

Rogue: I fucking knew it! This was never about "corporate

colonialism" - this was about your groupie output wasn't it?!

Johnny: You wouldn't understand, Rogue.

Rogue: Givin' you four fuckin' minutes. Chopper's not gonna wait one sec longer.

Spider Murphy: Door lock breached. Arasaka sons-a-bitches incoming.

Johnny: Love you, Spider.

Spider Murphy: Whole world loves me.

Johnny: Fuuuck! Closing in on the access point.

Spider Murphy: Slot in. Sweet ICE-breaker. Foreign, right? Just, wonder if we know anyone who can switch the subnet protocol…

Johnny: Hilarious. You gonna help or not?

Spider Murphy: Do spiders spin webs? It's time we caught some flies.

Johnny: Thanks, Murph.

Spider Murphy: Now, just for good measure… Holy cybercow, we're

on TV! Take a look.

News Anchor: And we turn now to Arasaka Tower its evacuation ongoing after an unidentified terrorist organization released a manifesto threatening violence. The terrorists stating their desire to, quote-unquote, "topple a monument to corporate colonialism." Night City's mayor, Mbole Ebunike, has issued a statement declaring that he will bring the full force of the law to bear in response to any act of terrorism. Going now to our reporter on the scene at Arasaka Tower. Hopefully, he can shed some light on this situation as events unfold.

Playing for Time

Spider Murphy: All set. Now get outta there. They're movin' up! Hit the roof, quick! Shit! That's Adam Smasher! Johnny, run!

[Another time glitch.]

ARASAKA TOWER
AUG. 20, 2023
TIME: 11:45PM

Johnny: Murphy?!

Spider Murphy: Door's sealed, but it won't hold for long. Run, Johnny. Like the wind.

[Johnny runs to the helicopter. Get to the choppa, Johnny!]

Rogue: Johnny! Move!

[Johnny walks up to the flying helicopter and grabs Rogue's hand. He tries to get him inside as a rocket shoots into the helicopter. Johnny falls and the damaged helicopter is forced to fly away.]

Johnny: Smasher.

Smasher: Told ya, Johnny boy. Told you I'd end you someday.

[He shots off Johnny's metallic arm. Another time glitch. Johnny is taken out of the building on a gurney.]

ARASAKA: はい、まだ生きています (Yes, he's still alive.) わかりました。向かいま (Understood. We're en route.)

[Another time glitch.]

Agent: Let us try once more. (slaps Johnny) Your associates - who are they? How did you acquire fissile material?

Johnny: Gonna give good cop over there a chance to say something? C'mooon...

[The agent hits Johnny right in the nuts.]

Agent: Which terrorist organization do you belong to? How did you

acquire fissile material?

[An old man enters.]

Johnny: Hey, gramps. I know you.

Saburo: 外せ (Leave us.) 直接話をする (I wish to look him in the eye.)

Johnny: Hot damn - done and gone.

Techie: My husband died in that tower. But there are fates worse than death…

[He puts a tech halo on Johnny's head.]

Johnny: I didn't want him to die.

Saburo: なぜ・・・ このようなことを? (Why did you do this?)

Techie: Why did you do this?

Johnny: To bring an end to the madness you wreak.

Saburo: 人は顔をつき、自分自身を欺く (I have found that people lie, most often deceiving themselves.) だが死者は違う (Not so the dead…) 死者は雄弁だが、彼らは決して組をつかない (The dead are so very, very loud. And yet, lying is not in their nature.) 死者の言

葉には・・・健ましさがある (It is so... humbling - to listen to the dead speak.) 始めろ (Begin.)

Johnny: Aargh...

[V wakes up in some strange virtual world. He approaches a stranger.]

Johnny: And you? Who're you?

[The computer in V's head reboots. He comes to, buried under the garbage.]

MUNICIPAL LANDFILL, 2077
TIME: 4:40 AM

[V digs himself out and crawls on the wet ground. However... The murderers have not yet left. Dexter grabs his leg and drags him to Takemura.]

Dexter: Urgh... Heavier than he looks. Now, listen, dawg. I have done exactly what you asked, so less you on me figure this--

[Takemura shots him in the head.]

Takemura: Hmm... アラサカ様、お父様の殺害犯を見つけました (Arasaka-sama, I've found your father's killer.) この男で間違いありません (It's him, I have no doubt.) はい (Yes.) 1時間こは着くかと (I expect to be there in an hour.)

V: Argh! Fuck...

Takemura: Quiet. (slaps V)

[Takemura puts him in the car and drives to his boss.]

Takemura: クソ、ひどい臭いだ (You smell like shit.)

[V briefly loses consciousness.]

Takemura: You hear me? I need your help!

[Takemura holds out a syringe of medicine to V. V stabs it into his chest and wakes up a little. He notices the motorcyclist on his right. He has a decidedly unfriendly attitude.]

Takemura: クソどもめ! (Sons of bitches!) Hold on! The booster will not last long...

[V pulls out a gun and helps Takemura.]

Assassin: Takemura! Die already!

Assassin: Traitor! Burn in hell!

[In the end, Takemura fails to keep control and crashes into a pole.]

Takemura: Don't you dare faint again. Keep your eyes open.

V: Fuck... Uuugh! (shots the last assassin)

Takemura: We both could use medical attention. Do you know a ripperdoc whom you can trust?

V: You... you were at Konpeki Plaza...

Takemura: We must get to a ripperdoc. Quickly.

V: Did well back there...

Takemura: Do not waste time.

V: Viktor... will fix us up.

Takemura: We have to get there somehow. Call someone. Anyone.

V: All right, all right...

[He calls Delamain.]

Delamain: Greetings. My scanner indicates you are outside the service area.

V: Just come… pick me up… Need to get to Misty's Esoterico… front of Vik's…

Delamain: Of course. A vehicle is en route. It should arrive in less than twenty minutes.

Takemura: What are you doing?! Hey!

[V loses consciousness. When he comes to, he's already riding in Delamain's car with Takemura.]

Delamain: Please proceed to insert the jack below the ear, though not too deep. There should be auxiliary neurosockets between his lymph nodes, beneath the SCM muscle.

Takemura: If I hit a vein by mistake, he will die.

Delamain: Indeed. As he will if you do nothing.

Takemura: I think I have the sockets.

Delamain: Now proceed to connect.

[Delamain arrives at Vik's. Takemura caring V with him.]

Takemura: I cannot hold it! I need… to rest…

Viktor: That your blood? Misty!

[On the table…]

Viktor: Pressure's tanking!

Delamain: It's neurogenic shock. He's dying.

Viktor: Gotta cut my way through the occipital bone. No other way.

Delamain: There is risk of --

Viktor: I know when doing.

[Some time later…]

Takemura: How is he?

Viktor: Slower on the mend than you, but lookin' better every day. V? You in there?

V: Ugh… my head.

Viktor: How ya feelin'?

V: Fuck… Dunno, Vik… ears're ringin'. And I'm seein' shit…

Viktor: These… hallucinations - describe 'em to me?

V: Blinding lights. It's loud. I'm on stage and almost can't breathe. I'm so damn full of… hatred. Then I let it all out into a mic. And I realize it didn't help, I don't feel any better. And then, promise not to laugh. I plant a bomb in Arasaka Tower.

Viktor: Nothin' there to laugh about…

V: Night City looked different… strange. And I hated it. Hated everybody, every inch. It was too real, even for a lucid dream.

Viktor: You weren't dreaming, V. Those were memories. There's a personality construct on that shard, Dreams you had were from his past.

V: Sayin' I experienced another psyche's memories? How's that possible?

Viktor: You two're connected in a way I can't make head or tail of.

V: Two? Me and who, Vik, who's the other?

Viktor: Johnny Silverhand. A terrorist - real talk o' the town back in my day. Anyway, that's not what's important right now…. Anyway, that's not what's important right now….

V: Never given me that look before, Vik. What is it?

Viktor: You, uh, don't got a lot of time left, kid.

V: Say what now?

Viktor: The biochip… It's basically a bomb, fuse lit already. You don't have much time left, much… life. A few weeks tops. Silverhand's construct is overwriting your consciousness - gradually taking over your body until one day you'll just be… gone. V. It's important you get all this.

V: You'll fix me up, right? Vik?

Viktor: If I could, I would, V, believe me. But this is… Way beyond what I know how to do.

[Viktor is broken by what is happening. It's hard for him that they can't do anything. V sees this and realizes that it's over. He bursts into emotion.]

V: You're the best of the best, Vik. Why can't you help me?

Viktor: Want the long story or the short?

V: Don't omit a thing, not one dete.

Viktor: OK. There was, is, a construct, a psyche on the chip. That of Johnny Silverhand. You jacked it in your chipslot. Nothing happened, right? Until you died.

V: Bullet in the head from Dexter DeShawn. But, how do you come back from something like that?

Viktor: Low caliber - you lucked out. Not least thanks to another poor decision by Mr. DeShawn. The nannites off the chip started fixing the damage. Then they took your hand and coaxed you off the path towards the light.

V: People don't just die and then get up like nothing happened.

Viktor: Used to be true. Now, it's only if they don't have a classified piece of corpo tech primed to resurrect them.

V: What about me, my psyche? I make it back from the other side, and what? I'm supposed to pretend change is normal?

Viktor: Ask the Arasaka engineers who built the thing. All I know is your mind's gonna go and it won't be pretty. From the biochip's perspective, your brain cells are a tumor that needs to be scooped

out, while your body's an empty shell to hold the construct.

V: So this fucking terrorist wants to wipe me and take my place, take my body.

Viktor: It's not willful on his part. It's automatic, inevitable. And neither of you can stop it.

V: Can't we just take the chip out? Or switch it off?

Viktor: Either way's out of the question. You'd die, immediately.

V: Fuck, I remember this thing, saw it on TV... What was that stupid slogan? Soul something?

Viktor: "Secure Your Soul."

V: That's it! It's just supposed to let you communicate with constructs.

Viktor: Maybe. But this is a prototype, by the look of things. Somehow made it out of Arasaka labs.

V: Vik, you've always come through for me. If there's nothing you can do to help me, then... well, what the hell do I do? Tell me, please. Vik?

Viktor: I wish I knew, kid. Misty!

Misty: You're askin' too much from an old-timer like Vik. C'mon, V, let's get you home.

[Misty takes V to his home.]

V: And then he died… and I thought I was gonna die… with him, in my sleep.

[Misty enters.]

Misty: Sleep's a… Small hint of death, the inevitable.

V: Can't actually tell if I'm awake now. I mean, I could be dead already, right?

Misty: Not something to focus on. V. Let it go. Here, got some meds for you. Omega blockers - token regularly, they'll keep things from progressing too quickly. Also, they should keep that guest of yours calm, quiet. Pseudoendotrizine's from me. Effect'll be opposite. It'll speed things up, free the demon, so to speak.

V: Givin' me a pill to prod that sonofabitch? So he can kill me faster?

Misty: Listen, you're likely to be fine for a while. But some time down the road. It could turn into pure agony. I'm givin' you options, honey.

V: The brain can be tricked. Plain old painkillers do that.

Misty: Your psyche's gonna die, V. You'll feel… your old self slipping away. At some point, you won't recognize yourself. It'll be terrifying. It'll be painful. But it doesn't have to be.

V: The fuck I need pills for? Oughta just stick a gun in my mouth, pull the trigger.

Misty: Well, that way you'd kill two souls. Is that what you want?

V: Gotta lie down…

ACT 2

Misty: Here, got one more thing for ya. Vik pulled this outta your skull - a lucky charm? Promise you'll try to get some sleep?

V: Didn't you hear? My condition's terminal. What good can this do?

Misty: Don't be silly. As long as you're alive, there's hope. And don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

V: Really think I can make it, survive this?

Misty: 'Course you can. I mean, you did already die and come back once, didn't ya?

V: Misty, wait. Umm… about Jackie…

Misty: Yeah?

V: Misty, wait. Umm... about Jackie... I'm so fucking sorry Jack's not here anymore.

Misty: Jackie was special. Really spiritually rich. He touched so many people with his love. Don't worry, he'll be around.

V: Sure you'll be all right?

Misty: I'll be fine. Life is so beautifully powerful, so much more powerful than death. But right now you need rest. So sleep, please sleep.

[V lies down in his bed, looks at the bullet necklace given to him, and falls asleep. Johnny appears in the corner. He is a glitch in consciousness that only V sees and hears.]

Johnny: Gotta get out of here, understand? And I kill anyone who gets in my way. You included.

[V wakes up. Johnny stands in the corner and bangs his head against the wall.]

Johnny: Need a smoke. Where'd you stash yours?

V: Where'd you even come from? How're we even talking?

Johnny: How the fuck should I know? The fuck kinda joytoy are you s'posed to be?

V: Fuckin' ghost off!

[Johnny teleports and punches V.]

Johnny: Who you work for? Start talkin'!

V: Fuck!

Johnny: Fuck!

Johnny: Fucking chip… Rip the thing out myself!

V: No! Wait! Ugh…

Johnny: I'll take control. I'll FIND a way! You hear me?!

[V takes the pills.]

V: See you never, asshole.

Johnny: Not like that!

[He knocks the bottle out of V's hands.]

Johnny: Stick some iron in your mouth and pull the trigger. I can feel it... our minds... touching... I'm like mold on fruit... creepin' into you... nothing I can do about it. You hear me?! I'd puke if I fuckin' could! It's just a copy of the engram - I'm out there somewhere, gotta be...

V: I'm... gonna kill you.

Johnny: Do it, what're you waiting for?!

V: Ugh. Fuck me...

[V loses consciousness and wakes up in the shower.]

[V gears up. Takemura calls him.]

Takemura: Takemura here. We must meet. Come to Tom's Diner.

V: Hmm... why would I do that?

Takemura: Because I am the one who saved your life.

V: Haven't managed to get my head straight yet, not after everything that happened.

Takemura: That will not happen anytime soon. And so what? If you intend to live, you must reenter the ring. The bell has already tolled. Tom's Diner. I am waiting.

[V walks to nearby dinner.]

Takemura: Sit. You do not look so bad. Then, in the car, I doubted you would survive.

V: Why'd you help me, anyway?

Takemura: I needed you to live. That hasn't changed.

V: This about the biochip? That why I'm here?

Takemura: Hm. I hear it is damaged beyond repair Any ottempt to extract it would be disastrous, fatal for you.

V: Huh. Vik likes to talk, I guess...

Takemura: Not many could do what he did. You should be thankful.

V: What's it you actually want from me?

Takemura: To begin, you must tell me where to find Evelyn Parker.

V: Evelyn... what's she to you?

Takemura: She and Yorinobu Arasaka had intimate relations… She knows how to get to him.

V: Been thinkin' oughta have a word with her myself. She promised to help me get rid of the chip.

Takemura: I would not count on that. She is likely gone, very far away.

V: Just answered your own question 'bout where Evelyn is - long gone.

Takemura: Why do you believe she could help you remove the chip? Does on corporation help her?

V: You ask a lot of questions.

Takemura: You have many interesting things to say.

V: Might be your turn now to say something interesting.

Takemura: I intend to punish Yorinobu Arasoka severely for the crime he has committed.

V: Sorry I couldn't be of any help. Don't have any time to lose, so…

Takemura: V, wait. I need you. Yorinobu Arasaka must answer for this crime of patricide.

V: Pff. Lookin' for justice? In Night City?

Takemura: I seek revenge. Much more feasible here. I have allies prepared to bring Yorinobu to his knees. The only thing I need is proof.

V: And you think they'll trust the word of a merc?

Takemura: I have nothing better now. Also, I know no one here, and I am a fugitive, I am hunted.

V: What if I say no?

Takemura: Then I will tell you what rewards await if you help me.

V: So what we stroll into Arasaka HQ and announce that Yorinobu's on kingkiller? That he murdered Saburo?

Takemura: We will get a hearing before reasonable people, in a neutral location. Certain… procedures will be used to establish the truth.

V: A lie-detector? Forget it.

Takemura: In that case, another option. You are dying. You do not know how to save yourself. A chip, the Relic, is the culprit. Technology made by Arasaka, technology they alone know. This corporation can save you as easily as it can make you disappear. It is merely about getting the right people on your side. Politics.

V: Exactly what kind of people are we talkin' about?

Takemura: People who hold Arasaka dear, are its heart. People interested in the corporation's stable growth.

V: Ya mean people like Anders Hellman?

Takemura: You know this name how?

V: Prepped for the heist, thoroughly. Relic is Hellman's design, his creation.

Takemura: Untrue - he is a pawn. I was thinking of one much more powerful. Besides, Anders Hellman escaped Arasaka, betrayed it.

[He is distracted by the news release.]

Tom: Fuckin' 'Saka scum's everywhere.

[Tom the bartender turns the TV off.]

Takemura: Hey! I was listening to that!

Tom: Shut up. Nobody 'cept you wants to watch that shit about that corpo cunt.

Takemura: What did you say?!

Tom: You heard me!

V: Let it go, Takemura.

Tom: Hm. Least one of you's got some fuckin' sense.

[Takemura in shame return to the table.]

V: (streetkid) Tom's all right. Not afraid to speak his mind, that's all.

Takemura: He reminds me of my father. He also worked in a kitchen all his life.

V: Last thing we wanna do is to draw attention.

Takemura: I'm sorry... A stupid reflex.

V: Thanks for the offer. Need to think about it, get back to you.

Takemura: I need... time... to plan, organize. You stand to gain much

if you help me. All I ask is that you do not leave the city.

V: Leave? Why would I leave? Need help, best chance I'll find the right person here.

Takemura: Someone other than Arasaka specialists? There is no one, no alternative.

V: Actually, we just talked about some. With a bit of luck, I'll track down Evelyn.

Takemura: If she could not help you before, she will not manage to now.

V: Honor among thieves - ever heard of it?

Takemura: Yes, I thought it ironic, thieves have none. There is just honor, I believe.

V: Yorinobu Arasaka'd agree, I'm sure.

Takemura: The Parker woman will not help you. Were I you, I would think about a plan B.

V: Anders Hellman - he invented the Relic. If I wanna get rid of it, he's my man. And if that means picking another fight with Arasaka, so be it.

Takemura: Hellman defected from the company. I myself spent many days looking for him. He - what's the expression - dropped off the face of the earth.

Automatic Love

V: Somebody's been busy the last few days.

Takemura: I will not sit and do nothing when there is information to be found, things to prepare.

V: Your job, basically.

Takemura: It was my job.

V: Why're you looking for Hellman?

Takemura: He was the one to alert Saburo-san to Yorinobu's schemes. He knew both of them well and could be an important witness.

V: Corpo rats'll squeal when hangin' by their tails.

Takemura: For several days, I collected information. All leads point to one place - the club called the Afterlife. I was quickly... dismissed by the “Queen of Fixers” there, Rogue.

V: Mean to say you worked for Saburo yet got no idea how to talk to

the high and mighty?

Takemura: She wished to have nothing to do with the man accused of murdering Saburo Arasaka.

V: Rogue's well informed, gets wind of most things that happen in the city. Might be worth asking her about Hellman.

Takemura: I wish you luck. The woman is choosy, expensive and rude. I cannot stay here any longer. Do what you want, look for Parker, Hellman, whoever. I must see some friends, call in some favors. When my people in Arasaka are ready to listen, I will call you.

V: Till then, I guess.

Takemura: If by some miracle you find Hellman, please notify me. He and I have unfinished business.

[He leaves. Johnny takes his place.]

Johnny: Zapper-dumples and filth. In some ways, Night City never changes. Arasaka's still a despotic machine and the world's on a collision course with chaos. But hey, at least Rogue's still alive.

V: You know you got some nerve. First you're out to kill me, now you wanna be my pal? Make like nothing happened?

Johnny: You know you don't gotta speak out loud to talk to me?

V: What do you want?!

Johnny: I've processed some shit, changed my mind. Don't want you dead anymore.

V: Go fuck yourself, dickwipe!

Johnny: Hey, wasn't easy for me, either. You woke up in a landfill, I woke up in your head. Wrestling with your thoughts, memories. Think we're even. And I've taken a step back, looked at things... Think we might be able to help each other. We could start with Rogue. Her and I go back to the stone age.

V: Why should I trust you? Remind me again.

Johnny: Trust me. Don't trust me. I don't give a fuck. It's the least of our worries anyway.

V: You're the ghost of Christmas past, asshole. Any Friends you had're either dead or so old their memory's gone.

Johnny: Johnny Silverhand died a legend. Nobody forgets that.

V: So you fuckin' know Rogue. What do I say to her? Got a talking brain tumor claims it's her old friend Johnny?

Johnny: Trust me, Rogue's heard dumber shit than that. Way back when you weren't even an itch in your daddy's ballsack.

V: Don't need convincin'. Seen your memories. Gross.

Johnny: Rogue'll dance to any tune I play her. Just get us to the Afterlife.

V: There is no "us."

[V calls Judy.]

Judy: V...? That you? Sheesh, thought you were... gone.

V: You're not alone in thinking me dead... Thought it was game over for me, too.

Judy: Things went ass up, huh, not as planned?

V: Heard about the heist, I take it. Must've talked to Evelyn.

Judy: Didn't need to. Whole damned city's heard.

V: Listen, need to find Evelyn.

Judy: I really don't wanna talk about her...

V: Know where she is?

Judy: What'd I just say? Drop it. I won't tell ya again.

V: Judy, you're my one hope, the only lead I got. I got to find her. An' I know you can help me do that.

Judy: Who told you I'd want to?

V: Can we meet? Let's meet, please? You at Lizzie's?

[Judy hangs up. V goes to the bar.]

Mox: Hey! Haven't seen you here before? Got a good memory for faces. Bar's closed. Sorry, choom.

V: Looking for Evelyn Parker. Know where I might find her?

Mox: Used to come 'round... Haven't seen her in a while, though.

V: Need to talk to Punchin' Judy. She in her den?

Mox: Yep. Take the stairs down. I'll let Judy know you're comin'. Just don't let me catch you messin' around, OK?

[V goes down to the basement to Judy's lab.]

Judy: You just don't give up, do you? Got nothin' more to say to each other. Thought I made that clear.

V: What was that all about?

Judy: Everyone in this city lives in their own goddamn bubble. And either you fly high or sink into quicksand.

V: Susie seems to know what she wants. She your boss?

Judy: You come all this way just to play Who's Who at the Mox?

V: Listen, have you seen Evelyn? Need to talk to her. It's important.

Judy: Why? So you can make her your scapegoat for your trainwreck of a heist?

V: Need to find out who she was working for.

Judy: That's it?

V: That's it. Judy, you don't need to worry - I won't lay a hand on her. Wouldn't make sense.

Judy: Fine... All right... Evelyn's a doll. Used to work at Clouds. Cig case on my table's got the address. Take it, ond once you find Evelyn give it to her.

V: Megatower? Luxurious.

[V walks out of the lab.]

Judy: Wait..! Umm... Just let me know how she's doing. OK?

V: Give you a call, OK?

Judy: Thanks... Thank you, V.

[V leaves the lab. On his way out of the building, Johnny appears before his eyes.]

Johnny: A doll. Why am I not surprised?

V: You're on engram in a fading mind. Nothing should surprise you anymore.

Johnny: So, we gonna hit this place - Clouds?

V: Why the hell not.

[V comes out of the bar. As he approaches his car someone calls

him.]

Mr. Hands: They call me Mr. Hands. If you're looking for Pacifica jobs, call me.

V: Name's V. And what, no “pleased to meet yous”?

Mr. Hands: I'm truly honored to meet you. You got any biz call me.

Stanley: It's a damn shame dolphins can only survive in lab tonis. I'd sure love to seem 'em take a crack at world domination.

[On the way to Megabuilding HB V got a call from an old Japanese woman named Wakako.]

Wakako: It has been a long time.

V: Wakako Okada - the lady of Westbrook estate.

Wakako: When you find a moment, come see me. We must settle our accounts. For Sandra Dorsett. You did quite well. You and that friend of yours. Until then.

[V arrives at the Megabuilding and takes the elevator up to Clouds.]

Johnny: Way I see it, only thing waitin’ for you here is getting off of getting offed. Place your bets.

V: What’ve I missed this time? Enlighten me.

Johnny: Braindance chick is hidin' somethin’. No coincidence we already saw two Tyger Claws. They must control the building.

V: Arasaka and the Tyger Claws are in bed together. Go figure…

Johnny: Every corp plays dirty, 'cept the streets are more than that - they're filth. So the corp leave it to the gangs. Sults’ collars'd get soiled. Surprised?

V: No. I mean, if Evelyn wanted to disappear, especially from Arasaka, she could've done better.

Johnny: This whole situation's bent over, cheeks spread wide.

V: Someone's in a great mood.

Johnny: Not every day a half brain-dead dude drugs me around a cathouse on a wild whore chase. So, havin' a grand ol' time.

V: Think Judy's lying? Why?

Johnny: Little something called intuition, V. Ever heard of it?

V: Oh, so what you meant to say was you're full of shit. Got it.

[V exits the elevator. He waits until evening for the bar to open and enters it.]

Receptionist: Welcome to Clouds. Where we know what you're looking for. Would you care to jack into the terminal?

V: Looking for an Evelyn Parker. She work here?

Receptionist: Hmm… Give me a moment… Evelyn's not available at this time.

V: Need to see her. It's important.

Receptionist: The algorithm knows best. Trust me, it will choose a doll that will thrill you. Our dolls can change their hair and eye color in real time to look just as you wish.

V: I'm not a customer.

Receptionist: Well all the more reason to be excited! There's a first time for everyone at Clouds. It's no reason to dawdle. All you need do is jack in. We'll just create your personal profile and you'll be good to go.

Johnny: I'm sorry, she finally say anything useful? Fuck the menu, let's ditch this waitress and take our special order to the chef, point-

blank.

V: Meaning?

Johnny: Meaning you go in as a customer, keep a low profile. They wanna keep their cards close? Fine. We'll play our own game.

V: How could you possibly know what I'm looking for?

Receptionist: Clouds always knows. Your deepest desire - we find it. You'll have your needs fulfilled and maybe much more. "Less" is not a word we use around here.

Johnny: Fuck the menu, let's ditch this waitress and take our special order to the chef, point-blank.

V: So how's this all work?

Receptionist: An algorithm pilots the doll's motor functions. It takes your profile data and transforms into... experiences in real-time. Memory dampers on the doll's behavioral chip block any recall of the session.

V: So there'll be no trace of the meeting?

Receptionist: Well, I could say yes, but that would strip it of mystery and suspense wouldn't it? Once you're in there, you set the stakes.

V: You're saying it's not dangerous, but there's some risk involved.

Receptionist: That is one way to put it. One thing is for sure, you never get what you expect.

V: Consider my interest piqued. All right, let's do this.

Receptionist: This will be a live session, so events may take an unexpected turn. But don't quit if you feel uncomfortable - you could miss out on something truly remarkable. If you feel unready to handle what comes next, you can interrupt the session immediately. Now for your safeword.

V: Samurai.

Receptionist: Now bear with me a moment... Scanning your personal profile. You should see compatible dolls in just a second. Two matches... Interesting.

[The system shows 2 matches - a man named Angel and a girl named Skye.]

V: Is that normal or...?

Receptionist: Who can say what is..."normal"? You're clearly a unique person with... unique tastes. Our system can handle it. So

who will it be? Angel or Skye?

V: Rather go with Skye.

Receptionist: I couldn't have chosen better myself. Now for the payment. And you'll venture into the Clouds.

V: Not here to pay and play. Just want some info.

Receptionist: Ah... unfortunately, that we do not sell. Should you change your mind, come back.

V: All right, I changed my mind. I'll pay.

Receptionist: Temptation is often too strong to resist. Please jack in.

V: There you go.

Receptionist: And.. the payment's come through. The entire floor is open to you if you wish to wind down first. Skye awaits you in booth nine. Disconnect, please?

V: That it?

Receptionist: Ahem. We have a strict no-weapons policy here at Clouds. Please deposit any and all hazardous items with me.

Johnny: Only two willin' to spread their legs for you? Sad.

V: Go eat a dick, Johnny.

Receptionist: Don't worry, all your grown-up toys will be safe with us.

[V deposits his weapons.]

Receptionist: Thank you. We hope you enjoy your stay.

[V goes to room nine.]

Johnny: Guess that makes you a real deviant.

V: Would've had more choices if I didn't have a certain brain parasite.

Skye: Hi, I'm Skye. And you must be… Vincent?

V: V. Just V. Only people who know me real well can use my real name.

Skye: OK, then. V.

V: Welp, looks like this'll be interesting…

Skye: So, V, you're dying.

V: How'd you know I'm dying?

Skye: Deep inside... you fear this, cower before it.

V: So what if I do? Why do you care?

Skye: Of all the voices in your head, the loudest is that calling for help. Look around, all of this is your doing.

V: There's something in those mirrors, way back...

Skye: It's a projection - your inner landscape.

V: Just what I needed - therapy with a robohooker.

Skye: I'm not here to analyze you. That's not something I do. I'm here to fulfill your deepest, most hidden desire.

V: Lookin' for someone named Evelyn Parker, used to work here. Know her? Know where she is?

Skye: You need answers, that's clear... Just not the ones you think you need.

V: Asked you a simple question.

Skye: Evelyn Parker... not the most important thing you're looking for, is she? I can smell your fear. You're afraid of something else.

V: You just gonna talk in circles, that it?

Skye: I can't help you if you don't want to be helped.

V: What's next? Meditation?

Skye: Something like that. Try me.

V: Just answer my question. Tell me where Evelyn is. Don't have time for a.. debate. Why'd the manager say she doesn't work here anymore? When was Evelyn last here? You know anything?

Skye: Evelyn had her own story before it collided with yours. But I know you'll find her. You always get your way.

V: I was told this place'd fulfill my deepest desires. Not what I was expecting, this.

Skye: When true desires go unfulfilled, they turn into needs. We are here to reach for them and beyond, we are here to understand.

V: So what's it I need so badly?

Skye: To come to terms with the fact that you died. Now move on,

already.

V: That's tough. Rather let it eat away at me a bit more.

Skye: Fear of death is what drives us all to do what we do. You're scared because you've given up on your dreams. What happened to becoming the best in all of Night City?

V: Still wanna be the best... Never gave up on that goal. Chances of getting there're starting to look pretty slim, though. Just want the world to know I was here. That I mattered.

Skye: Instead of a dream, you're living a nightmare. You're afraid of being erased, as if you never existed. Or is it just the fear of becoming someone else, different?

V: Death is death is death. You're gone - game over.

Skye: You can't know that for certain. Even if you've been there and back.

V: Believe me, I've seen it. And it's fucking boring.

Skye: You haven't stopped grieving since, or for what's to come.

V: What I've been through - tough to move on from that. Death was something that happened to other people - hell, that I DEALT to

others. Now my number'll be up. Wasn't enough. I died once. Have to go and do it again.

Skye: Death's' absurdity, the futile struggle before these terrify you.

V: So what now?

Skye: (whispers) Now you find out what it is you need to do.

V: Which is? You're gonna tell me?

Skye: (whispers) You've never backed down from anything in your life, even when you maybe should've. You go through Night City knowing a stray bullet could end you while hailing a cab. But that's never stopped you from taking action, going where you needed to go. And it won't stop you now.

V: But how do I keep up with everything that's changing...?

Skye: (whispers) You have been keeping up. You've made an impact. Not a single thing in this world isn't in the process of becoming something else. Likewise you. Never look back. If you gotta kill, kill. If you gotta burn it all to the ground then let it burn.

V: Thanks, um... for all this. Jeez. Don't even feel like getting up...

Skye: (whispers) Few do. But everything has its end.

V: Samurai.

[The light in the room is turned off. Skye's violet-burning eyes turn their normal color.]

Skye: What's going on? Goddamn thing threw me out!

V: Need to talk to you.

Skye: Talk? You pulled the emergency brake, ripped me out just to talk? What happened? I do something wrong?

V: Lotta things been going on in my head lately. But this was… different. Refreshing.

Skye: That's what we do at Clouds.

V: I get why people come here, come back… but I need something else. Evelyn Parker. What do you know about her?

Skye: Not much. Everyone's got their own booths, their own problems, their own little bubbles. It's a fragile ecosystem. People like you barge in, violate it, try to rearrange. No.

V: You gotta help me. Please… I'm no threat. But she could be in trouble. Just wanna talk to her, find out if she's OK.

Skye: In case you haven't noticed, doll work's not the most secure job in the world. One day you're in the next you're out, and maybe gone.

V: Anything out of the ordinary happen here lately?

Skye: Fine. Heard a customer did a number on her. But that's all I know. Shit like that happens around here way more often than anybody'd care to admit. You oughta ask Tom. Two of them were inseparable, gossiping for hours on end.

V: A customer attacked her?

Skye: I guess… I dunno, real mess that was. Security borged in, handled it. Things went silent. You don't go around asking questions here. Better off not seeing, not hearing, keeping your head down.

V: Where'd it happen?

Skye: Her booth. Told you, she was with a client.

V: Gonna just stand there or tell me a number?

Skye: Eleven.

V: This booth occupied now?

Skye: Nah, think it's been "out of order" since, uh..

V: Need to get inside that booth somehow.

Skye: Yeah? And do what?

V: None of your biz. Can you open it or not?

Skye: Sure, just don't bother me again. Ever. Talk to Tom.

V: Who's Tom?

Skye: A doll like the rest of us. What'd you think - an XBD star?

V: Where'll I find him?

Skye: VIP area. Booth two. I think.

V: Thanks. See? You turned out to be useful after all.

[He leaves and walks to Evelyn's booth.]

Johnny: Let's take a look, shall we. (lights a cigarette)

V: Blood - fresh, not too much. Put it to a wound rather than a kill.

[V turns on the laser camera, which reproduces the incident. The

client licks Evelyn's legs as she suddenly begins to lose her mind.]

Johnny: Well, client wasn't the one who flew off the handle. Something bit her in the ass. What do you think? Cyberpsychosis?

V: Sounds crazy, but… she could've been remotely hacked. A netrunner?

Johnny: Weird…

[V exits the VIP area.]

Johnny: As establishments fucked sideways go, this one takes the whole damn pie. Hear that? He better keep this short and sweet. Two browshed sex zombies in a single day is too much, even for me.

V: Looks familiar.

Johnny: What's that?

V: Evelyn's jacket. Crumpled like a tissue - must've been here a while.

Doll: Hold it there, honey. You seem to be in the wrong place.

Doll: Hey, no peeking! Bad luck, seein' us like this.

[V finds the guy Skye was telling him about in booth 02.]

Tom: Hi, umm… Think something might've gone wrong here… Not really sure, umm… Don't have your details. Sorry, no idea what I'm supposed to do… Sure your VIP card checks out? Had a sich once - payment bounced and was ripped outta the sesh the same way.

V: Relax, ya don't need any data, don't need any detes, I'm not a customer. Here to talk to you specifically. Not to be with a doll. Tom. Is that it?

Tom: Uh-huh.

V: Need to get in touch with Evelyn Parker. It's important.

Tom: You and me both. Tried calling her a bunch of times… No luck.

V: Mean to say she's not here?

Tom: She had an accident. Needed to go to a special clinic in Osaka… or Oslo? I think it was Oslo - for a new faceplate.

V: Which was it - Osaka or Oslo?

Tom: Oslo… Yeah, definitely Oslo.

V: That accident. Involved a client, did it? Found blood in her booth.

Tom: Uhh… You know, shit like that happens here… sometimes.

V: And everyone's cool with that?

Tom: We get new implants, recovery leave and… well, sometimes even a payout. Now that I think about it, it is weird she went away so far.

V: Tell you herself she was skippin' town?

Tom: Nah, just didn't show up for work. Wasn't picking up, either, so I asked Woodman what was up. Told me she left. Like I said.

V: Where can I find this Woodman?

Tom: Probably got his feet up in the back office. 'Cept it's off limits to customers.

V: Woodman - who is he?

Tom: Mr. Forrest. But everybody calls him Woodman. Never really known why…

V: OK, Mr. Forrest then. What's his thing?

Tom: He's kinda like our caretaker. Finds new talent, deals with ugly situations.

V: Got it.

[He goes to Woodman's Office and finds the guy. He eats a burger.]

Woodman: Hey, no clients allowed in here. Be a choom and close the door on your way out, would ya? As you can see, I'm very busy.

V: Looking for a girl named Evelyn Parker.

Woodman: Got nobody working here by that name.

V: But she used to. What happened to her?

Woodman: Probably did what all the dolls try to do found a unicorn to set her up for life. Eh, you can do better. Try Roxie over at booth two. Same heart-shaped ass. Behavioral chip do the rest. Won't feel any difference.

V: Look to me like a reasonable man. I think we can work something out.

Woodman: And you to me look like a psycho prick Who's never been ghosted by his beau or belle before. But go on, I'm listening.

V: You've got info, I've got eddies. It's a fair trade. What's your price?

Woodman: You need to pull your head outta your ass. Eddies'll buy you whores here not snitches. I look like either of those to you?

V: Oh well… Can't say I didn't try playing nice.

Woodman: Better think real hard where you wanna take this. 'Cause you're really startin' to piss me off.

V: Doll goes missing client gets messed up, and management's just sitting there, sucking his thumb… Pretty strange for a place that advertises itself as one hundred per cent secure.

Woodman: You gonna get to the bloody point?

V: I can see it already - headline in tomorrow's screamsheets. Got all the evidence I need, too…

Woodman: Hey, we don't need to spill any ink over this. It'd just make things worse… This conversation's starting to bore me. Humor me, will ya? This particular piece of ass, out of all of them why? She wasn't even that good… She was hot, I'll give you that. But for all her delusions of grandeur, she was nothing more than a basic whore. And like all basic whores, she got what was comin'. As will you.

[He pulls out a gun. V kills him in a few slashes of his katana.]

Johnny: Well aren't you the king of fuck-ups.

V: You're not helping. Now what...

Johnny: Hell, why don't you just scan the truth from his grey, lifeless eyes? Or scour his comp.

V: That just might work.

[He checks Woodman's emails.]

Johnny: Sold her off to a ripper?

V: Chip was busted... Could've sent her to get it patched up.

Johnny: A ripper named Fingers, in a back alley for hookers... sounds like a joytoy's wet dream.

[V searches the locker room.]

V: Left her purse.

Johnny: Coulda had more 'n' one.

V: All her shit's in it, though. Must've left in a hurry.

[He leaves the building killing the guards with the weapon he found.]

Receptionist: I'm required to return your weapons... even though I'd rather not. Hey, I don't know anything! I just work here!

[V takes his weapons and leaves Clouds. He walks to the elevator and sees Johnny.]

Johnny: Nice work back there. Ever thought of applying for the diplomatic corps?

V: Don't have time to massage egos.

Johnny: I respect that.

V: Course you do, you'd've loved to drop an H-bomb on this place.

Johnny: No need to go so OTT. I've got other methods. One thing's for sure, though - Claws won't forget this.

V: Think Fingers's got her? Think we'll find her there?

Johnny: V, if I could see that for I wouldn't be a fucking ghost on a chip in on corpse's head right now.

[V takes the elevator down to the ground floor. He coughs. His condition is slowly worsening.]

Johnny: You had a plan, you tried, it fell flat. Now you're flat - don't

look in any condition to find Hellman.

[V comes out of the elevator His head is spinning.]

V: Gah, fuck!

Johnny: Ugh, the hell's that? No, no, dammit!

V: Jesus… the fuck do you want from me?

Johnny: It's all goin' too slow. Gonna decomish before we learn how to rip the chip out.

V: Lemme alone.

Johnny: To sell yourself to the ‘Sakas? They'll end you, plain as that.

V: Wanted me dead, said so yourself.

Johnny: Made it pretty clear since that I changed my mind. Want you to live now.

V: Can't find the words to describe exactly how fucked up you are.

Johnny: I just needed a calmer moment to think. And yeah, figured

since fate gave me another shot, I'll take it.

V: To live life to the fullest? See the northern lights, run with the mechbulls or with gazelles on a safari?

Johnny: To finish what I started. I'm back in the game. Want 'Saka out, so I'm gonna need you in.

V: But why? Fightin' for some dated ideal? Pursuin' a personal vendetta?

Johnny: You don't need to know. Here to get me from point A to point B. Listen, I know things, where we can save your life, who can help us do that. You'll get rid of the chip, I'll smash 'Saka - win-win, kid. Soulkiller's what we need and Milkoshi's how we grab it.

V: You know you're just an irritating hallucination, right? Should just ignore you.

Johnny: And you're a walkin' corpse. Should just wait till your mind shrivels to nothing and frees up space for me.

V: You fuckin' asshole...

Johnny: But as should be obvious, I've decided to help you. Need to find somethin' first - seven letters, starts with an M...

V: OK, so, this Mikoshi - what is it, exactly?

Johnny: OK, basics. If you're jacked in, cruisin' the Net, Arasaka can use Soulkiller, an AI, to trap, fry and pack away your psyche, your mind and your soul. Followin' so far?

V: Yeah, seen the memories - did a real number on ya.

Johnny: OK... Seems we got a few more things to broach than I thought, but that'll come later. Anyway, when Soulkiller fries, roasts and boils you, you die. But the contents of your mind get copied to an engram first.

V: Sure. That's how you became a construct.

Johnny: Exactly. Now, Mikoshi's the place Soukiller operates out of, where it stores its victims' engrams.

V: Still don't see how Mikoshi's linked to my chip problem.

Johnny: Not the brightest bulb on stage, are ya? Fifty years back, ops on the human mind Mikoshi was the sole place on Earth where they did anything like that. Bet it still is today. Tellin' ya, all roads lead there. It's where we'll settle our biz - you yours, me mine.

V: And, uh, how you plan to smash Arasaka this time? Got another nuke tucked away?

Johnny: This time bomb's named Alt Cunningham.

V: I'm s'posed to know who that is?

Johnny: Not yet. But you will once we find what we need. For now, we got no time to lose, need to get inside Mikoshi.

[V tries to call Jackie...]

Automated Secretary: This number is temporarily unavailable. Please leave a message.

V: Jack, I got no clue where you are, happened to you... It all got so fucked up. If you... If you're there somewhere... Fuck, I... What'm I doing?

[He calls Judy.]

Judy: V. You called, heh.

V: Promised I'd call, didn't I?

Judy: Promising's one thing, keepin' it's a whole other bag. So, manage to learn anything?

V: Evelyn's not at Clouds anymore.

V: Behavioral chip was damaged. 'Parently they carted her off to a ripperdoc goes by Fingers.

Judy: Oh, shit…

V: Know where to find this Fingers character?

Judy: Yeah, runs a dinky chop shop off Jig ug street. Fuck, V. guy's all kinds of bad news.

V: Headin' there now. To find her.

Judy: I told her to stay the fuck away from Clouds… Argh, all right. Later, V.

[V arrives at Jig-Jig Street.]

Johnny: Won't lie - place has a wicked vibe.

V: So, this more up your alley than Clouds?

Johnny: Hey, least here you know what you're getting.

[At the clinic's door V encounters a few thugs.]

Punk: Ey, not one step closer. Here to see who?

V: Got a message for Fingers. Comes from the Tyger Claws.

Punk: And that message would be...?

V: Two things - urgent and confidential.

Punk: Meaning?

V: Meaning you've got a choice.

Punk: Oh yeah?

V: You either get your shit kicked in for being slow or for being a nosy prick.

Punk: Fine... let him through, Sludge.

[V enters the clinic. Inside, it looks more like an abandoned mental hospital than a clinic.]

V: Blue butter...? Hell are they taking?

Johnny: Blue, huh? Probably a cefabricol derivative. Preem rot. Veins were poppin' with it during the Third Corporate. Sounds like paradise. Twenty-four hours you feel no pain and barely remember a thing afterwards.

V: Who can blame 'em, then. Hey, you all right?

Joytoy: No way I'm 'onna swim. Hate water. Can't you see nobody cares?!

V: Fingers - know where I can find him?

Joytoy: If I could I'd swap, y'know. Why does everythin' have to be so damn… convoluted. In the end, all you got left are shredded cables and empty bottles.

[V finds Judy on the second floor.]

Judy: V, hey.

[She tries to open the door to the doc's office.]

Patient: Hellooooooo? There's a line…?

Patient: Nuh-uh, you ain't cuttin'!

Patient: Sit your ass down and wait your turn!

V: Fingers guy - you know 'im?

Judy: Heard some things, yeah.

V: Like…?

Judy: His hand sometimes slips.

V: Glad to see a familiar face.

Judy: I'm worried sick about her, V. Had no idea anything'd happened.

V: We'll find her, I know we will. After the heist, Evelyn holed up with the Mox for a while, right?

Judy: That's right.

V: So why the hell'd she go back to Clouds?

Judy: Thought she'd be safer there. God knows why. Tried to get her to see straight, but she just wouldn't listen.

V: Mox don't happen to have Fingers in their crosshairs?

Judy: No. Why?

V: Heard joytoys come out of his clinic in worse shape then they come in.

Judy: Yeah, well… can't solve all the world's problems at once. We're

gonna be here forever, I just know it. Maybe you could talk to those girls, see if we can't cut in front?

V: Why me?

Judy: I don't think they like me. Just give it a shot. That or come up with something better.

V: Think Evelyn's being kept here somewhere?

Judy: On the one hand hope she is, 'cause I want her back fast. But on the other, hope to God no, because who knows what that sick fuck could've done to her.

V: She means a lot to you, doesn't she?

Judy: And you've arrived at that conclusion how, exactly?

V: Moment you knew where she was, you sprang into action.

Judy: Once you get close to Evelyn, you never wanna let her go.

V: You worked at Clouds?

Judy: Not as a doll. Tuned their virtus. That's where I met Ev, Tom and the rest of the crew.

[V sits on the couch and tries to speak with the girls in the line.]

V: Fingers - where'll find him?

Patient: He's operatin' on somebody right now.

Patient: Been in there for ages… Shouldn't be much longer.

Patient: Don't hold your breath. I've spent hours waitin' for him to come out. ‘Specially when he collects "payment" right after the procedure! Hehehe.

V: My friend here? She's in really sorry shape. Couldn't let us cut in front, just this once?

Judy: (fake moaning) Aaaaarghh…

Patient: 'Course, honey, be my guest.

Patient: Well now, hold on, hold on a sec. Didn't seem so bad just a minute ago.

V: She's a toughie. Keeps it inside, mostly. C'mon let's go.

[V and Judy enter Fingers clinic.]

Judy: Think he's done.

Judy: We going in?

Fingers: Yes, hello? What can I do for you?

V: Looking for a girl named Evelyn Parker. I know she was here in your... clinic.

Fingers: Ahh, so that's what this is about...

V: Where is she?

Fingers: A loaded question if I've ever heard one... You Tyger Claws? Far as I know, I'm all paid up.

Judy: We're with the Mox.

Fingers: The Mox! Why didn't you say so? So. What brings you here?

V: These girls know you're chippin' faulty implants?

Fingers: You might say so. I'd say they're the very best I can find. See?

Judy: What's in it for you?

Fingers: Whatever they have to offer. And they ALWAYS have

something to offer, heheheh.

Judy: You're a sick fuck. Know that?!

Fingers: You looking for… a friend? Hahaha.

V: Heard you help the workin' girls around here.

Fingers: Well, very few children will play with broken toys. So when skin goes flabby, sockets go out of whack, implants malfunction… I'm sure you get the gist. You pay for goods, you expect top quality. Consumerism one-on-one.

Judy: Please. Scrapyards offer better quality than this.

V: Already told you. I'm lookin' for a woman named Evelyn Parker. Need to know where she is.

Fingers: Step into my office, please. Many girls come through here. So many, But let me put it to you this way - I believe in giving each of them the personal touch. Ask anyone. I'm more than a chop-doc. See, I know what people truly want. To be flattered, praised, potted. To feel like… like they deserve it. Of course… I can't remember each and every one… Please, set your exquisite derrieres down.

V: Wen jittery soon as I mentioned her name. Don't try gettin' out of this. I know you remember her.

Disasterpiece

Fingers: I... I have a neurological condition! Not easy living with tics. Really, I'd love to help if I only knew who you were talking about.

V: Mox've got a low tolerance for scum like you. Right now, I'm the one thing standing between you and a particularly feisty and furious member of the gang. So tell me where Evelyn is or I'll let her to talk to you.

Fingers: Poor girl.. Tried to help her, I did. But as you can see, this isn't exactly a state-of-the-art facility...

V: Mentioned you couldn't help her. Help her with what exactly?

Fingers: If I only knew, I wager she'd be standin' here, happy and smiling. Instruction register on her chip was burnt to a crisp. Tried replacing it. Nothing.

V: Damage was caused by a netrunner using homebrewed malware.

Fingers: Sounds about right.

V: Get to the point.

Fingers: The point? Ah, yes. Well, I haven't the faintest idea where she is.

Judy: Enough of this BULLSHIT! What'd you do to her, you freak?!

Fingers: Now, either you put a muzzle on this... creature... or put her down. It's impossible to have a conversation with her around.

V: Don't talk to her like that.

Fingers: She insulted me!

V: Look, the quicker you spill, the shorter you'll have to put up with us. Now, Evelyn Parker. Where is she?

Fingers: Could very well be on her way to becoming the next underground braindance darling! That's all I know.

V: What do you mean by "underground"?

Fingers: I don't know. I mean, I don't watch that sort of stuff.

Judy: Snuff? XBDS?

Fingers: I told you, I don't know!

V: You're sure about this?

Fingers: Four days I had her here. She was out cold, in la la land, for practically every minute. It wasn't a slumber party, we didn't have

pillow rights and promise to send each other postcards.

V: Where'll we find her?

Fingers: How many times do I have to repeat myself? I don't know... I did what anyone in my place would do. When I realized I wouldn't be able to help her, patch her up, I called my fixer. Two guys came and picked her up the same day.

V: Who'd you call? Who's your fixer?

Fingers: Wakako. Told her I had a busted doll with a BD implant to hand off.

V: Where'd they take her?

Fingers: I told you already I don't know. They weren't the talkative kind, and I'm no gonk. I know better than to ask questions of people like that.

Judy: You're no gonk? What do you think, why do all these girls come here, let you grope around 'em? Think it's for your charm, your caring attitude? They do it 'cause they don't got no choice. And in the end, they despise you, they can smell you're pathetic.

V: These guys, what'd they look like?

Fingers: Like you, me, anyone else in this city!

V: Really now? They looked like you...?

Fingers: They looked like the kinda guys you don't make eye contact with. One of 'em was a bearded fellow.

V: The two that came for her... didn't say anything about where they were gonna take her, what they were gonna do to her?

Fingers: Mentioned something about virtus with... a moth, of all things. Said she'd be perfect for them, whatever that means. But that is really all I know.

Judy: You pawned her off like she was some fucking inanimate mannequin.

Fingers: Because that is exactly what she was.

[Judy slaps him.]

Judy: Need air. I'll be outside.

[Judy walks out. V gets up from his chair, grabs Fingers by the ear, throws him to the floor and knocks him out with one punch, then walks out into the corridor.]

Judy: I let her go back to Clouds. Coulda stopped her but I didn't...

V: Don't worry, we'll find her. I know it.

Judy: We'll fuckin' find what's left of her butchered corpse.

V: Hey! Keep it together! Wanna give up, now?

Judy: No... Only lead we got's an XBD. Where's that get us?

V: We also know we're lookin' for something related to the Death's Head. Better than nothing.

Judy: I don't get your optimism. Still sounds like a big fat nothing to me.

V: Death's Head symbol bring anything to mind? Anything, doesn't matter how small.

Judy: This industry... I mean, market's lookin' for every kind of fetish out there. It's cavernous. But an XBD outfit'd be on the move almost always.

V: Yeah, that'd make sense.

Judy: Makes 'em harder to nab, harder to sting. V! Get it together! What's up with you?

[While they are talking, Wilson calls.]

Wilson: Hey, V! Ya hear me?!

V: Loud and clear, you don't need to yell. What's up?

Wilson: Doin' a little competition. Shootin, prizes and all. Y'know over here, at the range. Well? You in?

V: I didn't think big parties were your thing.

Wilson: Yeah, well it ain't a big one, but… Y'know, runnin' low on eds. Gotta bring in the clients. Attract 'em an' shit.

V: Could try sellin' iron straight from factory, skip the whole part where your tinker for hours on each little shooter.

Wilson: V - my dignity, please.

V: Sure, I'm in. When?

Wilson: Well, uh, right now. We'll wait on ya. See ya.

V: (to Judy) Need to figure out where they're scrollin' this stuff. Gotta

be a rot-hole of some sort, doubt they do much shooting on location.

Judy: Yeah, gotta be somewhere quiet, out of the way.

V: Could be we'd see something to point us in their direction in one of their virtus.

Judy: Have to be real gonks to leave a clue...

V: Everyone, everything leaves something behind, just need to know where to look. Lucky for me, I'm runnin' around with the best BD specialist in town. That's an extra pair of expert eyes.

Judy: Well, your BD expert has a better idea, "Pleasures of Night City," a domain with its twin on the dark net. Every kind of thing goes on there. Might stumble on something useful.

V: Lemme think for a sec. Dark net domain, that's our best bet. Let's stick to the plan.

Judy: Fine. Here's hoping you turn up something useful.

Dealer: That last shit's so good it'll make you cry.

[M walks around asking locals about XBDs.]

V: OK, let's see, show me.

Johnny: Shit... her implants're older than I am.

[V talks to a dealer.]

V: Can't believe she finds the spares to keep 'em runnin'.

Dealer: Yo yo, ever try rainbow poppers? Purple haze? Got every color under the sun, I do...

V: Show me the range.

[V walks into a store nearby.]

V: Lookin' for somethin' special. A braindance to really...

Vendor: You mean... smut?

V: Nah. More hardcore.

Vendor: Won't find it here. But there's a guy on Jig-Jig Street has a whole lotta peculiar flicks, and I mean peculiar...

V: Got anything that might interest me?

Joytoy: Hey, you lookin' for some company tonight?

[V goes to a pimp looking dealer talking to his client.]

Dealer: How 'bout you? Yo buyin' or just gonna stand there like a pig undercover?

V: What've you got?

Dealer: Virtus.

V: Any special kind?

Dealer: Lemme put it to you this way - those who know, don't need to ask.

V: Lookin' for BDs. A particular kind.

Dealer: Particular...? You a badge?

V: Cops are like kids - mommy and daddy wouldn't let 'em go off on their lonesome.

Dealer: All right, all right, can't be too careful. What do you want?

V: Gimme the best of the best. Ones with the Death's Head.

Dealer: Hmm... Didn't know I was dealin' with a connoisseur. Death's Head'll cost ya, though.

V: How 'bout a discount for your newest customer?

Dealer: Only give regulars discounts. If you're short, then fuck off.

V: I'm no connoisseur, trust me.

Dealer: Hm, sure.

V: All I need to know is who makes 'em... and where.

Dealer: Now listen, just sell whatever sells. Nice, calm job. Lemme see some eddies, you can pick one, parse it, an' I won't care a hair.

V: Where do you get these scrolls?

Dealer: Said you weren't a pig.

V: Just curious, that's all.

Dealer: Once you've booted up your virtu, daresay your curiosity will be satisfied. People that make these? OBSESSED with privacy. Never even occurred to me to ask where they're from. To which caution I prolly owe the fact that I'm still alive, talkin' to you.

V: Got anything that might interest me?

[V buys some illegal braindance from the dealer.]

Dealer: Pleasure doin' biz with ya.

[V goes to Judy's van.]

Judy: Hey, V. Hop in. Lemme get everything prepped. You make sure the wreath's snug on you.

V: (puts on the tech halo) Ready when you are.

Judy: Want to you describe what you see. Might catch something I'd miss.

[V plunges into the braindance. Some thug drags him in a netrunner's body to the operating chair. He beats him several times. A woman, ripperdoc, pushes some buttons. The netrunner's body literally dissolves.]

Judy: V? Editing mode's good to go. Dig around all you want.

[V studies the footage.]

V: Can't beat that rich synthcoff aroma - cheap shit. Cold, too. Mmmhm. Buck-A-Slice. Scav woman. Huh, who knew that 'sides citoppin' people up they were scrollin' XBD... Poor fucker. Electric Corp patch on the coveralls. Scav - gotta be. No one else with that

kind of fashion sense. Ordered recently. Coffee was cold… like, from the day before. Pizza looked fresh, though.

Judy: Soo?

V: Means someone's grabbing Buck-A-Slice regularly. Which is not something one does for the flavor and fresh ingredients. Pizza shares its DNA with styrofoam, nobody's gonna schlep across town for it. OK, we're lookin' for an Electric Corp power plant located near a Buck-A-Slice.

Judy: EC used to have a big ol' complex in Charter Hill. Buck-A-Slice checks out, too. How can you be sure, though?

V: Radio's turned way up. Probably to drown out the screamin'. Heard shit like that before. Sounds like scavs to me. Here we go. Old Electric Corp power plant in Charter Hill. Gotta make do with that for now. Nothin' else to garner from this scroll.

[V returns to the real world.]

V: No time to lose. We gotta go there.

Judy: Definitely. Ride with me?

V: Let's get going.

Judy: On our way.

[She start the engine and drives away.]

V: Still can't shake it… that virtu sample we sow, with the Death's Head moth… If all they scroll is snuff, then…

Judy: Stop it. They'd have to be utter gonks to waste her on something like that.

V: What do you mean?

Judy: We're talkin' about a girl who's not only a natural of what she does, but also's got a doll's implant. I mean, that's not a package you find lying out in the street. Aaaand here we are.

V: We goin' in?

Judy: Find us a way inside. I'll hang back, scan the subnet - see if there're any blueprints of the complex lyin' around. Join you soon as I find somethin'. Let's link on holo till then.

V: It's not gonna be pretty in there.

Judy: So? If you mean to tell me to hang back altogether, don't bother.

V: All right. Goin' in.

[He leaves the van and enter the building.]

Judy: Heard shots. You still alive?

V: I'm here. Got no time to creep around.

Judy: Got the blueprint - be there in a sec. Try to find a way to the lower levels.

V: Found a way down. You see my position?

Judy: Yep. Be there in a sec. Wait for me. V, hold up. I'm close. I'm here. We need to get to level minus 2. Bet that's where they're keepin' her. Hear that? That shirt - I know it.

V: Evelyn's?

Judy: Without a doubt. Ugh... looks like snuffs're are only the tip of the iceberg.

V: Smells like propylmethionine. Must be cookin' RPM here.

Judy: Double RPM. I used to sprinkle it on my breakfast.

Judy: Need to get into the hallway past this room.

Double Life

V: OK.

Judy: What about them…?

V: I can always just get rid of 'em my way.

Judy: Your call, but you gotta make it now. Eat it, assholes. Looks like you got 'em all. Now delta to the hallway. Clear. Keep going.

Johnny: Cuffers. Classic. Can't go wrong.

V: 'Cept these are solid steel, not the softcore, plastic kind. Even if you come here on your own, gunnin' to become a star, there's no guarantee you're ever gettin' out.

Judy: Think that's a maintenance room. See what I can stir up.

V: Gutted out all her implants. And why stop there? Took a few internal organs while they were at it.

Johnny: How so very resourceful.

V: Scavs… No matter how many you stomp out, there'll always be more crawlin' around somewhere.

Johnny: Figure you've made their acquaintance?

V: 'Fraid so.

Judy: Where are you?

V: Close to the studio, I think. You find anything useful?

Judy: Freed up the elevator. Should be easier to get out of here. You really don't fuck around, do you. Wait one sec for me. All right, I'm here. Let's find her. Hang in there, Ev.

[They find Evelyn. She is lying on a bed in a place specially equipped for filming and streaming. Apparently she is being used as a sex slave.]

Judy: That's Evelyn. Just don't touch her! If she's recording, you'll scramble her brain. Wait until I cut her link. Grab it and tell me when you're gonna yonk it'll break the link at my end at the same time.

V: What do you think? What do I do now?

Johnny: What we came here to do. Find the truth, ask her.

V: Johnny, she's unconscious.

Johnny: Or she's a better actor than we thought.

[V approaches Evelyn. Her face is stained with blood - God only knows what kind of cruelty she has gone through.]

V: All right. Let's do this.

Judy: Wait for my signal.

Judy: Here goes. Ready aaand...

V: Now!

[He takes the cable out of Evelyn's neck.]

Judy: Thank God... Ev? Evelyn! You hear me?

V: What's wrong with her?

Judy: Honestly? I don't know... She's gotta be seriously traumatized...

V: She OK to be moved? No brain hemorrhages, damage to the spine?

Judy: Doesn't seem to have any wounds... Guess we got no choice.

V: Umm... hey, Evelyn. I need you to tell me who hired you.

Judy: (screams) Seriously, V?! You gotta do this now?

V: Let's get her somewhere safe.

Judy: Fast, too.

V: Which way?

Judy: I sealed the doors and managed to power the elevators.

V: Elevators it is, then.

[V takes Evelyn in his arms and carries her to the elevator. Some time passes. V stands near a door to the motel room and looks at the cigarette case Judy gave him.]

Johnny: Come on. Is it really that hard? Please, just one. For me.

V: Fine, have it your way. Smoke to your lungs' content.

[He lights a cigarette.]

Johnny: Aahhhh... finally something better than exhaust and the stench of the city. Don't tell me you don't feel it, too. We goin' in?

V: Let's give 'em a couple. You saw how she looked.

Johnny: If it was up to me, I would've splashed some water on her face back at the studio and asked her straight up.

V: It's not up to you, though, is it? Let's go.

[V enters the hotel room. He's feeling sick again.]

V: Ugh…

Judy: She's sleeping. At least, I think she is. Her eyes're closed and she's not shaking anymore. I would've already killed her by now if I didn't feel so bad for her.

V: I need to talk to her.

Judy: Listen, I know you've got some serious questions that she's got the answers to. I mean, if I were you I'd wanna know, too. But it's just not gonna happen. She's completely out of it.

Johnny: You've gotta be fucking kidding me.

V: How's she feeling?

Judy: Use your imagination. That place sucked every last drop of humanity from her. It's not enough she already gave up everything she had, they just kept taking more, and more. She's in some kind of trance - like she's folded into herself. No reaction to her surroundings

whatsoever. I really, really didn't want to poke around in her head. I did it for you. I just want you to know that.

V: You're mad at her? Why?

Judy: When you asked me to scour her behavioral chip, I was just about done dealing with your shit.

V: Judy, I didn't have any other…

Judy: I know. It's OK.

V: So I don't get why….

Judy: You'll find out in a sec. I'll show you the virtu I found.

V: How many BDs did you manage to rip?

Judy: Two. Only one of 'em's intact, understandable, though. The rest… well, they're in the same shape as Evelyn right now.

V: Guessin' you saw them already?

Judy: Yeah. Had to wrestle to make sense of the whole thing. But I don't wanna say anything and tuint your perspective. You should go in with fresh eyes.

V: OK, show me.

Judy: Give me a sec while I set the parameters.

Johnny: Guess we'll find out if our doll really did lose her tune. Come on, V. I'll be the first to admit, this does not look good...

[V sits down next to Evelyn.]

V: Hey. How ya feelin'? Need anything? Not here to nag. Just talk. I know it's a bad time, but I gotta ask. You got any idea how to remove the biochip..? Or know anyone else who might? Listen, Evelyn. I really need your help. It's important. If I don't do anything, and do it soon, I'll die.

Johnny: You're right, this is a complete waste of time. (V touches Evelyn) Well now, look at you.

[V walks to Judy.]

Judy: Have a seat.

V: All right, roll it.

Judy: Data was in pretty rough shape - not all that editable.

V: Mhm. Glad you managed to salvage 'em in the first place.

Judy: Needs a second to load. Quality's lousy, but I did what I could.

[V plunges into Evelyn's memories. She talks to a Haitian woman.]

Evelyn: What am I lookin' out for? Every single piece of tech I see, security?

(Data Encrypted): We need a layout of the whole room. We will get everything else we need from the virtu.

Evelyn: What about his messages?

(Data Encrypted): Only if you can do it and be pa fè bri (quiet). It is most important that he suspect nothing. Try to be your usual, relaxed self.

Evelyn: And if he starts talking about the biochip himself, should I…?

(Data Encrypted): Biochip? Where you hear this? That is not of interest to you. You spin the virtu, you come back here, we give you the eddies. That your ONE job. The rest is none of your concern. Understand?

[The BD ends.]

Judy: Take a look around, if you want.

V: Can't see her face.

Judy: Under normal circumstances, that kinda encryption's easy to crack. But not this time. Whoever she is, she's got serious netrunning skills.

V: That or someone's working it for her.

[He scans a hologram.]

V: Hmm… think I recognize these.

Judy: What are they?

V: Veve markings.

Judy: You familiar with them?

V: Not enough to know what they actually mean. Heard of who might use 'em, though.

Judy: Who?

V: Could be the Voodoo Boys… But that's just a hunch. Can't be a hundred percent sure.

Judy: The spine chillin' netrunner crew? Hard to find, cause they don't wanna be. I wouldn't know where to start.

[V scans flyers on the floor.]

Judy: Might not be important...

V: Maybe... but all of them are from Pacifica. Narrows down our search at least.

Judy: What now?

V: Looks like I'm goin' on a field trip to Pacifica. All right, think we got everything.

[He returns to the real world.]

Judy: What do you think?

V: Woman who hired Evelyn... any idea who we're up against?

Judy: Your guess is as good as mine. Sorry, V.

V: Now we know what happened at Clouds. They're the ones who tried to flatline her. Launched a nuke at her chip.

Judy: So it was punishment? For getting played by her?

V: She knew more than they thought she know. Couldn't let that go.

Judy: So that's who she was running from...

V: Looks like Evelyn never told us the whole truth.

Judy: You're telling me?! If I'd known what she'd gotten herself into... Argh, I'm so mad at her!

V: Her only job was to record a virtu. Pretty damn amazing she managed to organize a full-blown heist. And swipe the biochip from under her boss' noses.

Judy: So that's where you came in, she hired you. And brought this all on herself. On you, too. There's one more recording. Wanna see it?

V: Sure, why not. Nothing that can surprise me at this point.

Heroes

[V plunges into Evelyn's second BD. She overhears some girl talking, probably the one she talked to in the first BD.]

Man on phone: Tipoupe a deja ale?

Woman: Wi li ale. Ou te gen rezon, manzè twò entelijan pou sa pote l byen.

Man on phone: Ou panse manzè qp fè n gen pwoblèm?

Woman: Manzè pa enroje. Anplis, se pi bon mwayen nou genyen pou nou rive sou Yorinobu. Fòk nou pran chans lan.

Man on phone: Mwen to swete mwen kwè menm jan avè. Silvèrhan ap mennen nou dirèk sou Alt.

Woman: Ou gen yan pi ban lide? Trèbyen, si w deside sispan kritike sa m panse, al kontinye fè travay ou.

Judy: What language is she speaking?

V: Dunno… Haitian Creole? It is the Voodoo Boys…

Judy: Didn't I? Wait, lemme see if I've got an auto-translator. Meantime, you try to tune into the phone's frequency. See what the other side's sayin'. Try scanning the phone. Got it. Give it a second… Heard her mention Yorinobu. Probably why Evelyn buried this recording deep. Caught another name… something like… Silverhand?

V: We have to know what they're saying. Could be important.

Judy: Fine. Just found the auto-translate package. Should get along fine with your system. I'll install it now.

Man on phone: The doll has left?

Woman: Yes. You were right, she's too smart for her own good.

Man on phone: Will she bring us trouble?

Woman: She wouldn't dare. Besides, she's our best route to Yorinobu. We must take this risk.

Man on phone: I wish I share your confidence that Silverhand will lead us to Alt.

Woman: You have a better idea? Good, then if you're done questioning my judgment, you can get back to work.

V: OK, Judy. We're good.

Judy: All right. Disconnecting.

[V returns to the real world again.]

Judy: V, you got any idea?

[Johnny strolls around the room and smokes a cigarette.]

V: Biochip we stole...? It's got Silverhand's engram burned onto it.

Judy: Engram...?

V: Digitized psyche, personality construct.

Judy: ...

V: Can you... can you give me a minute? Need to go over some stuff. In my head.

Judy: 'Course.

[She walks out of the room.]

V: Know who they are - who the woman is? Any idea how we find them?

Johnny: Fuck, V... I been dead the last half century. Sorry if I'm unable to hand you all the answers on a chrome fucking plotter when you snap your fingers.

V: These people - what could they want from Alt?

Johnny: How the hell should I know?!

V: Got no notion whatsoever?

Johnny: One way or another, everything leads back to that netrunner. Finding her's our biggest priority. If she knows as much as I think she

knows about the chip, she can help us out.

V: Thought you said nothing could help us?

Johnny: Ugh, just find us that juju wirehead, OK?

[V walks out of the room to talk to Judy.]

Judy: Wait... you got any idea how to get in touch with the Voodoo Boys?

V: Why? Worried that I'll give Evelyn up to them?

Judy: No. I didn't trust you at first, but... well, if you wanted to get back at Evelyn, you woulda done it already.

V: So why the worried look?

Judy: I just... I want it all to work out for you. You got a plan?

V: I'll ask around, make a few calls... Lemme put it this way. The Voodoo Boys wouldn't trust a cat if it walked onto their turf... But someone's gotta know a way in.

Judy: Well, good luck. Hope you won't need it.

V: See ya around, Judy.

Judy: Right, um… Thanks, V.

[V calls Jackie's mother.]

Mamá Welles: V? Good to hear you. Finally. Been a long time since we talk. Since when Jackie pass away.

V: How're you doin'?

Mamá Welles: How you think? My son is dead. But I am hanging in there.

V: Callin' to offer my condolences.

Mamá Welles: Hm. "Offer your condolences." Jesucristo (Jesus Christ) V, you lived under our roof! Have the decency not to treat me like some stranger you just met. I was going to call you. I prepared an ofrenda for Jaquito. We can't let him go without a proper goodbye. The ceremony will be at the Coyote Cojo. Many of his friends will be there.

V: Say no more, Mama Welles. I'll be there.

Mamá Welles: Hm, I did not doubt it for a second. See you, V.

[V drive at El Coyote Cojo. It's a bar.]

Mamá Welles: V, nice to see you. Oye (Hey). Sit, sit. You want a beer?

V: Wouldn't mind one.

Mamá Welles: Cheers.

[They drink.]

Mamá Welles: A lot of time has passed. How you been?

V: Been better, to tell you the truth.

Mamá Welles: What is happening?

V: That night, when Jackie fell… Let's just say things haven't exactly been easy since.

Mamá Welles: Yo sé cómo te sientes. Todos lo sabemos. (I know how you feel. We all do.) I am in the middle of preparing an ofrenda. There is still so much to take care of…

V: An ofrenda? Wh-what's that, exactly?

Mamá Welles: Hm, friends and family… We gather to celebrate the

departed, our memories of them. And we bring things they loved in life and might need in the after.

V: Sure some beer'd be at the top of Jackie's list.

Mamá Welles: Heheheh. And there will be beer.

V: Could help you with that.

Mamá Welles: Gracias, mi cielo (Thank you, darling), but I will manage. It's enough you come to say goodbye.

V: Wanna take part in the ceremony, but... wanna do it the right way - in line with tradition.

Mamá Welles: Mhm...?

V: But something I'd lay by his casket... That'd do justice to his memory, I-I don't got anything...

Mamá Welles: Mh, but your heart is in the right place, mi niño (my child). Fff, don't worry, It's symbolic. Look for something in his garage. His past is all there.

V: Jackie had a garage?

Mamá Welles: He used it for his motorcycle, mostly, but not so long

ago he moved in. You'll find something there, I'm sure.

V: You won't mind me digging through his stuff?

Mamá Welles: No, mijo. He's gone. And funerals are for the living, not the dead. Toma, take the key.

V: Thanks, Mama Welles.

Mama Weles: Eh, don't mention it, V. You have respect. I admire that. The garage is on Republic. Ahí te veo. (See you.)

[V goes to Jackie's garage and finds Misty sitting near it.]

Misty: Hi, V.

V: You here alone? This is not exactly the safest neighborhood in town, Misty.

Misty: I used to sit on the stairs when I was ten. Twenty Six now - if anything was gonna happen, it wouldn't taken this long.

V: What're you doin' here?

Misty: Sittin' and waitin'... And, yeah, waitin' for him, though I know he's never comin' back. Lately I've just been comin' here to sit an hour, sometimes two. I know it's gonk, it's just... I miss him. A lot.

Wanna sit? Catch up?

V: Hardly gonk at all… just, well, human.

Misty: I guess.

V: You know each other long?

Misty: Half our lives. Grew up in the same streets - saw each other a lot but just never got together…

V: Till a year back.

Misty: Yeah. Best darn year of my life.

V: Jack talked about you a lot. Always sayin' how much you meant to ‘im.

Misty: Did he really say that? I bet he used different words.

V: Heh, maybe, but that's what he meant. I really believe that.

Misty: You actually got to know him - the real Jackie. Everybody else thought her was a goofball with a rough-hewn face and an edge. But they're wrong.

V: What'd you see in him?

Misty: Lemme tell you what he told me once. Told me he'd take a bullet for me in an instant. Even if it'd kill him.

V: Spoken like a true Heywood boy.

Misty: A man - with dreams, ambitions. Only thing they cost him was his life. There's a huge chunk of his past in there…

V: How come you're outside?

Misty: I don't have the key.

V: Jackie never gave you a set? Who you two didn't get that far?

Misty: He offered. But I wanted him to have his own space, just his own.

V: Mama Welles is having a send-off for Jackie. I need to find somethin' he really cared about. Ya mind givin' me a hand?

Misty: I'm not sure I should go in there, V.

V: Still too soon?

Misty: No, it's not that. Mama Welles and I aren't exactly on the best terms. She wouldn't want me touching any of his things, disturbing

the memory - that I know.

V: Jackie'd want you here - that's more important. Come on.

[They enter Jackie's garage.]

V: Jackie loved to pump iron, didn't he?

Misty: He called it his form of meditation. He used to say barbells are the best listeners. They understand all your problems and never give you gonk advice.

[V looks at some bodybuilders posters on the wall.]

V: Gotta be hanging here since 2020.

[V looks at Jackie's motorcycle.]

V: A fine piece o' metal and mechanics. Heh. He was so psyched...

[V looks at some crates on the floor.]

V: Loved to poke around engines.

Misty: He was fifteen when he first got on a bike.

V: Knowing him, it's a miracle he never wiped out.

[He notices a book on the workbench.]

V: "For Whom the Bell Tolls" - Ernest Hemingway.

Misty: Jack read it a dozen times. Always right before a big job. He said the guy who wrote it was tougher than Morgan Blackhand.

V: Have you read it? Is it any good?

Misty: I, uh... I never got the chance.

V: It'd be a good tribute for the ofrenda, though.

[V looks at some posters with fine girls.]

V: Guess no man cave's complete without some of those, huh?

Misty: He said they're collectibles. They don't print them anymore.

V: That's definitely why they're up there, yeah.

[V looks at a crate full of beer bottles.]

V: Still full.

Misty: His favorite. Strategic reserve. No touching.

V: How come?

Misty: “Porque no puedes tocar una reserva estratégica, ¿va?” (“Because you can’t touch a strategic reserve, OK?”)

[V finds a ball in the corner.]

V: Basketball signed by Dante González.

Misty: He was from Heywood, too. Everyone here shot hoops, Dante ran circles around 'em. I think he mighta been the first kid to ditch the Valentinos.

V: Like Jackie?

Misty: Mhm. They both wanted more outta life. Dante's captain of the NC Blackouts now.

[They go into the next room and see a beautiful picture on the floor surrounded by lit candles.]

Misty: Oh, Jackie.

V: That a… mandala…?

Misty: Mhm. Oof, it's a long story.

V: Hey, you all right?

Misty: I'm so much better than all right. I once told Jackie he should sweep all the dark energy out of this place. A sand mandala'd do the trick, for example. He told me that out of sand, he'd build a castle, a home, the Welles' family hideout, stronghold, somethin'…

V: I guess you made a bigger impression than you thought.

Misty: I guess I did…

V: It's beautiful.

Misty: It's hideous. But it's also the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

[V finds an aquarium.]

V: An aquarium?

Misty: Used to be Taco's.

V: And Taco was…

Misty: His fish. A dwarf shark, like, mini.

V: Sounds like a mighty expensive fish.

Misty: Pfft. Oh. I don't think he bought it.

[V looks at a bottle on the table.]

V: Jackie's favorite tequila. Huh, still sealed.

Misty: It's his lucky charm. One of the first bottles ever made by Jesús de Abajo (Jesus from Below).

V: Who--the founder of Centzon Tequila?

Misty: Only a hundred of 'em left in the world - all owned by the one percent.

V: Wha… how'd Jackie get this one?

Misty: Some shriveled abuela (granny) in Mexico sold it to him. Told him de Abajo had stolen her recipe.

[V looks at some photos on the wall.]

V: Nice still. It's gotta be Jackie's dad.

Misty: Old school ganger. Valentinos, of course.

V: D'you meet him?

Misty: No, I only ever heard about him. But he didn't exactly inspire many fond memories.

[V finds a belt on the table.]

V: Leather belt?

Misty: Sort of a memento. His dad's. Used to beat both Jackie and his mom with it. Until one day Jackie fought back, kicked his butt, told him he'd kill him next time. Old man was hospitalized and then he left.

V: Why'd he hold onto it?

Misty: In case his dad ever comes back.

[V takes the tequila bottle.]

V: Takin' this, yeah. Perfect for Jackie.

Misty: Well, you got something for your ofrenda. But we could look around a little more.

V: Better get goin'.

Misty: Actually, V... I think I'll stay a while. Say bye to him here. Mama Welles wouldn't want me there anyway.

V: What happened between you two, what's the beef?

Misty: Let's just say she didn't see me as daughter-in-law material.

V: What'd she have against you?

Misty: That my name wasn't Camila and I wasn't Jackie's ex-output. Camila was Mama Welles' favorite.

V: Right. You gotta come, Misty - you got a right to be there.

Misty: I'd rather not get in Mama Welles' way. It's for family.

V: You were family to 'im.

Misty: I guess you're right. Thanks, V. So? Shall we go?

[They leave the garage.]

V: You ever thought you might leave Night City?

Misty: Sure. Once upon a time I even tried.

V: Seriously? Meanin'?

Misty: Packed my bags and hopped on a plane - to Nepal. Thought I'd stay there. After a week I realized I couldn't live without the traffic outside my window and my neighbors' hollering. I'll see you at the Coyote, then.

[Misty stays outside. V walks into El Coyote Cojo.]

Mamá Welles: V, it's good you're here. We're about to start. Sit down, please.

Viktor: Hey, V.

[V sits next to the doc. The bar is full of people.]

Mamá Welles: I thank you all for coming today. I'm not going to tell you what kind of man my son was or lament about how much I miss him. Instead, I'll tell you a story. When he was about… nineteen years old? Jackie was in the Valentinos. They were at war with Maelstrom back then. I get a call from the hospital. They tell me he got shot. Three times. Just by the heart. He was conscious when I get there. So many tubes coming out of him, he look like a… like a pulpo, like an octopus or something. He tell me, he said, "No te preocupes mamá (Don't worry mom). Look, I'm bulletproof. Nothing bad'll ever happen to me." And when I go, he take off his Valentinos ring. He swear he won't need anymore. But he was not scared. He just didn't want me to worry. Hm. Descansa en paz, mi hijo (Rest in peace, my son).

[She puts the ring next to Jackie's photo. Doc gets up next. He's holding boxing gloves.]

Viktor: Among the membership of the Night City Devils boxing club, we had this saying. Make your best friends among the fighters who knock you out cold. And it's true, Jackie's arm was a cannon. No one's ever hit me as hard - heh, I can still almost feel it.

[He puts the gloves on the table next to Jackie's photo. He struggles to restrain his emotions.]

Viktor: Twelve rounds, buddy.

[Next a guy walks to the table to say some words.]

Valentino: Campo Orta me mandó. (Campo Orta sent me.) He's sorno estar aquí, todavía le quedan cuatro años que cumplir. Me pidió que leyera esto. (He's sorry he can't be here - still has four years to serve. He asked me to read this.) "Recuerdo cuando Jackie se nos unió. Era un niño fuerte." ("I remember when Jackie first came to us. He was a tough kid.") "Cuando decía que iba a hacer algo, cumplía. Tenía honor. Podría haber llegado lejos." ("When he said he would do something, he did it. He had honor. He would've made it far.") "Mis condolencias a la familia." ("My condolences to the family.") "Que descanse en paz." ("May he rest in peace.")

Mamá Welles: Anyone else...?

V: I, uh... often think back to the first time me and Jack met. It all started when he put a heater to my head. Then some badges showed up. Beat the shit out of us both - it's half my fault, half his. And we hightailed it out together. Half an hour later... well, we're eatin' dinner at Mama Welles'. Turned out to have more in common than we thought - principles. Jackie Welles. Best friend you could ask for, loyal to a fault. Once he set his mind on something, he was ready to die to achieve it. He once told me, "Bróder, the one thing we can't do is be afraid of others." He kept Heywood in his heart, always. It made him who he was. But most importantly... Jackie loved life and had no fear. Heart on his sleeve, he didn't overthink things. He just went for it. Thought he was bulletproof and... and that he'd become legend at the Afterlife. And ultimately, he did what he set out to do - shit in the shoes of some powerful people. And if he's watching, I bet just about now he's flippin' 'em all the bird.

[He puts the tequila bottle on the table.]

V: He always wanted more than he got outta life. Rest easy, choom.

Mamá Welles: I would like to say a toast. Por mi hijo. (Here's to my son.)

[Everyone in the bar drinks a shot.]

Mamá Welles: Thank you for your kind words, V. I'm glad you're here. It was a beautiful ofrenda we gave him.

[V walks to the counter.]

Pepe: Pour you another? For Jaquito.

V: (streetkid) I see the Valentinos haven't forgotten about Jackie.

Pepe: Days like this even the meanest motherfuckers pay their respects. Principles. And Jackie lived by them - they's what kept him going.

V: Weird bein' here without Jackie.

Pepe: Can't shake the feelin' I'm gonna turn on see him sittin' at the bar. In his favorite spot, where he always used to sit.

V: Pour. For Jackie.

Pepe: Amen, brother.

[V drinks.]

V: I'll have another.

Pepe: Have as many as you want.

[V goes to talk with the doc.]

V: I'm gonna miss him. Already do.

Viktor: Hah, me too, cabrón. Me too. Here's to Jackie - gone off to greener pastures.

V: Jackie Welles. (drinks)

Viktor: A proud son of Heywood.

V: Well, uh, I should mingle, Vik.

Viktor: Sure, see ya later, V.

[V goes to some guys drinking at a table.]

Gustavo: Psst, hey you! Have a drink with us, hm? To Welles.

V: How'd you meet Jackie?

Gustavo: Uh, we started out together.

V: In the Valentinos?

Gustavo: No, in the fucking Bible book club. Yeah... I got only good

memories of him. Rest easy up there, bróder.

V: Think we might know each other.

Gustavo: Gustavo Orta.

V: V.

Gustavo: Yeah… I've heard about you. Well, heartfelt condolences, friend - from me, Campo and all the Valentinos.

V: Thank you. All right, why not.

Gustavo: To Welles. May he rest in peace.

The Gig

V: Good for now, thanks.

Valentino: See? Ya gotta know when to stop.

Gustavo: Ayy, gimme a break. All right, let's go.

[V notices Misty.]

V: Hey. Are you all right?

Misty: Yeah… I think I'm just still in that garage, mentally. I just need a sec.

[V goes up to the second floor to talk to Padre.]

V: You, uh, here to say goodbye to one of your own, Padre?

Padre: I'm here to say goodbye to a good man.

V: Jackie, uh - did ya know him well?

Padre: I remember the day his mother brought him into this world. The day his father left. The day he took you into his home. Yes, V. I knew him quite well.

V: So, Padre. You think Jackie's looking down upon us... from up there?

Padre: I believe he has met God, stood before Him. I don't know if God left the meeting happy, but I'm pretty certain Jackie did.

V: How're things in the streets?

Padre: This is not the place to conduct business. Have some respect.

V: I'm gonna move on.

Padre: Go with God.

Mamá Welles: Lot of people come today... Even that putita (little bitch) Jackie was messing around with.

V: Her name is Misty.

Mamá Welles: What...?

V: Misty. And she was very important to him. Do you understand? Go, invite her along for dinner. It's the least she deserves.

Mamá Welles: You know what? You're a good man. Jackie would want you to have this.

Both sides, Now

V: You... you sure? Jackie'd kill me if I got so much as a scratch on it.

Mamá Welles: So don't get any scratches on it.

V: Thank you. I'll take such good care of it.

Mamá Welles: Cuidate, V. (Take care of yourself, V.)

[V leaves the bar.]

[Now that V has the money, he goes to pay Viktor for the expensive eye.]

V: Ugh… How's biz going?

Viktor: Eh, can't complain. Corpos learned to keep their distance. And Saka's back hiring lone mercs - they all gotta have the newest, shiniest implants.

V: Good thing you got Misty here to help. Handles your griping well.

Viktor: Yeah, rentin' outta her shop's the best decision I ever made.

V: know what? Seems like you're the only person in Night City who's happy with his lot.

Viktor: You get to a certain age, you drop all your Illusions. Life just gets easier from there.

V: Got a few questions about Silverhand and this chip.

Viktor: I'm no expert but fire away, see what I can do.

V: How's it even possible? Seein' him?

Viktor: Well, that biochip is designed for users to communicate with constructs. It's just doin' its job. So I got Arasaka to thank. Y'know, I wager you have the lowest net worth of any Relic owner out there.

V: Tried to flatline me, Johnny did.

Viktor: What?!

V: What can I do suppress him? Y'know, avoid my murder?

Viktor: Well… long as you don't give him control, can't do too much harm. 'Course that won't necessarily be possible after some time.

V: And what then?

Viktor: Whaddaya say we don't let things get that for? Find a way to get rid of Silverhand, and fast.

V: Why'm I relivin' Johnny's memories?

Viktor: You two share a brain now. He has access to your senses, perceptions, even some memories. Likewise, you've got a glimpse into his. After a while, won't even know whose is whose.

[V pays Viktor for his work - 21000 eddies.]

V: Finally scrounged up enough eddies to pay you back in full.

Viktor: Hold onto Sem just in case you need 'em more than me.

V: I'm not takin' 'em all the way to my grave, Vik. Here. And thanks

again for doing so much work on me 'thout ever seein' an enny.

Viktor: That's what friends're for.

V: Was thinkin' about swappin' some chrome. Got any new toys?

Viktor: Have a look.

[V buys some new upgrades and leaves the clinic.]

[V goes to Wakako to collect the reward for saving Sandra.]

Wakako: Well, well... Who do. I spy but V - in my humble parlor, no less.

V: Wakako. Long time, no see.

Wakako: So what brings you here?

V: Willing to bet nobody knows Westbrook like you do.

Wakako: My husbands knew Westbrook, yes. Each of them, very high in the Tyger Claws. Ruled Japantown.

V: What did they do?

Wakako: They did what made the best eddies, gave them the most pull. Sold sex and black-market tech.

V: Can't help asking - how many of those husbands did you have?

Wakako: Five. All went before their time. Terrible family tragedy.

V: Not afraid that tragedy will strike you?

Wakako: Have to live somehow. For my nine sons.

V: We have some outstanding biz to settle. Remember Sandra Dorsett?

Wakako: I don't forget such things, V. Hero is your reward. It comes with a fairly ample bonus. Go see a ripperdoc - they'll weave you a dermo-imprint that will enable smart-gun compatibility. A Tyger Claws speciality.

[V jumps on Jackie's bike and rides to Cassius Ryder to claim his reward, then walks into Cassius shop.]

V: How's biz treatin' ya, Cassius?

Caselus Ryder: Lately, can't complain. MaxTac raided a black clinic not long past. Since then, customer count's gone up and so is my

prices. Coincidence? Heh, you decide.

V: Let's see what's good.

Cassius Ryder: Take your pick.

[V takes his reward and leaves the store. Then he decides to visit Judy.]

Ghost Town

Judy: In the bathroom!

[V goes into the bathroom and sees Evelyn's corpse in the tub and a crying Judy. She's in shock. She's under a lot of stress and can hardly speak.]

V: Oh fuck...!

Johnny: Bird offs herself to express her undying gratitude to you for saving her ass.

V: Stop talking.

Judy: I was-- I was only gone an hour...

V: Checked her pulse?

Judy: V. She's gone.

V: How'd this happen?

Judy: I don't know! Told you. Evie was lying in bed, like always, when I went out. And I got back to… ough….

V: Fwoo… fuck.

Judy: If I'd just known I'd've…

V: Don't blame yourself, won't solve anything.

Judy: I should've sensed something, that it was off, ough!

V: Stop, couldn't watch her twenty-four seven… She'd made up her mind. Would've found a way. Always. Gotta do somethin' with her.

Judy: Don't want any trouble - I'm callin' the badges. Can you carry her to the bed?

Johnny: As if that'll change anything…

V: Not sure we should move her before the bodges get here.

Judy: She's just another dead whore to them - nobody'll care. Least

we can do is treat her with some dignity.

[V carries poor Evelyn's body to the bed. Meanwhile, Judy calls the police to report the accidental death. She yells and curses at the dispatcher, who says that the car won't arrive until tomorrow.]

Judy: They'll be here soon. Psh. Told me to keep her on ice until tomorrow. Can you believe the balls?

V: Y'know... to you she was your best friend, so it's a terrible tragedy. But... they must get dozens of calls like this every day.

Judy: What are you - their fuckin' PR rep?

V: No, just sayin'.

Judy: Gonna put somethin' on her. Rather she look like a person than a body. Could you wait outside? Close the door, V. Please.

[Some time passes. V and Judy are standing on the balcony. Judy looks out over the city.]

Judy: Fwoo, uh... bum a cig?

V: Didn't know you smoked.

Judy: Uhh. Quit, been years. But right now I need something 'sides air

in my lungs. Please, V, just one.

V: Heh, here.

[He hands her the cigarette case she gave him earlier.]

Judy: That was her smoke case.

V: Wanna hold on to it?

Judy: No, you seem to like it, keep it. Kinda glad it's you that has it, actually. Fuck, Evie... I let her down. I thought If I gave her some space or time she'd get back on her feet...

V: Can't wrap my head around it... I never saw Evelyn as the type to give up...

Judy: C'mon, what she went through? I wouldn't call it giving up. 'Member Fingers, how he said Evie was with 'im for four days?

V: Mhm... did say so.

Judy: She disappeared from Clouds a week before you turned up. Tom told me later. Couldn't sleep at night, knowin' that. Kept thinking - what the hell happened to those other three days, so... did some more diggin' in her virtus. Ehh - found Woodman. He kept her. Had his way with her. The things he did... And once he got bored, he

pawned her off.

Down on the Street

V: Wait, so you found other recordings?

Judy: Had another look at the corrupted ones. Lots of static - hard to pick up anything, really. At some point I stumbled on something like on echo of the spot we'd had… Last time we saw each other. But I know she wasn't scrolling.

V: Then why was it saved as a virtu?

Judy: Tsh, got no explanation for it. Maybe she recalled it later, relived it, almost? Implant could've been on when… Y'know, as a defense mechanism - escapin' into the past so as not to live the present.

V: What'd Woodman do to her? Did you see it?

Judy: Yeah… and I really wish I could unsee it.

V: I zeroed Woodman. Didn't plan on it - just how the chips landed. Glad I did, though.

Judy: Me too. I can't even imagine. Still, it's not enough… There're so many more like him. Gotta be somethin' I can do about it.

V: Like what?

Judy: Don't know yet. Think I'll call Suze… Hehh, thanks, V. Sorry, but, uh, I'd rather be alone now. Promise to keep in touch.

V: Sure you don't need anything?

Judy: No but sweet of you to ask.

V: Anything comes up, holler on the holo.

[V rides to the Afterlife.]

V: Hey.

Emmerick: In ya go.

[He walks to Claire, the bartender.]

Claire: Get you anything?

V: Choom of mine earned a spot on the menu here.

Claire: That chulo bull with the bun? Yeah, was sorry to hear.

V: Remember his drink, the recipe?

Claire: Vodka on the rocks, lime juice, and ginger beer.

V: And a splash of love.

Claire: Hah, that's right. And the drink's name…

V: A Jackie Welles.

Claire: Right. Well, the first Jackie Welles is on me.

[After a shot V goes to see Rogue, a fixer and an old friend of Johnny. At this very moment she is arguing with some girl.]

Panam: No. This trouble, the net around me - you wove it. You know it. I lost everything. Through you.

Rogue: Lemme be plain. Again. Solve your own problems, clean up your shit.

Panam: Do you know what, Rogue? Go fuck yourself.

[The nomad walks off, jostling the bouncer from behind.]

Panam: (to V) Be careful who you bargain with.

[V steps towards the booth.]

Dennis: Hey! Interested in some work?

    V: (Need a fixer. Urgently.) Need a fixer. Got somethin' that can't wait.

        Rogue: Let him/her in.

    V: (Can we talk) Rogue? Wanted to talk.

        [The bouncer looks over his shoulder at Rogue]

        Rogue: It's OK.

Rogue: Hm. Not here, not there. Who're you?

V: Name's V.

[For a 70-80 year old lady, she looks pretty good...]

Rogue: And what is it you want, V?

(Johnny glitches in, he's sitting in the corner of the bench behind Rogue, feet on the seat)

Johnny: All these years... It's really her. Fuckin' Rogue, just kickin' it

back on at the Afterlife.

Johnny: Don't mess with 'er. She's got MR-eyes. See right through you. Give 'er the truth.

V: (Optional: What was that about?) The girl - what was her gripe?

    Rogue: Why don't ya ask her. Might still be around, sniveling in a corner.

V: (Anders Hellman - need to track him down.) Need your services. Gotta track a guy down.

Rogue: Mhm?

V: Anders Hellman. Hot-shot engineer. Worked for Arasaka.

Rogue: Millisec. (uses the PC in her head) Anders Hellman. Pinpoint him for me?

V: Huh. Thanks.

Rogue: Jumpin' too soon. First, my help's got a price. Second, and third - Dexter DeShawn. Jackie Welles. T-Bug. Multiple bells ringin' V. Left a lot of bodies behind, death walks in your wake. Chalk that up to bad luck?

Johnny: Theeere's the bitch now... Ask her out 'Saka Tower. How they shot me up right in front of her.

(options)

    (Phasing out)

        Rogue: Pick up the pace.

        Rogue: You're wasting my time.

    V: (You got Johnny killed.) Wanna go through obits? Really? Fine. Johnny Silverhand. Zeroed inside Arasaka

Tower, before your very eyes. Got more, if you want. Or we could just talk.

        Rogue: (to male V) Got balls on you, boy. Don't like that on everybody, but they seem to suit you.

        Rogue: (to female V) Got 'nads on you, girl. Don't like that on every woman, but they seem to suit you.

    V: (Even you lost people in action.) They knew the risks. All sorts of shit happens - to all sorts of people. Even to the best. To you, too, Rogue. Arasaka Tower... 'member? Who'd you lose back then? Johnny something...

        Rogue: Ah. You came prepped. 'Course.

Rogue: Anyways... feelings be damned, I've always said. This is pure biz. You need my help, so get those eddies ready.

Johnny: Mhm. See?

V: (And if I don't have the cash?) U-huh. And if I don't have the scratch? It's "fuck off and have a nice day"?

    Rogue: No. More like, "Come back when you do." Them's the breaks.

    V: Mhm. Then, see ya. Soon.

    Rogue: You know where to find me.

V: (15000 [Pay] This enough?) Should be enough.

    Rogue: Mhmm. Come back tomorrow, we'll talk.

[Takemura calls V.]

Takemura: V? Can you talk? It is important.

V: What's important?

Takemura: I may have found a solution to... the problem we share. I have established contact with an old friend from Arasaka. He is here in Night City now. He is well-connected to certain influential people.

  V: *(Why the mystery? Get to the point.)* Old friend, well-connected to the influential... why so mysterious? Get to the point.

    Takemura: I told you once I would explore options, knock on many doors.

  V: *(How's that gonna help us?)* That's gonna help us how, exactly?

Takemura: There will be a meeting - you, me and this friend of mine. You will tell him what you told me - the truth of events at Konpeki Plaza. I have little hope that he will be convinced. But it will be a start.

V: *(Question: This guy trustworthy?)* Of all people, you oughta know Night City tests everyone's reliability - even that of "old friends." Sure about this guy? Trust him?

  Takemura: Many times we have had the opportunity to kill one another. Yes... I trust him.

V: *(Fine. Where's the meet)* Fine. Where's the meet and when?

  Takemura: Japantown. After sunset. I am sending you the precise location. I will see you there.

[V rides to Japantown to meet with Takemura, then waits for him on the waterfront until evening.]

Takemura: It is good to see you, V.

V: Seems pretty, uh, secluded here.

Takemura: It is appropriate for such a secret meeting.

V: *(Question: You look awful.)* What the hell happened? Look close to awful.

  Takemura: You see a man robbed of his implants, money and dignity. Look well. It is not all bad. I am mostly unnoticed in the streets.

V: Friend you mentioned here?

Takemura: Oda? He should be here any moment now.

V: Willing finally to give me the spec on 'im?

Takemura: He is Hanako-sama's bodyguard.

V: Hanako Arasaka's? From the carrier at anchor in the bay? Saburo's daughter?

Takemura: Yes. And if he believes you, we will next meet with her.

  V: *(Or he'll sell our asses out.)* And what's to stop her little errand boy from selling us out?

    Takemura: He will not do that. He is a man of honor.

    V: Right, 'cause Arasaka's ranks're chock-full of those.

    Takemura: Do not confuse true honor with the petty morals by which you live.

  V: *(Sure you can trust him?)* Sure you can trust him?

    Takemura: Yes.

    V: Pff. Convincing, very.
    Takemura: I have nothing to lose. Is that better?
    V: Worse. 'Cause I got plenty to lose.
  V: *(Corpo: Hope he's not a stickler for Arasaka protocl.)* Just hope he doesn't blindly follow Arasaka protocol.
    Takemura: What protocol?
    V: Unwritten rules. Had 'em here in Night City. Could be different in Japan. If I got even a whiff of treason, they'd prep an enhanced interrogator and send two elite squads with air support to grab the suspect.
    Takemura: I understand the point you seek to make.But if Oda has ulterior motives, he will need no elites, no air support, no one but himself. Trust me, I have seen him work.
    V: Hm. That supposed to be reassuring?
    Takemura: If it helps you stay calm, you can gaze at the sky.
Takemura: By car, huh? A good sign. He is usually camouflaged.

[An Arasaka limousine pulls up to them. A Japanese man in a suit gets out, looks about as buff as Takemura. His hair covers half of his face.]
Oda: Takemura-san.
Takemura: Oda.
Oda: Is this him/her? Your thief?
Takemura: *(S)*He is my witness, V.
V: Can speak for myself, you know.

Oda: So speak. I have been told you know things.

  V: *(Yorinobu strangled his father.)* Was there. Saw what happened. Yorinobu strangled the old guy.

  V: *(Not gonna like what I have to say. Need a guarantee.)* Not gonna like what I'm about to say. I need a guarantee I'm safe here...

    Oda: You are. You have it.

    Takemura: V, you can trust Oda.

  V: All right, then. Konpeki Plaza - I was there the night it happened. Looked like your typical family quarrel, until... Yorinobu lunged at Saburo an' started chokin' him...

Oda: Silence. Not one word more. You will bring death to your door.

Takemura: But it is the truth! Hanako-sama must hear it!

Oda: My one concern is to keep her safe in this city forgotten by the gods.

Takemura: Is she in danger?

Oda: Now? No. Yet during the parade to honor Arasaka-sama? Most certainly.

Takemura: I bring you this witness to his murder. And you dare to worry about a silly parade? Fool!

Oda: Correct. Unlike you, I have not yet failed to keep my oath to do my duty.

[Beginning of timed prompt 1]

  Takemura: You will regret those words!

  Oda: The only thing I regret is that I came here to meet you.

    V: *(Prompt: Can't ignore the truth!)* But

you can't ignore the truth!

      [Takemura makes eye contact with V for a moment]

[Beginning of timed prompt 2]

  Oda: There is a price on your head! I do you a favor now by not cutting it off and taking it straight to Yorinobu-sama.

    V: *(Prompt: This gonna take much longer?)* Sorry, but... this gonna take much longer?

  [if V doesn't speak]

    Oda: What would you do now were you in my place?

    Takemura: I do no favors. I would deliver your head to Yorinobu-sama.

    Oda: Consider yourself lucky that I am not you.

[Beginning of timed prompt]

  [if V says nothing]

    Takemura: You cannot ignore this!

    [Oda turns, gets into his car, and drives off]

  [Prompt, options]

    V: *(Stand - Oda!)* Wanna help or not?

      Oda: What?!

      V: We're talkin' about a guy who killed his father to seize control of Arasaka! Gonna take an interest in this or not?

    V: *(Stand - Hanako should decide for*

herself.) Oda. It's not as if we're asking for a whole lot, here. Just one brief meeting. Hanako should decide if what we say is true. You can't decide for her. Will you help?

  Oda: I will not. But I will let you leave this place, this city, unharmed. If I see either of you again, I will not be so lenient.

  Takemura: Be very careful, my friend. We are all so far from home.

[Oda drives away.]

Johnny: Good fuckin' riddance. One Arasaka whackjob is already plenty.

  V: *(Cool 12 - Fine friends you got)* Fine friend, there. Got any more?

    Takemura: Alas, only him.

  V: *(Knew we'd crash.)* No way this was gonna work.

    Takemura: Hmm... yet, we walk away with a small measure of success...

  V: *(Well, we tried.)* Well... can't say we didn't try.

    Takemura: We tried, yes, and obtained something useful...

V: Hm, how do you figure that?

Takemura: What Oda said... They return to Tokyo after the parade. Do you not see? The parade... It is our chance, perhaps. If, somehow, we can get to Hanako-sama... We must do a proper reconnaissance first... We will need a precise map of Japantown.

V: Hold on...

Down on the Street

Takemura: It is your turn to call on friends. Do you know a fixer who

could help?

V: *(Query: Slow down, this isn't gonna be easy.)* Er, hang on, not so fast! Make it sound as easy as hacking a SCSM. But you said yourself - Hanako's got the tightest security in all Night City.

  Takemura: Correct. That is why I wish for you to contact us with the local fixer.

V: *(Know just the dame - Wakako Okada.)* Know just the fixer dame - Wakako Okada. Runs a pachinko parlor on Jig-Jig Street.

Takemura: We must pay this woman a visit. Will you join me?

  V: *(No, thanks.)* Get there on my own, thanks.

    Takemura: I will meet you there. One other matter requires my attention.

  V: *(Sure.)* Sure, why not.

[They get into Takemura's van and drive to Wakako.]

Takemura: Ji-Ji Street... What is this name?

V: Just a Night City name.

Takemura: Beware - you mock me... too often.

  V: *(What's going on at Arasaka?)* Any idea what's going on at Arasaka?

    Takemura: Only what I can surmise from what I see on TV. Yorinabu and his puppets grin at the cameras and insist that everything is under control. But the wider the smile, the bigger the lies.

  V: *(How are you?)* You all right, Goro?

    Takemura: Yes. Why the sudden concern?

    V: *(We have shared interests - you and I.)* Have shared interests - you and I. Or have you forgotten?
      Takemura: Certainly not.
      V: Good. 'Cause catching lead in Night City's easier than catching a cold - and I need you alive.
      Takemura: I am alive and well, as you can see. You should worry about yourself.
    V: *(Just asking. SOmething wrong with that?)* Uh, just asking? Does everything with you have to have an ulterior motive?
      Takemura: I apologize, that came off wrong. I, em... I am simply not used to such questions. People like me - either we are doing well, or we are in a grave.

[They walk into Wakako's parlor.]
Takemura: Mmm... How I missed the sound.
Wakako: *(If V has been back after the Dorsett job)* V, so nice to see you.
Wakako: *(If V has not been back after the Dorsett job)* Well, well... Who do I spy but V - in my humble parlor, no less. Long time, no see. What brings you here?
Wakako: And your charming friend is...?
V: Happen to be workin' together, that's all.
Takemura: タケムラゴロです。オカダさん、お会いできて光栄です *(Goro Takemura. The honor is mine, Okado-san.)*
Wakako: Haaa... a true gentleman! Shame, only, that he's being hunted by all Arasaka's tin soldiers. And you, V, bring him to my door.

Gimme one reason why I shouldn't notify the proper “authorities” right away.

  V: *(We come with biz, and you love to make eddies.)* Eddies is why. Always about eddies, Wakako. You wanna make 'em - we got biz. Doesn't get any simpler.

  V: *(Simple. You're damned curious.)* Would've already made the call if you intended to. Simple - you're curious to see what we got.

Wakako: So tell me. And mark well I still have my phone at hand.

V: *(Parade in Japantown - we need intel.)* Need Intel on the parade that's scheduled to come through Japantown.

Wakako: So it's Arasaka... again. What I fail to understand is... Why come to me? Did Mr. DeShawn not come to the phone?

  V: *(Goro, why's Dex not available - remind me?)* Goro? Remind me why Dex's fat, backstabbing ass is currently indisposed?

    Takemura: He is deceased.

    V: Butchered and dumped at a landfill by some Arasaka goon. Real shame, that.

    Wakako: That a threat I detect?

      V: *(timed prompt)* No threat, no. Asked why I couldn't reach Dex, I answered: Just facts, nothin' more.

      Takemura: *(if V doesn't answer)* Okada-san, our intentions are honorable. We need just information. It is a matter of life and death. *(he looks at V in exasperation. Why are you like this?)*

    Wakako: Good, 'cause you would then

have to join him.

  V: *(You know everything that goes on in this 'hood.)* Cm'on, got your finger on the 'hood's pulse, know everything.

    Wakako: Won't see me dressed in mourning.

    Takemura: Come again?

    Wakako: But the rest is true.

  V: *(Streetkid - Heard Arasaka killed your grandkid)* Arasaka, Tyger Claws - kinda like the family dog screwin' the cat, huh? Can't possibly be fond of the people who killed your grandkid.

    Wakako: That was very long ago.

    V: Time's the best healer? Wound like that, though...

    Wakako: A wound like that, no.

Wakako: Everything's on the shards.

Takemura: How much does this cost? My pockets... are empty.

Wakako: Clearly. My gift to you, it's free.

Takemura: Okada-san... what is free often proves most costly.

Wakako: Gonna take them or not?

V: *(Query: Free? You sure?)* For free? You sure?

Wakako: Got my reasons. But patience I got none.

[V takes a shard from the table and sticks it in his neck.]

Wakako: Japantown. Whole district is to be sealed off for the parade. Dashi platforms, the main attraction. They'll try this way, high above street level. Along the parade route - balconies, footbridges and vantage points affording good views. Hanako Arasaka, the guest of honor, will deliver her speech from the largest float. She'll do this

exactly... here. Got no idea about security, but given recent... events, expect it to be tight. Our lost parade? Arasaka undercovers infiltrated the crowd. Not to mention a smattering of sharpshooters, drones. And if that's not enough fun for one day, a netrunner, one at least. They use the city CCTV to observe everything. Main access point - here. It's an old, automated control center. If you ask me, most useful by far. At the end, the floats will float out of Japantown, and we'll be left with trash up to our elbows that no one will collect. That's it, it's all I have.

Takemura: It must be enough.

Wakako: Then go, be on your way.

V: *(Query: Not at all curious what we're after?)* Not at all curious what we're going to all this trouble for?

  Wakako: Blissful ignorance has served me well. In any case... I'll find out soon, won't I?

V: *(Thanks, Wakako.)* Thanks, Wakako.

Takemura: We appreciate this, Okada-san.

[They walk out of the parlor.]

Takemura: A delightful, mature woman. This information... it could be just what we need. But I will try to investigate further. I will stay here some time and call some associates. The moment I learn something new. I will let you know.

  V: *(Stay safe.)* Stay safe, Goro.

    Takemura: You as well. Until next time.

  V: *(Keep a low profile.)* Just... low profile, OK? Don't start handing out autographs.

    Takemura: In fame, I could not overtake you if I tried. Be safe, V.

[Takemura calls V.]

Takemura: V? Can you talk? It is important.

V: What's important?

Takemura: I may have found a solution to... the problem we share. I have established contact with an old friend from Arasaka. He is here in Night City now. He is well-connected to certain influential people.

  V: *(Why the mystery? Get to the point.)* Old friend, well-connected to the influential... why so mysterious? Get to the point.

    Takemura: I told you once I would explore options, knock on many doors.

  V: *(How's that gonna help us?)* That's gonna help us how, exactly?

Takemura: There will be a meeting - you, me and this friend of mine. You will tell him what you told me - the truth of events at Konpeki Plaza. I have little hope that he will be convinced. But it will be a start.

V: *(Question: This guy trustworthy?)* Of all people, you oughta know Night City tests everyone's reliability - even that of "old friends." Sure about this guy? Trust him?

  Takemura: Many times we have had the opportunity to kill one another. Yes... I trust him.

V: *(Fine. Where's the meet)* Fine. Where's the meet and when?

  Takemura: Japantown. After sunset. I am sending you the precise location. I will see you there.

[V rides to Japantown to meet with Takemura, then waits for him on the waterfront until evening.]

Takemura: It is good to see you, V.

V: Seems pretty, uh, secluded here.

Takemura: It is appropriate for such a secret meeting.

V: *(Question: You look awful.)* What the hell happened? Look close to awful.

  Takemura: You see a man robbed of his implants, money and dignity. Look well. *(He pauses)* It is not all bad. I am mostly unnoticed in the streets.

V: Friend you mentioned here?

Takemura: Oda? He should be here any moment now.

V: Willing finally to give me the spec on 'im?

Takemura: He is Hanako-sama's bodyguard.

V: Hanako Arasaka's? From the carrier at anchor in the bay? Saburo's daughter?

Takemura: Yes. And if he believes you, we will next meet with her.

  V: *(Or he'll sell our asses out.)* And what's to stop her little errand boy from selling us out?

    Takemura: He will not do that. He is a man of honor.

    V: Right, 'cause Arasaka's ranks're chock-full of those.

    Takemura: Do not confuse true honor

with the petty morals by which you live.
  V: *(Sure you can trust him?)* Sure you can trust him?
    Takemura: Yes.
    V: Pff. Convincing, very.
    Takemura: I have nothing to lose. Is that better?
    V: Worse. 'Cause I got plenty to lose.
  V: *(Corpo: Hope he's not a stickler for Arasaka protocl.)* Just hope he doesn't blindly follow Arasaka protocol.
    Takemura: What protocol?
    V: Unwritten rules. Had 'em here in Night City. Could be different in Japan. If I got even a whiff of treason, they'd prep an enhanced interrogator and send two elite squads with air support to grab the suspect.
    Takemura: I understand the point you seek to make.But if Oda has ulterior motives, he will need no elites, no air support, no one but himself. Trust me, I have seen him work.
    V: Hm. That supposed to be reassuring?
    Takemura: If it helps you stay calm, you can gaze at the sky.
Takemura: By car, huh? A good sign. He is usually camouflaged.

[An Arasaka limousine pulls up to them. A Japanese man in a suit gets out, looks about as buff as Takemura. His hair covers half of his face.]
Oda: Takemura-san.
Takemura: Oda.

Oda: Is this him/her? Your thief?

Takemura: *(S)*He is my witness, V.

V: Can speak for myself, you know.

Oda: So speak. I have been told you know things.

  V: *(Yorinobu strangled his father.)* Was there. Saw what happened. Yorinobu strangled the old guy.

  V: *(Not gonna like what I have to say. Need a guarantee.)* Not gonna like what I'm about to say. I need a guarantee I'm safe here...

    Oda: You are. You have it.

    Takemura: V, you can trust Oda.

  V: All right, then. Konpeki Plaza - I was there the night it happened. Looked like your typical family quarrel, until... Yorinobu lunged at Saburo an' started chokin' him...

Oda: Silence. Not one word more. You will bring death to your door.

Takemura: But it is the truth! Hanako-sama must hear it!

Oda: My one concern is to keep her safe in this city forgotten by the gods.

Takemura: Is she in danger?

Oda: Now? No. Yet during the parade to honor Arasaka-sama? Most certainly.

Takemura: I bring you this witness to his murder. And you dare to worry about a silly parade? Fool!

Oda: Correct. Unlike you, I have not yet failed to keep my oath to do my duty.

[Beginning of timed prompt 1]

  Takemura: You will regret those words!

  Oda: The only thing I regret is that I came here to meet you.

    V: *(Prompt: Can't ignore the truth!)* But you can't ignore the truth!

      [Takemura makes eye contact with V for a moment]

[Beginning of timed prompt 2]

  Oda: There is a price on your head! I do you a favor now by not cutting it off and taking it straight to Yorinobu-sama.

    V: *(Prompt: This gonna take much longer?)* Sorry, but... this gonna take much longer?

  [if V doesn't speak]

    Oda: What would you do now were you in my place?

    Takemura: I do no favors. I would deliver your head to Yorinobu-sama.

    Oda: Consider yourself lucky that I am not you.

[Beginning of timed prompt]

  [if V says nothing]

    Takemura: You cannot ignore this!

    [Oda turns, gets into his car, and drives off]

  [Prompt, options]

    V: *(Stand - Oda!)* Wanna help or not?

      Oda: What?!

      V: We're talkin' about a

guy who killed his father to seize control of Arasaka! Gonna take an interest in this or not?

    V: *(Stand - Hanako should decide for herself.)* Oda. It's not as if we're asking for a whole lot, here. Just one brief meeting. Hanako should decide if what we say is true. You can't decide for her. Will you help?

  Oda: I will not. But I will let you leave this place, this city, unharmed. If I see either of you again, I will not be so lenient.

  Takemura: Be very careful, my friend. We are all so far from home.

[Oda drives away.]

Johnny: Good fuckin' riddance. One Arasaka whackjob is already plenty.

  V: *(Cool 12 - Fine friends you got)* Fine friend, there. Got any more?

    Takemura: Alas, only him.

  V: *(Knew we'd crash.)* No way this was gonna work.

    Takemura: Hmm... yet, we walk away with a small measure of success...

  V: *(Well, we tried.)* Well... can't say we didn't try.

    Takemura: We tried, yes, and obtained something useful...

V: Hm, how do you figure that?

Takemura: What Oda said... They return to Tokyo after the parade. Do you not see? The parade... It is our chance, perhaps. If, somehow, we can get to Hanako-sama... We must do a proper reconnaissance

first... We will need a precise map of Japantown.

V: Hold on...

Takemura: It is your turn to call on friends. Do you know a fixer who could help?

V: *(Query: Slow down, this isn't gonna be easy.)* Er, hang on, not so fast! Make it sound as easy as hacking a SCSM. But you said yourself - Hanako's got the tightest security in all Night City.

  Takemura: Correct. That is why I wish for you to contact us with the local fixer.

V: *(Know just the dame - Wakako Okada.)* Know just the fixer dame - Wakako Okada. Runs a pachinko parlor on Jig-Jig Street.

Takemura: We must pay this woman a visit. Will you join me?

  V: *(No, thanks.)* Get there on my own, thanks.

    Takemura: I will meet you there. One other matter requires my attention.

  V: *(Sure.)* Sure, why not.

[They get into Takemura's van and drive to Wakako.]

Takemura: Ji-Ji Street... What is this name?

V: Just a Night City name.

Takemura: Beware - you mock me... too often.

  V: *(What's going on at Arasaka?)* Any idea what's going on at Arasaka?

    Takemura: Only what I can surmise from what I see on TV. Yorinabu and his puppets grin at the cameras and insist that everything is under control. But the wider the smile, the bigger the lies.

  V: *(How are you?)* You all right, Goro?

    Takemura: Yes. Why the sudden concern?

    V: *(We have shared interests - you and I. Have shared interests - you and I. Or have you forgotten?*

M'ap Tann Pèlen

    Takemura: Certainly not.

    V: Good. 'Cause catching lead in Night City's easier than catching a cold - and I need you alive.

    Takemura: I am alive and well, as you can see. You should worry about yourself.

    V: *(Just asking. Something wrong with that?)* Uh, just asking? Does everything with you have to have an ulterior motive?

    Takemura: I apologize, that came off wrong. I, em... I am simply not used to such questions. People like me - either we are doing well, or we are in a grave.

[If V does not drive with Takemura to Jig-Jig street, or arrives there after him - basically, leave him alone for five minutes, and...]

Elderly Man: Now, I may not be good with names, but I do have quite the talent for faces! Where have I seen yours before? On the TV...?

Takemura: Very unlikely.

Elderly Man: But of course! Hideshi Hino, the man, the legend - in the flesh!

Takemura: (noticing V) Ah. You are just in time.

Elderly Man: Do you know who this is? Hideshi Hino! The late-night comedy host! He was brilliant before he fell off the wagon! Can you

still do your famous, "BETTER BUCKLE UP!"

Takemura: No.

Elderly Man: Come on, you don't forget a thing like that! Just once, please?

Takemura: V? We should go in. Now.

V: *(optional:)* Hideshi, don't leave this poor guy hangin'.

  Takemura: This is not the best time, truly.

  Elderly Man: Oh, come on! I haven't heard it in years!

  Takemura: Egh... BETTER BUCKLE UP!

  V: Wow...

  Elderly Man: Hino-san... what happened to you?

  Takemura: I do not know. I do not recognize myself. Are you happy? May we go?

V: *(OK, let's go.)* Fine, let's go.

Elderly Man: Hideshi Hino... to have fallen so far... such a shame...

[They walk into Wakako's parlor.]

Takemura: Mmm... How I missed the sound.

Wakako: *(If V has been back after the Dorsett job)* V, so nice to see you.

Wakako: *(If V has not been back after the Dorsett job)* Well, well... Who do I spy but V - in my humble parlor, no less. Long time, no see. What brings you here?

Wakako: And your charming friend is...?

  V: (*[Only available if Elderly Man had the conversation about Hideshi Hino, see above] Hideshi Hino - comedian*) Hideshi Hino - the comedian.

    Takemura: Stop it, asshole.

  V: Happen to be workin' together, that's all.

Takemura: タケムラゴロです。オカダさん、お会いできて光栄です *(Goro Takemura. The honor is mine, Okado-san.)*

Wakako: Haaa… a true gentleman! Shame, only, that he's being hunted by all Arasaka's tin soldiers. And you, V, bring him to my door. Gimme one reason why I shouldn't notify the proper “authorities” right away.

  V: *(We come with biz, and you love to make eddies.)* Eddies is why. Always about eddies, Wakako. You wanna make 'em - we got biz. Doesn't get any simpler.

  V: *(Simple. You're damned curious.)* Would've already made the call if you intended to. Simple - you're curious to see what we got.

Wakako: So tell me. And mark well I still have my phone at hand.

V: *(Parade in Japantown - we need intel.)* Need Intel on the parade that's scheduled to come through Japantown.

Wakako: So it's Arasaka… again. What I fail to understand is… Why come to me? Did Mr. DeShawn not come to the phone?

  V: *(Goro, why's Dex not available - remind me?)* Goro? Remind me why Dex's fat, backstabbing ass is currently indisposed?

    Takemura: He is deceased.

    V: Butchered and dumped at a landfill by some Arasaka goon. Real shame, that.

    Wakako: That a threat I detect?

      V: *(timed prompt)* No threat, no. Asked why I couldn't reach Dex, I answered: Just facts,

nothin' more.

      Takemura: *(if V doesn't answer)* Okada-san, our intentions are honorable. We need just information. It is a matter of life and death. *(he looks at V in exasperation. Why are you like this?)*

    Wakako: Good, 'cause you would then have to join him.

  V: *(You know everything that goes on in this 'hood.)* Cm'on, got your finger on the 'hood's pulse, know everything.

    Wakako: Won't see me dressed in mourning.

    Takemura: Come again?

    Wakako: But the rest is true.

  V: *(Streetkid - Heard Arasaka killed your grandkid)* Arasaka, Tyger Claws - kinda like the family dog screwin' the cat, huh? Can't possibly be fond of the people who killed your grandkid.

    Wakako: That was very long ago.

    V: Time's the best healer? Wound like that, though...

    Wakako: A wound like that, no.

Wakako: Everything's on the shards.

Takemura: How much does this cost? My pockets... are empty.

Wakako: Clearly. My gift to you, it's free.

Takemura: Okada-san... what is free often proves most costly.

Wakako: Gonna take them or not?

V: *(Query: Free? You sure?)* For free? You sure?

Wakako: Got my reasons. But patience I got none.

[V takes a shard from the table and sticks it in his neck.]

Wakako: Japantown. Whole district is to be sealed off for the parade. Dashi platforms, the main attraction. They'll try this way, high above street level. Along the parade route - balconies, footbridges and vantage points affording good views. Hanako Arasaka, the guest of honor, will deliver her speech from the largest float. She'll do this exactly… here. Got no idea about security, but given recent… events, expect it to be tight. Our lost parade? Arasaka undercovers infiltrated the crowd. Not to mention a smattering of sharpshooters, drones. And if that's not enough fun for one day, a netrunner, one at least. They use the city CCTV to observe everything. Main access point - here. It's an old, automated control center. If you ask me, most useful by far. At the end, the floats will float out of Japantown, and we'll be left with trash up to our elbows that no one will collect. That's it, it's all I have.

Takemura: It must be enough.

Wakako: Then go, be on your way.

V: *(Query: Not at all curious what we're after?)* Not at all curious what we're going to all this trouble for?

  Wakako: Blissful ignorance has served me well. In any case… I'll find out soon, won't I?

V: *(Thanks, Wakako.)* Thanks, Wakako.

Takemura: We appreciate this, Okada-san.

[They walk out of the parlor.]

Takemura: A delightful, mature woman. This information… it could be just what we need. But I will try to investigate further. I will stay here

some time and call some associates. The moment I learn something new. I will let you know.

  V: *(Stay safe.)* Stay safe, Goro.

    Takemura: You as well. Until next time.

  V: *(Keep a low profile.)* Just... low profile, OK? Don't start handing out autographs.

    Takemura: In fame, I could not overtake you if I tried. Be safe, V.

[Note: Takemura's expression in the final conversation will change based on previous dialogue options. If V choses the sympathetic 'Just asking'-option in the car, he will look like ^_^, if they don't or mock him about the Hideshi Hino situation, he will look like >:|]

[V arrives at the chapel. Mr. Hands calls him.]

Mr. Hands: V, welcome to Pacifica.

V: Pretty quick on the dial - just got here.

Mr. Hands: That's the biz. Be in touch.

[V enters the chapel. It's full of people - there's a service in Haitian. A man in a cape walks up to him.]

Beggar: You are V? We have been waiting.

V: (Streetkid) What gave me away? It's the hair, isn't it.

Beggar: We have had eyes on you since you entered Pacifica.

V: Makin' sure I didn't get lost?

Beggar: Ou ka di sa. (Something like that.)

V: Couldn't meet somewhere else? Not big on funerals.

Beggar: Do not be frightened, etrange (stranger). Dis funeral is not for you.

V: You my contact? Someone finally gonna tell me about this job?

Beggar: I'm just the man in the middle. You will learn more... soon.

  V: (optional - Streetkid - So that's how you do biz in Pacifica) Interesting biz strategy ya got in Pacifica. No details, no names. No one knows a thing.

    Beggar: Your name we know. That is enough.

  V: (optional - This some kinda test?) You screenin' me? See if I came alone? What kinda chrome I got? This some kinda test?

    Beggar: Most people we work with we knew as babies. We know their angels. You we do not know.

  V: (optional - Whose funeral is this?) Who died? Got somethin' to do with the job?

    Beggar: You think we put together this funeral special for you?

V: Wanna talk with Brigitte. She here somewhere?

Beggar: No. Shopping center by the intersection - go to the butcher shop there. Ask for Placide. He will tell you the details.

[V goes to a small butcher store nearby. There's a vendor, a man, and a woman sitting on a chair nearby talking.]

V: Well, my creole's a bit rusty...

Vendor: Yo pale mil lang nan Night City. (A thousand languages are

spoken in Night City.) Nou mem, nou pale yon sel gwen. (We speak only one.)

V: Shit luck, right? All those, an' I don't know yours...

Vendor: Chrome translation. Ou pa maton. (Chrome translation. You are not clever.)

V: You actually sell meat outta here? Really?

Vendor: Ou aktyèman vle anchte kèk? (Do you actually want to buy some?)

Tante Myriam: Kisa l'ap fè la a? (What's he doing here?)

Vendor: Ou ap eseye vin entelijan, li sanble. (Trying to be clever, looks like.)

V: Lookin' for Placide.

Vendor: Placide. Gade isit la. (Look here.)

[V turns his head at a surveillance camera.]

Vendor: Se ou menm. Kontinye. (So, it's you. Go on.) Placide. Gade la. (Placide. Over there.)

[V goes to the back of the store where the production is going. He gets sick again.]

V: Ughh... ngh.. fooo...

[He walks up to the man cutting the meat.

V: You Placide?

[The man shakes his head.]

V: Wanna talk to your boss.

[The man points at a muscular guy in the corner.]

Placide: Ki sa ou vle? (What do you want?)

V: (streetkid) Y'know, I heard a few things about you.

Placide: Hm?

I Walk The Line

V: Voodoo Boys… best runners in town. Least that's what they say. Though nobody really knows what you do on the Net.

Placide: Dis is good.

V: I mean, bleedin'-edge black soft, corporate data heists, wagin' war on NetWatch… But no one mentions… chickens. Here I thought selling domesticated fowl was still illegal. Six years poultry's supposedly had the plague. Now all of a sudden - poof - it's clean?

Placide: Dis not for sale. What you want?

V: I wanna talk to Brigitte.

Placide: But they send you to me.

V: And you'll tell me more about the job?

Placide: Yes, but not here. Follow me.

V: Where we headed?

Placide: Dis way. Welcome to Pacifica.

[They enter an area of blatant poverty and illiteracy. A man nearby shouts something and shoots at a module flying by. Next to the beautiful buildings are tents made of improvised materials.]

Placide: You know Pacifica well?

V: Nah. You guys aren't exactly great at rollin' out the welcome mat for outsiders.

Placide: Was to be its own city, where suits would burn their eddies. A closed circle. De corps feed their sheep, they split de cash back out. All de toys here are grown from corp cash. Our interest is now in de GIM - de Grand Imperial Mall. Pacifica's biggest, ugliest temple to greed… but never finished. Until last week it was deserted, empty.

V: But now?

Placide: De animais crawled in, made a nest. Let's go. Not far now.

[He approaches a street vendor and exchanges the chicken for something.]

V: What do you trade in, exactly?

[Placide doesn't answer.]

Placide: You deal wid Animal before?

V: Yeah. A few times. You want the Animals out of the GIM? Extinct? That why you hired me?

Placide: You learn everyt'ing soon.

V: I mean, it makes no sense, them being here. Middle of Pacifica, no backup, cut off... It's your turf. Hell, even badges don't patrol around here.

Placide: Uh-huh.

V: They tryna provoke you? Make you do somethin' stupid?

Placide: Dey do not leave GIM.

V: How many we talkin' about in there?

Placide: Thirty. Maybe more.

[They walk into a small room with a table on which there is a laptop. Placide sits on a chair in front of the laptop. V sits on the chair on the opposite side of the table.]

Placide: Vini nan (Come on). We talk here. You sit.

V: When do I see Brigitte?

Placide: You do jab. Dat is first.

[Placide tries to pull the connection wire out of V's hand. V yanks his hand away.]

Placide: What da hell...?!

V: Could fuckin' tell me what you plan to do first.

Placide: You take job. You do what I say. So you jack in. Now.

V: Or you'll do what? You got a line of volunteers waitin'?

Johnny: V... Home stretch. Almost there. Do not fuck this up.

V: Dammit, here goes nothin'...

[He jacks in his wire.]

Johnny: Well, at least he's not likely to talk your ears bloody.

V: Got a feeling we're not gonna become best friends. No chemistry.

Placide: I will survive.

V: Evelyn Parker. Ring a bell?

Placide: Not one of us.

V: She did work for you once. Why not send your own goons to the GIM?

Placide: Dis not our way.

V: How's that been workin' out for ya?

Placide: Work good. Good more than bad. Your chrome shaman - it is Viktor?

V: You two know each other?

Placide: No. No need. This hardware is shit. You should replace.

V: Oh, so now you're a ripperdog, too? Is that at all relevant? Or just a cheap scare tactic?

Placide: I need you to be able. I need know. Dis chip - it have no signature. What is it?

V: Besides that, everything's OK?

Placide: Neural net problem, cortex spikes, other trash...

V: Any of that a dealbreaker?

Placide: I ask you about de chip.

V: Mah, unimportant. Busted anyway.

Placide: Mh. How?

V: Got a bullet to the brain. Hasn't worked Since. That's how.

Placide: Mhh.

V: You know, you haven't asked about my experience, what I can do....

Placide: We are not corp, do not offer career. You do for us only one simple thing.

V: Once inside, what do I do?

Placide: De kamyonèt. (The vehicle.) 20:35:07... three second before... poof. We try to learn where de kamyonèt come from.

V: Van's definitely a custom job.

Placide: I see you not know also.

V: Hey, just tryin' to piece the facts together. You record all this on your own?

Placide: Mhm, local cam signals, corp sats, we capture through all.

V: But from inside the GIM - squat, right? Tech looks pretty advanced. Doesn't scream meathead to me.

Placide: They watch it very close. It is important, whatever it is.

[Some guy enters the room.]

Netrunner: Placide, batmann kè li ap desann ankò... (Placide, her heart rate's dipping again...)

Placide: Femet pòt la! (Close the door!)

V: Time for a break? Think you might be needed.

Placide: Dey will manage fine. You focus.

V: Animals aren't the play here, are they? They're hired muscle. Someone else needed them. Someone with a van all of netrunner tech. And that's where I come in? To sniff out who?

Placide: Mhm. Start with the kamyonèt. Hide from all eyes. Only see de sitiyasyon. You have now sync wid Rezo Agwe, our subnet.

V: Why? What for?

Placide: You are my vessel now. Through Agwe see what you see, hear what you hear. I will guide you through GIM.

Johnny: Another voice in your head. Just what the ripperdoc ordered.

V: We know who the 'runner inside is? What he wants?

Placide: This I hope you tell me.

V: So, aim to keep an eye on me. Shows trust. All right, anything else I should know?

Placide: Find our people near mall. Dey will show you how to get inside de beast.

V: My pay - how much we talkin, and how'm I gonna collect?

Placide: Hands say you not in dis for cash. You in dis for problem. Do GIM for us, Brigitte can solve it.

V: Uh-huh, 'cept then I found out you need me to be a bullet trap on enemy turf. That means my fee's just gone up.

Placide: Hm. We will see. No promise.

V: Got it. So I do this and you put me in front of Brigitte, right?

Placide: Yes. Soti (Exit) at end of de hall. Go down. My people will let you pass. We are done.

V: None too fond of strangers, here, are you?

Placide: People like you… stick out.

V: Meanin'… I best watch it?

Placide: Mhm. Wise.

V: Brigitte even know we're supposed to meet? Or did you cook this deal up all by yourself?

Placide: You speak with chefin when time is right.

V: So "Voodoo Boys" - why? Don't seem to believe in voodoo.

Placide: Don't know. Ask those who call us this.

V: Mean to say you call yourselves something else? Aaand you ain't gonna tell me, are ya? Right.

[V leaves. Placide calls him.]

Placide: V?

V: All ears, what?

Placide: I check stability. Da link on your end clear?

V: Mhm. Seems so.

[V goes to meet Placide's people.]

Placide: Dey are my people. Talk wid dem.

Voodoo Boy: You V?

V: They know you're watching 'em?

Voodoo Boy: Dis is our turf, our home. We need not to be ghosts here.

Voodoo Boy: It is you must be ghost, be silent. Invisible.

V: Know the way in? Was told you would.

Voodoo Boy: Yeah. Garage. In de back.

Voodoo Boy: But shh… Quietly, yeah?

V: Anything interesting happen over there?

Voodoo Boy: Since we are here, all quiet.

V: No one in, no one out?

Voodoo Boy: Well, they went out for supplies once.

[V runs towards the mall.]

Placide: Why do you wait?

V: Just takin' in the sights. OK. I'm in.

[He fights his way in.]

Placide: I see. De kamyonet - check it.

V: Right. Wait, who was that?

Placide: Who you think? De runner we want try to invade you. Wid de extra ICE we give you, it is fine for now.

V: So… he knows I'm here.

Placide: De agentman tries to cut you off. Head down. Hide away from dem. Look for de kamyonet. De main atrium.

V: OK, at the van. But no sign of the 'runner.

Placide: I see what you see. No chatter. Now interface wide van.

[He connects to the van.]

V: While I got ya here, mind tellin' me what we're lookin' at?

Placide: Dataflow map of Pacifica… Dey hunt Agwe.

V: Who is "they?"

Placide: NetWatch. Dey always out to fuck us.

V: What're they lookin' for, exactly?

Placide: Internal data forts. If dey crush our ICE, dey take Agwe an' de entire Net. A return to de dark time of Bartmoss.

V: How bad's it look?

Placide: I do not know how much data dey pull, but deir mop is no complete. Dey still not have source validation.

V: OK, so what's on me to do?

Placide: You must reach de agent. Easy now to find him. Look at de map. He is in cinema.

NetWatch Agent: Step away now. This isn't your fight.

Placide: Med. (Fuck.)

V: What? Placide, what?

Placide: We are cut, pushed out. De 'runner know you are here. Hunt him.

V: Can't just scorch him via the Net? He's gotta be jacked into the van.

Placide: I cannot pierce his protection. You must find him, face him.

V: OK, so what do I do once I find him?

Placide: I will tell you.

[The V is attacked by Animals.]

Placide: De agentman tries to cut you off. There is a gate behind de kamyonet. I will open it. OK, now to de second floor, de cinema. Eyes open now.

[V walks up to the movie theater the doors are locking tight. He sees a woman in heavy armor named Matilda K. Rose of the Animals gang. She is talking on the phone.]

V: What's goin' on?

Placide: You have company soon. Scan her right away.

V: That bad, huh?

Placide: She must have a weak spot.

[V enters the fray. After a while, V begins to lose his vision - he sees only oversaturated colors.]

V: Placide - what's goin' on?

Placide: Netpig try to scramble you. Keep focus handle it. But I cannot hold him long. He in same subweb wid alpha Animal. Deal with her!

Placide: Now, de Watcher.

V: Think she's had enough.

[V kills Matilde and takes her stuff. He goes up to the top of the theater, to the cinemas and seea the netrunner.]

Placide: Invade him. We need access to their data. Clear? You must first--

[The connection is cut off.]

V: Placide?

[V sneaks up on the netrunner with a shotgun in his hands.]

NetWatch Agent: Whoa, hey. Easy...

V: What'd you do?

NetWatch Agent: Well, now we can talk in private. Just severed the connection to the rest of Pacifica. Gives us a little time.

V: Just a second ago you tried to flatline me. And now you wanna talk?

NetWatch Agent: Flatline? No, just discourage, but it looks like I underestimated you.

V: OK, no more fuckin' tangents. Fess up - who are you?

NetWatch Agent: (shows a badge) Bryce Mosley, NetWatch special agent. Can we talk? Had a specter on you, didn't you? Sow and heard all you did? You follow his orders? No idea what the Voodoo Boys are payin' you, but our pockets are deeper.

V: Sorry, don't work with corps.

NetWatch Agent: Come on, everyone does. I bet you have, too. Could verify that right away, actually, But we don't need any distractions, do we?

V: Not interested. Not a money job for me, just need on in with Maman Brigitte, Voodoo chefin.

Net Watch Agent: Brigitte and her lapdog Ti Neptune have been frozen several days now ever since we shrouded their subnet with ICE. And you? Well… you were sent here to free them. Do you know why they didn't tell you everything? 'Cause you're a “ranynon.” That's what they call outsiders brought in for special jobs - floor rags. When you're no longer needed, they chuck you. A fate for all "ranyons.”

V: Rather put my trust in the Voes than in you, by a mile.

NetWatch Agent: Hey, I know we're unpopular in your circles. But whenever there's a real problem, it's NetWatch, not Pacifica's shady

hacker cult, that gets the call. See that, right?

V: Voodoos know black tech better than anyone. So, no, think I prefer their expertise over yours.

NetWatch Agent: Clever, kinda… but the wrong choice. Know why? They never answer call. If you're not Pacifico born and bred, you're nothing to them, less than nothing.

V: You have Brigitte? And how'd you manage that?

NetWatch Agent: When we took the mall, we knew the VDBS'd send runners. Ti Neptune breached first - to see what was goin' on. When we ICEd him, Brigitte dove in after him, used him to shield herself. Tough cookie, that one, but still finds herself stuck.

V: Got anything to back that claim? That the Voodoos wanna set me up?

NetWatch Agent: Wanna? They did it already - soon as you handed over your link. Slipped the specter and a virus.

Johnny: Hah, talkin' as if he was there… He's workin' you - so obvious it hurts.

V: Asked for proof. 'Sides, I'd know.

NetWatch Agent: That so? Then, please take a look. Run a system diagnostic.

V: Fine. (runs the diagnostic) And...? Nothin' outta place, no trace of--

NetWatch Agent: Do it again. Then cross-check the result against the first. Identical, right? Mhm, cause it's not a real scan, It's a copy.

V: What's your beef with the Voodoos?

NetWatch Agent: Any idea how many attacks from behind the Blackwall we neutralized year?

V: Want me to guess?

NetWatch Agent: So you don't know. No one in Night City Knows, outside of us. And no one wants to know. People imagine it as a great border wall, a one-time solution to protect humanity forever. Whereas it's more like a torn open trash bag taped over a busted window. And the Voodoo Boys will not stop poking holes in the fuckin' thing.

V: Brigitte and the other one, Neptune - What's their condition?

NetWatch Agent: Tags're active. So the VDBs must be keeping them alive from their side.

V: But.. they can't sustain that...

NetWatch Agent: They cannot. Which in turn, makes Brigitte and Ti less useful to us. Tried using their interface to breach the Voodoo subnet, but Brigitte proved... stubborn. She managed to take some bites out of our systems before we secured her.

V: Little taste of your own medicine? The data collection - why would you target Pacifica's runners?

NetWatch Agent: That's the job.

V: This's about Rezo Agwe, Isn't it? Can't have an indie net where you aren't welcome to protect and serve, huh?

NetWatch Agent: No such thing as an independent net. If the Voodoo Boys breach the Blackwall, we'll all be fucked, one way or the other.

Transmission

V: All right, what're you offerin'?

NetWatch Agent: A compromise. I'll fish the Voodoo virus out of your system. And I'll reled both Brigitte and Ti Neptune. They'll wake up like nothing ever happened. Not to worry. And all you gotta do is let us walk. With our data. Thoughts? Clock's flippin' digits.

V: Think I'll just stick to my plan.

[He punches the netrunner in the face several times and knocks him to the floor. After that he connects to his neck connector. After downloading some data from the U.S. map V groans in pain and he passes out. When he comes to himself, the netrunner is lying dead on the floor.]

Johnny: Hey, V? You all right?

V: Gimme a sec...

Johnny: You looked just like him a sec ago.

V: Thanks, wasn't asking... Ugh... what happened?

Johnny: The netpig was right. Voodoos were blowin' smoke. Soon as you gave 'em access to the Netwatch web, they roasted all the agents. And you.

V: Then why's my brain not a pile of hot goo?

Johnny: Dunno - you finally grew a pair? Toughed it out?

V: Not about to let this shit lie.

Johnny: Christ, hope not Fuckin' cultists made you their kamikaze bitch. Who'd take a job from us spooky ass Voodoo Boys? Placide

took you for pathetic gutter trash, someone who no one's ever gonna come lookin' for.

V: So, what? I shoulda spilled the truth?

Johnny: No. We take this to Brigitte. Saved her sorry ass, after all. Wouldn't mind a quick word with Placide, too. Shouldn't let this lie. Head to Batty's. Grumpy motherfucker... hope he likes surprises.

[V leaves the mall.]

Voodoo Boy: Oh fuck! Li vivan. (He is alive.) You wish to talk with Placide? Is that what you want? Be-because I can take you.

V: I'll find him.

Voodoo Boy: Sure. Yes.

[Takemura calls.]

Takemura: V? The information from Okada-san... very valuable. I also learned something through my own efforts. We must meet.

V: Where'll it be this time? Trash processing plant? Deserted NCART station?

Takemura: In the south of Japantown there is a street market. It is on

a footbridge above the main street. Use the elevators. It is easy to get lost. I'm on my way there. Do not make me wait.

[V return to Placide. It's time to talk.]

Placide: You return. How? How you manage dise?

V: (looks at a body on a gurney) That the other guy you sent to the GIM? Didn't make it looks like. You let loose in the GIM? With… what, exactly? A-a virus? A vectored electromag impulse? Saw it before my own fuses popped - your guys shredding tags on the NetWatch agents in Mosley's grid.

Placide: It is called "Ki vale limyè" - he who swallow de light. Ten NetWatch agent swallow it. It destroy de grid, de BBSes. But not you. You vomit light back up.

V: Looks like you fucked up. What's Brigitte make of it all?

[A woman who was standing nearby approaches them.]

Brigitte: Ase. (Enough.) We must head under. This is not over. NetWatch will return.

Placide: I hope you will not lead her to de crypt? He is ranyon. Nothing special. You see de scans.

Brigitte: I saw them. Soti, kounye a. Fè tout moun soti. (Out, now. Get everyone out.)

[Placide leaves.]

V: You must be Brigitte. Hard woman to find.

Brigitte: You have something for me.

V: You know about the biochip, don't you?

Brigitte: Yes, and we must check its condition.

V: How much you know from my scans?

Brigitte: More than Placide, I am sure.

V: You recognized the biochip 'cause you were lookin' for it.

Brigitte: We must examine you. If you survived the GIM, it is at the chip's cost. Yes, and we must check its condition.

V: Shoulda thought about that before you tried to kill me.

Brigitte: If I was here, da chip would never be in danger. If it is in good condition, we offer you a fair price. Perhaps more for the… emotional toll.

V: Heh, biochip's not for sale. And you're not rippin' It outta me. Thing was in shit shape already before I strolled into the GIM.

Brigitte: It does not function?

V: Not that bad. Problem is, no one I've talked to tan yank it out without risk of death. Seein' as you commissioned the things theft, figured you might know on way to help.

Brigitte: How do you know all dis? How did you find us?

V: Evelyn Parker - name ring a bell?

Brigitte: Ah, de doll... de whore. You found us because she led you to us. She has proved not completely useless after all.

V: Listen, can you help me or not?

Brigitte: Yes, of course. But not here. We will go to de crypt... where you must give us access to de chip. Once we have de data we need, we will do our best to help you.

V: Seriously? Haven't done enough for you already?

Brigitte: There is no other way. To remove it, we must first examine it.

V: 'Cause if you fuck up you're left empty-handed? That it?

Brigitte: I gave my word. We will help you.

V: Don't think I'm that desperate yet.

Brigitte: You said no other could help you.

V: Maybe I got other options I don't know about yet.

Brigitte: I hope you return before your time runs out.

V: How do I know you won't screw me again?

Brigitte: I have been honest with you all along. You cannot fault me for Placide's actions, his decisions while I was trapped in de Net.

V: Fine. I'll give you access.

Brigitte: Finalman (Finally). Come with me.

V: You guys sure seem to love this place. But, honestly, you don't give off a strong religious vibe.

Brigitte: We left our gods on Haiti. Yet we are strong here without them. Dis way.

V: So how come Placide didn't know about the biochip? He didn't recognize it in the scans.

Brigitte: Few of our people know about Konpeki Tower. But Placide, he is… yon bèt debaz (a basic animal).

V: Where we going?

Brigitte: Soon you will see.

[V cough in pain.]

V: Aaaahh! Ugh…

Brigitte: De Watcher did not notice de biochip in you? Strange.

V: Never gave him a chance.

Brigitte: Good. It would complicate our work.

V: This an old subway tunnel?

Brigitte: No. Part of de transcontinental maglev system. When all states were connected. Like de Net, it too crumbled after de war. Vire

kouran (Turn on the power).

Netrunner: Evut bagay pare. Nou ka kòmance. (Everything is ready. Nou ka kòmance.)

Brigitte: Bon. (Good.)We take you into de cyberspace. No better place for you to interact with de construct.

V: Guess all this means you got your own SynthTech interface.

Brigitte: We have our own versions of all. We do not use anything from de city.

V: How do I know I'll come back? Do I get some guarantee?

Brigitte: You will be inside our data fortress, under watch.

V: Under YOUR watch.

Brigitte: If you knew what is out there in de cyberspace, you would not be so choosy.

V: How's all this any different from plain or netrunning?

Brigitte: De interface show you de data layers direct from de Net. Readable, of course. What de basic runners see is only a map. They cannot see beneath de surface. Their tech, it is too weak.

V: OK, hang on. I wanna know what you need Silverhand for first.

Brigitte: We wish to contact Alt Cunningham. We know she and Silverhand were close.

Johnny: Alt?

Brigitte: The Relic which Arasaka held close, It is our only lead.

V: Alt Cunningham…heard of 'er.

Brigitte: Oh? Where, from who?

V: From Johnny. Though granted, not much.

Brigitte: Johnny?

Johnny: All right, V. Guess you better tell 'er.

V: Tell her what?

Johnny: About us.

V: Construct's active. Lets me and Johnny shoot the shit every now and then.

Brigitte: Mhm. We will look at dis, too.

V: What, think I'm hallucinating? Found myself an imaginary friend?

Brigitte: Little is known of how an engram might exist within a human's neural network.

V: Tell ya one thing - doesn't shake out well for the human. What's your plan to contact Alt?

Brigitte: We try to cut out a unique piece of Silverhand's engram from de biochip. Alt will know it. If something of de human is left after years beyond de Blackwall, she will answer.

V: Whoa, what? You said nothin' 'bout breakin' through the Blackwall.

Brigitte: Well, now you know.

Netrunner: Direksyon konekte. (Linking flows.)

Brigitte: Here.

Netrunner: Koneksyon estab. (Stable connection.)

V: Johnny? Looks like you're the bait. You OK with that?

Johnny: Yeah, whatever. Just do what she says.

V: What exactly do you want from Alt? All of you?

Brigitte: Alt de only one can give us safe passage post de Blackwall. When de change come, we wish to be on de winning side.

V: The change?

Brigitte: When de Blackwall was built, everyone think de ICE would be enough, keep de wild AIs out, away. But technology advances, it cannot be stopped. And now catastrophe, come again. This is sure. And soon. De corporations, dey do not see de danger. But we - we will be ready.

V: The Blackwall - what is it, exactly? I mean, I know...

Brigitte: You know only what de NetWatch tell you. De final bastion against de postwar AIs. De great victory of humanity over chaos.

V: That would be your Saturday morning NetWatch propaganda.

Brigitte: But de Blackwall is an AI itself. De boundary condition let nothing poss through, either way. If de AIs thought like people, dey would call it a traitor.

[V notices a tub filled with ice water.]

V: Oh, come on. Not the tub.

Brigitte: We must prepare you for de dive into cyberspace. You are not accustomed to de neural demand.

Johnny: Don't try on' get outta this, V. Just do what she says. I'm not about to sizzle with you.

V: Let's do this. (steps in the tub) Ooooh…

Netrunner: Ki moun ki pral pwoteje li? (Who will protect him?)

V: Ooooh…

Netrunner: Leon avec Jean-ki ri. (Leon and Jean-ki-ri.)

V: Ooooh… OK, wh-what now? J-Johnny?

Netrunner: Li pare. (He's ready.)

Netrunner: Pare plonje. (Ready to plunge.)

[V enters som virtual world and sees Brigitte.]

V: This is it? Seriously?

Brigitte: This is our BBS. Data fortress. Bridge to de deep Net.

V: It's... it's all so alive. So real.

Brigitte: Cyberspace moves, breathes at all times. De interface will adjust de ebb and flow of data to de capabilities of your brain. But you... you are an exceptional case.

V: Seein' somethin' more than I am?

Brigitte: Yes. De cyberspace, it is always... twò bèl (too nice).

V: So - what now?

Brigitte: We can begin. All is ready. We enhanced your link to Silverhand's neural network for a short time. To grab de fragment. We must find de data on Alt. Alt alone. Dis should only take...

V: Brigitte..?

[She disappears. Time rolls backwards to 2023 and then to 2013.]

Johnny: What's happenin'?

[V becomes Johnny for a short period of time. He performs on stage.]

Johnny: Will never fade away!

[He shoots at the crowd.]

THE HAMMER
AUG. 4, 2013
TIME: 2 AM

[Some guy drags Johnny off the stage to the backstage.]

Kerry: Johnny?! The fuck, holmes? Outta line! Way out! What next? Where you gonna take it? Gonna drag a corporat on stage, make him kneel, douse him with gas, then light 'im up? It's not YOUR band. You're no solo act. Gonna crash, man, and pull all of us down, too.

Johnny: You kinda are, though. Only one to have a problem with me.

Kerry: 'Cause everyone else has had it up to here. They're done thinking they can get through to you. You're fucking whacked!

Johnny: You know exactly why I do it.

Kerry: No, nuh-uh! To piss Arasaka off enough so they'll give you a case of deep-muscle lead poisoning?

Johnny: But I'm the only one with a vision. So unless you got a better one, like I said - Go Fuck. Your. Self.

[He slams the door and walks into the dressing room where Alt is already waiting for him. Johnny takes some pills.]

Johnny: Fuck!

Alt Cunningham: Is it the concert or Kerry?

Johnny: Hm? Said you weren't coming tonight. Not If I can help it.

Alt Cunningham: Changed my mind, lover. Look at you… all hot and bothered.

[They have some sexy time together.]

Alt Cunningham: Goodness, gracious, me…

Johnny: Mmmhm.

Alt Cunningham: A damn shame that's that.

Johnny: What, smoking after sex not Zen enough for you? We gotta rewrite "The Art of War," too?

Alt Cunningham: We're done, Johnny, with it all. I just… couldn't ghost without saving… something.

Johnny: So go on - say it.

Alt Cunningham: You can be such a bastard sometimes, Johnny.

Johnny: Man, are you on my ass today.

Alt Cunningham: Not just today. How is it subtlety goes so for over your head? Weird for artist.

Johnny: Things were swimmin'... What, change your mind? Eats at my gut. 'Cause you knew what you were signin' up for.

Alt Cunningham: Look. If you were just another charismatic, narcissistic douchecanoe running around after his dream with his head up his ass, I couldn't care less.

Johnny: But?

Alt Cunningham: It's all a lie. That concert, Samurai, all of it. A ginormous fiction. You're not a rockerboy, Johnny. Face it. Oughta join the wired wackos on the corners, frothing at the mouth as they scream "Death to Arasaka!"

Johnny: Uh-huh, I get it! Like to fix your men, huh? Not the first to try, believe me.

Alt Cunningham: Honestly? I've got better things to do. Just hoped

I'd help you realize you're deluding yourself. An' that doing anything about it... that's on you.

[She walks to the next room to dress up.]

Johnny: Mh. You're afraid. You and Kerry both - cowards. I alone have the balls to stand up to Arasaka. And boy, that terrifies you - all of you.

Alt Cunningham: 'Course. Johnny S. - misunderstood by all Night City. That's it, that's the problem.

Johnny: You're confused. We came here to fuck each other's brains out, not analyze mine. Think we're done for the day, so you can fuck off.

[A time glitch happens... Johnny has another fight with Alt.]

Alt Cunningham: See, I thought...

Johnny: (grabs her head) That this meant something? That we're close? So close you can give me shit about everything I do? Got quite the imagination, then.

[Alt leaves the room. Another time glitch. Johnny sees alt kissing another man on a stairs.]

Johnny: Where you goin'?

Alt Cunningham: Got somewhere to be.

Johnny: Ran outta boosters.

Alt Cunningham: Ugh… Typical.

Johnny: So how long you think you're gonna be mad? Last time…

[A couple of armed drunk guys walk up to them.]

Alt Cunningham: Let's get out of here.

Thug: Join usss for a drop, Ssshilver-rocker?

Johnny: Fuck off.

Thug: Oooh, short-fuse on this one, huh?

[Johnny pulls out a gun and kills three of the thugs. The fourth grabs Alt. A quietly approaches Johnny with blades on her arms and stabs him.]

Alt Cunningham: Nooo!!! Johnny! Nooo!!! Fuck off! Lemme alone! Johnny! Let go of me!

[Johnny stays alive. He watches as his girlfriend is kidnapped, after which he loses consciousness. Some guy comes up to him.]

Thompson: Really did you, didn't they?

[He takes Johnny somewhere...]

12:00 AM

Johnny: Mrgh...

RIPPERDOC CLINIC, NIGHT CITY
AUG. 4, 2013
A FEW HOURS LATER

Milt Nauman: C'mon, rise and shine. Been a while, Johnny boy. How long'd you say? Two weeks since I lost cobbled you up?

Johnny: Man, did I miss you. Aargh...

Milt Nauman: Bullshit, you gonk son-of-a-bitch. Didn't even bother to call. You were supposed to be back for your follow-up. Kid's like a son to me.

Thompson: So I see.

Johnny: How's it look down there?

Milt Nauman: Welp, shoved so many tubes up your ass that you're about two mods off from pissin' espresso and milk froth. Also tossed in a synthetic liver. Old one was lookin' worse than a paper bag full of shit.

Johnny: Great. Now I can live forever.

Thompson: Just as well.

Johnny: Where's Alt?

Mit Nauman: Where's who?

Johnny: Woman who was with me.

Mil Nauman: He brought you and you alone.

Johnny: Fuck. They grabbed her. Nobody saw it?

Milt Nouman: Ask your savior. Said his name was Thompson.

Johnny: Arasaka, wasn't it?

Milt Nauman: Urgh, it's always Arasaka with you.

Johnny: 'Cause it always is Arasaka.

Thompson: We gotta talk.

Milt Nouman: Aall right. It's spit 'n glue, but she's holdin' tight. Get some rest. Even a few hours, let the stitches set at least.

Johnny: Uh-huh.

Milt Nauman: Johnny… Agh, fuck it, you won't listen anyway.

Johnny: So talk.

Thompson: They wanted her. You…you was just home.

Johnny: And you… Just stood there, dick in hand, gowking and dreaming of tomorrow.

Thompson: Woulda shredded us both if I'd jumped in. You see that guy's reflexes? 'Course not - he was that fast. Tech like that you don't find in a dumpster.

Johnny: So… what're you after? Chasin' down a story? Fresh for the screamsheets? That why you scrape me up off the pavement?

Thompson: Nah. Had my story. But then some cats tossed her in the back of a van and sped off. You, uh, aim to do something about it? She was your output, wasn't she?

Johnny: Not your fuckin' business.

Thompson: Mhh, not sure, huh? Yeah, heard there was tension, assorted goings on. Honestly, could not care less about your fluttering hearts and loins. I wanna know why Arasaka bagged her.

Johnny: Alt's kidnapping - It's collateral shit. They swiped her to get at me.

Thompson: You even know what she does for a living? Girl's one of the best runners around.

Johnny: So? One of how many? No. Only link to Arasaka is the fact that Johnny Silverhand's boning her.

Thompson: She's been workin' for ITS lately. Wrote some real smooth black ICE for them. Not to be duped in either sense of the term.

[Johnny jumps off the doc's chair, but loses his balance. Thompson offers him his hand. Johnny accepts help.]

Thompson: Arasaka wants her. Abduction was a standard intercorp extraction, nothin' more.

Johnny: Hang on. Alt was gonna meet you tonight.

Thompson: Mhm. Said she could use my help. Wasn't kidding. 'Saka tried this before, you know. 'Cept Alt got lucky. Slipped through their mantis blades.

Johnny: Tellin' me she was afraid…and she went to you?

Thompson: Yep. And frankly, I'm startin' to see why.

Johnny: OK, so what're they after?

Thompson: Soulkiller, an AI - sound familiar at all?

Johnny: 'Course. Urban legend with the shittiest name ever.

Thompson: It is no legend. Soulkiller's real. And your choombas at Arasaka just "hired" the 'runner who wrote it. Take that in - 'Saka with Soulkiller to do with as it pleases. Grim, my man. You even imagine that, rocker? Arasaka'll be unstoppable. Soulkiller flatline any 'runner who comes close to even tryin' to scratch its ICE. Seen it happen. Not an iota of physical damage - nervous system on anywhere else. No sound, no fury, no stench. Just all the sudden, brain waves cut out. As if someone pulled the plug. Or ripped the soul from the body in question.

Johnny: Cool. Tell me the rest on the way.

Thompson: Do I hear extreme doubt?

Johnny: Oldest, tritest tale in the world. Arasaka was out to provoke me. And it worked. So what'll it be? Comin' with?

[They leave the clinic.]

Thompson: Where to?

Johnny: Arasaka Tower. To grab Alt right back.

Thompson: Jus' you 'n' me? You outta your fuckin' mind?

Johnny: Uh-huh. Come along. Let you watch from the sidelines. Seem to like doing that.

[He drives a club named The Atlantis.]

Thompson: I'll be in the car. Can't wait too long, though.

Johnny: You'll wait as long as you need to.

[He enters the building and touches some guy by the shoulder.]

Johnny: Where the hell's Rogue?

[A second later the guy is already on the floor.]

Johnny: Sit, stay.

THE ATLANTIS, NIGHT CITY
AUG. 5, 2013
AFTER MIDNIGHT

[Johnny goes to the bartender.]

Ringo: Silverhand! Got an IOU here with your autograph on it.

Johnny: You seen Rogue?

Ringo: She's upstairs. But I heard you two weren't, uh...

Johnny: Well, ya heard wrong.

[He goes up to the second floor and notices his ex-friend at the machine, who unsuccessfully tries to make it work.]

Yishen: Fucking fuck. Johnny! Gimme a hand here?

Johnny: Heard you weren't talking to me.

Yishen: Dunno. Seem to be talking to you.

[Johnny smashes the machine with his steel fist.]

Johnny: How 'bout now?

Yishen: Now you can go fuck yourself.

[Johnny approaches a bouncer at Rouge's door.]

Engels: Johnny.

Johnny: How's things, Engels?

Engels: Got a private meet goin' on in there.

Johnny: Rogue back there, too?

Engels: Yeah, just…

Johnny: Yeah, yeah, private meet, so you said. Promise to be super unobtrusive.

[He enters Rogue's office.]

Rogue: Johnny.

Johnny: Don't know you.

Santiago: That's no problem. Just as long as everyone else knows

Johnny Silverhand.

Rogue: You're wasting my time.

Johnny: (sits next to Rogue) Rogue. Lovely surprise to see you here.

Rogue: We're waiting for a client. One who values discretion.

Johnny: Mhm. So much so, he himself didn't show.

Rogue: No point in sitting here, then. Pick it up, OK?

Johnny: You still mad about that thing?

Rogue: What thing, Johnny? That you fucking lied to my face, put my peeps on the line? Or that you were fucking three other women behind my back before we were through?

Johnny: Look, our history, I know. But we don't really have time for... feelings.

Rogue: I'm in no hurry.

Johnny: New partner?

Rogue: You're wasting my time. Gotta say, that famed charm of yours - overhyped. Or maybe just dulling with age.

Santiago: You have a job for us, rocker? Or you mainly here to run your mouth?

Johnny: I got a job. That's it. Urgent, but I got the euro.

Santiago: How much?

Rogue: Butt out. This isn't your biz.

Santiago: Is now. Rocker just pulled out his wallet.

Rogue: Don't you get it? He's not here about any damn job. He's fucking with me. Last time, he--

Santiago: So this time you'll be smarter. Take your eddies up front. So - how much, rocker?

Johnny: It's Arasaka. I'll understand if you'd rather not.

Santiago: If you wanted my attention, you just earned it. But if you're almin' for a friends 'n' family discount - I'm not your man.

Johnny: Corpos, ridin' in on 'em hard - you two do that for fun.

Rogue: Pick it up, OK?

Santiago: For fun, but not for free. We leave that to rockerboys.

Johnny: It's important. Name your price.

Santiago: Ah. So you're either made of money... ...or you think we won't live to collect. Either way, rocker, you're comin' with us.

Johnny: Deal.

Santiago: That it is. Urgent indeed...

[Two guys with weapons rush into the room.]

Rogue: Shit, Johnny! Didn't notice you had a fuckin' tail?!

Agent: Mr. Silverhand. You're coming with us.

Johnny: Sure, lemme just finish this.

[He smashes the boot from the agent's head. Santiago kills the other with a knife. The heroes walk toward the exit, fighting for their lives.]

Rogue: Aren't you Mr. Popular. A helo?! is this real? Who'd you piss off this time, Johnny? Gotta admit - been missin' this. Take cover! Let's get outta here.

Santiago: Sons of bitches.

Rogue: Fuck. Elevator, now! Need to blow outta here. And quick. Elevator, quick.

Thompson: This gonna take much longer?

Johnny: Got trouble in heaps.

Rogue: There'll be more at the bottom - bet you a thou.

Rogue: Pick it up, OK?

Santiago: We're parked outside. You coming?

Johnny: Thompson's waiting for me in the car.

Rogue: Who?

Johnny: Media. You wouldn't know him.

Rogue: That help could come back, WILL be back. Steady hands on that guy behind the wheel.

Thompson: Faster!

Johnny: Let's get the hell away.

[They get in the car.]

Rogue: We'll be right behind you. Got company. On our ass.

Thompson: Arasaka! If they hit the car, we're fucked!

Rogue: Show off.

Santiago: I have no idea what the hell she saw in you.

Johnny: Not half bad, that. Now what?

Rogue: Gotta lose 'em, quick! Next right - take it!

Thompson: You hanging in?

Rogue: Think we're clear of 'em.

Thompson: I'll park somewhere, we'll chat.

[They park to plan their next move.]

Santiago: All right, so who we gotta pull outta Arasaka?

Johnny: Alt Cunningham. Netrunner from ITS.

Rogue: Oh. Yeah…

Thompson: The tower. Musta taken 'er there.

Rogue: This gets better by the minute. How you wanna play this? Either of your gonks got a plan?

Thompson: Yep. Distract 'em. Make some noise.

Johnny: Set up right under Arasaka's windows and crank it loud. Blast the panes out. It'll be a gig to remember. (sips some whiskey)

[In the next scene, Johnny decides to play a concert right in front of the Arasaka building. The whole thing turns into a riot.]

News Anchor: We do not as yet know the exact amount of people hurt in the riot. But our reporters are on the scene, at Arasaka Tower... And they all agree - psychoactive agent has been dispersed at the site affecting those in the crowd.

[Johnny watches the news while standing in the elevator of the Arasaka Tower with Thompson, Rogue and Santiago.]

Johnny: All right. You recordin' this whole thing?

Thompson: Uh-huh. Why? Wanna say a few words to the folks at home?

Johnny: Do what you gotta do. Just stay out of my way.

Rogue: Thompson - know him well?

Johnny: No. Why's it matter?

Rogue: Don't like the guy, don't trust 'im. And medias're bad luck.

Johnny: What?

Rogue: Bad luck. Say someone finds a tape later? A tape of us breaking into Arasaka Tower?

Johnny: Worry about that if we make it out.

[They come out of the elevator. Johnny pulls out his gun and starts shooting.]

Thompson: C'mon, we don't have much time.

Johnny: Mainframe. Gotta find the mainframe.

Rogue: Great. Now focus. Fuck, locked the doors. What now?

Thompson: Gimme a sec. I'll get It open. Cover me.

Rogue: Got four in view. Headed this way.

Santiago: Get ready. Got four headed our way.

Rogue: Get ready.

Thompson: Five seconds and we're in. Ready?

Santiago: Minigun, spotted. Find cover.

Rogue: Gotta be around here somewhere. Turrets. Watch out!

[They find a door to the mainframe.]

Rogue: This is it. Fuckin' door's armored so thick we could use a tank. Solutions, anyone?

Johnny: Let me try.

[He tries to open it with his mechanic arm.]

Johnny: Son of a bitch!

[Thompson places a bomb on the door.]

Thompson: Try this.

Santiago: Ah, now I see why we brought him along.

Johnny: Three, two, one...

[The door explodes.]

Santiago: Perfect.

Rogue: Best step back. Watch out!

[Johnny finds Alt in one of the cells. She is connected to a computer. Some fat Japanese guy is standing next to her.]

Santiago: We're too late.

Toshiro: I would advise you not to disturb her.

Johnny: (points his gun at him) What'd you do to Alt?

Toshiro: I put her to work on the project of a lifetime.

[Johnny shots him in the head.]

Johnny: Get out of my way.

[He walks over to the girl sitting on the chair and pulls the wire out of her neck.]

Johnny: Hey... You hear me? Alt?

Rogue: Is she...?

Johnny: Alt? C'mon, don't do this. Fuck.

Rogue: Johnny.

[Thompson filming the body with his tech.]

Johnny: The hell are you doing? Are you still rolling?

Thompson: This is all we can do now, my man - show people the truth.

[Johnny punches him with his metal arm a few times.]

Thompson: ...won't change a... she's not...

Rogue: Johnny! Stop that! You out to kill him?! We gotta go. Johnny. She's dead.

[We return to 2077 and V. They are in the virtual world and as it seems to be the same room there Alt died.]

Johnny: Well? Spit it out 'fore you burst.

V: Thompson - what happened to 'im?

Johnny: Dunno. Never worked together again.

V: Maybe 'cause you whooped his ass to make yourself feel better.

Johnny: Guy was a vulture. Out to use Alt from the start. When Arasaka flatlined 'er, man, for him that was sprinkles... with a cherry on top. Fuck, he woulda killed 'er himself if they hadn't just for his cockrot story.

V: Wow. Were you going for Dickwipe of the Year?

Johnny: The fuck you going on about?!

V: Alt. You always treat her like shit?

Johnny: Don't you fuckin' mention Alt. Shit, you must've been watching some other flick! I took down Arasaka-fuckin'-Tower for her!

V: And I'm wondering why. I mean, you told her you two were nothin'. You told you cared about her as far as the end of your cock.

Johnny: Didn't you fucking hear what she said to me? Coulda just left, but no, had to break my balls first.

V: Just tryin' to wrap my head around it. You went to rescue her 'cause you actually cared about her? Felt you had unfinished biz? Or was it just another excuse to go at Arasaka?

Johnny: Guess.

V: It ever occur to you she might've been right?

Johnny: No, it hasn't. She was manipulative, had an agenda.

V: Thought that was more your style?

Johnny: What's that supposed to mean?

V: Lookin' at it now, with twenty-twenty hindsight, nothin' occurs to you?

Johnny: No. But this is a bit of a deja vu. You're as bad as she was. Can't understand why you can't just fuckin' drop it.

V: Cause you're planning a reunion. You wanna ask Alt for help And you're no solo act, Johnny. Could've told me earlier, about Alt.

Johnny: What the hell for? I didn't know how to find ‘er, neither did you.

V: Woulda made things just a little easier, knowing who we were

lookin’ for. So how the hell you expect Alt to help us? I saw her get decommed.

Johnny: She didn't die. She got out, escaped.

V: Well, looked to me like...

Johnny: She fled into the Net.

V: You're pushin' bullshit. Heard more than my share of tales 'bout runners who ran off to Never-Never Netland. Just never thought you'd be the next to tell me one.

Johnny: Don't need you to believe me long as you do exactly what I say.

V: When’d you find out?

Johnny: When she made contact, a little later.

V: And? What'd she say?

Johnny: That she was a captive in the Arasaka subnet. But they couldn't hurt her. And she told me not to come lookin' for her.

V: What? Why?

Johnny: This one time she wanted me to just let it go. 'Cause enough people had died for nothing already.

V: So... What did you do?

Johnny: Got my hands on two thermonuclear charges.

V: Then headed back to Arasaka Tower. How d'you know Alt's still around? It's been a half century, which you've spent cloistered in Mikoshi. NetWatch coulda hunted her down years ago.

Johnny: Oh, they tried, believe me. But their tiny corporate brains can't handle a free AI that knows how people think. They were busy looking for her in the Crystal Palace, while she was building the Ghost City for Kang Tao.

V: And Rogue went with you. Again.

Johnny: I paid 'er well.

V: Said it yourself - she was the best. Had 'er pick of contracts. But for some strange ass reason, she took a job from a rocker with a death wish. A rocker forever getting his ass beat by Arasaka.

Johnny: Different times, kid. Back then, mercs didn't normally sell out to corps. All ya had to do was yell "Let's fuck up Arasaka!" and every last one of 'em jizzed their pants. Rogue included.

V: Voodoo Boys think they know where she is - beyond the Blackwall.

Johnny: Where nobody can touch her.

V: And Brigitte's primed to go there, break through. Just to contact Alt, talk to her.

Johnny: Too much for our little pro?

[V returns to Brigitte's net ghost.]

Brigitte: ...a moment.

V: Sure felt like more than a moment. Saw a good chunk of Johnny's life... And Alt.

Brigitte: It is possible. Data connected to Alt are linked to a strong memory trace in de construct. Very strong. These memories must have evoked a powerful emotional response, then projected onto your consciousness.

V: Emotion, yeah, plenty of that... Construct - what kinda shape's it in?

Brigitte: Enough data is uncorrupted to convince Alt it is authentic.

V: What the hell's that mean? So... did it work?

Brigitte: Yes. We extract de necessary fragment of Silverhand's engram. We are ready now to make contact with Alt. First, we must dive deeper. Beyond, dere are no borders. Beyond de Blackwall. Few have gone through to de other side. And none have yet returned. She will be de first.

[They reach the border of the net.]

V: So actually... you've got no idea what's beyond that thing.

Brigitte: But we will know soon.

V: And these shapes I'm seein....

Brigitte: Wild, unfettered AI. Searching for a passage.

V: I held up my end of our deal. Your turn. Before you pass through that wall, I want Johnny's psyche removed.

Brigitte: We will not pass through. You will take de code to de other side.

V: Fuck... Might've guessed. Never had any intention of helpin' me, did ya?

Brigitte: It does not matter anymore. You will bring all to its end.

V: Don't got much for options, do I?

Brigitte: Ale. (Go.)

[V touches the wall.]

V: How do I get to the other side? Brigitte?

[She disappears. V finds himself on the other side and sees Alt's ghost floating in the air.]

V: Alt?

Alt: Johnny. You cannot remain here.

[She teleports you to Brigitte.]

Brigitte: Alt Cunningham.

V: Alt...? Wh-what's goin' on?

[She teleports you to Net version of Arasaka Tower.]

V: Alt...?

Alt: We will talk here.

Johnny: Relax, lemme handle this.

Alt: Johnny.

Johnny: Come through the Blackwall to meet me... That mean we're good, things're chill between us?

Alt: I have recognized your engram code, but I do not know why you are here.

Johnny: To give ya a chance to pay me back for gettin' you outta Arasaka Tower. V, this is Alt - best netrunner Night City's ever seen. Alt, this is V - you need to save his life.

V: What'd you do with Brigitte? She still alive?

Alt: Yes - but she is not needed at the moment. What do you want?

V: This chip, the Relic, it's killin' me. Construct on it is wormin' its way through my neural system.

Alt: I see this. But why is it my problem?

Johnny: Why the fuck isn't it? You created Soulkiller. You handed Arasaka a fuckin' super weapon that dismantled me, you and half the

'runners in Night City.

Alt: Your death was of your own making.

Johnny: Jesus, Alt, I dove in after you. Gonna tell me now this ain't your problem?

Alt: It is not. The Alt Cunningham you strove to save in Arasaka Tower no longer exists. This should be obvious to you as you were responsible for her death.

V: Your death wasn't Johnny's fault.

Alt: How could you know?

V: Seen you in his memories... It was an accident.

Alt: What you saw was his subjective view of what happened. A warped account of events he locked away in his subconscious and replayed time and again. It bears no resemblance to the truth.

V: If you're not Alt, who are you?

Alt: I use her engramatic data.

Johnny: Really. You find this "icy bitch" aspect in there, too?

V: Mind unloadin' this baggage later? Wasn't sure what to expect from a meeting with on AI, but It sure wasn't digital spat.

Johnny: How's that help me, exactly?

V: Aa, didn't make it any worse. OK, I get it, you hate Johnny's guts. But what about me?

Alt: I cannot help you.

Johnny: Can't? Or won't?

Alt: Can't. To attempt to do so. I would need access to more advanced technology.

V: What? But it's your tech, you created Soulkiller.

Alt: The program I created has little in common with how Arasaka has since repurposed it.

Johnny: Fine... So how about Mikoshi? That advanced enough for ya?

Alt: If I could gain access to Mikoshi, It would cease to exist.

Johnny: Good, we can work with that. We'll get you inside Mikoshi, and you'll help - deal?

V: Best 'runner Night City's ever seen can't bust into Mikoshi on her own?

Alt: I am a well known threat there. They have a layer of black ICE with my name on it, literally.

Johnny: Kinda like a custom-made prison jumpsuit...

Alt: I refuse to be caged in there ever again.

V: What can you do for me, exactly?

Alt: With the Soulkiller resident Inside Mikoshi, I will create a construct of you, then disentangle your neural network from Johnny's. I shall then inject your engram back into your mortal form.

Ghost Town (Part 2)

V: So... you'll save my life but flatline me along the way?

Alt: Your consciousness, neural engrams, will be recorded as data. The rest will cease to exist.

V: The rest?

Alt: The soul. I did not grant the program its name, but Soulkiller does precisely what it promises to do.

Johnny: Christ, I don't wanna listen to this bullshit. V just hops back

into his body, right? Nothin' changes.

Alt: Everything changes. You know this well.

V: Right, so we got a plan.

Alt: But how will you reach Mikoshi? I've created armies that failed to breach it.

Johnny: They were children of the Net - there's your problem. We're bankin' on the human factor. We'll crack a window, slip you into Mikoshi.

V: Johnny, uh... embellishes, in case you hadn't noticed. You don't trust him, which is fine, but you have my word we'll slip you inside Mikoshi while keepin' you outta harm's way.

Alt: I believe this “human factor” and I have things in common.

V: So, we agreed?

Alt: Yes, we are agreed. Find a path into Mikoshi, I shall prepare a program to help you navigate the localnet.

V: How'll I contact you once I'm ready?

Alt: This is a BBS address. It will be our secure communication

channel.

Johnny: Voodoo Boys - what about them?

Alt: They shall let you pass unharmed. Those were our terms.

[V returns to the real world.]

V: Ughh... ngh... fooo...

Brigitte: So you manage to survive.

V: No thanks to you, I'm sure.

Brigitte: You must not take any of dis personally. We seek Silverhand's construct. You are unlucky - have accident, get involved.

V: So it's OK to make me the fool. That how you do biz? Maybe I oughta give Alt a heads-up?

Brigitte: You dare now to lecture me?

V: No, waste of time, waste of breath. Thank fuck my biz with you is done. Want nothin' to do with ya.

Brigitte: So get out.

[V goes to the exit of the chapel. Placide meets him at the door.]

Placide: Hm?

V: Hm. Gotta be pretty disappointed.

Placide: Wid what?

V: That you can't zero me after all.

Placide: It is out of my hands.

V: D'ya hear about Brigitte's ask from Alt? Or was that memo way above your pay grade? Like the biochip was?

Placide: Ah, you try to provoke me, is dis wise, you think?

V: Bingo. How'm I doin' so far?

[He comes out of the chapel and collapses in pain.]

Johnny: Look. Hey, look See that? Fuck those cunts.

V: You watchin' a story on the Arasakas or narrating porn...?

Johnny: Gee, aren't you funny? Look around, look what they've done to this 'hood. So you ready?

V: This the part where you divulge your master plan to annihilate Arasaka?

Johnny: No, it's the part where I say I despise petty merc-thiefs who think they're hot shit rebels after settin foot in the Afterlife. Might think you took on Arasaka, but you're just a bug they scraped off the sole of their boot and tossed in the trash.

V: Whatever you gotta say - say it. Got somethin' eatin' at your code, that's clear. Been tryin' to learn how you're wired this whole time. To know who I'm dealin' with. Thought you were just unlucky to hirst. But I kept watchin' and finally realized what your problem is. You're a dirtboy from Heywood who found the guts to walk a few extra blocks from home. But turned out the best you can do is chase scavs for ennies. Let's get outta here.

V: You're a dick y'know.

Johnny: And you're a cunt. Maybe we'll til together after all?

V: Sure seem to know a lot about my past.

Johnny: Well, seen flashes of your past, just like you've seen flashes of mine.

V: Pisses me off that our memories blend, don't have my own

anymore. Chip's the worst thing to ever fuckin' happen to me.

Johnny: Mean to say I haven't earned the top spot yet?

V: An arrogant asshole's no small problem, but it ain't my biggest. Dyin' is.

Johnny: Death by becoming someone else... You didn't do anything to deserve that fate.

V: My memories - what do they... feel like?

Johnny: Not followin' ya.

V: Aside from what you see and hear, I mean. You process or experience any feelings?

Johnny: Anger, regret, bitterness, fear. Though honestly, can't tell if they're your or mine.

V: You afraid of death?

Johnny: I'm afraid of wasted opportunities.

V: Like Arasaka Tower?

Johnny: Come through it, as you can see. And I ain't done with them

yet.

V: Not having control - you can't stand it. Seeing some things’re outta your hands...

Johnny: Don't be ridiculous, V.

V: Whole world used to revolve around Silverhand. Now, no one gives a shit.

Johnny: OK, I'll tell ya why wanna destroy Arasaka, but I'll only tell ya once. Wanna hear it?

V: All right.

Johnny: I saw corps strip farmers of water... and eventually of land. Saw them transform Night City into a machine fueled by people's crushed spirits, broken dreams and emptied pockets. Corps've long controlled our lives, taken lots.. and now they're after our souls!

V: Might be right, can't really argue with you there.

Johnny: V, I've declared war not 'cause capitalism's a thorn in my side or outta nostalgia for an America gone by. This war's a people's war against a system that's spiralled outta our control. It's a war against the fuckin' forces of entropy, understand?! Do whatever it takes to stop 'em, defeat 'em, gut 'em. If I gotta kill, I'll kill. If I need your body

will fuckin' take it! Fuckin' hell... You still don't see it. But you will one day.

V: (to Weyland - Here to see Rogue. Got an appointment.) Here to see Rogue. Expectin' me.
(if Rogue hasn't been paid before)
    V: Hey, Rogue. Got the scratch.
    V: Got the cred for the Hellman job.
    Rogue: Fine.
    Rogue: (on the phone) Anders Hellman - flick me the detes.
(otherwise)
    V: (I'm back. What about Hellman?) Hey Rogue. I'm back. What about Hellman?
Rogue: (calling Claire at the bar) Two, please. Make some room.
[The guy sitting right of Rogue moves over to make room for V.]
Rogue: Siddown.
V: Hope you found him.
Rogue: Don't see that often, determination like yours. Must really need this guy.
(Johnny glitches in, sitting on the table)
V: Matter of life and death.
Rogue: Heh. Haven't heard that for a while, either.
[Claire brings them a tray with two glasses and a bottle, pours booze into the glasses and is about to leave with the bottle.]

Rogue: Bottle stays.

[Claire puts the bottle down on the table and walks off]

Rogue: (to V) Go ahead, enjoy.

    V: (drink) To your health.

        Rogue: To YOURS, kid. Gonna need it.

    V: (Thanks, I'll pass) Thanks, but I'll pass.

        Johnny: Hell's wrong with you?

        Rogue: Good stuff. Your loss. (She drinks)

[Some guy brings her a shard.]

Rogue: Thanks, Nix. [She slots it, her eyes start glowing blue while she accesses the data.]

Johnny: Queen of The Afterlife. Who woulda thunk...

Rogue: Got a shard for you - intel, interesting stuff.

V: (optional, to Johnny) Think she'll help?

    Johnny: The Rogue I remember was one cold-ass bitch. But she usually went with her gut. Somethin' tells me she thinks you check out.

V: (to Rogue - Let's have a look.) Let's see what you got.

[Rogue pulls out the shard and hands it to V, who slots it behind their ear]

Rogue: Your Hellman's not on any payroll, not officially, anyway. But he does pop up in QianT's confidential stacks. It's a Kang Tao subsidiary. Chinese corp. Kang Too's been using them as a fig leaf for years. Their mask for more "sensitive" operations. All that clear?

[the map needs a while to encrypt, the HUD is working on it.]
(options)
    V: (They're protecting him from Arasaka) Prolly keeping him hidden from Arasaka. Must've worked on a top-secret project.
        Rogue: Mhm - hidden from Arasaka or any other megacorp that wants whether knows.
    V: (Can you track him down?) Think you can track him down?
        Rogue: Getting a mark on him oughta be easy. Actually grabbing him - another story entirely.

Rogue: Decrypted map of upcoming Kang Too convoy route.
V: Think Hellman might be in one of 'em? Thing is, which one?
Rogue: Take a look at the specs on this one - a lone AV, no ground support. No linked cargo manifests, either.
Johnny: Weird...
Rogue: Sure, Kang Tao sometimes transports stuff unregistered if they wanna push it under the table, but... Catch the load on this AV. Already approved in the system, but too low. So definitely no cargo on board.
Johnny: Huh.
Rogue: BUT there's a passenger list - Kang Tao security detail plus one VIP. Transfer from QianT.
V: Our boy, Hellman.

Rogue: That was the good news.

Johnny: There it is.

V: (optional: Got this intel pretty fast.) Data's all confidential. You just snap your fingers and it falls in your lap?

    Rogue: I know where to look. And I know whose head to put in a vise. Also, hate wastin' time. Especially answering stupid questions.

V: (What's the bad news?) So what's the bad news?

Rogue: Bad news is the extraction site. Look - Night City airspace, all this.

V: Mhm. No way to 'jack the transport without the NCPD picking up on it.

Rogue: And here, we're too close to Kang Tao. We ever give that AV a dirty look, their backup huscle'll be on us. But... right here's Jackson Plains. Narrow corridor just outside the city and just out of Kang Tao's reach.

Johnny: Guess it's your lucky day.

V: A dead zone. I'll grab him there. (closing the map overlay)

Rogue: Gonna need a native to the area, someone who'll set up the op, cobble together the gear.

V: (optional: AV like that's a hard nut to crack.) Even tracking that AV'll be a bitch. Familiar with the type, saw models flyin' around during the war. They're mammoth but they're quick. Plus they pack next-gen defenses. Can't take potshots at it, not even with serious firepower, dust won't work.

    Rogue: It's not about firepower. There are ways. And people who know them. Or who can at least improvise

on a theme.

V: (Know the right person?) So, a native. Know any hick mercs?

Rogue: Just one. Panam Palmer. She can't count on her clan anymore, but she's a true nomad She knows those lands. And she will help you. Won't have a choice.

V: “Won't have a choice?” Does not sound enticing - not for her not for me.

Rogue: Enticing comes at a price you can't possibly afford.

V: Can't possibly afford to blow this chance at nabbing Hellman.

Rogue: Your operation, your call.

Johnny: Gotta bad feeling, V.

V: (optional: Strange. Nomads usually keep clear of city folk.) Strange. Thought nomads gave the city, and city folk, a wide berth.

    Rogue: Varies by clan, by the connections they have, the depth of the shit they're in. But you're right - Aldecaldos're rarely willing to do biz with the city.

    Panam's got a different take?

    Rogue: Yep. On everything, it seems.

V: (Panam has to help me? Why?) Why's Panam gotta help me? I sense a catch. Pretty big one.

Rogue: Occasionally, Panam moves merch for me. Last job... well, wasn’t a good day for her.

V: She run into a hitch?

Rogue: Complete bust, actually. Lost the goods and her ride. Panam'll do anything to get the load back. Means her dignity - I know her.

V: OK, guess I can try to help her. But if we don't know where to look, I mean--

Rogue: We do. I do.

V: You know, but wouldn't tell Panam? Aim to play cat and mouse with me, too?

Rogue: My aim is to know an opportunity when I see one. And then to seize it. Say I told her everything. Whaddaya think she'd ‘ave done? Grabbed her iron and gone on the warpath, that's what. Not hard to see how that coulda ended. And there's nothin' I hate more than losin' good people to plain stupidity.

V: (optional: Wow. Gonna try to play me like Panam?) Huh, I'm 'er only chance. And she's my only chance. Two pawns on Rogue's board.   **Rogue:** You're quick. For a pawn.   **Johnny:** Oh, V…

V: ()So tell me. Fine. Lemme hear what you know.

Rogue: Rocky Ridge, ghost town just outside Night City. Panam knows where. You'll go there, get the merch back. Wheels, too. Naturally, you'll call her first. Sendin' you her detes.

Johnny: Ugh, finally. Let's get outta here.

V: (Stand - I'll do that. Thanks.) All clear, Thanks.

Rogue: Good luck.

[V walks away from Rogue's table and coughs.]

V: Ugh… gonna puke…

[He calls Panam.]

Panam: Hello.

Ghost Town (part 3)

V: Hey, Panam. Got your number from Rogue. Name's V.

Panam: Great. Where's that old war horse want to kick me now?

V: Forget Rogue for a minute. I wanna help you.

Panam: How very kind. But it's for too little, far too late. So do tell Rogue she can eat my shorts.

V: Tell it to your therapist. Callin' about your ride and the merch you lost. Interested? Or are you gonna tell me to eat your shorts, too?

Panam: The rail freight yard on Bonita Street, the one hugging the city line. We'll meet there.

V: See ya.

[V goes to meet Panam. On the way he gets a call from Judy.]

V: Hey, Judy. How ya feelin'?
Judy: Shitty. But somethin' come to me.
V: Gotta give yourself time to grieve, Judy. Experience all its stages, feel them, let employ out. Shock, anger, depression...
Judy: I'd say I'm on anger. Gonna stay here for a while, too. I can work

with anger.

V: So what'd you come up with?

Judy: The Mox dive, Lizzie's Bar, used to be a joyhouse. Tyger Claws killed one girl too many, so people took matters into their own hands... Belongs to us, now. Clouds could stand to get the same makeover.

V: (streetkid) I'm familiar with the story. Things did not go that smoothly.

Judy: I didn't say they did, didn't say they would. But Evie thought Clouds would be safe. You saw how far that got her... how she ended. V... I can't stand by and let things go on like this.

V: You sure you've thought this through, Judy, carefully?

Judy: Pff, haven't thought it through at all. All know's the Mox didn't turn things around by sitting on their tanned and toned asses, doin' nothin'.

V: Got the Mox to agree to take over Clouds?

Judy: No. I'm tryin' to get you. Know someone at Clouds who'll take our side. Will you help?

V: Fine. Got me on board.

Judy: Woo, yes!

V: OK, so. What's the plan?

Judy: First up - we gotta talk to Maiko Maeda, if she's not with us, might as well throw our hands up in the air.

V: Maiko Maeda... who is she, exactly?

Judy: Girl who unofficially runs Clouds. Good at it, too.

V: What's she do officially?

Judy: She's a doll. So she's a nobody.

V: You sure Maiko's gonna wanna join forces?

Judy: If I was sure, I'd be on the holo to her and we wouldn't be havin' this conversation.

V: Let me rephrase. Is there any chance she'll stop us around, then shove us out her megatower window?

Judy: 'Course, sure.

V: Guess I can work with that. How well do you know this Maiko?

Judy: Too well.

V: When we doin' this?

Judy: Early morning, Clouds'll be closed - hardly a soul lurkin' at that time.

V: How early?

Judy: Before eight. I'll be by the entrance... Nah, scratch that the balcony above Clouds. We'll sneak in - no one needs to know we're there.

V: On the balcony. Got it.

[V meet Judy on the balcony. She smokes a cigarette.]

Judy: Hey, V. Thanks for showin'. Talkin' with Maiko's like a game of 3D chess - don't let her derail you.

V: Some detes about her could be useful, when I talk to her, don't you think?

Judy: No, leave the talkin' to me.

V: So, in brief, I'm just here as your huscle, right?

Judy: Never said that. I just know the woman better.

V: How you aim to get her over to our side?

Judy: By tellin' the truth. About Evelyn - what happened and why.

V: Think that'll cut it?

Judy: No. Have to improvise from there.

V: You seem a bundle of nerves.

Judy: I've a mind to kill the bastards with my bare hands. So yeah… you could say I'm a teensy bit nervous.

V: I'm ready, let's go.

Judy: Hold on. I'll open it.

V: Looks like you've come this way before. More than once.

Judy: Hm. I have, on occasion. Easy as paella. Follow me.

[They enter Maiko's office. She sits at the giant table in Chinese styled room.]

Maiko: Judy Alvarez. I'd say it's great to see you but I've never been one to lie. Also I never liked surprise parties, which you know.

Judy: Yup, bet I even know why.

Maiko: Thought you'd hit rock bottom when you joined the Mox. Guess you've managed to stoop even lower, now. You somehow never fail to lower my expectations. First you settle for the Mox, now murderers. I shudder to think what's next. Yes, V - I mean you.

V: Sounds like I left a mark on this place. Good.

Maiko: If by "mark" you mean buckets o' blood, then yeah - congrats.

V: Don't mind me - just here to blend into the decor.

Maiko: That's no reason. Why come at all?

V: To make sure Judy gets what she came for.

Maiko: Jude woulda had a better chance without you.

V: Judy has a proposal… about Clouds.

Maiko: Wanna come back? Done. Always valued your skills, you know that. Just don't get why you had to drag this… loose end in here.

Judy: Stop treatin' dolls like meat and I'll consider it. But first things

first - Clouds needs to be taken from the Tyger Claws.

Maiko: OK, look. It's clear what happened to Ev was... traumatic.

Judy: Huh? I was convinced you didn't know.

Maiko: That girl was askin' for an unhappy ending. I was just surprised it took so long.

Judy: We gotta do something! Or everyone'll end up like Evie. Woodman roped her while she was unconscious, then sold her like she was so much scrap.

Maiko: Yeesh, you've always been unstable. OK, since you seem more reasonable, care to explain what this is about?

V: Judy's idea - think about it. Could work.

Maiko: Well, well, Jude. See you've found a true and loyal fan.

V: Call me a murderer? You're right - I killed Woodman. I'd do it again in heartbeat. And if I'd known what he did to Evelyn when she needed help, I wouldn't've have gone so easy on him.

Maiko: Tyger Claw bosses rule this place. Know how much I mean to them? About as much as you two and your problems mean to me. Read, negligible.

V: Doesn't it make you wonder why you even work here?

Maiko: Gonna pretend as if you two weren't ever here. For old times' sake, Judy. Literally moments from now security's gonna figure out you're here. Got two options - go out the way you came in, or get thrown out. And that's not a threat or figure of speech. Just a friendly heads up.

Judy: Had enough. I'm leavin'.

Maiko: Smart move.

V: You picked the wrong side, Maiko.

Maiko: I'll be the judge of that.

[V and Judy leave Maiko's office. V follows Judy.]

Judy: That went... smoothly. She totally blew us off!

V: Prolly needs time to think. Couple of days, tops.

Judy: Yeah, you might be right. I'll call her tomorrow.

V: You two have a history?

Judy: Way back, yeah. Think I just felt lonely.

V: Like everyone in Night City.

Judy: She was different then. And so was I.

V: Can't trust people that see everything as a numbers game. Line between potting you on the back as their friend, and planting a knife in you as their enemy, is down to a decimal.

Judy: I know - right there with you. I... well, used to have a big crush on her. Took me a long time to realize who she really was. But still... honest or crooked, we need her. Huh, just think, could gone divin' this mornin'...

V: A little unwindin'd do you good. Do me good too, actually.

Judy: It wouldn't been unwindin', not exactly. Got an idea buzzin' in my mind, workin' it, but I can't say if it'll amount to anything.

V: Yeah, you, a deckchair and a Mai Tai with a cocktail umbrella - somehow don't see it.

Judy: Nope! Me in a deckchair's me mullin' over coulda, shoulda, wouldas - somethin' I avoid right now.

[They walk in an elevator.]

Judy: Ugh. Punch the ground floor. Need to get out of this place. Really don't understand what tits have to do with sellin' that garbage.

Johnny: Can't say no to tits - rest can go fuck itself.

V: Hey, if it works... I mean, blame the corps all you want, but at the end of the day, says more about us than them. Biz is biz 'n' tits're biz.

Judy: It's like junk food... people don't buy it 'cause they're gonk - they're just poor.

[The elevator stops. Judy and V continue walking and leave the megabuilding. Judy lights a cigarette.]

Judy: I gotta get back to Maiko with somethin' big.

V: Appealin' to her sense of justice wasn't big enough?

Judy: Maiko only works with specifics.

V: For a minute there, thought you were about call it quits.

Judy: V... I go for days tuning virtus in a basement, know what the chances are of somebody blowin' my head off down there?

V: Miniscule?

Judy: Same as Maiko's empathy. Unlike you, I don't put myself out there. But this ain't over - not yet.

V: Y'know... I'm also partial to specifics.

Judy: Uh-huh, so that's what matters. How many you'll drop, how much ammo you'll use, how many eddies it'll getcha?

V: Art and dreams of freedom can't be everyone's food. Sometimes... you gotta deal with the dirt. So - what now?

Judy: Gotta think. We need more bodies, that's for sure. I'm gonna talk to the dolls. I'll call you when I've got something. See ya later, V. And thanks.

[On the way to Panam V gets a call from Judy.]

V: Judy. So, you got a plan?

Judy: Damned right I do. Come over to mine tonight, gonna lay the groundwork with Tom and Roxie. They're with us. Maiko'll be here, too.

V: How'd you manage that?

Judy: Got somethin' really big. Tell you everything tonight. Last thing - what do you like on your pizza?

V: A and A, artichokes and avocado flavor. And Zucchini for good measure.

Judy: Oooh. Fancy. So, I'll see you come evening?

V: Gonna tell me this big secret of ours?

Judy: Figured out how to tweak behavioral chips. Turn dolls into fighters.

V: Sounds like my kinda plan.

Judy: We'll go over the specifics tonight. You're comin', right?

V: Course I'll be there.

[V arrives at the rendezvous point with Panam and sees a girl picking under the hood of a car.]

V: Hey, Panam?

Panam: So you're V. Where's my car?

V: Why's it matter? What's wrong with this one?

Panam: It’s borrowed, it's not mine. I asked where my car is.

V: We can help each other. Rogue said so.

Panam: I might've guessed. All right. Tell me all you know. Fail, and you can go back and tell Rogue to fuck right off.

V: Hey, c'mon. Calm down?

Panam: Don't tell me what to do.

V: Fine. Know where to find the cargo and your car. But you go alone, you wont get ‘em back. And you could lose something else besides... So let's figure something out.

Panam: What do you want?

V:Need to hit a Kang Tao transport. Won't be easy. Wanna know I can count on you.

Panam: Are you out of your goddamned mind?

V: About you or the job? Kang Tao's AV route'll take it over Jackson Plains. Heard that should help us.

Panama: Yeah, I doubt it.

V: Gonna be a guy on board. Need to talk to him.

Panam: Fuck. In return, info on your cargo, help in getting back what's yours. We got a deal? I dunno, I... (in the car she is fixing, the alarm goes on) Shit! (she rips out the wire) All right. Deal. But if you want your thing done, we'll need to get my Thorton back first. So where is it?

V: Thought this was mostly about the merch?

Panam: Fuck the merch. With that ride, I can take any transport job in town. Without it, only thing I can move is pizza. Maybe.

V: Car's in Rocky Ridge. You're supposed to know where that is. Car's there, goods're there.

Panam: Nash your dirt-eating bastard... I will strangle you.

V: Nash a choom of yours? He hang you out to dry?

Panam: Do not call him that.

V: Heh, fine. Partner.

Panam: Former, if ever. The Shiv tricked me. He straight nipped my truck and the merch. Probably now aims to sell it off in Rocky Ridge. Is he ever going to be fucking disappointed.

V: Rocky Ridge. Let's go.

Panam: Eh, hang on. I-I should think this through. Fuck. Yes. We'll need backup. We have one brief stop to make on the way.

V: Wanna tell me where?

Panam: Give me a sec. I should call the client, convince them to leave the bastard hanging.

Johnny: Going ahead with the deal behind Rogue's back? Brave, I guess. Or fucking dumber than a drum.

Panam: (on the phone) Boz. Hey. Nash is gonna pass you the merch in Rocky Ridge. The thing is the motherfucker screwed me over. Boz, I will take care of it. I just need you to give me a chance. Boz, c'mon.

How many times have moved things for you? And now many times have I failed? You have my word. After dark? OK. No, don't call off the meet. Just don’t show up. I'll take care of everything. Do you even have to ask? Of course will. Thanks, Boz. You won't regret this. (to V) OK. I have bought us some time.

V: Gave that meathead your word, and he took it?

Panam: Is that surprising? It's called having a reputation. You should try getting one of your own.

V: (streetkid) Boz? Vista del Rey Boz? Had no idea you drive for 6th Street.

Panam: Is that not allowed?

V: No, nothin’ wrong with it. They still wild about stars, stripes and core, heartland values?

Panam: Strong word, wild. And I don't care. They pay well. It's simple.

V: So - where to now?

Panam: The Aldecaldo camp. I need to see some of the old clan.

V: Don't seem too excited.

Panam: That's not your concern. I still have friends there.

V: Rogue mentioned your friends. Said you guys stopped seeing eye to eye.

Panam: Well, since Rogue said so, it must be true!

V: It isn't?

Panam: You mean to irritate me.

V: Ooo-k, then.

Panam: It was just a hiccup. They're still family.

V: So it's complicated.

Panam: You might say so, yes.

V: Any chance they might help us? In Rocky Ridge?

Panam: That is the plan.

V: Good, let's roll.

Panam: Get in.

[They get in the car. It's a typical family car from the '80s, similar to a Pontiac Safari complete with junk food on the torpedo.]

V: Nice ride. Lots of space. Practical.

Panam: Say no more. Please.

V: How far's the camp?

Panam: Just post the city line. We'll jump on the Nine and head east.

V: How the hell'd you land in this mess?

Panam: I liked the color. The air freshener and booster seat come extra.

V: You know I don't mean the car.

Panam: What am I supposed to tell you? That I'm not about to let my partner rob me and get away with it? That my fixer made me look like a goddamned fool? What about you? Why do you need that clown from the AV?

V: This particular clown's got Intel I need. And I'm running out of time to get it.

Panam: So why didn't she tell me she knew about Nash?

V: Rogue? Do better not to wonder what her agenda might be.

Panam: Goddamn, I can't stand the bitch!

V: Rogue's queen of the Afterlife. Plays her pawns as she pleases.

Panam: Did you just call me a pawn?

V: I got a good look at 'er. She rose to the top ‘cause she reads people. So what if she keeps things to herself? It's a skill in her profession.

Panam: Well, I think she's a lying, manipulative bitch. She put me together with that Raffen - did you know that?

V: Wait, Nash is Raffen?

Panam: Yes... He runs with the Wraiths, the largest Raffen group in the area. You know about them, right?

V: Mhm. Nomads tossed out of clans.

Panam: Yes. mostly. Nomads don't banish their own without a reason. So think - murderers, rapists, freaks. They gather in teams. sometimes form actual gangs. Most of them are wanted and have warrants on their heads.

V: Shit.

Panam: And that bitch had me working with scum like that.

V: Might not've known that side of him.

Panam: Don't make me laugh. A fixer of her standing knows. And Rogue probably knows we're talking about her right now! Nash and I had a role to play in her game, her plan. That's it. Rogue's a frigid old bitch. That's the truth. OK, we're almost there. We'll gather my guys, then ride to Rocky Ridge.

[They pull over at a nomad camp.]

Scorpion: Well, would you look what the cat dragged in!

Mitch: Is that a ghost or is it just my hangover?!

Panam: (smiling) Fuck you too.

Scorpion: Mhm. And who's this?

Panam: My babysitter. V, this is Scorpion, Mitch. Two old friends.

V: Well, might not've needed a babysitter if you hadn't lost the merch and the car.

Panam: Shut it, V.

Scorpion: (laughs) Heh, are you kidding? Did that beauty Thorton of yours finally bite it?

Mitch: She rode it to death in ol' Night City.

V: Nah. It got klepped.

Scorpion: Shit, who dared?

Panam: It doesn't matter. I'll get her back - that's why I'm here.

V: Need your help.

Mitch: What with? What's this about?

V: Raffens screwed Panam. Plan is to show 'em that was a bad idea.

Scorpion: How bad did they get you?

Panam: Bad enough to make me sit quietly through all your bullshit.

Mitch: You know we would do anything for you, sister...

Scorpion: But now - now's hard.

Panam: Seriously - you won't help?

Mitch: Ah well, the old man told us to sit tight and get those generators back up after the batteries went kaput.

Panam: Generators? You won't help because of some goddamn generators? Is this another joke?

V: Really could use your help.

Mitch: Not this time. We're needed here.

Panam: Fuck, I don't believe this. So you'll stay put because Saul told you to? (upset) You couldn't care less about me?

V: Panam...

Scorpion: This isn't about Saul. It's about the clan. You know that.

Mitch: Listen - we can't leave camp, no chance. But... but, Saul never said a thing about gear.

Panam: OK. Well... I need that rifle of yours, and some of my own stuff.

Mitch: Take whatever you want.

Scorpion: And take care of yourself out there.

Panam: Yeah... Thanks guys I'll grab the gear, then be out of your hair.

[She walks away to grab the gear.]

V: Looks like you're stuck with me.

Panam: Mmhm.

V: You disappointed?

Panam: I don't know. Maybe a little, yes.

[Panam goes into one of the tents and picks up a rifle that resembles a 50 cal Barrett sniper rifle.]

Panam: Will you help me with this?

[V takes the box in his hands.]

V: What's inside?

Panam: A few odds and ends that should be useful. Take it. All right, that's everything. Let's go.

[They return to the car.]

Panam: So... I'm off.

Mitch: Yeah, yeah... Go on, go, already! Call us sometime!

Scorpion: Keep an eye on her, V.

Panam: Put it in the trunk.

[V puts the box in the trunk and Panam puts the rifle on top and closes the trunk.]

Panam: We can go. Hop in.

[They hit the road.]

V: Seems you got a real problem with authority.

Panam: What?

V: Rogue, Saul... He your leader?

Panam: Their leader.

V: Seemed in a hurry to delta the hell outta there.

Panam: Let's just say Saul wouldn't have been happy to see me.

V: What happened?

Panam: (sighs) The reason we came to California was because he promised change food the Aldecaldos. He claimed we would turn over a new leaf. But you saw it. We got a handful of tents on a heap of sand, A hell of a promised land. I wanted something different, better. Saul's a damned coward. He'll be the end of the clan. I'm certain.

V: Mitch and Scorpion seem good souls.

Panam: The best friends it could ask for. I'd stay in the camp too if I were in their shoes. Fuck Saul and his generators, of course - yet the clan comes first. But I'm not part of it anymore.

V: Still treated you like you're one of them. They care about you.

Panam: Mhm. Do you have anyone you would call close?

V: Not right now, no. Could just be a matter of time, though...?

Panam: Pfff. Ooo-K.

V: Were those two in the army?

Panam: Scorp and Mitch? Yeah. Panzerboys. They were on contract

during the lost war.

V: Panzerboys? Flew those huge transporters?

Panam: Scorpion piloted. Mitch ran security. They both got some kick-ass combat implants and a stack of really fucked up nightmares.

V: So, Rocky Ridge - empty, dusty hole in the middle of bumfuck nowhere, I heard. Natives either moved to Night City or just got the hell out.

Panam: Then you know almost all there is to know. The whole area was waiting on a new interstate extension. It was supposed to breathe new life into the town. It didn't happen, of course.

V: How many ghost towns you think are there? Hundreds?

Panam: Country-wide? Thousands. I drove down I-Eighty the other day. All you have to do is pull over after sundown. It's quiet then. And you hear it.

V: What's that?

Panam: The wind whistling through boarded-up windows. Tumbleweeds scratching across dry, sandy tracks. That's how towns die. Not with a bang, but with whispers and whimpers. OK, we have arrived.

[They leave the car.]

V: Whatta we do?

Panam: We get ready to greet the Raffens. And we've little time for that. We'll need to improvise. We should scout first. To look for anything that might be useful.

[V scans 3 devices in the area.]

V: Doubt Rocky Ridge could be any deader. Everything's down, nothing works here.

Panam: Well? Have you found anything?

V: I got nada. You have an epiphany?

Panam: The Raffens will roll in after dusk, right? We will have a surprise ready for them. We just need to get some power flowing.

V: No dice. Nothing's up, all cut off.

Panam: So we plug it back in. Let's check the substation.

V: You got it. Found the breakers. But there's no juice on 'em.

Panam: Not to worry. Come down. I know how to surprise the bastards! Right, so the intersection is powered from that transformer substation right? The switchgear on the roof - we'll flip the switch there and everything will light up like Christmas, Understood?

V: Fine idea. Let's get us some power. I'll look around for access points.

Panam: Great. They're likely to show up in numbers, we can't know how many. We need to outfox them, then get to my car somehow.

V: Relax. Got a few Ideas. I'll try to play a little game with 'em at the intersection.

Panam: Hell yes, perfect.

V: Soon as they see the lights, they'll have to check who, why and how - nova.

Panam: Yep. First, we start up the control terminal below - the gear on the roof is a hunk of junk without it. C'mon, we'll give it a boost from the car battery. That should do the trick. Wait for me by the substation. I'll bring the car around.

[She drives the car to the supply.]

Panam: The panel looks to be in good shape. I'll make a bypass circuit

to the power supply, that should do it. We just have to get it up and running... Grab the jumper cables from the trunk. We'll boost it from the car battery.

V: Red cable connected.

Panam: Give me a moment. I need to hook everything up here. And done. Now the black rattler. (V connects the cable) There she goes. But the old jalopy served us well. OK. I've got voltage. Start the terminal inside, and once the power is on in the building, get on that roof.

V: You got it.

Panam: I'll set up on the tower. We'll have the whole intersection on a platter. You flip the breakers when I give you the signal to do so, understood?

V: Yes, ma'am.

V: Switchgear's got power.

Panam: Prime. We'll have some fun at the intersection. Let's get into position.

V: Now we wait.

Panam: Remember - as soon as we see them, you give us power.

V: Raffens'll come from where? Any idea?

Panam: The northeast, I wager. From the freeway that was never finished.

V: Got it. Cover me, just in case.

Panam: Of course.

SOME TIME LATER

[At night, several cars enter the town.]

Panam: They're rolling in. In my Thorn! You see 'er?

V: Really, really hard to miss.

Panam: Let's take 'em by surprise. Let's try to do this quietly. If anything happens, I'll start picking them off. Sound good?

V: Sounds great.

Panam: Get good and ready. The show starts - now!

[V flip the switch. The lampposts light up.]

V: Let there be light.

Panam: Look for the girl with the mohawk.

V: Colorful bunch.

Panam: Good work. What now? A few Shiv still breathe.

V: Better off not leavin' anyone to tell the story.

Panam: It's as if you've read my mind.

[The shootout begins.]

V: I've been made.

Panam: Fuck. Covering you. We have to pick all of them off now. We have to take out the brutes by the car. One for you, one for me. Wait for me in the car.

[V kills the Raffians and find the car.]

Panam: Move. I take the wheel.

V: There. Couldn't wait another minute, could ya?

Panam: At last. And? She's prime wheels, isn't she?

V: Dreamy, indeed. No surprise you wanted her back.

Panam: She completes me.

V: See? Managed just fine without Mitch and Scorpion.

Panam: Listen, V. It's not over yet.

V: It's not? You got the cargo, you got your car...

Panam: I did not get Nash, who was not in Rocky Ridge. The fucker didn't show.

V: So it was about vengeance. The whole time.

Panam: The hell you know about me!

V: Either you're not bein' straight with me, or you don't know what you want. Hard to say which is worse.

Panam: Just listen to me, for fuck's sake! I know where their little hidey-hole is. We'll take the old, unfinished freeway nearby. They will not be expecting us. I'm sure of it.

V: Wanna just show up at the Raffen hideout? Are you out of your

mind?

Panam: Do you have a better idea? Let me hear it!

V: Matter of fact, I do. We take the stuff to Sixth Street, then go after Hellman like we planned!

Panam: I gave you my word, didn't I? Please stop riding my ass about Hellman! And do not start acting high and mighty like you won't lift a finger if it's in the contract. Just... just help me get Nash.

V: (sighs) All right... So where's this hideout?

Panam: A hop and skip away. Thanks, V. What Nash did... I placed my trust in him. He was the first person I worked with after leaving the Aldecaldos. After I came to Night City. And I granted him my trust.

V: I get it. Know how you feel. Had someone betray me, just like that, once.

Panam: And did you make them pay?

V: Never got the chance. Someone else got to 'em first.

Panam: But if they hadn't? Would you have done it?

V: No doubt, without skippin' a beat.

Panam: Let's get this over with.

[They drive to the place.]

Panam: Are you ready?

V: Let's get 'im.

[They start shootin'.]

Panam: What, asshole? Did you really think I'd let it slide? Shut your fucking mouth!

Nash: Can't say I blame 'er. I'd wanna rid myself of a bitch like you fast as I could, too.

Panam: Watch it - bastards comin' in from the other side!

Lightning Breaks

[V and Panam kill Nash and his gang. Panam happily calls Rogue.]

Panam: Hello, Rogue.

Rogue: Panam.

Panam: What did you say? Again? "Solve your own problems? Clean up your shit?" Nash is dead. One shit cleaned. Happy?

Rogue: And the Sixth Street merch?

Panam: Nash can't deliver it anymore. Buuut if you ask nicely, I might be able to help you.

Rogue: Help me? I took my cut up front, honey. But, I guess I'm touched. Was actually wondering if you wouldn't forget about biz while you were out chasing down a vendetta.

Panam: (hangs up) Fuck!

V: So, feel any better?

Panam: Maybe a little. Let's get out of here.

Johnny: One bitter, cold bitch that Rogue. Think she might've lost the plot.

V: Mean to say she used to be sweet and alluring?

Johnny: Heh, never that. But she's no stranger to the other end of the stick. Think she might need a nice, strong shock.

[V and Panam return to the car and hit the road.]

Panam: (on the phone) Hey, Boz. Got your cargo. No, no fast ones.

Come on, let's meet, Sunset Motel. I know you're not kidding. I'm certain to be there. (to V) OK, I arranged our meeting. Let's do the deal and start working on Hellman. Agreed?

V: Sixth Street not likely to pull anything?

Panam: I've driven for them before. Never had them do anything strange. I'm hoping they know what's good for business.

V: Sunset Motel - what's that?

Panam: A safe spot. It's not far from here.

V: Should be fun.

[They drive up to the motel.]

Panam: They're here. Let me do the talking.

V: Sensing trouble?

Panam: No. At least I don't think so.

[She gets out of the car. V also gets out, hiding the gun behind the door.]

Panam: Hey, Boz.

6th Street: Paaanam. How's Nash? Doesn't seem to be answerin' his phone.

Panam: Don't call him anymore, there's no need.

6th Street: Heh. You got balls, girl. What's this? A bonus of some sort?

V: We work together.

6th Street: Hm. Change chooms like you change clothes, girl.

Panam: There. First-class merch.

6th Street: Mhm.

Panam: So, everything's in order?

6th Street: Check your account. Should be pretty plush in a couple minutes.

Panam: It's been a pleasure. But I believe Rogue's the one who is to pay me?

6th Street: You're all right. Think you earned a tip. Let's roll.

[They leave. Panam walks towards the motel.]

Panam: That went well... C'mon. Let's get a drink.

V: Raffens wiped, Sixth Street's pleased. Pretty good day for Panam Palmer.

Panam: The day's not over yet. You still have a chance to piss me off.

[V coughs with blood.]

V: Ughh... I--I can't...

[They enter a bar at the motel.]

Panam: Hello, Noah.

Bartender: Hey. New biz or new friends back there?

Panam: Take a wild guess. Is everything good with you? Did those bozos come around again?

Bartender: Raffens? Noh, It's been quiet. They'll be back sure 'nough, but this place has seen worse. What can I get ya?

Panam: Broseph. Two of 'em.

V: So, that package for Street - what was it?

Panam: You didn't peek? Baloperidol. Drugs for the cyberpsychos in our midst.

V: They trade in 'em?

Panam: Yes. They have deals with black clinics, rippers...

V: Well - here's to that Thorn of yours!

Panam: Thanks for everything. Partner.

[They clink bottles of beer and drink. Panam drinks her bottle to the bottom!]

Panam: Another one over here.

Bartender: Cheers. Lemme know if you need anything else.

V: The Aldecaldos - think you'll ever go back? I mean, not right now, but... someday?

Panam: I don't rightly know... On the one hand, I don't have anyone outside the clan. Shit, I don't really know any other life.

V: But on the other?

Panam: Without my clan, who am I? Who would become if I stayed in Night City?

V: Could always try it out, see who you become in Night City. 'Cept… city doesn't always play fair. Dunno if it's worth sacrificing your friends along the way.

Panam: You mean Mitch? Scorpion? Come on.

V: Sooner or later, Panam, the city'll suck you in. Won't need to cut whatever ties you got left to the Aldecaldos, cause the city'll do that for you.

Panam: I guess I should think about it...

V: The Raffens - we done with them?

Panam: Oh no, The Shiv are cockroaches. One's never rid of them. But it should be quiet for a time. They'll need to gather their wits and dust themselves off.

V: All right time we looked to my needs. What's the plan for Hellman?

Panam: I've come up with a plan, a first draft, but I need to sleep on it, work it out. Then we can talk about the details. I think it best to rent rooms here, just to stay in the area. We'll get to work around

midnight, it will help keep us out of sight. Agreed?

V: Maybe we rent just one room?

Panam: Good idea. Noah has two twin beds in every room. We'll save some money.

[Feeling the tension, V takes a sip of beer.]

V: Not quite what I had in mind...

Panam: Just what did you have in mind?

V: Just, um... Ehm, glad to have met you. Heh, so I thought....

Panam: I'm glad we met, too. That could've been a damned tough day, but thanks to you, it all went well.

V: Maybe... calls for a little celebration?

Panam: Sure, we can celebrate. But not today. I'm beat. (to bartender) Noah, we'll need a room. Twin beds. Just for tonight. I'll go catch a few winks.

[V sips some bir and follows Panam to the room.]

V: G'night.

Panam: Mhmmm...

[Some time later V wakes up. Panam's gone. V's condition worsens.]

V: Ugh... gonna puke...

[He got a text from Panam. She wants to meet at Sunset Motel's garage at midnight. V goes to the bar.]

V: You known Panam for long?

Bartender: Long enough. I remember when she ran her first few dust-trials. Used to stop here on the way for a Broseph, never asked her what she was carryin'. Maybe that's why she liked me. Then there were those few times she saved my ass, and I hers, in a way. She's as solid as they come - kind of person that'll never leave you out to dry.

V: Could use a drink.

Bartender: Sure thing - what'll it be?

[V walks outside and goes to the garage.]

V: Can I help?

Panam: No you can't. I'll be done soon. The Raffens left her crooked as a bag of snakes. Did you sleep all right?

V: Can't complain. And you? Reasonably rested?

Panam: I think you had nightmares. You screamed a few times.

V: Really?

Panam: Don't worry, I'm accustomed to that sort of thing. When Mitch and Scorpion come back from the war, they tossed and turned night after night. For months this went on. Whatever it is, it'll pass.

V: Yeah... let's hope so. Come up with anything? For Hellman, I mean.

Panam: As a matter of fact, I did. Look here.

V: OK, tell me.

[They approach the workbench. Panam explains her plan using the tools lying on it.]

Panam: We're the wrench. The cutter is the AV. And the screwdriver is where the AV should bury its nose cone in the dust. Now, you must be wondering how we get the AV to do that.

V: That ol' HMG of yours?

Panam: My gun will be useful elsewhere. This caliber would barely dent the armor of a heavy hitter like that. There are other ways. Here - the clamp's our solution. A satwave power station.

V: Why down the AV there, at that exact spot?

Panam: Because once it's on the ground, we'll have to locate it and arob your target. As fast as we can. And the terrain there is typical California desert - flat, dry and empty. They'll be a big old sitting duck.

V: Hold up, one more time. Wrench is our car, right?

Panam: Mhm. The cutter is the AV. The screwdriver is where the AV should hit the ground. And the clamp is the satwave power station. That is, the net we use to bring the AV down.

V: Um, satwave power station?

Panam: Yes. We need to break into it.

V: Mhm, so far so good. But then what?

Panam: And then we strike. We hit the AV with an EMP.

V: 'Course we do.

Panam: As soon as the AV is in range, we cause an electromagnetic pulse. The on board electronics should fail outright.

V: Meaning what? Engines'll shut down?

Panam: Everything will shut down, engines included. Drive, navigation communication systems...

V: Aren't you, um, counting chickens? We can't actually know the AV'll fly over the station.

Panam: Of course, we can't. But we don't have to. You'll see. It's bound to be quite a ride, but not one you'll regret. I've got everything planned out.

V: 'Member, need Hellman alive, unharmed. Gotta try not to blow the AV to bits, OK?

Panam: I know. But I'd say your man had best beauckled in. This idea... if it works, he'll be in for a rough landing.

V: All right. Let's ride.

Panam: Great. Hop in, it's cold out here.

[V hop on the passenger seat.]

V: Who owns this power station? Gov or corp?

Panam: Is there any difference? Who do you think pulls the government's strings?

V: Hey, I'm just wondering whose toes we're about to step all over.

Panam: V, look around. It is simple. Everything you see is owned by a corporation.

V: You like to mess with the corps, huh?

Panam: Whatever gave you that idea?

V: Or wait, scratch that. Rogue, Nash, the Raffens...

Panam: You're on thin ice, V.

V: You just like to mess with everyone.

Panam: Well, then I suppose it's a good thing I'm on your side, isn't it?

V: Mhmmm. And now for something completely different. Weirdest thing you've ever transported - go.

Panam: What are we playing twenty questions?

V: C'mon, answer.

Panam: The deputy finance director of Kaukaz.

Life During Wartime

V: That's chauffeuring, not smuggling.

Panam: He rode in the trunk. Flatlined.

V: Really? Dead?

Panam: A long story. Maybe someday I'll tell you. We've almost reached the dam. We'll make a quick stop here. We need to calibrate you with the turret. I want you to be able to use the gun, too. It should up our chances in general. Connect here.

V: Do we really have to waste our time on this?

Panam: We do. Unless you've already used one of these without help, while moving, while taking fire from all directions. And still managed to hit something. But somehow. I don't believe that's the case. So don't argue, just connect.

V: How should I connect? Personal link?

Panam: How else? Just watch the jack. Sometimes you have to jiggle

it a bit.

V: Wired in.

Panam: Wait a moment. Diagnostics first. Shit. It keeps giving me an error. Odd. Let me work around it.

Johnny: And now, Panam, here's Johnny! Out in the middle of bumfuck nowhere. Great work, V.

Panam: Hey, uh, I think your implant has a virus. The one in the nape of your neck.

V: Uh, I've got a bioprocessor in my head that operates independently of me. Probably why your diagnostics flagged it.

Panam: Mhm.OK...

V: But no data will leak out of it through the personal link. Your ride's secure.

Panam: Fine. I trust you won't fuck anything up. OK. Here goes nothing.

[She connect V to the torrent and they begin to practice.]

Panam: You see that pile of junk? Fire a short burst into it. I'll take

care of the calibration. Good. Next target. Single shot. OK. Just one more. Longer round. Great. We're done, I think. Now, that wasn't so bad, was it?

V: Calibration's fine, but your soft could really use an update. Scanner controllers -all a couple generations back, at least. There's better tech in the bargain bin at a Kabuki flea market. I can help you with that, you know.

Panam: Yes, sure. The most important thing is that it works now.

V: So where's this power station?

Panam: You will see in a moment. I know a spot. We'll have a decent view from there. I just want to be sure the area is clear.

Johnny: Sabotage a corpo power station, jump a corpo transport, kidnap a corpo suit...

V: This a plug for the word corpo or do you have a point?

Johnny: know what? You're starting to remind me of me... fifty years back. (smiles) Minus the charisma... and impressive cock. Hm. Maybe we CAN just get along.

V: Could be something to that, I suppose... What happened to us, it must've had some effect.

Johnny: You're more like me than you think. You'll see.

V: But it goes both ways. Maybe you're becoming more like me.

Johnny: Nah, no way.

[V and Panam arrive at the place.]

Panam: All looks clear. The area looks deserted, I see no patrols. The huge thing is the collection unit. And see the antennas? Each antenna collects microwave energy from satellites in orbit. That's then converted into electric power.

V: Power station serve the whole city?

Panam: Honestly? Who the fuck knows.

V: Guess we're about to find out.

V: Huh, antennas run all the way down the interstate...

Panam: Mhm. And they're linked, which is to your advantage. We just need to mess with the collection unit. A chain reaction will follow. Each one of the antennas will emit an EMP burst.

Panam: The AV will be like a fly headed for a spider's web. We just

have to fire off the pulse at the right moment.

V: Let's go get 'er.

Panam: Once we reach the station, I'll set up a bypass for the detonator. You just overload the systems.

V: Panam, what if we cut all the cute stuff and blow the station up?

Panam: Normally, I'd love to. But an explosion would trigger an automatic shutdown protocol in each collector. All Night City would know we were there well before we got around the protocol. Nice idea, though. Maybe next time.

V: "Overload the system." Yes, ma'am - when do I start? Although... hopin' that's not too complicated. Is it?

Panam: It shouldn't be. You just turn everything up as far as it'll go.

V: Crank it up to eleven. Got it. So, what now?

Panam: We wait. We should time our arrival to the AV flight plan.

V: Got it.

SOME TIME LATER

Panam: Good, time to roll.

V: Done anything like this before?

Panam: Downing an AV? By myself? No. Why do you ask?

V: Seems Rogue was right.

Panam: V...

V: What? She said you were good. And she was right.

Panam: Yes. I suppose she was. But we have yet to take the AV. So you might wait before you fasten a halo on her.

V: Know what? Think I figured you out.

Panam: Oh, you have, have you?

V: Either pull off this mission or prove Rogue wrong - choose one.

Panam: Fuck off. I will get both done. OK. We'll be there in a moment. One last time we drive In, fuck up the system and get the hell out of there. Hold on tight. This could get a little bumpy. Get ready!

V: OK. I'm ready.

[He connects to the turret.]

Panam: Drones!

V: I'll deal with 'em!

Panam: Deal quick, before they hit us! Good enough.

V: Is that all of 'em?

Panam: Mhm. Provided we hurry.

[She smashes the car through the door to the building.]

Panam: Find the controls! I'll connect the detonator. Quick, V!

[V overcharges the local network and gets shocked a couple of times.]

V: Agh shit... Ughh... ngh... fooo... Ooof... c'mon... breathe...agh... Shit! Think we mighta overdone it, Panam!

Panam: You'll survive!

[V returns to the car.]

Panam: Do you see that? All lit up and blinking like a Christmas tree!

V: Girl, you wanted eleven, you got eleven!

Panam: Fuck yeah! Let's get out of here, before it lights us up, too.

[They drive away.]

Johnny: V! Get the fuck out before something happens to the chip!

V: Thanks for the tip. Y'know, I was just about to set up a picnic, maybe lay out, work on my base tan...

Johnny: I mean it. Watch out the next one migh--

[He glitches and disappears.]

V: Johnny? Johnny?!

[He appears again and looks exhausted.]

Johnny: Fuckin' hell... OK. I'm fine. It's... It's OK, Just... It's OK, I'm fine... Yeah... Just - DELTA THE FUCK OUT.

Panam: Not the cleanest job, perhaps, but it still went well.
V: What about the detonator? Is it workin'?

Panam: Yes, it's working. And I don't even see a drop in the signal strength. We just need to drive for away enough to keep the pulse from blasting us, too. The cliff there - we'll set up. It should give us a good view of the antennas. And then we wait.

V: OK.

Panam: Here.

V: Always wanted to push the big red button on somethin' like this. How do we know when?

Panam: Don't worry, I'll have eyes on it. You just wait for my signal, then set off that pulse. They won't know what hit them. And by the way...

V: What?

Panam: We are about to knock a multimillion-eurodollar Kang Tao asset clean out of the sky. How does that make you feel?

V: Blastin' shit - 'zactly what the doc ordered.

Panam: And that's exactly what I like to hear.

V: Just noticed.

Panam: What?

V: It's quiet. The hum of the city, people's voices, the smells... It's all gone. Wind just intensifies it. Think I forgot quiet exists.

Panam: Mhmm... Though maybe not the smells. I mean, the coyotes? Rather hard to miss.

V: Thought that was just the air freshener in your Thorton.

Panam: Har-har. Screw you. You'd do better to focus on the AV. Keep your eyes open... It's there! Coming from Pacifica! All right, get ready... One more second. One more... Now!

V: Boom. There she is.

[Nothing happens.]

Panam: Shit. What's happening?

V: What's going on? Goddamnit all...

[He presses a button and the tower in the distance explodes. Many people lose their jobs, and some may even die.]

Panam: Bullseye!

V: Panam! The engines are still runnin'. Fuck! They're gettin' away!

Panam: They're going nowhere.

V: We gotta go after it!

Panam: Give me a moment...

V: Panam, what're you doin'?

[She gets out of the car and blows up the ship flying away from the exploding tower with a rocket launcher.]

Panam: THAT'S how you do it!

V: It's losing altitude!

Panam: We got the bastard.

V: Let's go!

[They get back in the car and drive away.]

Panam: We got it!

V: No way it stays in the air after a blast like that.

Panam: They either land or crash!

Mitch: You catch that? Over.

Scorpion: Yup. AV, unmarked. Losing alt-- ...there?

Panam: Mitch! Scorpion! What the hell are they doing?!

Mitch: I'm finishing ...of the generators. Follow 'em, I'll be on my way in a bit. Battery should sort it--

Panam: Mitch! Scorpion! It's Panam! Don't go near that AV! I repeat -

do not approach the AV!

Scorpion: Mhm...on the way, or I'll start the party without you.

Panam: It's Kang Tao! Wait for me! Or better, get the hell out! They probably want to help the survivors. Without knowing it's corporate. They can't hear me. The pulse is interfering. Shit! I have three on radar!

V: Drones?

Panam: Yes. Get ready!

[V connects to the turret.]

Panam: They're tryna slow us down! We won't let them! We have to reach Mitch and Scorpion.

V: Panam! Problem! Not shooting!

Panam: Shit! Probably jammed again! I'll fix it. Hold on tight, going on autopilot! Mhm, seized up. Son of a bitch.

[She climbs out of the hatch on the roof and fixes the turret.]

V: They're on our tail! Panam!

Panam: I know! Fucking latches! Don't want to open! Just a second... Fuck!

[She got shot.]

V: Panam?!

Panam: It's nothing, I'm fine... OK, It should work now. For the time being, at least.

V: Time being's all we need. Saw it! Behind that hill!

Panam: Well, one less thing to worry about... Augh... Shi...

[She's losing consciousness.]

V: Panam? You OK?

Panam: Fucking... ricochet...

V: Think you can manage?

Panam: Sure. I'll live, don't worry.

Mitch: Hey man, where are you? Hellooo! Scorpion?

Panam: Mhm, perfect! Keep broadcasting over an open channel, just in case they missed you the first time! God, I swear! Something's not right. Did you hear those shots? V, something happened to them! Let's check it out. I see the wreck. But no Scorpion. Or Mitch. (pulls out a medical syringe) Looks expired. Fuck it. (sticks it in his chest) V, connect to the drone. We'll scan the area. We have to get our bearings.

V: They won't mark us?

Panam: I'll enable the masking. Their scanners are out. They're blind.

V: Let's roll. You connecting to visual?

Panam: Mhm... V, if they got the Aldecaldos... If they got Mitch and Scorpion, I can't, I don't...

V: I know. I know...

V: Connected. I'm in control.

[V scans the area. We see that the camp is cordoned off and there are only a few corpses inside.]

Panam: Oh, no, no, no...

V: I - I'm sorry. Your clan?

Panam: Aldecaldos. Yes. They're dead, all of them... Fucking corporate rats... V, if they...

V: Don't worry. We don't know for sure...

Panam: Fucking corporate rats...

V: Don't worry. We don't know for sure...

Panam: They've set up the launcher. They'll tear us to shreds if we get too close. Mitch! He's alive! They have them!

V: Can't we take it down somehow?

Panam: Maybe... But we have to get there first.

V: Got five Kangs on patrol. Combat drones-defense systems active.

Panam: They secured the area. They're waiting for reinforcements, Shit... V, this does not look good...

[V disconnects from the drone.]

Panam: If not for those damned glitches, I could have warned them... This is all my doing... Why in the hell were they following the AV?! The fools!

V: Listen. We saw Mitch. They prolly got Scorpion, too. We'll find them help 'em out.

Panam: If they're still alive...

V: They're alive. Everything's gonna be OK.

Panam: Mind that launcher. It will blow us to bits if we approach.

V: OK, here's the plan - you stay in the car, I...

Panam: No, not so fast. I will go with you. Those are my people...

V: Panam, hate to break it to ya, but you're hurt. Wait in the car. I'll try and take out the launcher.

Panam: I... Fine. But I have Mitch's rifle. I will try to cover you from here.

V: Good idea. Let's move.

[He kills all Kang soldiers in the area.]

V: Path's clear.

Panam: I'm coming for you.

[They approach the module.]

Panam: Open the door. I'll cover you.

V: Now!

[V opens the door. Inside is a pilot holding Mitch hostage.]

Kang Tao Pilot: Step back! Back, toss your weapons! Or I'll shoot! I repeat - drop your weapons! NOW!

V: Easy, now. Not too late for everyone to wolk outta this alive.

Kang Tao Pilot: We called for backup!

Mitch: Bullshit.

V: Last chance. You don't gotta die today. Let's talk.

Kang Tao Pilot: Why should I believe you?!

Mitch: Panam. Shoot 'im.

Kang Tao Pilot: Shut up!

V: Listen. This isn't about you. Let him go and tell me where your passenger is.

Kang Tao Pilot: I-I don't know where they took him!

Panam: Hell no. He's lying.

V: You don't know, or you don't wanna say?

Kang Tao Pilot: Let me get the comms back up, I'll buzz the unit, we'll talk, but only if...

Mitch: Panam, you remember the cowboy, don't you?

[He pushes the pilot away and Panam shots him.]

Panam: Fuck!

V: Panam! Oh shit...

Panam: Are you all right?

Mitch: Just some scratches.

Panam: You fucking morons!

Mitch: Did you get hit?... Hang on, girl, I'll patch you up.

Panam: It's nothing. Let's go.

Mitch: We couldn't retreat, Panam... They regrouped so fast, started shootin' rockets 'n' shit. I lost everyone.

Panam: Everyone?...Scorpion? Is he here? Mitch? Mitch!? He's - He's safe, right?

Mitch: Panam, I'm sorry. I didn't make it in time...

Panam: No. No. Are you sure? No, he...

V: Scorpion, the rest... I'm sorry we didn't get here sooner.

Mitch: They were good people. Great people. They didn't have to die here.

Panam: I should have stopped him.

Mitch: I tried. He wouldn't have listened to you, either. Never was much of a listener.

Panam: Stubborn bastard.

Mitch: I'm guessin', since you were out here, you were out here for the AV. The question is why.

V: Why dive straight for the AV? Didn't notice the markings?

Mitch: We saw it was damaged, we know this land, we knew where it would fall. We had no idea it was Kang Tao. I figured they might need help. In the worst case, there'd be good salvage to be had. Couldn't've been more wrong...

V: Everything OK? You need anything?

Mitch: Thanks for savin' my ass, V.

V: Sorry about your people, but I need to keep movin'. I need the guy who was ridin' this AV? You know anything? See anything?

Mitch: Took him with 'em. In our cars.

V: Where?

Mitch: West. Small unit, your passenger's entourage.

V: Must be lookin' for a way to call base.

Mitch: So you're the ones who hit 'em with that EMP?

V: Yeah... We tried to warn you, but... couldn't connect.

Panam: If they took your cars, we might be able to follow their tracks.

V: Panam, listen. I know It's not the best time, but I need Hellman. Your promised to help - that still hold?

Panam: I always keep my word. Mitch... I will find those sons of bitches. I swear.

Mitch: Go, I'll call the crew, get all this cleaned up.

Panam: We'll leave my ride here, just in case. Just watch the gun, it likes to jam. We'll go by bike.

Mitch: Sounds good.

Mitch: Kang Too lost contact with their AV. Probably lookin' for it. Better hurry. But Panam...

Panam: What?

Mitch: You're comin' back for her, right?

Panam: I promise. Let's get going. Before they send a rescue party.

V: Scorpion and the rest... Look. I know how you feel. I mean it.

V: I'll help you settle your score with Kang Tao.

Panam: I will destroy them, V. Every last one.

V: We're in this together. To the bitter end.

Panam: You know what, V? You're all right. You helped me with Nash, you helped me with Mitch. To my mind, I owe you a favor. Your Hellman - I will find him.

V: Ah, so that's what this is? Just paying your debts?

Panam: No. Nomads always help their own.

V: Oooh, so I'm one of yours now? Sounds good.

V: Let's ride. Hope they didn't go far.

Panam: We'll see. The tire tracks start there. We'll follow them.

[V and Panam get on the motorcycles.]

V: Our guys were here. Let's follow, find them.

Panam: Scorpion said I would hate Night City.

V: He knew you that well?

Param: Probably better than I know myself. He said when I'd had enough of the city, we would stock up on cooned kibble... Fill a couple of thermoses with coffee and whiskey, and hit the road. He said we would get away from it all.

V: Sounds like a real adventure.

Panam: Yeah... but he's gone. Shit, V. Why is everything shit, shit, shit...

V: Hey, I know... But look, you're alive. Still got a few things to take care of, too.

Panam: Mhm. You know it. All I see is cracked concrete and rust. If they thought they would call their friends, they were in for one helluva surprise. Watch out! There's a sniper behind the van! Wipe them out, V! That's for my friends, you assholes!

V: The rest must've taken Hellman with them.

Panam: If they manage to regroup and call for help, we're out of luck.

V: Better hurry, then.

Panam: That's one of our... One of their rides, Let's check it.

V: Dunno if we'll find anything else here.

Panam: Enough. There's nobody here.

V: Better check where Kang Tao took him. Fast. You were right. Nomads' car did die.

Panam: They tried to put her back on her feet. But the oil pump died, pistons couldn't take it.

V: Gave us a few minutes, maybe. But they still got a head start.

[He and Panam ride after the Kang Tao.]

V: Left a few peeps behind at the airstrip, rest went with Hellman.

Panam: I would have done the same. They're looking to call their people. The last they want is to ride through the desert without backup. I hope Mitch contacted the Aldecaidos. All that damned interference.

V: They're comin' for 'im, don't worry.

Panam: Do you know what?

V: What?

Panam: This is my life right here. I step out of one pile of shit, only to trip into another, bigger one.

V: Panam...

[They come out to a small factory, which is patrolled by Kang soldiers.]

Panam: These tracks lead up post the hill to an old milling station. I wager that's where they're holding Hellman. OK. Covering you.

V: Drones, patrols... definitely set up shop here.

Panam: I see. They must have Hellman locked up somewhere. But V, see that? The pumps look pretty good. Not what you would find If the

place were closed. The bastards might have managed to call for transport.

V: We'll know soon enough.

[V engages in combat with the soldiers.]

Panam: You won't get out of this alive, you bastards.

V: I see cars. Nomad.

Panam: Mhm. I recognize them. The clan's. Hellman - he has to be here.

[V enters a gas station and finds an old vendor there.]

Weapon Vendor: Don't shoot. I'm unarmed.

V: The hell are you doing here?

Weapon Vendor: This is my station. Name's Marty. Those fucking suits rode up like they owned the place. Took everything, put me here an' locked the door.

V: Don't look too concerned.

Weapon Vendor: Ain't my first rodeo. Once the dust falls, the problems disappear one way or 'nother, and I... just dust myself off an' get back to work.

V: Brought a man with them, a man I need. Civilian. You must've spotted him.

Weapon Vendor: Mhm. I ain't blind.

V: Where're they holding him?

Weapon Vendor: Did garage, Room upstairs, probably keepin' him there.

V: Thanks. If I were you, I'd stay put for a few.

Weapon Vendor: Exactly my intention.

V: (via holo) Know where they're keeping Hellman. Going in.

Panam: OK. Covering you.

V: (to Marty) You even get any customers out here? Shit, anyone even drive this way?

Weapon Vendor: Anyone who don't like refuelin' with cameras watchin' 'em. Not many, sure. But they're all big tippers, you get me?

V: In exchange for your terrible memory?

Weapon Vendor: Heh heh. Don't you worry. I'll forget you too.

[V finds Hellman. He shakes in fear.]

Hellman: Who sent you?

V: Hey, easy. We gotta talk.

Hellman: Who are you working for? Yorinobu Arasaka? Do you wish to take me back or...?

Johnny: What a shitecting rat. He's about to either scream or run. Shut him up, already.

V: Not a fan, I take it?

Johnny: You haven't found a fan in him, either. Motherfucker doesn't know who to be scared of more - you or Arasaka.

V: (knocks out Hellman) Don't take this personally.

Johnny: Seem to recall you were gonna tell Takemura when you got Hellman.

V: Yeah, just a sec. I'll call 'im.

[He calls Takemura.]

Johnny: Just remember - you have Hellman, and that's one helluva card. Try to win something with it.

V: Takemura saved my life, remember?

Johnny: Because it was in his fucking interest to do so. Still just biz. He's no friend of yours.

V: Takemura? Good news. Got Hellman.

Takemura: Alive? What did he say?

V: Alive, alive. Not too talkative now. Taking him to the Sunset Motel.

Takemura: I will come to you. Keep him there until I arrive.

V: You got it. See ya.

Johnny: Better take him somewhere you can talk in peace.

V: True.

[V picks Hellman up and puts him on his shoulder, then walks outside.]

Johnny: Looks like your new choombas are here.

Panam: Is that him?

V: Sure is.

Panam: Take him outside, toss him on the bike.

[There are a lot of cars and people at the gas station. V puts Hellman by the motorcycle.]

V: Stay right there.

Panam: The cavalry has arrived. Mitch gathered together a few Aldecaldos.

Mitch: The road was clear. I don't think we were spotted. We would still do better not hang around too long.

Panam: What do you plan to do with him?

V: Just gotta ask him a few important questions.

Panam: I sure hope you got some important answers.

[A man approaches.]

Panam: Saul.

Mitch: Everything's done here. All clear.

Saul: (to V) I heard Mitch is alive thanks to you.

Mitch: Thanks to V and Panam. They both saved my ass.

Saul: I just hope he was worth it.

Panam: Saul, I tried to raise Scorpion, but he... Maybe I could help out somehow?

Saul: I think you've helped enough.

Panam: I tried to stop him! Sure. Just turn around now, let it all be damned! You're good at that aren't you?!

V: Look, Saul, it really wasn't Panam's fault.

Saul: Careful, you and me are not buddy-buddy. Besides, nobody's blamed anyone for anything - yet.

Panam: Sure, right!

V: Panam was just helpin' me. It was my doin', my fault that AV got hit. Without me, Scorpion and his people wouldn't have gone out to grab it. That's the truth.

Saul: When you are on Aldecaldo, you are always responsible for yourself and your people. The circumstances change nothing. Perhaps Panam should ask herself if she's still an Aldecaldo.

[Saul leaves. Panam stomps in rage.]

Panam: Damn it all.

V: Hey, don't worry about Saul. He'll get over it.

Panam: I don't give a damn.

Mitch: But he gives a damn about you, Panam. As soon as he heard what had happened, he ordered us to follow you. He was worried something would happen to you.

Panam: Saul? That was his...?

Mitch: Look, maybe you two don't see eye-to-eye at the moment,

but you're family. And Saul will do anything for family.

Panam: The thing is, am I even part of the family anymore...

Mitch: You know you are. Come back to us.

Panam: ...

Mitch: I understand.

[Mitch leaves.]

Panam: Sorry you had to witness that. Things just get complicated, dramatic sometimes. But I will manage. And you, you look out for yourself, all right?

V: So, what now? Back to Night City?

Panam: Yeah. I mean, I think so. I have to sit and think... about everything.

V: Saul, Mitch - they really treat you like family. Maybe you should give them a chance?

Panam: It is not that simple.

V: Like any family.

Aldecaldo: They're coming! You have about a minute to get out of there.

Mitch: Let's move!

Panam: I'm also headed out. Take care of Scorpion's bike - it's yours.

[V puts Hellman on a motorcycle and goes to a motel.]

SUNSET MOTEL, BADLANDS

V: (slaps Hellman) Hey.

Hellman: Where am I? What is this place?

V: Motel. Middle of nowhere.

Hellman: Any specific middle?

V: Doesn't matter. You're not leaving here by yourself anyway.

Hellman: Why are we here?

V: Wanna talk about your little invention. Biochip you made for Arasaka.

Hellman: Fine. But let's get one thing straight first. Yorinobu Arasaka didn't send you?

V: No.

Hellman: This means you must have an offer for me. If your boss will pay more than Kang Too, I believe we can talk.

V: Nobody sent me. I got a problem, and you're gonna help me.

Hellman: And what does that have to do with the biochip?

V: Got Silverhand's construct in my head. It's literally driving me crazy, and I know it's only gonna get worse. That is, unless I remove it. And that none of that's on the billboards I saw. Not even in the fine print.

Hellman: Silverhand? Construct...? That's impossible! Where did you get this biochip?

V: Long story.

Hellman: If Arasaka finds me, I'm dead. So are you. So we are in no hurry. And I'm interested. Truly.

V: Klepped it off Yorinobu Arasaka. Job for a client, but the client left me out to dry.

Hellman: And you decided the best place for it was in your own goddamn head?

V: Actually, wasn't a bad idea. Construct rebooted me when my own goddamn head took a bullet.

Hellman: I just never imagined it would turn out like this. Arasaka's

prize tech really is in the very streets of the city.

V: You have to remove the biochip from my system.

Hellman: It's not that simple.

V: Look, you made the thing, didn't you? So where's the problem?

Hellman: If you're telling the truth, you slotted in a new, experimental version of the biochip.

V: I know you can't just yank it out. My ripper said...

Hellman: (angrily) You showed that to some fucking street doctor? Who else knows?!

V: I needed help. Or did you think the first thing that came to mind was downing a Kang Tao AV? How's the prototype version different? It's got a different engram? Something more...

Johnny: ...aware?

V: ...aggressive?

Hellman: The biochip is what's unique, not Silverhand's engram. The previous version of the chip was only used to communicate with pre-saved engrams.

V: And it was rare as fuck and cost a fortune, yeah.

Hellman: This one's rarer. Meant to install and activate the engram in a new body. When I Arasaka, the project was still in the trial phase.

V: How do you put a price on immortality? Who could even afford tech like this?

Hellman: Nobody. This model was meant to remain in-house. The prototype was Saburo Arasaka's personal commission. He over saw the entire project himself.

V: So if it weren't for Yorinobu, nobody would've found out.

Hellman: And if not for you the project would not have been a

success. This is a true breakthrough.

V: How exactly was this new version supposed to work? Were you planning to have the engrom kick people out of their own bodies? Is that shit by design?

Hellman: During the test we assumed that the body would be... neurally indifferent during implantation.

V: Y'mean dead?

Hellman: Yes. Which makes what happened to you interesting indeed.

V: Yeah, yeah, great your tech works. Now get it out of me.

Johnny: Well, well...

Hellman: I would have to see it first.

V: Whoa. We just met. Haven't built up that sorta trust yet.

Hellman: How did you think this was going to go? If you want me to help you, I must examine you.

V: OK.

[Hellman connects to V's neck.]

Hellman: Hm... Unbelievable. It looks like...

Johnne: Can't believe this suit's the one who's gonna help us.

Hellman: Oh fuck.

V: What? What is it?

Hellman: What a pity I won't be able to examine it fully

Johnny: Yeah, real shame, you coulda been his guinea pig, too.

V: Tell me how to get rid of it.

Hellman: I'm afraid I have bad news. Your neural network has completely deteriorated. It can no longer function independently of the chip. The only thing I could do....

Johnny: Woo-hoo! It's bargaining time!

Hellman: ...is to give you information on a good clinic in Sweden. They'll help you through the terminal stages, minimize the pain.

V: Wait, you said the project was in the trial phase. You don't actually know how it'll end.

Hellman: Oh, I do. I just saw the construct devouring your brain. It's programmed to take over its new environment. At all costs. And your little meatbrain is helpless against it.

V: So no matter what, sooner or later the engram wins?

Hellman: Yes. And from what I've heard about Silverhand, that seems to be exactly his style.

Johnny: Huh. I see my reputation's grown into Arasaka legend.

V: What exactly is going on in my head?

Hellman: You tell me what's it like to have two personalities? Because it's not like you're hearing voices. You're both yourself and Silverhand, simultaneously.

V: I can see him and talk to him.

Hellman: You're not “talking,” but yes, I understand what you mean. Have you noticed the construct's influence on your decision-making?

Johnny: Sheesh. Give it a rest?

V: When it comes to my decisions, Johnny really is just a voice in my head. Maybe he has a different opinion, but he can't make me do anything.

Johnny: Agreed, one hundred percent. You are one fucking stubborn host.

Hellman: It's not as if one of you wins the debate. The scale simply shifts, slowly but surely.

V: What do you mean?

Hellman: You will start doing things that were once unthinkable, at least to your old self. And you know exactly who he was. A fanatic. A terrorist. A suicide bomber

Johnny: Well fuck me, who's trying to mess with your head now?

Hellman: That is why I believe it would be better for you to consider clinical isolation at this stage.

V: At least Johnny never whored himself out like you.

Hellman: Are you defending him? Or is that Johnny speaking now? Oh, let me guess - he already tried to take over your body? You know, just for a little while?

V: No.

Johnny: Would you, though? Could be fun...

V: Johnny...

Johnny: Kidding. But watch out - suit's getting ready to talk your head off.

V: know what? That's enough. You just playing for time? Because I can't tell - are you trying to convince me you're useless? I mean, in that case, I can just shoot you in the head and save us both some time.

Johnny: Ugh, finally.

Hellman: I will try to help you - if you come with me to Kang Tao.

V: "I'll try" just isn't gonna cut it. Actually, it's almost like you're trying to buy your way in with the Chinese... at my expense.

Hellman: Do you even realize how much data is in your head? Even if I can't help you, the data must be saved.

Johnny: Well fuck me sideways. what a halfbrained gonk. He just

admitted you're right.

V: Forget Kong Tao. Got any other ideas?

Hellman: If you think there's anyone else who can help you, I could give you the blueprints. Complete project documentation. Kang Tao offered quite the sum for it.

V: You got it with you?

Johnny: He's got to. Gonk's fucking useless without 'em.

[Takemura enters.]

Takemura: V.

Hellman: Takemura? What the hell is he doing here?

V: He's got a few questions of his own for you. You play nice, he might even save your ass. I'm almost done. The blueprints.

[Hellman hands V a shard. V insert the shard in his neck.]

Johnny: Better than nothing. Long as we find someone fluent in technobabble.

V: What'll you do with him?

Takemura: I haven't decided yet.

V: Are you serious?

Takemura: You know me. I can be impulsive.

V: He's all yours. I'll give you two some space.

Hellman: I hope we can come to an understanding.

Takemura: That is certainly in your best interest. V. I will remember this.

Panam: Riders On The Storm

Hellman: Agh, this heat. My throat is positively parched.

Takemura: Mh, V did not give you even a glass of water? Unacceptable. Inhumane. That is not me. You will see the difference. I

will give you full buckets.

Hellman: No, uh... No need.

[As soon as V leaves the room, they fall to the floor in pain]

[Relic Malfunction]

Johnny: Agh, what the...?

V/Johnny: Fuck! *(V falls on face, then scrambles to a chair)*

Johnny: That the biochip?

  ([Stand] Third trimester cramping.) No, third trimester cramping.

    Johnny: Ha ha ha, joke away, but you look pretty spent.

  ([Stand] Of course it's the chip.) **V:** Ugh. 'Course it's the damn chip. My silverhandosis is clearly incubating...

    Johnny: That a pointed finger I hear in your voice?

  ([Stand] It's you, you bastard!) **V:** No, it's you, you asshole! Killin' me little by little every damn day...

    Johnny: "Little by little" is not my stile. It's the chip, it's Arasaka.

V: Fuck...!

Johnny: *(lights cigarette)* That was your ticker. Sit and rest. Don't need you flatlinin' while we got a job to do.

V: Blah blah blah, fuck Arasaka, blah blah, smash Mikoshi.

Johnny: You really are turnin' into me.

  V: *([Don't smoke] Not good, you're a prick.)* Can't say I'm excited 'cause you're a manipulator, an egotist, and a cynic... Every time you open your mouth you gotta bury someone.

  Johnny: Y'know, we get along as the need arises. Maybe it's time you started trustin' me more.

    V: *(But I don't even like you.)* Do I gotta remind you how this came about?

      Johnny: Let's not get wound up - you're not yourself.

        V: *(Got no idea what's happening to me.)* Dunno what's happening to me.

          Johnny: The old V's gonna be a faded memory soon.

            V: *(Dunno where I'm going.) - (to **[1]**)*

            *([Stand] Need to get our shit together.) - (to **[3]**)*

        V: *([Stand] Can't stand you. I'm outta here.)* Every cell of my being dislikes you... How can I trust you?

          V: Let's move, get back to work.

          Johnny: Let's do.

          (Dialogue ends)

      V: *(Query - Really don't understand what people saw in you.)* Honestly can't fathom how you got so many people to bend over backwards for you.

        Johnny: Don't, c'mon...

  V: *(Problem is you think the ends justify the means.)* You can be a charming guy - just make the effort, charisma flows.

    V: Then I remember that nuke you detonated downtown without a second thought and no hint of later remorse.

    Johnny: It was Mikoshi I was after, wanted to destroy it. Gave 'Saka ample time to clear the building.

    V: You knew countless people would die. Don't kid yourself.

    Johnny: Take lives aplenty yourself. See scale as a problem?

      V: *(The problem's the madman in my head.)* No, the maniac in my head's the problem

        Johnny: Hah. Maniac in the head of a hypocrite.

      V: *(We deserve each other.)* Got a point. Guess we make quite the duo.

        Johnny: No, we're not the same. What I did in 'Saka tower... no doubts, no regrets.

        V: Might fool someone else with that, but I call horseshit.

        Johnny:

What do you know.

      V: *(You're unpredictable - that's my point.)* Whatever, won't argue. All I'm sayin' is you're unpredictable.

        Johnny: You pot, me kettle. Remember where you used to be, then think what you've done lately.

        Johnny: Path clear, see where you're goin'?

          V: *(It's all so fucked up...) (to **[1]**)*

          V: *([Stand] Don't wanna hear it.) (to **[3]**)*

  V: *(Don't even know where I'm going. - only with friendly option) (to **[1]**)*

  V: *(Only with hostile option) (TODO: dialogue option and Johnny answer)* Every cell of my being dislikes you... How can I trust you?

V: *([Smoke] Prolly not wrong.)* Ugh. Might be right.

    Johnny: We're bickering like a shriveled old married couple.

    Johnny: It's time we let up, let a little trust take hold.

    (options)

      V: *(Maybe.)* Yeah... maybe.

        V: Honestly? Not sure.

      V: *(Bullshit.)* Bullshit. Nothing dignifying in suffering, death... Not how legends are born. *(to **[3]**)*

[1]

  V: *(Don't even know where I'm going / Dunno where I'm going / It's all so fucked up...)* Got no idea where I'm goin'...

    V: Be a living legend - that's all I wanted. Feels like I'm barely survivin'.

    Johnny: Test of a person's true value? Death - facin' it, staring it down. You still got a chance to be somebody.

*(to **[2:]**)*

  [2]

  V: *(When you died - what was it like?)* What was it like? When you died?

    Johnny: Was on top of the world. Failure - not an option, not a thought... till it happened. Death feels real now, it's only now I know it.

    V: Now? Had half a centory to come to terms.

    Johnny: Mikoshi felt... I dunno, like

sleep? Lacked awareness, had no sense of passing time, didn't mark it.

    Did what they wanted to me. I just remember... cold, a black void, fear. Or-- or was that your death?

      V: *(Guess I understand why you hate Mikoshi)* Well, think I get why you detest the place.

        Johnny: Shouldn't exist. Of all the destruction and pain corps wreak 'round the world, what happens at Mikoshi is worst.

        Johnny: Know why?

      V: *(Got what you deserved)* The chosen and anointed die young. But you knew how it'd end.

        V: You deserved to die.

        Johnny: Death? Sure. Vile prison - maybe. But Mikoshi is so much worse. Any idea why?

    (Timed prompt)

      V: *(Eternity - it lasts forever)* 'Cause you're trapped there forever, it's eternal.

        Johnny: No, nothing's eternal. And for the psyches in Mikoshi, no such thing as the passage of time.

        Johnny: Worst thing's when they switch up your identity and you never even

know you've become someone else.
      V: *(You're denied the right to die.)* They strip you of your right to die.
        Johnny: No different than bein' kept alive on a respirator. That ain't the worst bit.
        Johnny: Worst thing's when they switch up your identity and you never even know you've become someone else.
      V: *(They can change you into somebody else.)* They can change who you are. Turn you into someone else without you even knowin' it.
        Johnny: Yep... Goddamn right.
      V: *(They experiment on the human psyche.)* They fuckin' around with the human mind, consciousness.
        Johnny: Not any different than bein' a pharm corp's lab rat. Nah, it's somethin' else.
        Johnny: Worst thing's when they switch up your identity and you never even know you've become someone else.
      V: I dunno.
    Johnny: Corps've already taken the world for their own, now they're comin' for us.
    V: *(Query: Doin' the same to me, you*

know. Erasing my identity.) Realize what you're doin' to me is what Arasaka's doin' at Mikoshi?

      Johnny: Yeah, I know... That's why I'm gonna fix it.

    V: *(Query: Why'd Arasaka build that place?)* Mikoshi - why'd Arasaka even build it?

      Johnny: If I could only see inside Saburo's head...

      V: Ha ha...

      Johnny: People can be bought, brainwashed, but it's only in Mikoshi that you can peer inside a soul, pick it apart... reprogram it.

      Johnny: They've amassed quite a collection. Scary talented 'runners, soulkilled, packed away. Probably using them, now, probably controlling 'em.

      V: So, ruling hearts and minds - that's what it's about. The usual.

      Johnny: Corps've always tried to shackle people one way or another. Saburo's ambition is greater - he's out to control humanity.

    V: *(Decision: [Stand] Enough. Let's go.) (to **[3]**)*

[3]

  V: *([Stand] Let's get goin'.)* Let's move, get back to work.

    Johnny: Let's do.

[V rides to Panam's camp]

Panam: V, it's good you're here.

V: Had no idea you and the Aldecaldos had made up.

Panam: They continue to grind my gears something terrible. But... y'know...

V: They're family.

Panam: Exactly.

V: What happened? Spit it out.

Panam: The Wraiths took Saul. The brickbrain ventured out with a small patrol and never came back.

V: Sure it was Wraiths?

Panam: We've been observing their camp. We know they're holding prisoners, including someone important. We need to free Saul. I don't know why but... I felt I could count on you.

V: Always, Panam. You and me're chooms. Thought that was clear.

Panam: Careful, or I'll start believing that. You won't be able to get rid of me.

V: I'll survive, I'm sure.

Panam: Whatever goodwill you might feel. I'm sure you won't turn down one of the best sniper rifles on the West Coast. A Techtronika "Grad" - you saw it in action already. That and the gratitude of the 'Caldos.

V: Sounds fancy.

Panam: Once you have it in hand, "fancy" all of a sudden becomes "kickass." Let's go. Mitch will walk you through the details.

[V follows Panam to some shop.]

Panam: Where's Mitch? He was supposed to meet me here.

Carol: He'll be here any minute. Huh, you never mentioned seeking outside help.

Panam: We can use all the help we can get.

V: (to the shop's owner) You recommend any chrome in particular?

Ripperdoc: Eh, y'know, cyberimplantation is like buying shoes - everyone needs somethin' different. A netrunner won't have the same needs as a solo. But..! If you spend a lotta time in the Badlands, it's worth investing in cloaking gear. Holoskin, active camo - what have you. Compared to the city, surrounding area might look deserted... but less folk doesn't mean you'll be safer. Here's what I recommend - move quietly, don't draw too much attention, else things can get real ugly, real quick.

V: Wanna get myself chipped.

Ripperdoc: Straight to the point. I like it.

[V buys some upgrades and walk to Panam standing near two guys fixin' a car.]

Panam: We can use all the help we can get.

V: OK, how you wanna do this?

Panam: Quietly. An open assault would be suicide. Mitch is already setting up the recon. You'll sneak into the Wraiths' camp while I cover you.

V: Goin' in quiet. Two's all you need.

Teddy: It's not that I don't want to go, to serve some Raffens up some justice! It's just...

Carol: Look around! The lost attacks left barely hall of us standing!

Our supplies are stuck outside goddamn Reno. And our gear... don't get me started!

Cassidy: We're up shit creek, static. And I don't know if we're ever going to find or fashion a paddle, try as we might.

Carol: So we do what Saul would want us to do.

V: Your leader gets nabbed and you, what, hope for the best? Rather not think about what you'd do for the ones at the bottom of our food chain.

Carol: You're asking for trouble..

Panam: Leave it. He has a right not to understand.

Bob: There's Mitch.

Mitch: I floated a drone over the Wraiths' camp. Will you take a look or would you rather keep mouthing off?

Panam: We can use all the help we can get.

V: Let's see what we got here.

Mitch: The Raffens can't see it - active camo. But that practically inhales battery juice, so make it quick.

[V inserts the shard to their neck.]

Panam: They found an abandoned cement plant to squat in. With a mass of heavy gear. Locusts would be a better name for them. They fly into a place, strip it of all it's got, then move on. But this time... Do you see the wall? They've added some primitive security measures. It points to them aiming to stay longer. The question is why who knows for sure, but I would guess that Saul is part of the reason. If he's still there, we have to find a way inside. That guard post is probably connected to the rest of the camp.

V: Our way in.

Panam: Maybe, but there are also breaches in the wall, lightly guarded sections. Do you see the tracks? Tire tracks. Their vehicles were moving heavy freight. It could have been equipment... Either that or Saul's not their only prisoner. The tracks lead to the truck. Can you scan it? That's probably the one they kept Saul in. The main building, there. Saul must be inside.

V: Quite a spread... Be like looking for a diamond in a hailstorm.

Panam: If they haven't scrapped and gutted the place for ports, you could access the local cam-net. You would just need to find the control room. The skywalk - It connects the garage to the main structure.

V: OK, got some stuff to work with now.

[V disconnects from the drone.]

Panam: Is everything clear?

V: Let's sum things up, just to be sure.

Panam: Sheesh... OK. The Raffens captured Saul. They're holding him somewhere inside their base. We are the cavalry riding to the rescue, hoping to make it in time. You will strive to slip into the camp while I cover you. But we'll let bullets fly only as a last resort. They are many, we are few. So we'll need to look for any chance to gain the upper hand. You will pull Saul but and the three of us will ride away at top speed. All clear now?

V: Yep, let's go get Saul.

Panam: Perfect. Mitch, is the van primed?

Mitch: I did what I could. Take a tour.

[They walk to the van.]

Mitch: Hold on a minute, I got one more thing. If you find Saul hasn't flatlined, you'll probably need this. Spiked SuperJet. A rhino dose. It should speed up Saul's central pump.

V: Hope so. Doubt I could carry him out on my back.

Panam: So, that should be everything. V, will you ride with me?

V: Yeah, 'course I'm going with you.

Panam: OK, you take the wheel.

V: Want me drivin'?

Panam: Yep, I need to fiddle with my scope a bit.

[V gets behind the wheel and he and Panam drive to Raffen Shiv Camp.]

Panam: Oh yeah... We even have a radio In here. Take it for a spin if you like. I still can't believe he let himself get captured... Anyone else... but Saul?

V: Said yourself he's not at the top of his form.

Panam: Yes, but... Moving civilians across the border during a bombardment... Hijacking a Petrochem tanker, opening the valves, cranking a few figure eights to set the desert ablaze and give the kids a fun show... That's the Saul I remember.

V: All had our idols...

Panam: I know. It's just...

[There is a huge cloud on the horizon.]

Panam: Holy... Do you see that?! That is one hell of a storm!

V: Lookin'... bad.

Panam: Oh it's bad in more than its look we have to move quickly. OK, let's go over the plan again. We need to hide the car. Park beside

that outcrop. OK, out. I'll find a place to roost and keep you in sight. You just watch yourself down there.

[V quietly sneaks into the compound.]

Panam: (via radio) That should be their garage. It's heavily guarded. Knowing them, they have something important in there. You might even gain access to the security system. Keep your head down and plow straight ahead! OK, you're near the main structure. That has to be where they're holding Saul. Careful. There's a sniper perched in the tower. Dammit! Stay out of sight! OK, main building. Watch for vermin. Saul is somewhere inside. I feel it in my bones. Remember what I told you. Find the control room and you'll gain access to the security cams.

V: Panam! I found Saul, I think. Locked in the cellar.

Panam: How is he?

V: Pff, It's hard to say. Too dark.

Panam: OK, get down there and get him. Maybe we made it in time.

V: Oh, Panam... Got a girl here... Dead. Disemboweled... and not just for her chrome, I don't think

Panam: Fucking Raffens! Soulless filth! There's no line they won't cross, none!

V: Right - think I got eyes on him.

Panam: Is he...?

V: Breathing? Think so.

Panam: Good. Grab him and get out of there.

V: Saul?

Saul: Do-do-d'you... have my goddamn cigar?

V: Y-your cigar...?

Saul: I told you sons of bitches... A cigar... Some ice-cold hooch... And a couple of ladies to keep me company. Either that... or you can kiss my keister.

V: Easy, Saul. I'm here with Panam.

Saul: Panam...?

Saul: But... she left.

V: Not forever. Gonna get you out.

Saul: You, I remember... You're that merc...

V: Can you walk?

Saul: Fuck! Something is out of whack.

V: You're pretty badly beat. Prolly could use this. (gives him a shot)

Saul: Ugh... Oh yeah!

Panam: (via radio) So? How is he?

Saul: Time to don my dancing shoes!

V: Seems not bad at all. Demanded a cigar and some "companions."

Panam: (via radio) That does sound like Saul. Now, get yourselves out of there!

V: Got the edge. Wraiths don't know I'm here. On our way out now!

Panam: (via radio) I'm firing up the engine! I'll be right there!

Saul: You... got by the posted guards?

V: Mhm. And if we can be just as sly together, might get out without firing a shot.

Panam: (via radio) Exactly. There should be a quick exit out of the cellar.

Saul: Fresh air. At last.

[V takes Saul out of the camp. He helps him into the van. Panam sits behind the wheel. The heroes drive away.]

Saul: That storm is picking up steam.

Panam: Good. It'll cover our tracks.

Saul: Anyway, we have good reason not to head straight back to camp.

Panam: There's no need to play it safe, we'll just burn time.

Saul: Better late and safe than dead.

Panam: Do you see those buildings? We'll wait it out there!

Saul: I remember this place. It should be safe! At least for now. Inside! Quick!

[A sandstorm is raging outside. The heroes run to a small house.]

Saul: Phew... I need to catch my breath... Just in time for dinner!

Panam: Not hungry. I just swallowed a pound of sand. Looks like we're in for the night. A little power might be useful. Could you help me look, V? I'll search in here. A lot of useful things. The Ingalls left in a hurry.

Saul: Biotechnica made them a good offer.

Panam: Yeah, prime. Sell us your land or...

Saul: You don't know that.

Panam: Hey, it worked! We have lights!

Saul: Damn, it's getting cold...

Panam: I tried to get us some heat in here, but no luck. Can you check it? Might have the magic touch. Actually, you know what? Check the fuse outside, it might have come loose. If so, just whack it back in place and I'll get this junk burning.

V: Anything else, Your Excellency?

Panam: Huh, I'll need to think about it. Though it'll be the end of our friendship if Saul freezes to death.

[V goes outside and fixes the generator, then returns to the house.]

Panam: See what I see? Expiration date's from before the last war, so hopefully it hasn't turned to poison. Today's our lucky day.

Saul: "Lucky..." Interesting choice of words.

Panam: Do I hear a lecture coming on? Go on, get off your feet. It could be hours.

Saul: No, no lecture. But we do need to talk. That Wraiths crap... It shouldn't have happened. They wanted everything - our camp locations, routes, offloading points... If they knew what state we're in... one or two more raids and that'd be the end of us. And if you hadn't mounted a raid of your own, well that would have been the end of me.

V: Hehh, it's not the time for this. You're both exhausted.

Panam: Maybe you're right.

Saul: We can't hope to handle the Raffens alone.

Panam: So you would sell us out to Biotechnica? V, tell him it's a damn rotten idea!

V: I gotta agree with Panam. Sounds like a truly shitty idea.

Panam: Thanks.

Saul: What could you possibly know about it?

V: Y'know what I always liked about nomads? Your taste, uh, no - your hunger for freedom. It's not easy to come by In Night City. The corps got their grubby claws in everything. And I just can't believe you'd hand them what you hold to be most precious.

Panam: Thank you, V. I could not have said it better.

Saul: We've had our spats.

Panam: A few. Like any family.

Saul: They're not worth digging up.

Panam: I think so too.

Saul: If you'd like to come back... Everyone'll be waiting, arms open wide. But there will have to be changes. No more jumpin' to the front of the line.

Panam: And so it begins...

Saul: You know what, sweetheart? We'll have plenty of time to tear at each other's throats later.

Panam: That is my hope.

Saul: But right now... I wouldn't mind catching a few winks.

Panam: Need help?

Saul: Fuck off. Huh.. Do you know what they call these storms in North Africa. Haboobs. Damn, I love that word.

Panam: Whoo, what was that about?

V: (rises a toast) To haboobs.

Panam: Yeeaaah... To haboobs! (drinks) Blech...! Now that packs octane. Haha, funny...

V: What is?

Panam: I rarely sleep with a roof overhead, yet this will be the second time with you. When you're on the road day into night into day, your butt basically fusing with your seat, you forget what it's like.

V: And? You think this is any better?

Panam: No... just different. Yeah, this would make for a decent little motel, wouldn't it? Little fireplace, booze.

Panam: Grumpy guy at reception is the one thing missing.

V: Have everything you need, ma'am?

Panam: Mmhmm... I couldn't ask for more.

V: How's your whiskey, ma'am?

Panam: Hmm... Pff, warm... subtle metallic aftertaste. Bold, yet smooth. Four out of five stars.

V: Ma'am, I'm sure you'd be cozier with your shoes off.

Panam: Haha, after a full day in them? I'd fear a health code violation.

V: Nonsense, after a day as full as today, you deserve to kick back.

Panam: Oh? And what did you have in mind?

V: (touches Panam's thigh) Got a few ideas... Think you know what kind.

Panam: Uh, ahem, V... No. It's really nice as is. Let's not spoil it, OK?

V: Yea-I, buhh... I-I'm sorry... Dunno what I was thinking...

Panam: Oh, it's fine, truly. Don't let it worry you.

V: Right. So... friends, then?

Panam: V... I'm glad you came. Really, thanks. It meant a lot to me. Uaugh... Do you hear that..?

V: Nnn-nope.

Panam: Hmph. Mhm. The wind has waned. I can't speak for haboobs, but... When a chinook rolls rough and rowdy across the plain, hehh, I sure can't get any shuteye... Not a wink. (falls asleep)

Johnny: On behalf of the staff of the Independent California Motel... I wish you all sweet dreams.

[V falls asleep too. He wakes up in the morning. The storm is over. He walks out onto the porch. Panam sits on the steps. Other members

of the tribe have already found them.]

Cassidy: Look who's alive!

Panam: Hey. Did you sleep all right?

Cassidy: Good work, V. Old style raid!

Panam: Hey. Did you sleep all right?

V: Saul doin' all right?

Panam: Cracked skull, six busted ribs, bruised kidneys, but he's back at it, bossing folk every which way. You?

V: You gotta agree now - next time I choose the motel.

Panam: Hah, if there is such a time. Well, I slept like a puppy. That's a cozy shoulder you have there. It's too bad I better get rolling in a minute.

V: Wai...hang on. Thought you were headed back to the Aldecaldos. Stayin' with the clan.

Panam: That remains so. Come on. Last night, when we were talking to Saul thanks for standing up for me. Though, one thing... The Wraiths, the raid - It's the start of something we need to prepare for. Saul will get everything set in camp. Whereas I...

V: Whereas you...?

Panam: The Raffens wanted to know our routes, right? Well, it's the Aldecaldos turn. Some recon is in order. One more thing... Your compensation. Please take care of her. She served me well.

[He takes a powerful sniper rifle named Overwatch.]

V: Puttin' her in good hands, Panam.

Panam: I know. So, uh... thank you, once again.

V: Uh, hold up... About last night...

Panam: We don't need to talk about that. I'm just... not like that?

V: So what are you like?

Panam: More like... this. (kisses V) Take care of yourself.

V: You, too, Panam.

Panam: And remember - I'm indebted.

[She drives away on her bike.]

Johnny: Circumstances were different, I'd say saddle up and ride after her. But here 'n' now... Just look. Damn hard to catch a girl like that. Only hope you've got is they feel a pong and stop to wait.

V: What's with you?

Johnny: Dunno. A memory, maybe. Don't matter. Ugh, OK, back to town, V. Had it up here with this gusty outback.

[V walks to Saul.]

Cassidy: Know why I read? 'Cause only fiction's capable of conjurin' up any kind o' sense about this world.

V: How ya feelin'?

Saul: Free. No better feeling in the world.

V: You all bury the hatchet with Panam?

Saul: Hah. I'd say It was more like a battleax. These things, they're tough to bury and even tougher to keep buried. But I'm optimistic. Her heart seems like it's in the right place.

V: Better start headin' out.

Saul: Yeah, same goes for us.

Cassidy: Only once the radiator gets a breather.

Saul: Thanks, V. What you did for me, I'll never forget it.

Teddy: I dunno - I think I liked it better up north. Less sand an' all.

Can't remember feelin' so itchy.

[V drives to Panam's camp.]

Panam: V, you're here.

Saul: What is he doing here? I forbade you from even breathing on that Militech convoy so you call in your friend? To do it all behind my back, is that it?

Panam: Uh-huh. That's exactly why I had V come and stand right in front of you. Do you think I'm that stupid?

Saul: To do it all behind my back, is that it?

V: You really think you can "forbid" Panam from doing anything? Trust me - no point. She'll do whatever she wants.

Saul: No, she won't. Not if she plans to stay in this family.

Mitch: Dammit to hell, Saul! Are you seriously considering letting that Basilisk slip through our fingers?

Saul: I am.

Mitch: But a chance like this...

Saul: A chance at what? Rotting up the job we came here to do?

V: Get the sense this fight's grown stale. C'mon, put some feeling into it.

Saul: No. This discussion ended long ago. The Biotechnica people will be here in an hour. Try not to cock anything else up before then.

Mitch: I can't believe it. There he goes off to paint the grass green.

Panam: V?

Mitch: If you don't want to, you don't need to drop into the middle of this. But we could use your help - that's undeniable.

V: Thought the Biotechnica contract had withered and died.

Mitch: Saul insists we see it through to the end - to prove the Aldecaldos keep their word.

Panam: Crop protection! Who gives a damn about crop protection?! All Saul is going to prove is that a corp can walk all over us, and we'll say thank you and ask for more.

V: What's this Basilisk nonsense?

Panam: It's an armored Militech cargo panzer - junk from back in 3060 or so. They want to peddle It off to a backwards country, somewhere it can still pass as a technological wonder.

Mitch: The Militech convoy will take the one-on-one, right past us. Shame not to say hello.

V: Lemme guess - whole thing's your idea?

Panam: How did you know?

V: Saul wouldn't be quite so pissed if it weren't.

Mitch: I believe V is right. If this had been Saul's idea, he would've seen it as the greatest plan on God's green earth.

Panam: Bull. Saul isn't that petty. He's simply a coward. He would rather play it safe, bide his time. For the family.

V: This Basilisk worth another fight with Saul?

Panam: Yes! A craft like that would finally put us back on the right path.

Mitch: The family is falling apart. If we fall into this Biotechnica rut, no one will ever take us seriously again.

V: OK, so you do wanna go behind Saul's back, dragged me here specifically for that.

Panam: Cassidy, Ted, Carol and Bob - also on board.

V: 'Member, a while back, told me to give you a solid kick in the pants if I saw you divin' in the stupid pool again?

Panam: I do. Yet that was before our tandem raid on the Raffen camp. I believe you lost your opportunity there.

V: Nope, different that - rescue mission. Someone from the family. Now, you're out to plain trick him.

Panam: If you plan to lecture me, you can damn well go right now.

V: Thought you and Saul'd agreed to bury your carbines.

Panam: So did I. But it seems that's only true when somebody is trying to kill us.

V: Zactly. You saved his life. You wanna fuck things up all over again now?

Panam: I saved his life, yet somehow he still ignores everything I say. So I do believe we have come full circle.

V: Why's Saul got his briefs in a bunch over this Basilisk?

Panam: He's afraid Militech will destroy us if we pick a fight with it.

Mitch: He thinks it safer to stick with the corporations. Like Biotechnica - what a joke!

V: And you guys'd rather...?

Mitch: We would rather go back to plying the trade we know best - logistics.

V: Meanin' smugglin'.

Mitch: That's what I said.

V: And you plan to grab the Basilisk how?

Panam: Thanks, V.

V: Haven't said I'd help just yet.

Panam: OK, let's go talk to the rest.

V: So, just the four vets on board with the plan, nobody else?

Panam: We didn't bother asking the others.

Mitch: There was too great a risk someone would take it to Saul.

Panam: Besides, only the vets understand what we stand to gain by having on Basilisk.

V: Sounds pretty risky to me.

Mitch: On the contrary, easy as pie. There won't even be much security on the convoy. Plus, we'll be doing our part towards furthering the cause of world peace. Why should this beast wind up being used in some little third world skirmish? We'll make better use of it right here in America.

Cassidy: Did you try to get Saul on board again? No luck, huh?

Panam: No. OK, everyone listen. Militech will transport the Basilisk in parts distributed across two trucks.

Mitch: Wait - do I sense a quiver in your voice?

Panam: Fuck you. The convoy we'll halt at the railroad crossing on the one-oh-one. We'll attack from behind then get the hell out and away. Questions, comments, motions?

V: Panam's got a beef with Saul, I know. But you guys...?

Teddy: A few years back, nobody would have given corpo work a second thought.

Cassidy: We want a good name, we just need good gear and good jobs. And Saul would see that if he pulled his head out of his caboose once in a while.

V: It's all too... easy. Convenient to arrange. The exact tech you need. Comin' your way almost served on a silver platter.

Panam: Yes. Saul also claimed it stinks to high heaven.

V: Intel on the convoy - where'd you get it?

Panam: Carol hacked the Militech comms channel. Is that enough for you?

V: OK. I'm in.

Panam: Hmm. OK. Thanks. First, we'll ride to the station. The train engine we need to block the convoy's way is there. Are you riding with us, or will we meet you there?

V: Ridin' with you.

Panam: Excellent Let's get going.

[V gets in Panam's car.]

Panam: Well? V? Let's go.

V: Nobody's gonna notice you gone, back at camp?

Panam: Saul has no wish to see us there anyway. The better to make a good second impression on the Biotechnica sults.

V: Your sour faces wouldn't help much.

Panam: Indeed they would not.

V: And the Raffens - what about them? Expectin' any trouble?

Panam: Saul is. He's posted sentries all around the camp.

V: How's that not right?

Panam: He's wrong in continuing to fight the symptoms rather than the disease.

V: You don't miss life in Night City?

Panam: At times, perhaps. I miss the feeling of having a new beginning, of freedom. But I also haven't forgotten the emptiness. The feeling of realizing it means nothing if you're alone.

V: Yeah, took adjustment on my part, too. Though, never was

Queen of the Highway

completely alone.

Panam: You had someone?

V: A true friend. Jackie, by name. You would liked him, actually.

Panam: Jackie. I'll remember that. We have arrived.

[V gets out of the car.]

Panam: Are we ready? OK, The Militech convoy will be traveling from Night City to the bus where they're due to meet the buyer. We will stop it at the railroad crossing.

Mitch: All we have to do is shove this beauty in its way

Panam: V - any questions?

V: Plan to move this thing how exactly?

Panam: It's old tech. Carol will have to hack it.

Carol: Then somehow have to finagle authorized from the control tower to move it.

V: Tower looks inactive to me, too.

Mitch: We'll see to that. You and Panam just get the authorization code.

Panam: OK. Let's get to work.

V: Any of this goes south, you know Panam'll be the one to pay.

Teddy: Do you see us hanging her out to dry? Do you see Saul letting us off the hook while Panam takes the fall for everything?

Cassidy: I'm starting to like this kid, Ted. He thinks he cares about Panam more than the girl's own family.

V: You didn't take her side last time when she left the clan - why?

Cassidy: Because last time Panam was acting a damned fool.

V: You thinkin' she learned somethin', she's smarter?

Cassidy: Yes. She left, learned a few things, managed on her own - and knew when to come back.

Teddy: People like that are worth a lot more than those who plant their asses in one spot and do as they're told.

Carol: Well, hello there. Have you come to make yourself useful?

V: Nope. Just here to talk.

Carol: You don't really know why you're here, do you?

V: Panam asked me for help.

Carol: Mhmm... She come back to the fold, sweet-talked Mitch and the rest over to her side... But still, she calls you. Interesting, isn't it.

[V walks to Panam.]

V: Need a hand?

Panam: Of course. But in your shoes, I would look for another way in first.

[V walks to Mitch.]

V: 'Member when we first met? Almost had a pound in your pants at the thought of falling foul of Saul.

Mitch: I don't recall leaving Panam high and dry, though.

V: Now you're gonna stick it to 'im plain. Something change?

Mitch: Uh-huh. I realized Panam is right.

V: How's it goin' over here?

Bob: Fantastic. We have everything hooked up and nothing works.

Mitch: It works, though not reliably. V, could scan it? Because I am not open to the prospect of taking it all apart again.

V: Capacitor's damaged. Third from the right.

Bob: Hm, indeed. Hold on, let me swap it out.

Mitch: Time to try it again.

Bob: Hey, it works.

Mitch: Thanks, V.

[V returns to Panam and opens the door.]

Panam: My, that was quick. The stairs it is, then. Mitch and Bob are already connected.

V: Got a little help from yours truly.

Panam: I've always been fond of trains. And the stations where so many tracks converge.

V: Mh, junctions.

Panam: Yes, those. When you see them from above, you feel...

V: Free? Like you could set off on a thousand journeys all at once?

Panam: Perhaps more simply - hopeful. OK. Here we are. Carol! What are we looking for?!

Carol: Punch cards!

Panam: What cards?

Carol: Oblong cards, holes in rows and columns!

Panam: Would you help me look?

V: Sure thing. Nothin' here.

Panam: OK, it must be here somewhere. V, look thoroughly, please.

V: Some sorta stone-age control panel.

Panam: Let's find the cards first?

V: Not here. Hm. Well, well, well. Got somethin'.

Panam: Good job.

Panam: Carol! We have a card! What now?!

Carol: You have to put it in the reader!

Panam: Well, V? The card... in the reader?

V: Here goes nothin'...

[V inserts the card into the mechanism and pulls the lever. The train starts moving.]

Panam: It worked! Come look.

Johnny: Little engine that could.

Panam: V... I wanted to speak with you.

V: What'd you wanna talk about?

Panam: I know this may sound foolish, because I asked you to help me. But.. Why are you doing this?

V: 'Cause it's important to you.

Panam: But... is that all? I-- Sorry, that sounded worse than I intended. Listen, V... I... I'm sorry, I'm not very good at this, speaking of my feelings and so forth. And I would not want to cock this up.

V: So far, so good, champ.

Panam: Because I've kept my mouth shut up to now. The thing is, I usually act before I think.

V: Uh-huh, noticed.

Panam: I know. But I also need impulses to act upon. When I do something spontaneously, I feel I'm being honest. Yet with you.. I prefer to play it safe.

V: Why's it any different with me?

Panam: Because truly care this time. Yet I fear I'll do or say something foolish - and be left alone in the desert. I would rather keep you close. If only as a friend.

V: Try followin' the impulse next time.

Panam: OK. Well, in any case, you've been warned. All right. Let's rejoin the others.

V: Convoy - got eyes and ears on it? (in pain again) Agh, shit....

Panam: Yes. Carol checks their communication channels from time to time. Everything is proceeding as planned - for now.

[They rejoin the nomads. It's near evening. They have organized a bonfire, something to eat. Cassidy plays guitar.]

Panam: We could still check--

Cassidy: Sit your ass down a minute, honey, and breathe.

Bob: Everything's under control. The convoy is already heading our way.

V: You worried about Saul?

Panam: We've quite some time left till dusk. Hm, the car could use another once-over. The stars have emerged. We've but a few hours till dawn.

Carol: You're acting spooked, as if you're the first person ever to stand up to Saul.

Panam: Oh, save your breath, I don't need to be consoled. Grr, was it someone I know?

Cassidy: Knew. Scorpion.

Bob: He came home from the war, head full of new ideas and a host of new contacts.

Mitch: He tried to get Saul to lead us in joining Snake Notion. It would make us stronger, he said.

Panam: I don't think he peeped a word of it to me. What did Saul do?

Teddy: Saul dressed the guy down head to toe for messing with the family. Hell, he didn't send him on any jobs for a year.

Panam: Gee, really consoling, thanks.

Carol: You said yourself you didn't need any.

V: Oughta raise a glass to Scorpion.

Mitch: To Scorpion.

Panam: And to Jackie.

V: Don't talk about the war much.

Mitch: What's there to say? They Just packed you into a panzer down in Mexico and said full speed ahead, soldier.

Bob: Then it was weeks talking either to yourself or the onboard AI, drinking iodide like water because your Geiger wouldn't shut up.

Carol: Mmhmm. I'm sprouting a rash on my ass just thinking about sitting in that boiling hot coffin.

V: Uh-huh. But you all can't wait to pack your asses into the Basilisk, huh?

Mitch: That's different.

Carol: Completely different. You'll see once you're on board.

V: Gonna try and get some sleep.

Panam: OK. It'll be quite some time before the convoy comes through.

V: Grown kinda cold out here. (hugs Panam)

Panam: Not true. But this is nice.

V: Catch some shut-eye with me?

Panam: I'll just lie here a while, by your side, gazing at the stars.

V: That another area of your expertise? Got maps of the heavens in your library, too?

Panam: Of course. That's the Big Dipper. And do you see the small flickering start the right?

V: Uh, yeeaah...?

Panam: You do? Oh dear, that means Ursa Major leak! Goodnight, V.

[The next morning. The gang gets in their vehicles. They follow the train.]

Carol: All right. She's moving!

Panam: Get her up to speed.

Carol: They're going faster than we thought I don't know if we can catch them!

Panam: Uncouple one of the cars, It'll speed you up! V No hemming and howing! Take out that coupler!

Carol: We're getting close, still too slow!

Panam: V, shoot out the damn coupler!

Cassidy: I see them!

Panam: Surround them soon as they're cut off!

[V's turret stops firing.]

Panam: Shit! Probably jammed again!

V: Well, fuck me...

Carol: OK. The trucks are all yours, boys.

Cassidy: Move that ass, Teddy boy.

Panam: Mitch, Bob! Go!

Mitch: All as planned, boss.

Carol: All right, the train's leaving. You had better move!

Mitch: OK, let's go!

Bob: Ready to roll.

Mitch: Fuck! It worked! Haha!

Panam: Pssh, of course it did. Just as I said it would.

Cassidy: How's it going there. V? Did you have fun?

V: Sure did.

Cassidy: Just be happy you won't be around to put the hunk of junk together. The real fun is just starting for Mitch and Teddy.
Carol: OK. I just lost the Militech channel. The suits finally realized someone was listening and changed the codes.
Bob: Perfect timing, if you ask me.

[The gang returns to the camp.]
Cassidy: I can talk to him if you want.
Panam: No, thank you. I'll take care of this myself.
Saul: Fuck! Panam!
Panam: So it begins.
Saul: (in rage) What's the meaning of this?
Panam: Exactly what you see. The Basilisk.
Saul: (in rage) All I see is two trucks with giant Miltech logos on them. Fuck! Panam, you can see them from miles away! You think we don't have problems enough on our hands? The Raffens could rear their heads at any moment. And now we have Militech to worry about, too!
Panam: (screams) STOP IT! FUCK! Just shut up already! Do you want to serve corporations forever? Fine, go right ahead. In that case, we'll leave the Basilisk as souvenir of what this family used to be. Or you know what? Maybe next time we're attacked, we'll be able to fight back!
Saul: As soon as I'm done with Biotechnica, we call a family meeting to discuss this, discuss you. Until that time I want these trucks out of my sight.
Panam: And the Basilisk? Can we put it together?

Saul: Do what you want. Just get out of my sight.

Judy: Talkin' About Revolution

Panam: Bob, Mitch - you two take the trucks around back. We need to unload

Bob: Sure, but then what do we do with them?

Cassidy: Oh, I've got an idea.

V: (to Panam) Got quite a pair o' lungs, there.

Panam: Thanks. I believe the last time I pulled something like that, I was ten years old.

V: Seem still to be in fine working order. Everything OK?

Panam: Yes, of course. Though the great train robbery bit of this was much more enjoyable.

V: You need me again, all you gotta do is call.

Panam: V... I am sure I will. So you'd better expect that call.

V: Be waiting. Take care.

[Some time later Panam calls V.]

Panam: V, the Basilisk - it's ready. Would you like drive it?

V: Sure! Be there soon.

Panam: Fuck, V. It is awesome!

V: So I hear.

[V returns to the nomad camp.]

V: All ready to go?

Panam: Hey, V. No, not yet.

Mitch: Carol still needs to check if Militech left any ICE in the system.

V: Corpos haven't shown up in person to report the loss?

Mitch: No, I think we managed to keep them off our scent.

Cassidy: We left the trucks with the big corpo logos down by the Raffen camp. Which was almost as much fun as leaving a bag of flaming dog shit on their doorstep.

Johnny: Fuck. Made it look like it just came back from a corpo war tour. Nice touch.

Carol: Everything's fine. Clean as a whistle.

V: And Saul - what about him?

Panam: Nothing, for now. We're staying out of each other's hair.

V: So he's not planning a family council?

Panam: Of course he is. He just wants to keep me in the dark a while longer.

V: Always wanted to take one these suckers for a spin.

Johnny: Which is exactly how all those naive gonks landed at the front. Didn't even need to be recruited. They just showed you the tech.

Panam: Go on, hop in. Everything is set.

[V gets into the tank.]

Panam: All right, let's fire her up! Hold on to your head! (failed to ignite) Dammit.

V: Got a bad feeling about this....

Panam: Everything is dandy. Give me a moment. Oh ye-ee-eees! It's not the latest model, but Mitch and Bob did what they could. What do you think?

V: Nice and cozy in here.

Panam: You steer directly from your seat. All you have to do is jack in.

V: What, no knobs, buttons, blinky doo dads?

Panam: No, none. The impulse runs directly to your cerebral cortex. In a sense, the Basilisk becomes an extension of your body. It's like a mystical oneness.

V: Ever piloted anything like this?

Panam: No, why? Don't you trust me?

V: Can I still get out?

Panam: No.

V: Then I trust you.

V: Then I thrust you. If it's so mystical and shit, why the co-pilot? Extra support?

Panam: I'll tell you once we're a bit further from camp. We'll practice. OK. If you want full functionality in an engagement, you need a second person to handle sensory overload. One pilot steers, the other handles the gun. It's oddly pleasant, you'll see. OK. This will do fine. A dry run first - I'll disconnect for now.

V: Doesn't need two pilots?

Panam: You won't be steering and firing. Are you ready?

[V jacks in and sees glitches.]

V: Panam...? Is this, uh... as designed?

Panam: Neural synchronization doesn't happen at the snap of one's fingers. It'll be over soon. There - see?

V: OK. Stortin to understand what you meant.

Panam: Warm up. Don't worry, I'm not going to watch. Just put it through a few turns.

V: Soft ride, seems a boat.

Panam: Mhm. She'll fly right over any bumps, all types of terrain. All right. I can see you've grown bored. Now take her along the line of

turbines. When I say so, swerve right or left before the last of them.

V: All right.

Panam: Left! Very good. Keep her going! Right! Yes! That's the way to do it. Right! Excellent. Now, let's do some shooting. Stop and I'll activate the system.

V: What's on the menu?

Panam: Don't get excited. The Basilisk is a cargo ship by design. But it should still be a good time. All right. Blast those wrecks. They're deader than dirt now. Bullseye. Good. OK, practice is over. V, do you remember what I said about impulses?

V: Mhm.

Panam: Well, watch out now.

V: What's happening?

Panam: I jacked in. Our nervous systems are now linked.

V: Right, Basilisk pilots workin' in harmony. That why I'm feelin' everything doubled?

Panam: It's sensory feedback. Our systems are intertwined. Would you like to... try it out?

V: OK. I could go for that.

[They have sex over the internet!]

Panam: Can you feel that?

V: Uhm. Yeah. Honestly, uh, no idea how people can focus in combat.

Panam: It's probably not always this intense. How about this? Oh, fuck. They found us. We have to get back to camp.

Saul: (via radio) They're Raffen. Whole group of them, ready for a fight!

Panam: They're here too, Saul! In full force!

Saul: (via radio) Take them out. Then haul ass here and make yourselves useful.
Panam: We'll go straight to camp, we have to help the family. We're almost there.
Saul: (via radio) OK. I see Panam. Those bastards are in for a surprise.
Panam: OK, V. Let's get to work. Is everything--?
Saul: (via radio) Yes. You turned them to dust, congratulations. It's time to talk.

[V and Panam leave Basilisk.]

Saul: All of us, each on his or her own, must think first and foremost of what's good for the family...
Panam: Come on, Saul! If I have to leave the clan, please just say so. Spare me another speech of yours, at the very least.
Saul: I'm afraid you'll have to sit through a few more. Because from this day forward you will lead this family. By my side.
Panam: (shocked) I will what?
Saul: I wished to do this properly, but fine, have it your way. I was wrong. You were right. That's the truth. May it never happen again. (hugs her)
Panam: But I made a mess of so many things... You said...
Saul: I know. But I changed my mind. You risked everything for this family, nors even knowing whether you'd be welcome the next day.
Panam: OK. OK. Well... Many things will have to change.
Saul: Yes. And to start with. We need to leave this place. Quickly. We can't wait for Militech to find us.

Panam: Of course, I will prepare our route.

Mitch: Congratulations.

Cassidy: Terrible choice. I voted nay.

Panam: Thank you, thanks. I need to cool down, I think. (to V) Will you come with me? An... Interesting day. I feel as if I barely evaded a rapidly approaching train.

V: Was pretty close.

Panam: I don't know if I could have done it without you.

V: Hey come on.

Panam: No, I'm serious. We all owe you. So you can count on the Aldecaldos. Always.

V: Heh, good to know.

Panam: Nobody's behind the bar. That I like. Beer? Lemonade?

V: Beer me.

Panam: To happy endings.

V: Speaking of happy endings... Back there, in the Basilisk, I... I hope you don't regret what happened.

Panam: I regret one thing only - that we had so little time.

V: Guess we'll have to do something about that.

Panam: Mhmmm. You know... You know this... this could be us, every day? V, look around. Look at them. They could be your family.

V: Panam, what're you--

Panam: Stay in camp. Join us.

V: (sips some beer) It's really not that simple.

Panam: You either want to or not. What's so complicated?

V: That's the problem. What I want right now - doesn't mean a thing.

Panam: All right, V. I shouldn't drop bombs like that on you right now.

I just thought... Eh, forget about it.

V: I'll think it all over, I pro--

[V gets sick, he gets dizzy. He falls to the floor of the bar. Panam jumps up to him. Some time passes.]

V: Panam... I...

Panam: V, relax, everything is OK. How do you feel?

V: Where... where are we?

Pisces

Panam: You passed out. Completely. We took you with us.

V: Where...?

Panam: We moved camp. You are safe, everything is under control.

Johnny: Ohhh, V...

Panam: V... You have to tell me what is happening. The blood... You were out for hours. What's wrong?

V: Panam, I... It's getting worse, every single day...

Panam: OK, V, relax. Take it bit by bit. What is happening, exactly?

V: To tell you the whole truth... I'm afraid things won't be the same between us if I do.

Panam: V, listen to me. There is not a thing you could say to me that would change how... I mean, Just cut the bullshit and tell me what's going on!

V: You know Johnny Silverhand?

Panam: Yes, they sometimes play those oldies on the radio. Why?

V: That's just it. Johnny's alive. He's sitting in my head.

Panam: He's what? A-am I not... is this some sort of strange metaphor?

V: Long story. Got a Job, fucked it up, now Silverhand's personality construct sitting in my head.

Panam: Bullshit.

V: Yeah, well, he's not too happy about it either. Turns out we don't really mix. And it's getting worse.

Panam: You are not joking.

V: Just trying to live with it. Survive, actually.

Panam: It's certainly not doing wonders for your health.

V: I gotta go. I'm feeling better, really.

Panam: Wait, I will go with you.

Mitch: I thought I heard that voice!

V: Hey, Mitch.

Saul: Finally. We were worried.

Mitch: Took good care of your ride. She's over there. But you're not leaving us already, are you?

Saul: Is everything OK?

V: Much better now. Thanks for your help.

Saul: I'm glad to hear it.

V: See you made yourselves at home already.

Saul: We do have some experience in this. This is a good place. We have greater control over the area. The rest will settle in quickly. But tell us, how are you? You scored us.

V: Thanks, I'll stick around for a bit.

Mitch: Make yourself at home.

Saul: Remember - our offer still stands. If you need help, the Aldecaldos are here for you.

Panam: And that, at least, we can agree on.

Saul: If you need anything, you know where to find us.

Panam: Want me to walk with you? I know this area, back from the

old routes.

V: You really safe here, though?

Panam: For now, yes. Milltech does not venture this far. And our vantage points really are much better. But you know, everything here... It is temporary, all of it. We will soon have to decide what comes next.

[They walk a bit to Basilisk's garage.]

Panam: V... Back to what we were saying... V... I will not even pretend to understand. I don't think it has even sunk in yet. But I am serious - how can I help?

V: Remember Hellman? He's the one who created the personality construct tech.

Panam: That's why you wanted to get him.

V: But it was a dead end. Now I have to figure out where to go next. Couldn't help me. Not sure anyone can.

Panam: I don't believe that. You'll find a way. And once you do, let me know. I will help. This whole family will help. Saul was not joking. You understand?

V: Thanks for everything. For being here for me.

Panam: Take care of yourself. And let me know... Well, just please keep in touch.

[V drives to Judy's apartment.]

Tom: Hey, V. Come on in. Pizza's getting cold.

Judy: You made it, good. Grab a seat. This is Roxanne. She's worked

at Clouds longer than any of us.

Roxanne: Hello.

V: Huh, yeah, respect. A feat in itself from what I've seen of the place.

Roxanne: Just been lucky, I guess.

Johnny: Just eat the free pizza and then we're outta here, OK?

V: Were you and Evelyn close?

Roxanne: Yeah... Blew up in her face when she showed up back at Clouds. She was supposed to be long gone, the one who got away. But deep in my heart, I was glad to see her back. Feel like such a gonk now...

V: Come here 'cause you want payback for what happened to er?

Roxanne: That's for sure... But I just wanna have a normal job, too. No fears, no tears, y'know?

[Maiko enters.]

Maiko: You'll never get rid of the stench of the corpse... You drop a lot of 'em, don't you? What's your secret?

V: So, changed your mind, huh? Quickly, too.

Maiko: I'm here. Doubt I need to explain why.

V: All right, chill. I'm not here to squabble with yo.

Maiko: Wouldn't put it past you.

V: Judy convinced you. Call me satisfied.

Judy: Done saying hello to each other? Revolution won't plan itself... I modified the behavioral chip. It can equip any doll with a motor reflex system. In other words, make the doll move and fight like a preem-tier solo.

Maiko: Fascinating, Isn't it? What one can learn while tuning fake orgasms for the Moxes.

Judy: Mind steppin' outside? Can't smoke in here.

Maiko: You'll air it out later. Fine, I'll sit by the window.

Judy: The body'll react as if executing a well-trained series of movements. Already tested it out on Tom. Chip's impulses supplant any natural reflexes, so it'll make users feel like they're experiencing cyberpsychosis.

Tom: But it's basically the same as when we activate ourselves for a client.

V: Solo skills don't lie in just executing movements. There's split second processes that happen - logistics, decision-making. Result of years of practice. Doubt your chip's capable of compensating for that.

Judy: You're prolly right... but I don't see another way. Alternative's intensive training, but we don't have time for that.

V: Tech that's all pros and no cons? I don't buy it. Side effects, spill 'em.

Judy: Combat mode auto-initiates when a threat is present, and, uh... there's no way to stop it. Can't find a workaround.

V: And that's it?

Judy: I dunno. Only way to determine that'd be through months of testing on a range of subjects.

Roxanne: There's an ethical side, too... You could murder someone and not remember a thing.

V: How'd you ever come up with this?

Judy: Learned how the behavioral chip works at Clouds. Always seemed like they must be pretty easy to modify, I'm surprised didn't get the idea the moment we walked into Maiko's office.

Maiko: Count yourself lucky, what with all the cams and mics in

Clouds. Tyger Claws would sooner dig those chips outta the dolls with screwdrivers than let an idea like this run Its course.

V: All right... gotta see it to believe it.

Maiko: Finally, someone said it.

Judy: Tom? Pulled that sequence from a kung fu training virtu.

[Tom throws kitchen knives right where Johnny is standing... in V's head.]

V: Gotta admit - not bad.

Maiko: Yeah, for the market square in Kabuki. Nah, before we start talkin' serious biz, gonna need to see serious action.

Judy: You just saw him... just saw him.

Maiko: I saw a bar trick. I wanna see a fight. Got an expert in causing serious bodily harm among us. I wanna see how Tommy handles him.

Judy: V? Just don't mess up my digs, OK? I like it here.

[Tom easily blocks V's punch and throws him on the floor.]

V: What the... Argh!

Judy: You there? Can you hear me?

Tom: Hahaha! Look at me go! Ya see that?!

V: Nice work, Judy. Outdid yourself. If you were to sell that, heh. You'd be the richest Judy in the NUSA.

Judy: Please. Plenty o' killin' machines in the world. I don't wanna turn more people into 'em. After this, chips're gettin' micronuked. V?

V: (to Johnny) If you got something to say, just say it.

Johnny: Who-me? This is my impressed face.

V: (to Maiko) Hehh... happy now?

Maiko: I'm rarely happy. But that was proof enough. (to Judy) Let's get to it, then. You've got an elite force of three muscleheads and on

techie. What now?

Judy: Guards and Tyger Claws in and around we'll overpower-take down disarm, escort 'em out. Clouds'll be ours. Bosses we'll give an ultimatum - a cut of the proceeds in exchange for never showin' their faces at the club again. And havin' no say in how the club's managed.

Maiko: That's what I thought... A half-baked, insane plan. You can't see more than an inch ahead of you. Taking out the security there won't solve anything. Claws'll just send more Hiromi Sato's the man you gotta get to.

V: Hiromi Sato? Who's that?

Maiko: Clouds' real boss. He rarely shows, but you can't so much as sneeze without him finding out. Claws trust him, respect his opinion... he is one of them. We can try to convince him, but... It's doubtful. We stand a better chance by injecting him with a dose of fear.

V: Where do we find this Hiromi?

Maiko: At his apartment, HB megatower. Topmost floor, it's a penthouse. Almost never steps outside its glass walls. But I'll figure out a way to get us inside.

V: Tom and Roxanne gonna come with?

Maiko: No. Whole points to strike both places at the same time. They'll take care of business at Clouds.

Judy: Two-pronged assault... Lovin' it.

V: Wouldn't it be better to ambush him on the street, like, while he's chomping on a scopdog or takin' a piss in a back alley? Why even try breakin' into a penthouse? It's probably crawlin' with guards.

Maiko: Hiromi don't go anywhere without security, so one - makes no difference. Two - this is only a show of force, demonstrating what

we are capable of. Which is a lot more than street thuggery.

Judy: So how about it? V? Tom? Roxie? Made up your minds?

Roxanne: I... I need to think about it. Never wasted anyone before, y'know.

Tom: I'm with it all the way.

Judy: V?

Johnny: Don't tell me you're seriously considering this? Stickin' our precious necks out for a bunch of whores?

V: Rather not have to flatline anyone.

Roxanne: What he said.

Judy: Hope is it won't be necessary.

Maiko: Overpower Hiromi, humiliate him - should be enough. Bosses'll put him outta the game.

V: Count me in, Judy. I already said I'd help, didn't I?

Judy: Thanks, V.

Maiko: Save the gratitude for later, please.

V: (havin' an episode) Agh, shit....

Maiko: I'll set up the meet with Hiromi and let you know. I need a couple days. Have fun. Toodle-loo!

Roxanne: Maiko, hold up. Give us a lift?

[All guests leave.]

Judy: Hooo, shit... I'm scared, V. Speakin' of gratitude... stuff I'm askin' you to do, well - usually comes with a price tag, I know. You wanna help - I get that. But I'm more'n happy to pay your fee in full. Feels like it's only right.

V: Judy... for real? No, don't wanna hear it.

Judy: But--

V: Ep-ep-ep! Not a word.

V: (havin' another episode) Aaaargghh....

Judy: Um... V, everything OK? V? You don't look so hot...

V: Ughhh... OK... OK, I'm better, I'm fine.

Judy: What the hell, V? You, like, sick?

V: It's passed. Forget about it.

Judy: It's late, you're tired. You can crash on my couch if you want.

V: Sounds great, thanks.

Judy: Don't worry 'bout it. Make yourself at home.

[V taking a nap on Judy's couch. He eats a ham and cheese sandwich and looks around Judy's house.]

V: (looking at old vintage videocards from 3030) Oh. Interesting.

Johnny: Place looks like a fuckin' antique museum.

V: Then I guess you should feel right at home.

Johnny: Chick's got taste.

V: That all you have to say?

Johnny: And she's nice.

Johnny: Six outta ten.

V: Didn't know she dabbled in robotics.

Johnny: Now that's fuckin' shimra. Think that's how she winds down?

V: After a day's work of tuning hardcore smut? Wouldn't be surprised.

Johnny: The Bushido collection in BD format...

V: First three are collectors' items nowadays... Someone likes getting their feet wet.

Johnny: Don't need to be an expert to tell the gear's pro.

V: Who woulda thought.

Johnny: Perilous Futur. Elektropunk? I'd rather puke out my ears.

[V leaves the apartments]

[V drives to Megabuilding HB to meet with Judy and the dolls.]

Judy: You ready?

V: So glad you came.

Roxanne: Mulled it over in my head. Y'all were right. Sometimes the only rational course of action is a kick in the nuts 'n' on bullet between the eyes.

V: You nervous, Tom?

Tom: How'd you know?

V: First time you've done anything like this. Just imagine you're doing what a doll does, just... different program. You're great at that. Any idea how I can get to Hiromi?

Judy: Pulled the blueprint, got it all figured out. OK, not all, but we're good on the penthouse. Best bet's to access it from the service level. Got a way in from there.

V: And Maiko, where's she?

Judy: Meeting with Hiromi. To avoid raising any suspicions.

Tom: She'll make him stay put until we're in.

V: All right. We goin' in?

Judy: Let's do this.

[They go into the elevator.]

Judy: You two head in right after us. Go straight to Clouds.

Roxanne: 'Bout fucking time.

[Heroes get off the elevator on the maintenance floor.]

Judy: Stay sharp - gongoons might be lurkin'. Gotta jack into the panel on the other side. Can you take 'em out? Meet you by the panel.

V: What then? Everyone all in position?

Judy: Tom and Roxie should already be at Clouds. We go on Maiko's signal. They'll mop up security, you deal with Hiromi. But first you gotta get into the penthouse.

V: Ya not comin' with me?

Judy: More likely not to be detected if you're alone. An' besides, I'll be more useful here. If they activate any alarms can override.

V: You gonna breach security, get me in the penthouse? Thought I could do it, but... Sorry, it's not gonna happen. Gotta manage on your own.

V: OK, on my way.

Judy: Elevator's on the other side. Be safe.

Judy: (via radio) How's the sich?

Roxanne: (via radio) We're inside, at Clouds.

Judy: (via radio) Who's takin' which floor?

Roxonne: (via radio) I'll take the lower level, Tom'll head upstairs.

Tom: (via radio) We're all set.

V: All right, on the roof.

Judy: (via radio) Jump down onto the balcony. Careful though, OK? Go to the surveillance cam in front of the security room.

[V gets into Hiromi's office to join the meeting.]

Maiko: Was hoping you'd make less trouble getting here. Luckily,

they're all jacked into virtus, it'd be game over otherwise.

Johnny: Right wrong - chicks'll give you shit no matter what you do. This one's a real charmer, too.

V: Not all girls have to be nice, Johnny. 'Sides, she's gotta deal with a gang, she shouldn't be. (to Maiko) Could've called off the odds you know. Would've been quicker, simpler

Maiko: I don't have that kind of authority. Yet.

Judy: (via radio) Why're there three guys? What's she playing at?

Maiko: That's our target. Hiromi Sato.

V: You don't have authority "yet"? Heh, you sound damn sure of yourself.

Maiko: Left no room for error. We're exactly where we need to be.

V: What're they watching?

Maiko: Demo reel of Clouds' next top doll, specially selected by yours truly. Lucky girl gonna replace Evelyn. Hope she proves smarter.

V: Where the other two?

Maiko: Target audience of today's presentation. Hiromi answers to them directly now they're gonna watch him die in a pool of his own piss.

V: This is not what we agreed.

Johnny: Look at me. See this? This is a look of un-fucking-surprise on my face.

Maiko: I know the Claws. To them, power is a question of strength, ruthlessness. This is the only way.

V: Maiko...

Maiko: I'm about to jack 'em out. They will not be chirpy after the rude awakening. One show ends, another begins. Just as good and

unforgettable, understand?

V: Maiko, our plan made no allowance for witnesses.

Maiko: A show of force, we said. And any show requires an audience. I know how this needs to play out, better than anyone. You gotta trust me. I thought this through - many times.

V: Meaning you wanna replace Hiromi.

Maiko: Mm-hm.

V: Even if that means joining the Tyger Claws?

Maiko: How the fuck else do you expect me to protect Clouds from other gangs?

V: Don't like this one bit.

Maiko: Too late for second thoughts. Tom and Roxie've done their part. Your little doll revolution is underway. Either we consolidate and win it all or let everything go to waste.

V: Do your thing.

[Maiko jacks the Tyger Claws out.]

Tyger Claws Boss: Well, she is no Parker... Wait what's going on? Who is this?

Maiko: Living proof that Hiromi Sato's time is up. This merchas already disturbed the clientele at Clouds once. He murdered Oswald Forrest. And now he's invaded Mr. Sato's private residence. As if that were not enough, this is where Hiromi's sheer incompetence has led all of us to.

[She turns on a bug screen behind the Tyger Claws]

Tyger Claw Boss: What...? What the hell?

Maiko: I have long looked upon Hiromi Sato's foolish, inept endeavors. But this... I think it's obvious he has outlived his

usefulness.

Judy: (via radio) V? What the fuck's she doin'?!

Maiko: Clouds needs new management.

Tyger Claw Boss: Am I to understand that this future manager stands before me now, speaking with such... zeal?

V: Hold on, Maiko. I think you're gettin' carried away.

Tyger Claw Boss: see not all has been agreed...

Judy: (via radio) V. You gotta take 'em down! That's why we're here.

Tyger Claw Boss: I see not all has been agreed...

V: (pulls out a gun) Bored of all this chatter. I'd rather we just cut to the quick.

[He kills all 3 Tyger Claws in pretty bloody manner.]

Maiko: V, what the hell were you thinking? Have you any idea what's gonna happen now?

V: What might that be?

Maiko: They'll have their revenge. You've turned Clouds into a ticking time bomb.

V: We can't know that for sure. Maybe the lives we cut short'll be enough for the Claws. They do profit and loss better than Militech's CEO. They'll see it's not worth it. They wiped their hands of the Mox, maybe... Clouds is due its freedom now. Time to let it go, Maiko.

Maiko: Get out. Get out now!

Judy: (via radio) All right. V, get outta there. Exit's on the lower level of the apartment. Then find the elevator. Tom and Roxie are outside and safe. They weren't followed. Get down to street level. Waitin' by the food stalls.

[V gets outside and find Judy.]

Judy: Fuck... Should've seen that comin'. Probably had this planned from the start - same sec we walked into her office. Jesus, am I a gonk.

V: Ah, don't be dramatic, Judy. There's a difference between bein' a gonk and believin' people wanna do good.

Judy: I know you do. Don't need to believe that. I just know it. Thank you. See you later, V.

V: See you around, Judy.

[Judy calls.]

V: Hey, Jude. What's up?

Judy: Ah, you know, same ol'. You?

V: I got good days, got bad days. Same as ever. You, uh, call just to see how I'm doin', or...?

Judy: Not just. Got a favor to ask you...

V: Ask away. It's never boring with you.

Judy: Interesting people aren't easily bored.

V: No chance in your company. But now that we've blown each other, what's up?

Judy: You're on a need to know basis. So, this particular mission don't require you to have no gun. Just a wetsuit.

V: Gotta say, I am intrigued... Why the wetsuit?

Judy: Can't back out now. Just gonna have to use your imagination.

V: You really know how to reel me in, don't ya?

Judy: Ain't seen nothin' yet.

V: All right then, count me in. But I gotta warn ya - I look great in a wetsuit.

Judy: Dam out past Rancho Coronado. Know it?

V: Uh, sure, what about it?

Judy: Little, uh, abandoned bungalow lakeside, Meet me there - at sundown.

V: OK. Uh... Is this a date?

Judy: Heh... You're not my type, holmes! Just show up. I'll see you there!

[V is on her way to meet Judy. He finds her sitting on the hood of her car. She is wearing a wetsuit.]

Judy: Hey, V.

V: (sits beside her) After all that went down thought you and I'd be ancient history.

Judy: Don't be a gonk...

V: Any news from the Moxes? Events, ideas?

Judy: Dunno. Don't see all that much of 'em.

V: How come?

Judy: You know how they are. Piss me off sometimes, is all.

V: So what's the latest from Clouds? Know anything?

Judy: Nothin' of any interest. Got a new situation, an' everybody's tryin' to adapt. Me too.

V: Doesn't sound like it's all OK...

Judy: Doesn't mean it isn't.

V: Somethin' got you down all of the sudden?

Judy: Um... no.

V: Judy...

Judy: Can we please not talk about Clouds, the Mox, or Arasaka and Militech and how the world's goin' to shit? Just... rather not think about any of that today, anything dark.

V: So... ready to tell me what we're doing here?

Judy: Well, been tinkerin' with virtus a lot lately and figured out a way to scroll two actors' experiences at the same time. Thought we could try it out. If you're down, of course.

V: How does one marry two separate neural tracks?

Judy: Well, at first I tried to create a single profile out of two data streams. Didn't turn out so great.

V: Must've gotten tangled up - interference, white noise...

Judy: Yeah, effect was kinda like a bad arthouse. Couple tries in, though, managed to isolate specific sensations.

V: So you load 'em onto separate neural tracks - no emo bogeys. Not bad. What do I gotta do?

Judy: You, my friend, are just gonna scroll me a virtu.

V: That's it?

Judy: Now, now, let's not get ahead of ourselves. This could be my greatest work - ever.

V: Sounds like we could do this anywhere. Why did we come all the way out here? What is this place?

Judy: Cottage belonged to someone I knew, sits empty now. I take the liberty to use it from time to time.

V: And that's where we're gonna scroll?

Judy: No, we're gonna scroll under water.

Johnny: Nope. No way. Bad idea. Tell 'er to find some other yes-man.

Judy: Whaddaya say? You in?

V: (to Johnny) Why would you say that?

Johnny: I dunno. Don't like the idea, that's all. It's just... when I think about the dark, the deep... palms that I don't fuckin' have get clammy with sweat I don't sec.

V: You're more'n welcome to stay on shore. (to Judy) Hell yeah, I'm in!

Judy: Awesome! So, uh... let's go! Got the hardware here. All right... suit up, landlubber. Let's get this scroller on ya.

V: Look pretty damn fine in that wetsuit.

Judy: Don't go there, dude.

V: Water's toxic. That not a problem?

Judy: Whole reason we're suitin' up.

V: Haven't even asked me if I know how to swim. Not worried I'll just sink to the bottom like a bag of rocks?

Judy: Eh, fifty-fifty chance, I guess. Willin' to risk it for the footage.

V: All right, let's do this. Freezin'-ass water - here I come!

Judy: OK! We're all set. You go first.

[V jumps into the water. Judy jumps right after.]

V: (via radio) Where we headed, exactly?

Judy: (via radio) 'Bout halfway to the deepest point. It'll be pitch black, but the currents are gentle - oughta be safe. Want the precise coordinates?

V: (via radio) Nah, why bother. I'll just stick close to you.

Judy: (via radio) Okie dokes.

V: (via radio) Virtus are more to you than just a way to churn out eddies, huh?

Judy: (via radio) Well, duh! Think paintings, songs... They're meant to produce emotion responses.

V: Generally how any kind of creativity works, sure.

Judy: Right. so art's a casing, trigger for emotion. Well, BDs are emotion in near pure form.

Judy: (via radio) This is it. Swim over here an' look straight at me, will ya? Great. Great, signal's clear. Just need your help with a few basic checks. Need to calibrate our gear. First up-motion sensors and scrollin'. Circle around me, swim. Great, motion calibrated. Back my way now, V. Next up - sound check. I'm 'onna hum a song, you gimme the title. Read me? Hmmm-hmmm, hmmm-hmmm...

V: (via radio) But... I hear you just fine.

Judy: (via radio) Need a wider range. Levels can't be short of perfect. Hmmm-hmmm, hmmm-hmmm...

V: (via radio) Hey, I know that! Etta Sorrentino - "Only You."

Judy: (via radio) Dead on. All right, that oughta do it.

V: (via radio) What now?

Judy: (via radio) Prepare to have your mind blown. Wait for it... Now grab this and hold on tight.

V: (via radio) Down we go!

Judy: (via radio) Impressive, huh?

V: (via radio) You wanna explore all that?

Judy: (via radio) Not me. I want you to explore it. Used to be called Laguna Bend. Just fifteen years ago, people still lived here.

V: (via radio) Yeah... I remember. NC Dam Ltd. made plans to build a dam. People protested, and the rest is history. Houses, playgrounds - all flooded. Got some connection to this place, right?

Judy: (via radio) You got it. Grew up here. Haven't been back since Laguna Bend was wiped off the map.

V: (via radio) Why're you showing me this?

Judy: (via radio) Wanna get the right emotional reactions. Got a feeling this'll be perfect for my experiment.

V: (via radio) Why's this stand to be perfect?

Judy: (via radio) Hopin' you'll be able to pick up all the unfiltered mess of emotions this place brings out in me. Like it or not, you'll react to those feelings. That's what I wanna capture.

V: (via radio) Whatever you wanna do, Judy. Guess I'm with you.

Judy: (via radio) Played this moment, coming back, so many times in my head. Taken me years... Workin' up the nerve for this.

V: (via radio) Why didn't you come earlier?

Judy: (via radio) Good question... Easy answer would be that I didn't have time, gear, stars weren't ever aligned... Truth is, the very idea just felt... weird. Flo's Diner - best eatery in town. Only one at that too... Burgers weren't amazing. Too greasy, big. ‘Course, I say that now. Back then they were the best thing I'd ever chewed and swallowed. And next door... That's where we lived. Me and my grandparents. Just lemme know when you wanna forge ahead.

V: (via radio) Looks like this fell off your “one and only” eatery.

Judy: (via radio) Let's see now, your childhood tasted like scopdogs from Capitán Caliente. With habanero sauce, extra hot. ‘Course, tasted even better when you stole 'em off the stand.

V: (via radio) (Streetkid) You know what they say - It ain't Caliente if it don’t burn on the way in... and out. Got somethin' here... Looks like an old photo cam.

Judy: (via radio) DP-350 - practically an antique.

V: (via radio) You like it?

Judy: (via radio) You kidding? It's awesome!

V: (via radio) That's a weird place for a framed picture.

Judy: (via radio) Water probably carried it outta someone's house. Anything to make out?

V: (via radio) Nah, not much.

V: (via radio) Hockey stick? Was there a skating rink here?

Judy: I wish. Played street hockey on rollerblades.

Kid: (voice) Quit schmoozin' Alvarez! We're losin' 'cause of you!

Little Judy: (voice) Coming! They're dead meat anyway!

Kid: (voice) So... will you go out with me?

Little Judy: (voice) Sorry, gotta go. They're callin'!

Judy: Just lemme know when you wanna forge ahead.

V: (via radio) Here, take this camera, Better off in your hands than sittin' here, collectin' algae.

Judy: (via radio) Gosh, thanks!

V: (via radio) What about your parents?

Judy: (via radio) Dad was never in the picture. Mom died when I was tiny. Can barely remember her. Still have her picture, but y'know... See a stronger there.

Kid: (voice) Judy, Judy, watch out for her cooties!

Kid: (voice) Alvarez is so poor, she can't even afford to have parents! Hahaha!

V: (via radio) What was that? Those voices...?

Judy: (via radio) Voices? Didn't hear anything but you just now.

V: (via radio) What was it like - livin' with your grandparents? How were they?

Judy: (via radio) Grandad had a real knack for things technical. Taught

me everything I know. And the stories he told... Ah, never got bored listening to 'em. And grandma was... temperamental. Hot one second, cool as steel the next.

V: (via radio) Temperamental, huh? Explains a lot. Is that a dominant family trait?

Judy: (via radio) Heh, no idea what you're talkin' about.

V: (via radio) Where'd your grandparents go? Night City?

Judy: (via radio) Yeah, for a couple years. Rented the unit that's mine now. But they hated the city. Moved up to Oregon, still go and visit 'em sometimes.

V: (via radio) Let's keep goin', Judy.

Judy: (via radio) Aye, aye, cap'n. Follow me.

V: We lookin' for anything in particular here?

Judy: (via radio) Nah. Can't hurt to look around, though. Pickin' up very chill vibes. Feels like we're outside of time - like, in a snow globe. After that we can see what lies up ahead.

V: (via radio) Hard to imagine anything that could be more out of place in an underwater world.

Judy: Mmm... Bottled water?

V: Heh... Touché, Judy, touché. Gotta say, I don't really get why they left their wheels behind when they had to evacuate.

Judy: (via radio) Hey, how old you think I am?! These hunks of metal have got half a century on 'em. When I was about yea high they were already here... and not in much better shape. S'good cover for playing MaxTac and psychos, though.

V: (via radio) What, this isn't yours?

Judy: (via radio) Poor thing... Been here all alone for twenty years...

V: (via radio) So it is yours.

Judy: (via radio) Nah... It was Jenni Chapman's.

Little Judy: (voice) I don't have your stupid doll! But we can look for it together.

V: (via radio) You took her doll?

Judy: (via radio) As if! Hid it... Was a monster...

V: (via radio) You hid it? Why?

Judy: (via radio) 'Cause I thought only losers played with dolls.. What I really wanted was for her to notice me. Ahh, the days when dolls were just kids' toys and nothing else...

V: (via radio) Wanna see what's further on.

Judy: (via radio) Come on, then. Wanna show you somethin'. Got no idea how weird it feels, swimming through here...

V: (via radio) Where you used to run as a kid. Where daily life grinded along. Can imagine it a bit.

Judy: (via radio) Heh. Church hasn't aged at all. Always looked old and... like it'd landed here from outer space. Bells were cracked too. Gave off this eerie, atonal clang. Weird... I had no memory of that seconds ago. Now I can almost hear 'em.

V: (via radio) I don't know how it's possible, but... I think I hear those bells too.

Judy: (via radio) Seriously? You can hear my memories...? Must be a side effect. Ah! Closed... Shame.

V: (via radio) Could look for another way inside.

Judy: Be my guest.

V: (via radio) Did you like goin' to this church?

Judy: (via radio) Never actually "went" to church. Never even really

paid attention to it, it was just... there, y'know? Once we knew Laguna Bend was to be flooded, people gathered here to plan a protest.

V: (via radio) Did it achieve anything?

Judy: (via radio) Look around...

V: (via radio) I found an opening. I think we're safe to go through here.

Judy: (via radio) On my way. Snuck in here once when no one was around. Stood at the altar and tried to imagine what went through the padre's mind, lookin' at all those people. Back then I wondered how he could read people's thoughts, know everything about 'em. Then I screamed at the top of my lungs to check the acoustics.

V: (via radio) Y-ya didn't get... chased off?

Judy: (via radio) Ran out myself. Echo I got back scared the living bejesus out of me. Thought it was that crush I had on Jenni Chapman. All that guilt I tried yelling out... flew right back in my face.

V: (via radio) Agarrghhh!

[surrounded by the screams of little Judy, V gets sick and loses consciousness.]

[They come to at the pier.]

Judy: V! Please... Oh, thank fuck! You're alive...

V: What happened...?

Judy: You passed out.

V: How'd you manage to lift me out?

Judy: Dunno. Didn't think about it. Just did what I had to do. Hey! Careful, easy now...

V: So, you're sayin'... you saved my life. Thank you.

Johnny: Told you diving into this toxic waste was gonna end badly. But you just don't fuckin' listen!

Judy: Heard somethin' weird just now.. Sounded like.. complaining?

Johnny: "Complaining"? That the best you got, kid?

V: You heard that...? S'incredible. Never happened before... But no worries, it's... Johnny Silverhand's construct. You heard his thoughts, not mine.

Judy: Johnny...? What?!

V: You remember the Relic? The reason for the whole damn heist... Well, Johnny Silverhand's digitized psyche was on it, and well... his personality's seepin' into my mind, taking over. You could say his mind's overwriting mine.

Judy: Oh shit. V... That mean you're... disappearing? Can you stop it?

Johnny: And here we go...

V: I got an idea, a plan, but... I just don't know if it'll... well, work.

Johnny: Can't tell which of you I've about enough of more...

Judy: Doubt you should go back to the city just now... I'm pretty beat too - last thing I wanna do is drive. Let's stay the night. Whaddaya think?

Judy: Let's stay the night. Whaddaya think?

V: Stay... where, exactly? We gonna camp on the shore?

Judy: No. In there. Crash there sometimes after dives. How 'bout it?

V: Why the hell... not? Who's cottage is that, then? You said you knew the owner.

Judy: One of our neighbors was hell-bent on staying in Laguna Bend. Badges literally dragged him out of his house before the water came

in. So he built himself another house as close as he possibly could, but... then he got sick. Water was way more toxic back then. Must be chilled to the bone. I'll brew a pot. How do you take yours?

V: Uh, black, please.

Judy: Like the heart of a merc. Ahh... Forgot to start the generator.

V: A generator? Heh... what's next - jacuzzi? Finnish sauna?

Judy: No, but there is runnin' water.

V: I can turn it on.

Judy: You're gonna take it easy.

V: Promise to take it slow.

Evelyn: (voice) 'Course I will be.

V: Think you could've fine-tuned the emotive wave transmitters better back there. Feed I was pickin' up felt a bit... flat - I wanna say?

Judy: (voice) Speakin' of harm's way. Know what I see lookin' at you? Walking, talking corpses.

V: Power's up!

Judy: (voice) You go that route, city'll always win. So be careful.

Evelyn: (voice) 'Course I will be.

V: Your little spa's open for business.

Judy: Shit...

V: Judy...? What was that? Couldn't hear you clearly. Somethin' the matter?

Judy: No... Nothing.

V: (sits beside her) Don't bullshit me, Judy. We're still synced, remember?

Judy: Clouds has... gone to shit. Tyger Claw nonecks took revenge for Hiromi and the rest. There was a firefight. Tom's dead. Roxanne

barely got out alive... House's closed until further notice. Rather not talk or think about it... Didn't wanna tell you... Didn't want you to think I blame you in any way.

V: Why would you even assume I'd think that?

Judy: Dunno, I-- I'm sorry. Let's just kill the subject. Think I'll... go lie down. I'm beat.

[She lies on her couch and immediately falls asleep.]

Johnny: Grr, this chick gets on my nerves. Let's you and me blow. Just don't wake her up.

V: Judy pisses you off - why? 'Cause she cares about people? And that reminds you you're a narcissistic asshole?

Johnny: She's all over the place. Refuses to take the door, jumps out a window, then acts all surprised when she gets hurt.

V: She reminds you of Alt, doesn't she?

Johnny: Oh, for-- No! Nobody's even close to Alt and what me and her had. Let's get the fuck away, can we?

V: You fuckin' blow if you can. Not about to leave her alone, middle of nowhere.

Johnny: Ugh, can't talk to you when you get this... sentimental. Waste of words. Least take a nap so we don't have to argue.

[V goes into the second room and falls on the couch and falls asleep, too. The next morning...]

Judy: Will ya sit with me a while?

V: Mornin'.

Judy: Here's your coffee. Finally. Y'know... yesterday, I think I'd made

up my mind… Actually called you 'cause I wanted to say goodbye. City's chewed me up, an' it's spittin' me out.

V: (Streetkid) Look. Night City's not for everyone. I grew up here, thought nothin' could surprise me…

Judy: And now?

V: I'd pack up my shit and bail too, if I could… But… it's just not the right time.

Judy: Gimme your hand, V.

V: Why? What for?

Judy: Don't say anything. Just gimme your hand. All set, congrats. Just gave you unlimited access to my pad.

V: Whoa… Askin' me to move in?

Judy: I-If it's what you want. Or just drop by when the urge grabs you.

V: Dunno what to say… Nobody's ever done anything like this for me. Really shows trust.

Judy: Take care, V.

V: This really it? Last time we see each other didn't seem so set on leaving just a sec ago.

Judy: See no reason to delay. I'll stay here a couple days… then head off. It's been nice knowin' ya, V. See ya… And hit me up on the holo sometimes.

V: I'll see ya, Judy.

[V goes to the city to meet Takemura.]

Takemura: Ah, you are here. There is no time to waste, V.

V: Why? What're we doin' here?

Takemura: You shall learn soon. I acquired some information of my own. Do you know who most wished to honor Arasaka-sama with the parade? His murderer. The irony makes me sick.

V: What's in it for Yorinobu? Doesn't seem like the kind who'd core to honor tradition.

Takemura: That is so. Japanese heritage is one element. Yorinobu will also put on a display of power. The floats are sure to be beautiful, but the wizened eye will see in them a hidden message to his foes.

V: What message'd that be?

Takemura: "I am here, gumin-domo. Watch your backs."

V: Not one for subtlety, is he? Still don't see how this gets us anywhere.

Takemura: I have had an idea. Look to the sky. The dashi floats will pass precisely this way. If I could just get onto Hanako-sama's float, I could speak with her in private.

V: Get there how?

Takemura: Why, jump, of course.

V: Expectation's way too high, Goro. Couldn't pull that off even if you still had your fancy implants.

Takemura: I have thought of a solution. While you were occupied with your shady dealings, I learned more about the floats. They are all kept in one place - Arasaka Industrial Park. It is there that they prepare them. We need only to break into the compound, find the right float and injector virus into its system. You will then be able to disable any security before I sneak inside.

V: Lots of ways to skin this particular cat, y'know. Gonna need--

Takemura: I know what you need. It is taken care of. I have an infected shard. It was not cheap, but the man who sold it to me guaranteed it will work.

V: Where'd you get this shard?

Takemura: Across the canal.

V: Kabuki? Might actually be half-decent soft, then. And if it isn't, got a few tricks up my sleeve, too.

Takemura: This is good to know. Let us move on. To take control of

the float is one thing, but not all. The security concerns me - the snipers especially. I will be an easy target. But I may have an answer. Okada san mentioned the city cameras. If we gain access to them, we will see exactly where the snipers are. You can deal with them as I advance.

V: Think I see where this is goin'. Got me doin' all the dirty work.

Tokemu: Do you wish to trade places? What exactly would you say to her? “Hello, my name is V”? Hanako-sama knows me. Only I can do this. And now... What would you say to a small test? We must try the shard. The camera control room is in front of us. You must get inside and infect the network, that is all.

V: Uh-huh. And in the meantime you'll do what? Crack open a can o' sud?

Takemura: I would not touch alcohol at work. I will watch your back. Now, get to it.

[V sneaks to the control room and infect the network with the shard.]

V: It fuckin' worked!

[He returns to Takemura.]

Takemura: And?

V: Done. System's ours.

Takemura: The shard works. Good - the easy work we have done. To break into Arasaka Industrial Park will not be such a “bed of roses.” But before we discuss that… Sit. I have not eaten since yesterday.

[They sit down at a small food cart. Takemura orders a meal.]

Johnny: Can't believe I'm sayin' this, but this ‘Saka scum might actually prove useful. He's a well-trained dog - needs orders, that's all. And when he outlives his purpose, we'll flatline him.

V: He's not on his A game, sure. But even without implants he could decomish us easily.

Johnny: Where's that come from? Ever seen him in action?

V: Nah. Just know… from the way he walks, look in his eye…

Johnny: We'll come back to this later.

Takemura: What is this?!

Cook: Heh, Yakitori.

Takemura: (throws food on the plate) OK. I have laid the plan. One.

We break into Arasaka Industrial Park. One and a half - we hack Hanako-sama's float. Two. During the parade with my help you eliminate any snipers. Three. I get onto the float. Four. I convince Hanako-sama of the truth.

V: Forgot five - Oda zeroes us and pisses on our corpses. He won't ever be less than a foot away from Hanako.

Takemura: Oda would not dare raise his hand against me.

V: What about me?

Takamura: That is a different matter. I would advise you to watch your distance.

V: Well, sounds like a suicide run, but done dumber shit than this so...

Takemura: Things even more stupid than stealing from Arasaka?

V: Nope. Dumber yet, no. Set the bar pretty high with that one...

Takemura: Now, we part. Reconnaissance is required.

Johnny: What're you doin'? Don't let him off his leash! Let him stray even a couple of feet ‘n’ you can say goodbye to his fuckin' honor. Go with him, V.

V: You're a stranger in a strange land. Goin' with you.

Takemura: Hmm, true. And you with your hands, skills, mind of a thief... Agreed. This we will do together. Cook! Louder, louder!

[They watch TV hanging on the cart.]

Takemura: Yorinobu...

V: In the flesh.

Takemura: He eliminated the last obstacle between himself and complete power.

V: And they...

Takemura: Surrendered it to him. Arasaka... An empire built to last. Before Yorinobu set fire to it from the inside. All of this began with him - the factions power struggles... All of this... kuso (shit)...

V: Got factions inside Arasaka? What are they?

Takemura: There are three - Kiji, Hato and Taka. Kiji longs for stability, the old order. They are united behind Hanako-sama. The liberal wing, Hato, support Michiko-sama - Saburo's granddaughter. I know little about her. And then there is Taka, treacherous dogs who support Yorinobu. Not to mention even smaller factions, which--

V: Tell me about 'em some other time. Where's Yorinobu's rebellious streak come from?

Takemura: No one knows this. Perhaps soon I shall ask him. In person.

V: Why'd Saburo tolerate it all? Can't get my head around it. Coulda kept his son on a short leash.

Takemira: Arasaka-sama was a strong and disciplined man. The strongest man I have ever known. And yet, at a critical moment, he showed a weakness.

V: For Yorinobu.

Takemura: For his daughter. When Yorinobu formed his band of hounds, declared war on his own family. Arasaka-sama could have crushed him with one word. Yet he did not. For he did not wish his daughter to suffer. When Yorinobu returned, his tail between his legs, she persuaded her father to give him a second chance. Do you understand? Hanako-sama saved Yorinobu from the consequences of his deeds.

V: Wait... ya think she's complicit in Saburo's murder?

Takemura: I think we are all to blame. We allowed ourselves to be

tricked. But we will correct this soon. Will you join me?

V: Sure, why not.

Takemura: Let us go from here.

Cook: I hope you enjoyed it. Please come again.

Takemura: Sawdust and plastic. Come.

[They drive to Arasaka Industrial Park.]

Takemura: I have found a good place. To observe. We must just climb up here. Now this way. Fortune smiles to us. It seems no one is here today. I would call this is a beautiful view of the city, if...

V: If?

Takemura: If there was anything to admire.

V: Hate Night City that much?

Takemura: Hm. Perhaps I am simply "homesick," as you say. Now. You must look for vulnerabilities, weaknesses, while I try to think of a diversion. Arasaka cannot discover our intentions. A bit of sabotage is just what we need to divert their attention. You will have the best view on the left. I will try here. This old scope should be good for

Play It Safe

something. Shall we begin?

V: Oh, can you run and grab us a pizza?

Takemura: Take-out food? No, just no. If I had time and ingredients, I would prepare some onigiri with cod... or with grilled salmon. No. Even better. With umeboshi plums. Mm. Arasaka-sama's favorite appetizer. Simple, tasty and filling. I found him chewing once, pride on his face. It was a protein bar.

V: Saburo Arasaka with a protein bar? Get outta here....

Takemura: Like a true soldier. OK, enough, or we will both grow hungry. Shall we begin?

V: Let's do this.

[V uses his eyes to explore the compound.]

V: Got eyes on the comms system. S' lotta guards.

Takemura: I could use comms for a diversion.

V: Footbridge, but it's guarded.

Takemura: We will use it to enter if there is no other way.

V: Antenna - security hub's liable to be in that building.

Takemura: Perfect for sabotage!

V: Transformer by the wall - see it?

Takemura: We should use it to step up. This is not bad.

V: Camouflaged turrets by the gate.

Takemura: A last resort. I do not wish to die there.

V: Looks like a service tunnel by the road there.

Takemura: It could lead to the warehouses.

V: Armored door. Sealed tight. Pipes. See 'em?

Takemura: We could use them to get inside.

V: Let's do this. Trucks drive up regularly.

Takemura: Are we to hijack one...?

V: Think I've seen everything...

Takemura: We have what we came for.

V: So? We goin' in?

Takemura: Hmph. Is this what you said before entering Konpeki Plaza. I wish to be certain we have not overlooked anything. We should wait and observe. If nothing out of the ordinary happens, then yes - "We goin' in!"

V: Sounds sensible. Better get comfy.

SOME TIME LATER

V: Khe-khe-khe...

Takemura: V?

V: What?

[Taremura ordered a take-out pizza and noodles!]

Takemura: Gulp. No sudden movements.

V: Do you see it?

Takemura: The cat.

V: Fine-lookin' feline. Thought they'd all disappeared from the city.

Takemura: It is the first animal I see in Night City. Except cockroaches, of course.

V: First it was birds, then dogs - cats actually put up a fight longest.

Takemura: Perhaps it is a bakeneko?

V: A “bakeneko?” What's that?

Takemura: It is a cat spirit - it brings misfortune, can restore the dead back to life.

V: Believe in ghosts?

Takemura: The Relic lets you talk to the dead, does not? I believe we are past belief. My grandmother knew many, many stories about kitsune kappa - bakeneko, too.

V: Where'd you grow up, anyway?

Takemura: I am from the slums of Chiba-11. Once, when I was desperate to leave there, I... Egh, bad memories washed away by time. I long only for the simple days of childhood.

V: Childhood memories, let's see... Hoppin’ buildings, runnin' away from badges. Iron taste of blood from a split lip..

Takemura: I remember the chemical stench of the cand where we boys washed our shirts. Corporate transporters sometimes passed through our slum. Arasaka selecting children - but only the clean ones.

V: Transporters, you say.

Takemura: Armored and armed. Chiba-11 had the most murders in all Japan. It probably still has.

V: Lemme guess - so they could turn 'em into corposoldiers?

Takemura: Exactly. When they chose me, I felt I had won the lottery. In the army I was given everything I lacked before - discipline, regular meals, and when I proved I was gifted - an education.

V: So how's a corpo rookie go from cleanin' latrines to bein' Saburo Arasaka's bodyguard?

Takemura: The highest grades at the academy, service in the special forces, and Arasaka-sama's unmatched eye for talent.

V: You're not sayin' Saburo fell for you at first sight.

Takemura: To make the right decisions with imperfect knowledge... that is how you become the world's most powerful man. One

hundred candidates standing at attention, and Arasaka-sama looked into each of our souls and chose the one who would serve him best.

V: And all you had to do in return was kill Saburo's enemies.

Takemura: I sense that you judge me. And yet you have no right to. Unlike you and your friend Mr. Welles, was not arrogant, I did not take the easy path.

V: Sayin' you got no dirt on your hands?

Takemura: There are no clean hands. But it is important how they become dirty.

V: So spill - how'd you sully yours?

Takamura: Arasaka gave me what no one else could - values I could honor, live for. This was most important. You dirty your hands for money. I, in the name of principles.

V: Wasn't judging you.

Takemura: Untrue. You oppose the corporations, their order, their world, in a mindless way, yet you offer no worthy alternative.

V: Take a look around. It's here - your corporate world in its glorious splendor.

Takemura: You show me filthy streets as if no other world exists, as if nothing else is possible. What of the millions who work for Arasaka and receive stability, safety?

V: And Chiba-11's slumrats? They're there, scraping scrops out of scoptins... Corps decided that, too.

Takemura: We cannot fix everything at once.

V: You already forget what happened at Tom's Diner? People hate corps more than anything. Can't blame 'em, elther. Got some regrets, but kleppin' from Arasaka ain't one of 'em.

Takemura: Sometimes I wish to become a nomad. To leave this world, forget everything.

V: Never too late to change.

Takemura: What is your expression... "One cannot teach an old dog new tricks." Do you know what I think?

V: What's that?

Takemura: That day in Konpeki, we both have lost someone important. And we are not at peace with this, so we seek conflict, argue eagerly.

V: Finally startin' to make some sense.

Takemura: It is the duty of the living to atone for the dead. Hanako-sama shall aid us in our mission.

Johnny: Or she'll make sure we die for good.

V: The bakeneko got sick of us, looks like.

Takemura: It will find its own way. As will we.

AT NIGHT

Takemura:I think it is time to do something, hm?

V: (in pain again) Fuck... gettin' worse...

Takemura: You do not look so bad. I will be in touch. The diversionary action - that is mine to do.

[V drives to Arasaka Industrial Park entrance.]

V: I'm in.

Takemura: (via phone) Good. Now try to enter the warehouse. I will draw their attention away. Mhm, rather clever.

V: That's why I'm here.

Takemura: (via phone) Very well. I have reached the roof. I will be in their communication system soon. You are an easy target when you step out. Huh, even I see you now!

V: OK, I'm in.

Takemura: (via phone) Find the largest float. They are controlled from inside. The tech, it could be a ordinary terminal.

V: Gotcha. How's things at your end?

Takemura: (via phone) Good. I will reach the control room and make a terrible mess. Very well, I am ready. When you finish, I will make the systems sick.

V: OK, float's ours to do with as we please. You can fly it to Tokyo if you want.

Takemura: Haha, I just may do that. Good work! Now it is my turn. Can you see? Terrible chaos! Even the roof is slowly... V, the roof. That is your way out! There are buildings around, smaller ones. Use them to come down.

V: It fuckin' worked!

Takemura: Excellent work, V.

V: OK, what now?

Takemura: Now, we retreat into the shadows and arm ourselves with patience. I will contact you before the parade. Until then, try not to get into any more trouble.

V: As if I wasn't in enough already...

[Some time later V drives to Japantown bazaar to meet with Takemura.]

Takemura: Mhm, V. Just in time.

V: Aw, Goro? If you're here to jump, remember that there's help available. There's a 'round-the-clock hotline...

Takemura: That is not funny... The parade will soon begin. I adjusted the data from Okada-san. I advise you to examine it yourself.

[V inserts the shard into his neck.]

Takemura: To begin with the malware works, truly! Much better than

Search and Destroy

I anticipated. Our eyes and ears are in the guard room. I observed the CCTV, and I know where the sniper positions are. They are a trio. You must make each harmless... before they do the same to me. There are many ways to reach them. The first is nearby - he should not be a problem. The second is worse... You will have to climb. As for the third, he hides on the footbridge over the street. We are here... Hanako-sama's platform will stop here, close to the emergency exit we will use when all is done. From these points you will have a clear view of the parade. But the snipers will see things even better. If they notice you - BANG! No more thief. If this sounds dangerous, consider that I must leap to the float, enter through a window and meet Hanako-sama face-to-face. The last is what I fear the most. Is all this clear? Are you ready?

V: Wait. If things go to shit, we got a backup plan?

Takemura: What do you think? I am accused of betraying Arasaka. Soon I will try to confront the sister of the CEO in person. There are no backup plans. This one must work.

V: I'm ready. Question is, are you?

Takemura: I formed this plan, did I not?

V: All the while ignoring one crucial element - your “friend” Oda.

Takemura: Oda is a man of honor. He would not dare raise his hand

against me.

V: Maybe. But you're gonna be droppin' in on Hanako by surprise.

Takamura: Huh, you have a point. Instinct and reflexes Win out at the moments like this.

V: So?

Takemura: So I can only hope that I am still faster than he is.

V: Stay safe, Goro.

SOME TIME LATER

Takemura: (via phone) I am in position. The floats have started to move. Remember to be careful or you will face Arasaka drones. I also spotted a netrunner in an Arasaka uniform. She is somewhere hidden.

V: OK, good to go.

Takemura: (via phone) Then let us begin. You must reach all snipers before Hanako-sama's float appears. You are close. He is almost in front of you. He is watching the crowd, not his back.

V: (quietly) Won't know what hit 'im.

[V kills the first sniper.]

V: Goro? I took out the one closer.

Takemura: (via phone) Now you must leap to the balcony by the green arrow and take the elevator. Take the footbridge at the top to cross the street. V, this is important. Oda is speaking to someone. I am linking you in. We both can listen.

Oda: (via phone) Again. Security is substandard! It meets none of our norms! Hanako-sama should not be here!

Unknown Caller: (via phone) You questioning Yorinobu's orders? Do your damn job.

Oda: (via phone) Understood. Over and out.

Takemura: (via phone) Mhh, it is just as we expected. Oda is here. I will contact you with any news.

Johnny: I know that borged out ogre! Adam fuckin' Smasher!

V: Guy who killed you, right?

Johnny: Guy?! Motherfucker's barely human! But hey know what? I'm glad he's here.

V: You're glad?

Johnny: Seein' as I woke up in a world without any Saburo, I'll have to be satisfied with Smasher.

V: You gotta be satisfied? You got fuck-all to lose!

Johnny: All right, fine - we. Your finger on the fuckin' trigger, I guess.

Takemura: (via phone) Try to reach the maintenance area. You can climb up from there.

Johnny: Catwalk don't look too stable... Sure Takemura didn't plan a little "whoopsy-daisy" for ya?

V: Fuck! Almost fell.

Takemura: (via phone) Carefully, you must not draw attention!

Johnny: Told ya so.

Takemura: You will have to get down somehow. Just be careful. Yes, just so. Don't rush. I need you alive, not a corpse below. Just a few feet more, and he's yours.

[V kills the second sniper.]

V: What do soldiers say? Target down.

Takemura: (via phone) Good words to hear. You will find a door to a staircase at the end of the room. It's the shortest route to the next sniper. He positioned himself high.

V: Keep you posted.

Takemura: (via phone) V? It is Oda again! Listen!

Oda: (via phone) We have to announce that public safety has been compromised! She must be extracted! At once!

Smasher: (via phone) Arasaka is fully capable of protecting its principals.

Oda: (via phone) Ask your boss what he values more - the Arasaka image or his sister's life!

Smasher: (via phone) The situation is in hand. Over and out.

Takemura: (via phone) Did you hear? They know something. Perhaps much! We must hurry. Try to reach the maintenance area. You can climb up from there. And if that doesn't work, you can use the footbridge to your right. Watch out for the float Jets. Unless you intend to get cooked. I would keep my head low. Those pipes look

strong. Try to climb them. Be careful - this is a construction area. We would not want the workers to alert security. A shooter patrols the footbridge.

[V kills the last sniper.]

V: Welp, that'll be all.

Takemura: Yes, apparently. Well done. One problem remains.

V: And that is?

Takemura: The Arasaka netrunner. She has taken control of all the networks. You must get rid of her. We will not be able to hijack the float otherwise She hides in an unfinished apartment building, near to the second sniper's nest.

V: OK, on my way. Shit... Not good...

Takemura: (via phone) Now, V! I have her attention! Pull out her link!

V: (pulls the cable out of the runner's head) Been on a while. Time for a break.

[He is attacked by Oda with two bright red swords. He is fast and tireless.]

V: Fuck! Course you're here!

Oda: I warned you. You should have quit and left the city! You leave me no choice! Still you struggle?! Let us try another way! And Takemura - Where is he?! Fearful to face his apprentice?! You... will not touch her..... will not let you!

[V defeat him.]

V: I... I managed to...

Takemura: Oda... Is he dead?

V: He's breathin... For now...

Takemura: Please, V. Show him mercy. There should be nothing standing in your way now. We press forward.

V: OK, preem. Online and in the system. Hanako's inside.

Takemura: What is she doing?

V: Tryna call someone, I think.

Takemura: Try to listen. Do not forget to disarm the alarms. I must be able to enter.

Honoko: 危険だと警告されたの。オダとも連絡が取れないし、何か変だわ (I was alerted of a threat. Oda is not answering. Something isn't right.)

Yorinobu: パレードを中止すれば、弱さを離したと思われる (If we cancel the celebrations, it will be taken as a sign of weakness.)

Hanako: 弱さ?誰の?あなたの? (Weakness? Whose? Yours?)

Yorinobu: 俺たちだ (Ours.)

Hanako: 私が参加したのは、あくまでもお父様を追悼するため (I only agreed to this to honor the memory of our father.) 操り人形になるためじゃないわ (But now I've started to feel like your puppet.)

Yorinobu: この見世物では、みんなに役割がある。ミチコは文句を言ってないぞ (Everyone has their role to play in this spectacle, Michiko has no problem with that.) だが、お前が言うなら中止してもいい。全部やめだ。お前の安全が第一だから (But I understand. One word from you and we can end this, it can all be over. Your safety is most important to me.)

Hanako: 兄さん・・・(Yorinobu?) やり終えましよっ (We must finish it.) ありがとう、ハナコ。せつかくの式典だ---やり終えなければ、海いが残る(Thank you, Hanako. It would have been shame not to finish so heartwarming a ceremony.)

V: Goro? All systems jammed. It's now or never.

Hanako: お父様・・・(For father.)

[Takemura enters.]

Takemura: ハナコ様 (Hanako-sama.)

Hanako: あなたは・・・ (It's you...)

Talkemuro: お許しを。どうか、話だけでもお聞きください (Please forgive me Hanako-sama. I only ask that you listen to me.) サブロウ様は・・・。 (Your father...)

Hanako: 父のことを口にしないで! (How dare you speak of him?!)

Takemura: これが、俺にできる最後のご奉仕なのです (This is the last thing I can do for him.) サブロウ様の死について真実を明かすことが (To reveal to you the truth about his death.) ハナコ様、無礼を働きたくありません。しかし... (Hanako-sama, please. Don't make me do this...)

[He shoots her with some weird gun with a purple flash.]

Takemura: V, run!

V: (disconnecting) Shit! Shit! Shit!

Johnny: He shot her?!

V: Whatever he did, now we're really fucked!

Johnny: knew we couldn't trust him! What happened to keepin' him on his leash? We'd best delta the fuck out here.

Takemura: (via phone) V? Are you secure?

V: Yeah... for now! Lost your fuckin' mind?!

Takemura: (via phone) There is no time to explain. We must meet.

V: Where are you?

Takemura: (via phone) An abandoned apartment block on Vine Street. Second floor, number three-zero-three. Knock four times! Hurry!

[V drives to Takemura's hideout.]

Takemura: OK. Come inside, quick. I feared they had caught you.

V: Now're you gonna tell me what the fuck you were thinkin'?!

Takemura: I used a sedative. She tried to enable her tracker. I had no choice. I offered her some tea...

V: You kidnap Hanako Arasaka and offer her a cup of fuckin' tea?!

Takemura: Yes... She respectfully declined. Tell her the truth about Yorinobu, no embellishment. And state your terms clearly. Perhaps to you she will listen.

Takemura: ハナコ様・・・ 彼が例の人物です (Hanako-sama... This is the man I spoke of.) どうか話を聞いてあげてください (Please, listen to what he has to say.)

V: I was there that night at Konpeki Plaza, I saw Saburo Arasaka die. He wasn't poisoned. That's a lie your brother made up and spread. Yorinobu is the murderer.

Hanako: You must be mad to think I will listen to such nonsense.

V: Why? My word mean shit to you?

Takemura: Hanako-sama, I apologize on his behalf...

V: Oh, shut up, Goro! Was s'posed to be honest. Well, that's what I'm bein'! Fine, maybe I am just a two-bit thief... but I'm the two-bit thief that stole that fuckin' Relic off you. Slotted it in, took a bullet to the

brain, died...

Tapeworm

Hanako: You... died?

V: Oh yeah. And now I got Johnny fuckin' Silverhand in there, and I'll do anything to get him out. So I got exactly nothin' to lose. But you got lots.

Takemura: Hanako-sama! V is living proof of the terrible crime your brother committed! We can confirm every word he speaks if only you will help him with the Relic. Hanako-sama? Did you hear that? Go and check.

V: I got a bad feelin' about this...

[He goes out into the next room and... the apartment building begins to be bombarded by a helicopter.]

Takemura: Argh... Not now! Arasaka - they have found us!

V: Dammit!

[Elite Arasaka squad bursting in.]

Arasaka Assault Squad: On the ground asshole. Don't move!

[Shelling causes the floor of the dilapidated building to collapse and

the V to fall down.]

Johnny: Keep low and eyes three-sixty! They're in the hallway!

[V runs to help Takemura.]

Johnny: The fuck you doin'? You lost it? He's beyond any sort of help!

Takemura: うおおおお! (Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!) You should not have returned! You will die here with me!

V: Thank me later! Need to find a way out now - fast!

Takemura: There are empty rooms to the right! It's our only chance!

[V and Takemura make their way out of the building. V falls on the asphalt.]

V: Oh shit...

Takemura: Be careful! We must go different ways! Alone we have a better chance!

V: Really?! Think so?!

Takemura: Then go! Now!

[Some time later. Some motel.]

Johnny: Think they make these motels especially for royal fuck-ups like us? AC's busted, dirty needles under the mattress, shitter's clogged… No, for real - who fuckin' comes here to sleep? We're a couple miles outside Night City… Someone leavin' town just keeps drivin'. Somebody goin' there sleeps in the damn city! What good's a motel in the middle of nowhere? I'll tell you who sleeps here. Fuckin' losers, that's who.

V: Johnny?

Johnny: Yeah?

V: Shut your gonk mouth. Please. Sayin' random shit ain't gonna help anyone.

Johnny: How the tables have turned…

V: Johnny, for cryin' out--

Johnny: Now we're the ones sittin' around, waitin' for 'Saka assault squads to storm in. Anyone knocks, blast the fuckin' door. No warning.

V: And if it's Goro?

Johnny: Who're you kiddin'? Been twenty-four hours since we split up. Complete radio silence. Rest in peace, bastard.

V: Saw him yourself. Even ‘thout his implants, he was a good fighter. He'll pull through.

Johnny: Doesn't matter how good you are in Night City. On your own, you're fucked. Hear that?

V: Car.

Johnny: At this hour? In this place? Fuck! Just one? Finger on the trig, V. Not a word.

Stranger: I have a message for V.

Johnny: Don't touch that door.

Stranger: I know you're in there!

V: Who's there?! I said, who's there!

Stranger: Want the whole motel to hear, or you will you let me in?

V: I'm armed. Don't try anything.

Stranger: Finally... Ugh... That on the wall... is that blood?

V: Yeah. Knocked the last star off this dump. So? You were saying? Got a message?

Stranger: Sittin' right here. It'll start soon.

V: What'll start?

Johnny: It's a doll.

V: Or a proxy.

Proxy: Ahem. I must make one thing clear. I still think you are mad, but... I must make one thing clear. I still think you are mad, but...

V: Hanako...? That you?

Proxy: But I can fool myself no longer. I believe you.

V: Any word from Goro? We split up when we went on the run.

Proxy: Takemura is in a secure location. That is all you need to know at this time.

V: How'd you find me?

Proxy: Did you really think it would be enough to leave the city...?

Takemura mentioned he had placed a tracker on you. Yet even had he not... when Arasaka wishes to find someone, it finds them.

Johnny: Porcelain bitch.

V: Damn shame you didn't believe me earlier. Goro might've still been alive had you.

Proxy: If you invoke his name, remember he did everything for this conversation to happen. That demands respect.

V: Fine.

Proxy: Yorinobu planted a tanto in the corporation's very heart. I must act while the wound is fresh. And you will help me. You are living proof of his crime and treason. And you will help me. You are living proof of his crime and treason.

V: Decided already, is that it? You're in no position to set conditions.

Proxy: And what if... obliged you to cooperate?

V: Have to send a swarm of proxies to do that. This here, talkin', is because you're alone. You don't have anyone else you can turn to.

Proxy: This is true. So what are your terms?

V: Wanna know everything you know about Mikoshi.

Proxy: Mikoshi... One of my father's flagship projects. A data fortress with servers situated on orbital stations all around Earth. Think of it as an archive of personality constructs, digitized psyches.

V: Try a prison?

Proxy: A matter of perspective. In any case, that is not where you will find salvation. Not without extensive knowledge of the Relic and the construct creation procedure.

V: Tracked down your runaway. Hellman was hidin' under Kang Tao's wing. We chatted. Thinks sooner or later the engram'll completely consume me. Process can't be stopped.

Proxy: A surprisingly deterministic conclusion for a man of science.

V: At the very least, I got my hands on the Relic's schematics. Got detailed information about its inner workings, project tech documentation...

Chippin' In

Proxy: All useful... Even more so given that Hellman is still alive. I will contact him and explain that one does not leave Arasaka by the back door.

V: Managed to make contact with Alt Cunningham.

Proxy: The Cunningham?

V: The very same who invented Soulkiller. Using her modified version now.

Proxy: That should be more than useful.

V: That's about the extent of what we got. What now?

Proxy: Let us meet in person. At Embers, in the city center. It is discreet. Just remember one thing. From now on we both must exercise extreme caution. (disconnects)

Proxy: Mhm... Well, that's my job done.

Johnny: Know what?

V: What?

Johnny: Think I'd've rather had a wave of 'Saka 'lites barge in here.

V: We got what we wanted. Don't tell me that proxy got to you?

Johnny: Fuck you.

V: C'mon, think about it. Yesterday Hanako was living in a world that

was completely safe for her. What's she got on her hands now? A foreign city, a homicidal brother and a fuckin' thief. It's why she sent a proxy. She's alone. And she's shittin' herself more than we are.

Johnny: Uh-huh. Clink.

V: What? Did you say "clink"?

Johnny: Mhm. Sound of her attaching her leash.

[V calls Takemura.]

V: Your hideout's been blown. Probably literally. Where are you now?

Takemura: I am done with squats, V. That is the most I can say - you will have to be content.

V: Any idea what's going on at Arasaka?

Takemura: Only what I can surmise from what I see on TV. Yorinobu and his puppets grin at the cameras and insist that everything is under control. But the wider the smile, the bigger the lies.

V: Spoke with her. Not In person, but we spoke. You know who I'm talking about.

Takemura: Mhm. She contacted me, too. We went, as you say, all-in.

And it worked.

V: Hard for me to trust anyone who goes via proxies.

Takemura: She made you an offer.

V: Seem to know everything already. I gotta keep talkin'?

Takemura: I know only what Hanako-sama saw fit to tell me. That is not much. So, please - continue.

V: Got a meet in person, soon.

Takemura: Very good. It would be hard to find a better sign of her trust.

V: Gonna be there, too?

Takemura: Not at this time. Arasaka is still searching for me - we cannot risk it. But... It is only a matter of time, V. Anything else?

V: Talk to you later.

Takemura: Be safe, V.

[V leaves the motel room.]

V: (to Johnny) What's up? Got a few more words 'bout the... "porcelain cunt?"

[He get sick again and fans on the ground.]

Johnny: Fuck!

V: Uugh! Johnny!

Johnny: You ain't dyin' yet. I got you.

[V wakes up some time later with a red pack of pills in his hand.]

V: Johnny...

Johnny: That smell's the sea breeze. Get up. Pacific's beautiful this time of day.

V: Almost flatlined by that attack.

Johnny: Almost.

V: You're right, hard to take my eyes off it. We in, uh... Pacifica? What's this building?

Johnny: Old hotel - the Pistis Sophia. We're her sole guests right now. Wanted to show you somethin', c'mon.

V: Saw the pseudoendotrizine in your hand.

Johnny: Can't very well function in this body without it, right? Got this strange impression your comatose self wanted to get rid of me. Actually put up a good fight.

V: I gotcha - no talkin' your way outta this one. You wanted to pop the pill.

Johnny: Gonna pretend you didn't say that.

V: Oh fuck off, I know what you are.

Johnny: Hey! I saved your ass, got you outta harm's way, and you're still gonna doubt my intentions?

V: Think I woke up, derailed your plan in the nick of time.

Johnny: And I think fear of death's got you spewin' misdirected anger. Climb through the window. Can manage that, I think. You wanted to know why I brought you here. There's a hidey-hole where I'm standin'. Open it. Empty it.

[V finds a military badge.]

V: These yours?

Johnny: They were - belong to you now.

V: Huh, fifty years back... Mexican conflict?

Johnny: When I was a young pissbrain like you, I enlisted with a corp army. Was in Mexico when I realized that no matter the conflict, corps always win. Ordinary people always lose.

V: So, that the truth you decided to reveal in song?

Johnny: Well, deserted first. Wound up here, locked in this room. Laid in bed staring at the ceiling fan for a good month.

V: Egh. I wouldn't mind lyin' down right now, watchin' a fan till the end of time...

Johnny: It's why I brought you here. Wastin' days, weeks - that's the step I want you to skip.

V: Why you givin' me these?

Johnny: Imagine we're deployed together, fightin' in a war side by side. Would you take a bullet for me?

V: Dumbass question...

Johnny: Yes or no?

V: I would, yeah.

Johnny: Tags belonged to a man who sacrificed his life for mine in Mexico. Been thinkin' about our predicament... Wanna be clear - I will do you no wrong. When the time comes, it'll be my life for yours, I'll agree to get wiped. Tags are proof of my promise.

V: I... I'd do the same for you.

Johnny: Yeah, thanks. You seriously considerin' Hanako's offer?

V: Got a better idea?

Johnny: Not yet, but I got a request.

V: Well?

Johnny: Adam Smasher - fucker who got the better of me. Whatever happens to me. I want him zero'd, gone, tossed into the wind as mulch.

V: Seriously? Smasher? He suddenly comes to mind?

V: Last time we saw him, we--

Johnny: Didn't have a chance to say hello. That's why we gotta find him. Finally end this.

V: That your dyin' wish - revenge?

Johnny: It's more than that. And I'll need you to take Rogue with you. It's important to me, and it's just as important for her.

V: That ain't true. Not sure it's somethin' Rogue would bother with these days. She delegates. Why stick her neck out for this, or at all?

Johnny: 'Cause I'll ask her to. Personally. You'll drop the pills from Misty, and I'll steer the ship for a bit.

V: I'm not at all excited about this plan - realize that, right?

Johnny: Just gonna have a quick chat with Rogue about Smasher, then I'm out. I promise.

V: Not sure you've earned my trust.

Johnny: This needs to work both ways, V. You enjoy complete control over me at all times.

V: Don't even enjoy control over myself.

Johnny: You're the one who makes the bad calls. All I can do is advise. And ask for favors. Like I'm doin' now.

V: Rogue's convenient cover.

Johnny: For what? Me seizing control of your body at long last?

V: Or some gonk ass suicide plan to attack Arasaka again. Know you pretty damn well at this point, Johnny.

Johnny: For the last time... No. Secret. Plan.

V: Hellman said you'd do this - make a power grab or pitch for control.

Johnny: Anders Hellman? And just what has he ever done to help you?

V: May not help, but he doesn't hurt me. Need to know exactly what you plan to do.

Johnny: I'll tell Rogue the truth, see if she's willin' to help

V: "Hey, Satan kicked me outta hell, thought I'd swing by."

Johnny: All I gotta do is mention Smasher, serve him up on a platter,

muse over the old days. Easy.

V: Need to think it over.

Johnny: Sure, thanks. This is important to me, V. Just get me to the Afterlife and hop in the backseat for a bit, that's all.

V: Feelin' better. Should get goin'.

Johnny: Still feel a sharp somethin' near your heart.

V: Doubt that's ever goin' away.

[V leaves the dilapidated motel room.]

V: The Hotel Pistis Sophia - that right?

Johnny: Mhm. Good place to die.

V: Just not today. Ugh...

[V drives to the Afterlife.]

Johnny: So - you ready? Rogue should be here any minute

V: OK one more time - you're just gonna talk to Rogue about Smasher, right? Then you'll hand me the wheel and hop back in the passenger seat.

Johnny: That is the plan. Don't worry, I'll be gentle. Ya might even enjoy it.

V: Actually, regretting this already. You're gonna strum her guilt, squeeze her for favors. Remind her all about how she left you to die in 'Saka Tower.

Johnny: First, she was sure I was dead already, Second, I'd never do that to her. Don't have to.

V: Heh. What, ya gonna use your charm?

Johnny: Rogue's never said no to me, ever.

V: OK, I'm ready. (takes the pill) 'Bout fuckin' time.

[He sits at the counter.]

Claire: Hm. Look a little... different. Fuss with your hair or...?

Johnny: (smashes the counter) Fuck, it's good to be back.

Claire: Never knew you'd gone off somewhere. What's your poison?

Johnny: Tequila Old Fashioned. Top it up with beer. And sprinkle in some chili.

Claire: Silverhand special? Been a while since anyone ordered that.

Johnny: (quickly drinks) Ahh. Gimme another.

Claire: You got it.

[Johnny drinks a lot, like a bottle or something.]

Johnny: Cassius Ryder. Name mean anything to you?

Claire: Mhm, tattoo guy. How do you know the name?

Johnny: We go back. Where'll find him?

Claire: Got a salon in Watson, Pershing Street.

[Johnny drinks the last one and the time jumps to Cassius' tattoo salon.]

Cassius Ryder: So, what'll it be? Billy goat or the other one?

Johnny: Billy-goat. More my style. He's gonna love it.

Cassius Ryder: Heh. Sure he will. Jeremiah Grayson. Heard he's an operator for Smasher. But you didn't hear that from me.

Johnny: Hey, who're you again?

Cassius Ryder: Yeah... Could say we had somethin' in common, heh. Ruby Collins. Sloppy second for Grayson - after I banged 'er.

[Johnny drinks and the time jumps forward again. He's at some bar drinking and dancing with a stripper.]

Regular: Hey, drinkslinger!

[Johnny has a drinking competition with some girls...]

Regular: Si-mone! Si-mone!

Regular: Haha. ¡Más rápido! (Faster!)

Simone: I win! Hahaha...

[Some stranger offers him a red and a blue pill...]

Stranger: Left or right?

Johnny: Think I got something better.

[He takes both pills and swallows them with alcohol. After that Johnny approaches the stripper he was dancing before....]

Johnny: Hey! You Ruby?

Ruby: What - you've heard about me?

Johnny: Let's get outta here. Tell you what I heard, then you'll show me if I'm right. Just got a little biz to take care of first.

[He vomits in a filthy shithole toilet and takes another pill to control V's body.]

Huscle: Yo, get your fuckin' paws off Ruby. She ain't goin' anywhere with you. She's on the clock, got it?

Johnny: Fuck, I missed this.

[He punches the bouncer.]

Johnny: Be waitin' outside!

Ruby: You waiting for me?

Johnny: Let's go back to my place.

[Johnny breaks the car window and the stripper gets behind the

wheel.]

Ruby: Where to?

Johnny: Martin Street. But take the long way.

[He wears aviator shades.]

Ruby: Look good on you. Got a light?

[They get into a car accident.]

Ruby: Oh my God! Aaaagh! Fuck. We could've died.

Johnny: Ruby...

Ruby: Maybe I'll call... I'll call...

Johnny: Ruby - focus. I need to talk to Grayson.

[She writes a word on a condom - Ebunika.]

Johnny: Helloooo, Night City.

[The time jumps. V wakes up in a room Rogue.]

V: Mhm... Ugh.

Rogue: Spit blood first thing every morning?

V: Talk about something else, please.

Rogue: Sure. First time you walked up, sensed there was something familiar about you.

V: Blah, blah, Johnny told you. Did we, uh...? You know...

Rogue: No. Gonk was too drunk. He called me early morning. 'Course, I thought it was you And I thought, "Cute kid. Too bad he's gone completely whacked."

V: Came to see for yourself, huh? Morbid curiosity?

Rogue: Mhm. And I found Johnny Silverhand.

V: Feels weird, this... you knowin' about Johnny.

Rogue: Face is changing, y'know? Still look like V, but that mean smirk - I'd know it anywhere. How he talks, moves... how he smokes.

V: I don't smoke.

Rogue: I know. Could never confuse you two. So sleep soundly.

V: Smasher - he tell you about 'im?

Rogue: Yes. Didn't know he'd come back to NC. Johnny found some way to get at him.

V: Wait... Grayson?

Rogue: Jeremiah Grayson Works for Smasher. Johnny gotta tip off some stripper don't ask me how. "Ebunike." Just that. Still, lemme see what I can do. Were gonna get that son of a bitch.

V: Know what Smasher's been up to all this time?

Rogue: Disappeared after the 'Saka Tower assault in 2023. All thought he was gone for good. Then suddenly reappeared. Did a few mondo Jobs for Arasaka, then went right back to ground. Nobody's seen him in years. ‘Cept Grayson, apparently.

V: Can I help at all?

Rogue: In your state? Heh, you're useless. Almost. Holobuzz you when I learn something.

V: OK.

Rogue: Unbelievable that bastard's somewhere in your head.

[She leaves the room.]

V: Ugh... Khe khe...

Johnny: (scratching his balls) Oh, fuck.

V: Fuck. Never again.

Johnny: Had no idea the pills would lay you out like this.

V: Maybe wouldn't be bad if you hadn't chased 'em down with fuck knows what. You tricked me. Just supposed to talk to Rogue.

Johnny: Did talk to 'er.

V: And the stripper? Empathy brawl? Tattoo?

Johnny: All required, man. Had to give Rogue something real, didn't I?

V: "Ebunike"? A lead on Grayson's supposed to be a lead on Smasher? Lead to lead - that's real?

Johnny: Real enough for Rogue. Quit mumble-whinin' and let's delta.

V: The hell is this place?

Johnny: Place where you can puke all over the carpet, no problem.

Beggar, not chooser.

V: Ugh...

[He calls Rogue.]

Rogue: V? Got to the bottom of “Ebunike.” Flicked pings to some contacts, Grayson buzzed familiar for a friend from the olden days. He did some digging. Found something, Section of the docks that's Maelstrom turf.

Johnny: So, feelin' better?

V: Hm. No. (to Rogue) So why’re these docks called “Ebunike”? Pretty sure it's got nothin’ to do with some long-dead mayor.

Rogue: Dead wrong actually. It's not the docks, it's an old container ship named after the guy.

V: Meanin' you found Grayson? He really got an in with Smasher?

Rogue: Come see me - Afterlife. We'll talk.

V: OK.

[V drives to the Afterlife to talk to Rogue.]

Rogue: V, Crispin Weyland. He's helping us.

Weyland: 'Eey, V. I hear you're hunting Smasher.

Rogue: Ready? We'll talk on the way.

V: (Streetkid) Weyland? Of THE Weylands?

Weyland: Yeah, man. I take it ya heard of old Andrew Boa Boa?

V: Like everybody in this town.

Weyland: That is nice. But me don't share me father's aspirations. So me expect to live longer than he did.

Johnny: We goin'?

V: Ya gonna be joinin' us?

Weyland: Nah, I already did me part.

Rogue: Don't tell me you don't wanna see Smasher dead.

Weyland: Me sure would. But not so close. De bastard has a bad habit of comin' back from de dead.

Rogue: Mhm. True bastards somehow always find a way.

V: I got somethin' I gotta do first.

Rogue: Make it quick.

V: Let's go.

Weyland: Good luck!

[V and Rogue leave the Afterlife and walk to the parking lot. Rogue open the trunk of her car.]

V: How'd Weyland help you, exactly?

Rogue: He made sure we'll find Grayson at home when we stop by.

V: So we know where to look for him.

Rogue: Gotcha a little somethin'.

[It's a badass leather jacket with SAMURAI written on the collar.]

Johnny: Try it on.

V: Is this Johnny's jacket? With me wearin' it, you sure you won't confuse us?

Rogue: Quite sure, thanks. A replica. Made-to-order. Real jacket musta disintegrated into dust years ago.

V: Thanks.

Rogue: Jump in.

Johnny: Finally lookin' half decent.

[They get in Rogue car and drive away.]

Rogue: What'd Johnny say about me? Know you two talk all the time.

V: Said you're the best. Always were...

Rogue: The best. Too bad that comes at a price.

V: It's a little weird you didn't run into Smasher before now.

Rogue: Came up in conversation. Time to time.

V: Yeah, but, y-you never tried to track him down?

Rogue: Listen V. Fact that Johnny's back changes things, OK?

V: OK, sure. Believe me, I know. Ya sure you're up for this?

Rogue: What - you getting cold feet?

V: No. Just... I don't wanna see Johnny haze you. Adam Smasher's his obsession, not yours. Adam Smasher's his obsession, not yours.

Rogue: Heh, think so?

V: Just tryin' to play fair.

Rogue: We'll get back to that, I guess. OK. Here's as far as we go. Might be our lucky day - drop Grayson and Smasher in one go.

Johnny: Fucker's gotta be around here somewhere.

V: So what's our plan?

Rogue: Weyland saw Grayson somewhere around the docks. He was with somebody.

V: Smasher.

Rogue: So I hope. Gotta get to the Maelstrom dataterm first. Should be some info on Smasher there. Main stash house. Dataterm's there.

V: You know where their dataterm is? How, exactly?

Rogue: Set up the buy myself. ATHENA D-III. External database.

V: Didn't know you worked for Maelstrom.

Rogue: Work for anybody. Long as it's on my terms.

Johnny: See I missed a lot these last fifty years.

V: OK. We can start.

Rogue: Ready? Too many rats around. Better wait till a little darkness creeps in. Too many rats around. Better wait till a little darkness creeps in.

V: And in the meantime, we do what?

Rogue: Wait and watch.

[They wait till the sun goes down.]

Rogue: OK. Good as it's gonna get. Maelstrom's got the docks covered, and you'll cover me. C'mon. Let's go

Johnny: She's tense.

Rogue: Got an idea.

Johnny: Cover her, just in case.

Rogue: Wait a sec, then follow me. Can you open it?

V: OK.

Rogue: Watch it, now. See 'em all? Gotta get to the dataterm. Quietly. OK. Guns a-blazing, then. We're goin' to Maelstrom's main storehouse. Dataterm's there. Gotta check, see if they have anything on Smasher. All right. We got it. Scan it, see if there's anything we can use. I'll watch the door.

Johnny: Nah, knows exactly where to find in. She's stallin'. Told ya - Rogue's still scared of the asshole.

V: Looks like they're hidin' out on the ship.

Rogue: OK. Let's see what we turn up. Over there, to the right. There she is. The "Ebunike."

V: Not lookin' so hot.

Rogue: Even shittier on the inside. Let's go.

V: Kinda hard to believe he's got his hidey hole here.

Rogue: Gotta search the deck.

V: OK. Why're you even doin' this?

Rogue: I'm settling a score.

V: Avengin' Johnny?

Rogue: That too.

V: Oh. Interesting.

Rogue: Now I know who jumped Kang Tao last month. Thoroughly pro work.

V: Ya sure it was this exact merch?

Rogue: 679275-PN1H. Sent three crews out myself to find it for the Chinese. Whole city was after it. Gotta admit the bastard's good.

Johnny: Yep, real fuckin' preem. Now we find and kill the bad guy, OK?

V: Recordings, seem like to me.

Rogue: Think you can play 'em back?

V: Yeah, can give it a shot.

Johnny: There a fuckin' point to this? Just find the motherfucker and

do it.

[V play the first audio log.]

Gilchrist: No idea who's backing you, but if anything happens to Mallory...

Smasher: You have twenty-four hours. Fail to back out of the Night Corp deal by then, the girl dies.

Gilchrist: Fuck, don't you understand? You can't blackmail the entire Militech board by kidnapping one--

Smasher: I know. I'm blackmailing you. Twenty-four hours.

[The audiolog stops.]

Rogue: There's corpo life for you. Upstairs - summits, handshakes, back-slapping, dick-waving. Downstairs - Smasher's holdin' a gun to somebody's head.

[V plays the second audio log.]

Grayson: How much's left?

Smasher: An hour. It's not going to work. Like I said.

Grayson: So why all this? The girl...

Smasher: She dies in an hour. As ordered.

[The audiolog stops.]

Johnny: Why'd he even record that?

V: Grayson might've. To have dirt on Smasher.

Johnny: Think you're givin' Grayson too much credit. Fuck, you hear that?

V: Grayson. Yeah.

Johnny: No, not that! Fucker's shooting at me with my own gun! Malorian thirty-five sixteen. Signature sound, I'd know it anywhere.

[V finds Grayson and shoots him in the shoulder.]

Johnny: Grab the gun.

V: Nice an' easy, or I'll pop another in ya.

Rogue: Grayson.

Grayson: Oh my, Rogue. You an' me not playin' for the same team

anymore? Gnh. Guess I'm not at all surprised. Seems your specially signs the backs of allies.

Rogue: Where's Smasher?

V: Could crack your skall like an eggshell know that? You'd still be able to talk. For a little while.

Grayson: But I'm happy to talk. Ever wonder how Rogue survived after the attack on the tower, how in hell no one ever hunted her down? Her alone... hrgh... out of all that Atlantis trash? 'Cause I do, I truly wonder how far she had to go to set herself up so comfy... Who'd she fingerfuck? Whose crack did she have to lick to--? Ugh!

V: What's he goin' on about?

Rogue: He's tryin' to throw you off. Gonk thinks he can still squirm outta this. Gonk thinks he can still squirm outta this.

V: Where's Smasher now?

Grayson: Ungh... With the Arasakas. But I think you know that already.

V: When's he due back?

Grayson: Never. Faithful old Adam's just been named head of

security there. Ungh... Not comin' back to this rathole, ever. I stayed behind just to tie off his loose ends.

Rogue: Shit!

Grayson: Could say that again. You two'll never jump that high. Smasher's outta your reach. But don't feel bad - he'll find you himself. Likes to resolve shit like this in person.

V: Gonna lead us to Smasher, assface.

Grayson: Even if I wanted to, he don't trust me enough to... Hey, why you so interested in Smasher anyway?

V: I'm not. Interested in Silverhand. And what happened to him.

Grayson: (laughs) Johnny Silverhand? What do you wanna know?

V: Silverhand's iron - you had it.

Grayson: What, you a fan too?

Rogue: Smasher give it to you?

Grayson: Uh-huh. Reward for a special job well done.

V: Smasher ever tell you what he did with Silverhand's body?

Grayson: That into him, huh? Plan to exhume that scop? Or you just wanna hear how he died - soaked in his own piss, neurons scorched by Soulkiller?

V: What did they do with 'im?

Grayson: Badlands, near the oil fields - buried out there... Gngh... One-O-one northbound, then head for the landfill. Dig deep enough, might even find a shit-smeared silver arm.

Johnny: Heard enough. Finish him. Fucker.

Rogue: Let's end this quickly. Wanna rip my eyes out just lookin' at ‘im.

Grayson: No, no, wait! I got somethin.... Silverhand, you're into him, right? Could give you somethin'.

V: He deserve extinction? Do I end him?

Rogue: Yes. Meanin’... Do what you think is right.

Grayson: Smasher's got something that was Johnny's. Could be yours. Just gotta let me live.

V: How'd Smasher wind up with Johnny's stuff?

Grayson: Told me Saburo Arasaka ordered him to get rid of the body, any and all sundries... Sold most of it, 'cept the Malorion and... what I got.

V: Don't want a damn thing from you.

[He shoot Grayson in the head.]

Johnny: Good. One dickspurt less.

Rogue: Let's delta. Pointless, this whole thing. Still no leads, nowhere to go from here.

Johnny: Fuck. V, tell her...

V: To Johnny, this is more than a 50-year-old grudge.

Rogue: Really - like, what is it?

V: It's about you. He wanted to do this with you.

Rogue: What, to cheer me up? Heh, didn't work.

V: Smasher...

Rogue: Fuck, you don't get it. This isn't about Smasher!

Rogue: He's just the goddamn tip of the iceberg! Even if we get him - what does that get us? Later, V.

[She leaves.]

Johnny: Leave 'er alone, V. She'll get it together, but times like this she prefers to be alone.

V: OK, I get that.

Johnny: Let's hit those oil fields. Wanna see what it looks like out there.

[They find a container...]

Johnny: Oh, fuck. Think I know what it is.

V: Let's see what we got here...

[There is a car inside.]

Johnny: Take that rag off it.

V: OK.

Johnny: My ride. Hop in. I'll even let you drive.

[They ride to the oil fields.]

Johnny: OK. Gotta be around here somewhere. Can't believe they bothered to truck it all the way out here.

V: It's better than the junkyard where I landed.

[They find Johnny's grave… it's a bunch of junk obviously. There's a writing on the concrete "NO FUTURE."]

Johnny: So that's how it is. Nothing here at all.

V: What'd you expect? Headstone flag and flowers?

Johnny: Nah, I… I dunno. A marker? Something, anything.

V: Really need symbolic, empty gestures?

Johnny: Guess I do. Thought I'd feel like I'd closed a chapter here. Like I'd said goodbye to the old Silverhand, hello to the new.

V: And how do you feel?

Johnny: Like I never even was. Or like I was still inside Mikoshi.

V: We'll figure something out.

Holdin' On

[He carves "JS 2023" on a piece of metal that he sits on.]

V: Better now?

Johnny: A bit. But let's say it was my real grave - what would you write? “Here lies Johnny Silverhand--”

V: "Night City Legend."

Johnny: (takes off his shades) Sounds good. But what does it really mean? What did I achieve, shouting “Chippin’ In” to a bunch of angry, pimply kids?

V: What's gotten into you? Where's Johnny I'm the fucking greatest Silverhand? Don't even recognize you.

Johnny: Maybe I'm done pretending. Listen, I realize I fucked up a lotta things. Either let down or used every last person who gave me their trust. Blind, selfish bastard that I was. But I've managed one thing for now. Not to fuck this up, what we have.

V: It's been a long, bumpy road, but we made it.

Johnny: Most people thought were my friends, they couldn’t even stand in the same room with me. You're fuckin' closest to me by a long shot. There twenty-four seven. And yet... you don't seem to hate

my living guts.

V: It’s too bad we didn't talk like this earlier. Woulda made things easier.

Johnny: Never found the right moment. Remember wakin' up at Viktor's, not knowin’ about me? “I'm seeing things, I’m scared.” Then moanin' at Misty's ‘bout how you didn't wanna die?

V: Remember you whinin' for smokes in the middle of the night? Complainin' about bein' able to kill me.

Johnny: Never thought we'd make it this far.

V: When you said you let your friends down - did ya mean Rogue?

Johnny: Rogue, Alt, Kerry, Santiago...

V: Not dif's lost yet, least with Rogue.

Johnny: Can't pretend nothing's changed over fifty years, can't just insert myself into her life.

V: Smasher biz really got to her. Ya can't leave it like this, I don't think.

Johnny: Might be right. She was acting weird.

V: You oughta talk to her.

Johnny: Y'know, did promise her I'd take her to the movies. Long, long ago.

V: Good idea.

Johnny: Call her for me, ask if she's free some night? Thing is, you'd have to surrender control - again.

V: Yeah, I'll call her.

Johnny: OK. Let's delta. Nothin' to see here after all.

V: Worth comin' out all the same?

Johnny: Absolutely. Thanks, V. Of all the heads I coulda popped up in, hella glad it was yours.

[V calls Rogue.]

Rogue: V?

V: Johnny wants to ask you out on a date. Whaddaya think?

Rogue: Johnny's asking? Or is it you?

Johnny: You're the one who said you got no trouble tellin' us apart.

Rogue: OK. And where'd we go?

V: Where'd you wanna go?

Rogue: Silver Pixel Cloud in North Oak.

V: OK. I'll swing by the Afterlife pick you up.

[V drives to the Afterlife.]

V: Hey, Rogue. Ready?

Emmerick: Again - you.

V: We goin'?

Rogue: Where's Johnny? Couldn't make it after all?

V: You look... wow.

Rogue: That Johnny's "wow" or yours? When's he gonna show?

V: He'll join us later.

Rogue: See you keep him on a short leash. Heh, wise beyond your years. This Johnny's Porsche? Ahaha! Where'd you get it?

V: That's what was in the container, the one Grayson was talking about.

Rogue: Hm, OK. Hehe, got a lotta memories in this car. Let's go.

V: Silver Pixel Cloud your favorite place?

Rogue: Once, probably. Haven't been there in ages. Drive-ins went out of style a century ago. But Silver Pixel's still hangin' in there.

V: Sounds like a preem place for a date.

Rogue: Thought so, too. Which is why I suggested Johnny take me there. A million years ago.

V: So it wasn't his idea.

Rogue: 'Course not. His idea of a romantic night out was blowing up Arasaka HQ. All right. V. Tell me what's going on. For real.

V: Meaning?

Rogue: Johnny doesn't do a thing without an ulterior motive. So

what's in play this time?

V: Johnny's changed. He really does wanna spend some time with ya. No hooks, no lines, no sinkers.

Rogue: Right…

V: Rogue?

Rogue: Just taking it all in. Heh, a selfless Johnny Silverhand. Apparently, you're a positive influence on him. Here we are.

[They drive up to the movie theater, but… It's been closed for a long time.]

Johnny: Fuck. I don't believe it.

Rogue: It really has been years. Managed to shut the whole thing down.

Johnny: V, try to get inside.

V: Can't stop us, won't stop us. We asked you out on a date.

Rogue: All right. Do your thing, I'll watch.

V: OK, gotta be the pass, this. Guess we really are going to the

movies.

[He opens the theater's doors for Rogue.]

Johnny: Wham bam sha-la-la.

V: All right, let's go.

Rogue: Well done. Try and get the projector started - I'll get us some seats.

V: Sure thing.

Johnny: Right, let's go check the projector. Entrance is over here.

[V looks at some movie poster Bushido X.]

V: Oh. Interesting.

Johnny: "Bushido X - Fade to Black." Must be a classic by now.

V: 'Bout to see.

Johnny: OK. Looks like I found the projector. You wouldn't happen to know how to get it up an' running?

Johnny: Look at that - last played "Bushido X"! Perfect.

V: Looks like a spurt of runny shit.

Johnny: V, we're at a drive-in. Movie's the last thing we care about. Just want some background noise - a little blood, tits and gore, that sorta thing.

V: "Bushido" will give you that.

Johnny: All right, V. Run along. I'll take it from here.

V: Have fun, you crazy kids.

[He takes the pill.]

Rogue: Grabbed us the best spot. Hop on up.

Johnny: Oh, so that's how you do it. Rogue. I don't need this world anymore. But I need you.

Rogue: Johnny. I was wrong about you. And it's a cryin' shame.

Johnny: This how you imagined this evening goin'?

Rogue: Always knew things would have to change for us to just go out and catch movie. Never imagined they'd change this much. Let's pretend it's twenty-fifteen, huh? We just met, an' I got no idea what a

bastard you are.

Johnny: But I like twenty-seventy-seven Rogue.

Rogue: A far inferior version. OK, so it's twenty-fifteen. If you could do it all again, what would you change? Anything at all?

Johnny: I'd do everything in my power not to lose you.

Rogue: Johnny, I...

Johnny: Hey, hey, hey, what's this?

Rogue: Nothing, it's just... Had a lot of time to think while you were away. What ifs and all that.

Johnny: Sure that's it, nothing about Grayson or Smasher?

Rogue: What? What's Smasher gotta do with anything?

Johnny: Getting the sense you still got a thorn in your side there.

Rogue: 'Cause I do. I'm irate, disappointed. But rather not think about it now.

Johnny: Think you might be hidin' somethin' from me.

Rogue: Johnny, there's a heap of things I'm hiding from you. But all we got's this one night.

Johnny: It's more than I ever could've asked for. Rogue, I'm here on borrowed time, in a borrowed body. But, I'm here.

[He kisses and touches her. They have some quality time together, but in the peak of emotions...]

Rogue: Johnny, I can't. It's not right.

Johnny: Thought you wanted this.

Rogue: Because I did. Tried so hard to pretend nothing's changed. To pretend I'm the same Rogue you knew. Actually managed to fool myself for a little. Hehh. Get back on my own.

[She leaves.]

Johnny: Rogue! Fuck.

[He takes the pill and returns control of the body to V.]

V: Uhhh... Rogue's gone.

Johnny: Yep.

V: You fought - what about.

Johnny: Ugh. Got no idea. Was gonna be a nice night at the drive-in. Now she's mad. And won't tell me what about.

V: Any guesses?

Johnny: Member Grayson, how they spoke, how weird it was?

V: Weird's not the word, I don't think. He was toying with 'er. Could be something to that.

Johnny: Gotta mull it over. For now, take me to North Oak.

V: That s'posed to help you figure out Rogue?

Johnny: No - Kerry. Tell you once we're there. Movie was a turd wrapped in crepe paper.

[V drives to North Oak as Johnny asked.]

Johnny: This oughta work.

V: Well? So why're we here, exactly?

Johnny: Heard Kerry got himself a buck a mansion here. Done well.

V: Where'd you hear anything about Kerry?

Johnny: In and about town: Screamsheets’re full of shit about 'im... Oh, right, you weren't around.

V: Mhm, your big night out. So what, wanna pay him a visit?

Johnny: Yep. Seems as good o time as any.

V: So I gotta hit Kerry's digs, look around, critique the drapes?

Johnny: Know what they're writin’ about him? He's depressed, attempted suicide.

V: What, really worried he wants to hurt himself?

Johnny: Who knows. Either way, could give him some pointers.

V: Meanin' you wanna go in person? Gotta hand you the reins again?

Second Conflict

Johnny: Yes. Behaved myself last time, didn't I? I think I warrant another furlough for good behavior.

V: Heh uh-huh. First Rogue, now Kerry, Who's next on the list of conjugal visits?

Johnny: Nobody. Just so happens the list of people I consider friends, and who're still alive, is pretty damn short. Exactly why I need to talk to Kerry.

V: What was that about attempted suicide?

Johnny: Amateur hour. Didn't even cobble together the right audience. Tried to put a bullet through his skull in his room. Bodyguard took his gun like candy from a baby.

V: Could just be the rumor mill.

Johnny: Sure, could. But I wanna know.

V: OK. But I wanna know what you plan to do.

Johnny: Nothin' stupid, I promise. Just wanna see how he's doin'.

V: How you plan to tell him it's you? Could be dealin' with some real personal shit right now, might not be the best time to mess with his head.

Johnny: V, Ker was always dealing with personal shit. That's why, in spite of everything else, we got along. Don't worry, I'll play it by ear, sensitively. First things first - we gotta get into that house.

V: OK. Just lemme know when you wanna take the wheel.

[He drives to Kerry's property and sneaks into the house guarded by robots.]

Johnny: Fugly as seafood barf. Hope it was expensive at least. Somethin's gotta justify this level of tacky. Fuck, cookie cutter crop straight from a catalogue. Doubt Kerry picked this. Always ate out, always.

V: Wicked bad collection.

Johnny: Well, now I am impressed. Played a few of these myself back in our Samurai days.

V: Axe like that run us many eddies?

Johnny: Forget it, we couldn't afford it. That's Kerry's fave.

V: Looks like he's showering?

Johnny: Alone, too. Good thing, believe me. OK, leave the rest to me. I'll get him outta there. Drop one of Misty's special pills, let's go.

V: OK.

[He takes the pill. Johnny takes Kerry's guitar off the wall.]

Johnny: Ugh, feels so much better. Now, let's see which're up for show and which're actually strummable.

[He plays one of his songs "Chippin' In".]

Johnny: (singing) C-can you feel it...

[Kerry enters the room with a gun in his hands.]

Kerry: Who the fuck...? Keep playin'.

Johnny: All right.

[Johnny plays some cool metal music.]

Kerry: Johnny?

Johnny: Kerry?

Kerry: No, no, no, this's some fuckin' joke. Hang on... What'd Silverhand tell me before he died?

Johnny: This a test? Could just play you another song.

Kerry: Answer me.

Johnny: Told you to leave Samurai, go your own way. Clearly, I was right. As I often am.

Kerry: Johnny fuckin' Silverhand... The fuck? I mean - how?

Johnny: Surprise.

Kerry: (punches Johnny) Motherfucker.

Johnny: OK, weren't expecting me, I get it.

Kerry: Au fucking contraire. Been waiting fifty years to do that. See you changed a bit. Sporting a new style, tryin' to stay hip?

Johnny: Yeah, kinda. What about you?

Kerry: Shit - Johnny. Oh man, need a drink. All right. C'mon, tell me - why do you look like a small time klepton from the Afterlife?

Johnny: Long as you tell me whatcha got in your throat.

Kerry: Always did complain I couldn't carry a tune.

Johnny: Nice place.

Kerry: Ain't seen much of it yet. Moved in after the fourth album come out.

Johnny: All sold well, apparently

Kerry: Fuck you, Johnny. Don't even start.

Johnny: Who'd you sign with?

Kerry: Shit, with Arasaka. Mornings I record at their studio, then evenings Yori pops over for a little neighborly cookout.

Johnny: Mh, and who'd you really sign with?

Kelly: MSM Records.

Johnny: Another pillar of society.

Kerry: C'mon. Siddown with me, tell me where you've been all this time.

Johnny: Live here all by your lonesome?

Kerry: Nah. Got my cook, Ariel - but he's off today, Miguel-- What'm I--? Not your biz, choom. Siddown, start takin'.

Johnny: Steel yourself for a long story.

Kerry: Just really want it to be tragic, sad as all fuck over all those

years. 'Cause if I hear you spent them with the nomads, open road, wind in your hair... Or cool and relaxed in orbit... And now you've just popped by to shit all over my life, well, I'ma lose my damn mind.

Johnny: Oh, it is a heartbreaker.

[He takes the glass offered by Kerry and starts talking. Some time later they watch Johnny's old concert record on Kerry's big TV.]

Kerry: Ooh fuck, remember? The one damn time Henry showed up sober and clean as a whistle.

Johnny: Uh-huh. An' played absolute tripe.

Kerry: Least Denny was happy.

Johnny: Lookin' at 'em now, those really were the best of times.

Kerry: Played fucking rat-infested dumps, argued before every gig. Had no idea what we wanted to play. And never had an ed to our own name. Nancy - control freak. Henry smelled like zappers n piss, I was always stealin' your pants.

Johnny: Hella good times, man. Never did get what Denny saw in that guy. I mean, Smart Imp, that one. Maybe too smart for the company she kept.

Kerry: Nah, Denny always went for losers incapable of dressing themselves. Hank was perfect. Half a brain and nigh all the time - she got to rescue him over and over again.

Johnny: Why'd she never try and fix me?

Kerry: Woulda had to get in line, that's why.

Johnny: Stuff about you bein' depressed - it true?

Kerry: Nope. Promo stratagem.

Johnny: Suicide attempts, too? Think putting a bullet through your skull'll help your sales?

Kerry: Didn't work for you. Nobody remembers Samurai. Now you're just butthurt 'cause I managed fine without ya.

Johnny: Fuck me. Got no answer to that. Still in touch with the gang?

Kerry: Just Nance. Changed her name to Bes Isis, works for N54 News. Could track down Denny and Henry if you want. Maybe get together? You know, jam or somethin'.

Johnny: Bes Isis. Damn, Nance really went for it. Though all I hear is part-time stripper with a thing for Ancient Egypt.

Kerry: Shame you died. Sure she woulda welcomed your input.

Johnny: How is she in general, besides having nothing to do with music?

Kerry: Could ask her yourself.

Johnny: Henry probably killed his own liver.

Kerry: Nah. Woulda heard if he was gone. Got mutual friends. Few calls and I should be able to track him down.

Johnny: Denny might still be in the biz. Actually had talent - and a spine.

Kerry: Yeah, released somethin' not too long ago. Moved to North Oak, too.

Johnny: You just said you weren't in touch.

Kerry: Didn't hear it from her. Think she might be avoiding me.

Johnny: You ever leave this house?

Kerry: Nope.

Johnny: You wanna bring Samurai back?

Kerry: Dunno. Could do one gig. Play some dive where nobody'd place us. I mean, got my reputation to think about.

Johnny: But I won't have to explain what happened, all this?

Kerry: Nah, we'll spare 'em. Hella boring story. Biochips, Arasaka's evil schemes, magic pills... We'll just say you're my new input.

Johnny: All right. Let's do it.

Kerry: Fuck, yeah! OK, send ya Nancy's number in a sec. I'll go after Henry and Denny.

Johnny: Mhm. I'm not there figure it out with V.

Kerry: Sure, uh... you two get along?

Johnny: Not lately, no. We don't have much of a choice, though.

[He takes the pill.]

Johnny: Haw'm I--

[He falls to the floor.]

Kerry: Johnny? You OK?

V: No.

Kerry: Ah, so you must be V. Johnny mentioned something like this might happen.

V: You two have fun at least?

Kerry: Heheh - that a hint of disapproval I hear? Just sit tight for a bit, rest. Don't worry about a thing.

[He leaves the room.]

V: The hell is this concert thing?

Johnny: D'you hear that?

V: Gets sharper as the pills wear off. So?

Johnny: Wanna see Samurai live? Prolly won't get another chance.

V: What if this ends up like the Rogue thing - one big let down?

Johnny: Nah, this is different. Kerry needs this concert.

V: OK. Callin' Nancy.

Johnny: Fuck yeah, nice!

V: Nancy? I mean - Bes? Bes Isis?

Steven: No, this is her underpaid, underappreciated assistant. Steven, N54 News, how can help?

V: Wanna talk to Bes.

Steven: She's not here.

V: Callin' from Kerry Eurodyne's residence.

Steven: Cool. But Bes still isn't here. She was s'posed to be back two days ago. Went to the Totentanz to shoot some stuff, story on Maelstrom. Call back next week, or just watch the news. Anything happens to her, I'll be the first to cover it.

Johnny: Got a bad feeling, V. Think we better head to the Totentanz.

[V drives to the Totentanz hideout.]

V: What was Nancy like, back in the day?

Johnny: Fuck. All starting to come together. Used to think she was

the only one who had her shit together. Turned out she was just hiding it well. No media would ever go for the Totentanz. Except Nancy. C'mon, up you go.

V: Not much left to clean up, probably.

Bouncer: Like your style. Minimalist. Used to have chrome just like that. Start movin'!

[V walk into an elevator.]

Fanatic: Totentanz, too? Fuck, yeah. Third floor. Press the button, my fingers're numb. Hear that? Tinnitus today. Our guys. This one I like. Later.

[V exits the elevator.]

Johnny: Go on. You'll blend in, no problem.

[V walks to the entrance to Totentanz. A guard stops him.]

Fanatic: Fuck! No fuckin' way! Remember that tape from All Foods? That's the choom who klepped the spiderbot!

Fanatic: No. No, no, no. Wouldn't be that stupid to show here.

Fanatic: You the one...?

V: Lookin' for Bes Isis.

Fanatic: Guess I gotta spell it out. You the one who klepped the Flathead?

V: Sure did. Why, you got another one? Had to toss the first.

Fanatic: Fuckin' jagoff. Look at this, a chance at a nick in the barrel.

Patricia: Get the fuck out. Now.

Fanatic: That's the All Foods punk...

Patricia: I'm not blind. Whaddaya want?

Johnny: Watch out for that one.

V: You the one in charge now?

A Like Supreme

Patricia: No. A lot's changed since Royce went, but not that much.

V: What happened to Royce?

Patricia: Militech happened. Think you know why.

V: Bes Isis - mean anything to you?

Patricia: You work with her?

V: No, just gotta talk. Heard she's here.

Patricia: She's here. But you talk to Brick first. His call what happens to you. I'll take you. Brick took over for Royce after the All Foods incident.

[V follows Patricia.]

V: Seems like you all come out ahead, then.

Patricia: Probably thinkin' Brick'll be grateful, huh?

V: What, that'd disappoint you?

Patricia: No - and Brick's not in a position to demonstrate feelings of any kind. Brick. Got another guest.

Brick: V - what a surprise. What can I do for ya?

Johnny: That's Nance.

V: Looks like I'm interrupting.

Brick: Wrappin' up, actually. Bes here's overstayed her welcome.

Nancy: Yet I still haven't gotten answers to all my questions.

Brick: Make somethin' up - you're a journalist, should be second nature. Say it's an orgy of noise or whatever.

V: Should up your huscle on the "Ebunike." Just there the other day - your people didn't put up much of a fight.

Brick: In that case, you should go back. I'll see to it they take good care of you.

V: Heheh, chill, just some friendly advice.

Brick: 'Preciate it.

V: Seems your people're goldin' a grudge.

Brick: Heh, hold those better than they hold their iron Show a little understandin', try not to piss 'em off.

V: Kerry Eurodyne sent me. With some biz for Bes.

Nancy: Kerry? Did he suddenly remember I exist?

Brick: You can go.

Patricia: Huh? Just like that?

Brick: I ask you? No? That's what I thought. Tryna run a business here.

Nancy: Thanks, Brick. That was... enlightening. Let's go.

Johnny: Let's delta.

V: 'Preciate it. Thanks.

[V walks out of the Totentanz with Nancy.]

V: Brick seems all right.

Nancy: Sure. Just too bad he doesn't know squat about music.

V: That's what you wanted to talk to him about?

Nancy: Yeah. Tinnitus. The Totentanz sound. What I got outta Brick was scop. Why's the elevator so damn slow in this dump... Car's outside.

V: So, what - giving up on your story?

V: I won't learn anything about Maelstrom's music?

Nancy: Got lots of footage, need to look through it, see what I can patch together. OK, c'mon. Fuck, just hope the car's still where I parked it. Brick was the safe option. Really should've talked to the asses from Tinnitus.

V: You got some sorta in with them?

Nancy: Brick invited me to one of their gigs. Problem is the lineup - changes every time.

[They find the car... but there's graffiti on it.]

Nancy: Oh, for fuck's sake.

V: Coulda been worse. This way you got a souvenir.

Nancy: Fuck souvenirs. I'm headed straight back to the editing room. Wanna talk, gotta come with me.

Johnny: Clunker like this, hope it gets us there in one piece.

[V sits in the car.]

Nancy: All right. So what's Kerry want?

V: Wants to bring back Samurai - one gig, one night.

Nancy: There is no Samurai without Silverhand.

V: Gonna be a gig in Silverhand's honor.

Nancy: What's got into Kerry all of a sudden? Thought he got over this ages ago. Well, guess it doesn't really matter. What's in it for me?

V: A reunion with some old friends?

Nancy: Oh, come on. Kerry and Johnny were friends, that's it. We just floated around, sometimes got in their way.

V: So whaddaya want? An interview with Kerry?

Nancy: Hah. Could write that myself, straight outta my ass. I'd want access to all his industry contacts, associates.

V: Not a problem, not as far as I can see.

Nancy: We're here. Hop out.

V: Alright. So... the concert?

Nancy: Hehh... Tell Kerry I'll put it together. Be in touch.

V: OK. Thanks.

Johnny: Went pretty damn well. Now call Kerry.

Kerry: Hey. So how'd it go? Talk to Nance?

V: Yep. She agreed, even said she'd organize the gig.

Kerry: Still a control freak. Awesome.

V: Ran into a few hiccups with the good folk from Maelstrom...

Kerry: Fuck yeah! Listen, I caught Henry. Dragged him outta rehab. Great story, actually. Henry didn't know Denny's been in Night city all this time. On his way over to see her now. gonna be a surprise. We're all gonna meet over at Denny's.

V: What, me too? Why?

Kerry: Gonna play with us, aren't ya? Gotta meet the others. Sendin' you the address.

[V drives to Denny's mansion.]

Johnny: See those?

V: What happened here?

Johnny: She musta been renovatin', Henry musta borrowed the truck.

Gonk always was good at improvising. Maybe they're home - try the intercom. (it doesn't work) Right, then. Guess we keep looking.

[V walks into the courtyard, walking around the side, and sees a black woman threatening a man on a chaise lounge with a bat. Kerry is standing nearby.]

Johnny: See Kerry beat us here. Hoo boy. Sounds sadly familiar

Kerry: V! Uh, good you're here. We got a problem.

V: This supposed to be Henry's surprise?

Kerry: Yeah, I obviously missed a few beats. Looks like he was holdin' some sort of grudge.

V: So he flooded the pool with concrete?

Kerry: Henry did often get emotional.

V: Know what happened between them?

Kerry: From what I've come to understand, one day Denny disappeared without word, then hid from Henry.

V: I imagine that wasn't too hard in his state of mind, either out of it or in rehab.

Kerry: Yep. That is, till gave Henry her address.

V: What about the concert?

Kerry: Haven't gotten a chance to ask Denny yet. Doesn't look good, though.

Johnny: V, talk to them. Kerry'll just make it worse.

V: Not really my biz...

Johnny: Go, go. They'll get past it in a sec. Kerry didn't piss all over himself outta joy when he saw me, either.

[V walks too Denny and Henry.]

Denny: This your backup? 'Case you forgot why the hell you came here in the first place?

V: Kerry sent me. It's about the concert.

Denny: What concert? Why isn't he here talkin' to me?

V: Look, it's awkward. Kerry considers you both friends.

Denny: What a sensitive guy, shit. Given he's the one who set this

flaming turdbag on my doorstep.

V: We're bringin' back Samurai - one night only.

Denny: That's what he wants to get the crew together for? Sweet, but no fucking way. Not about to play with this shitstain.

Henry: Denny...

Denny: No, no way. Either him or me - choose.

Johnny: Denny digs in her heels, we're done.

Kerry: How's it goin'?

Henry: Like shit, man. Denny wants me outta the gig. An' we already agreed on everything.

Denny: What, Kerry's payin' you? That's what this is about? Fuck, this's all fuckin' great. So you get him away from me and get the fuck off my lawn!

Kerry: Don't make me choose.

V: Maybe if someone'd tell me what happened...

Denny: Are you blind? Fucker filled my pool with cement.

Nocturne OP55N1

V: Maybe he had a good reason.

Denny: Really? A reason?

V: (to Henry) You outta your fuckin' mind with the pool? You knew Kerry wanted to get Denny to play with us.

Henry: Just wanted to clear the air.

Kerry: Fuckin' preem.

V: Gotta go without one or the other.

Kerry: Not a problem - should be able to borrow someone else for one gig. Won't be the same, though.

Denny: It won't ever be the same, Kerry.

V: (to Johnny) Pretty sure it's your call.

Johnny: Fuck. Really pisses me off Denny's on a control kick, settin' conditions. On the other hand, Henry's got scop for brains. Can't trust him.

V: Thanks, real helpful. (to Kerry) If we gotta choose, let's play with Denny.

Henry: Fuck, Kerry! Seriously? She's the one makin' a big deal outta this, not me.

Kerry: Listen, I'll get you--

Henry: Y'know what, Kerry? Fuck you. Good thing Silverhand isn't here to see this.

Denny: You done? Get out.

Denny: All right. What about Nancy?

Kerry: We've made contact. She's gonna set it all up, let us know. See you at the show.

Denny: Fuck. Now I gotta find someone to clean this up...

Johnny: OK. About all we can do for now. Except wait for Nancy to call.

V: Everything OK?

Denny: No. Just the sight of that douchewad reminded me how not OK it is. Don't worry, though. I'll be past it by showtime.

Johnny: Wonder what Henry did to her.

V: So his fault after all?

Johnny: Well, normally Denny's not a raging bitch.

V: Well, pretty sure she knew Henry wanted this concert.

Johnny: Mhm. Doubt she really gave a fuck about the pool.

[V gets a call from Nancy.]

Nancy: Hey. Gig's all set up super sweet, like. Tonight, at the Red Dirt.

V: Talked to Kerry? Didn't change his mind or anything?

Nancy: No, no, not at all. He's pretty stoked, in fact. Haven't seen him like this since the Silverhand days.

V: What about Henry? Still not on board?

Nancy: Didn't even try. Not wastin' my breath on that dicktip. Well, so, see you tonight. And don't worry about your axe. Got the gear all rounded up.

[V drives to Red Dirt.]

Denny: Hey, V.

Nancy: V! Got somethin' for you. Dunno if you know, but once upon a time this was Silverhand's.

[She opens a guitar case lying on the table.]

Johnny: Fuck. Nancy just gets shit done. Should just whisper "Mikoshi" in her ear, we'll be all set.

V: (Streetkeed) DeLuze Orphean. 'Member that Samurai graffiti in Heywood where the bakery used to be?

Nancy: Uh-huh. Got pointed over a while ago. But yeah, Johnny was holding the Orphean there. Nice one.

V: Where'd you find it? It's, like, fresh off the shelf.

Nancy: Bought it, private collection. Always like to have everything down to the last detail.

Johnny: Gets too obsessed at times, but gotta respect her hustle.

V: How 'bout you tell me what happened with Henry.

Denny: Ancient history. Kept falling into all sorts of crap, then I'd

have to dig him out.

V: You got tired of getting your hands dirty all the time?

Denny: All wrong. Managed to get him a gig with a decent band. Henry quit usin', got his shit together, things were goin' great. So he booted me out of his life.

V: So what happened next?

Denny: You get off on this sort of drama? He ditched me, partied with his new pals for a month. Then they tossed 'im out 'cause he started acting up again. Ran into him on the street total mess, conk even fainted for effect, a tug at my heartstrings.

V: What'd you do?

Denny: Left him right there. And made damn sure he couldn't find me again.

V: How ya feelin' ahead of the show?

Denny: Weird. Like I'm about to pretend to be... myself. Plus, Johnny's out. Never thought I'd say I miss the bastard, but I damn well do.

V: Hey, thanks for putting the gig together.

Nancy: Please, Kerry couldn't twiddle his own asshole without my help.

V: Silverhand was prolly the same.

Nancy: Heh, worse. At least Kerry did what I told him to do, kept outta my hair.

Nancy: Dunno if you know, but once upon a time this was Silverhand's.

V: Where's Kerry?

Nancy: Should be here any minute. Told me you play really well. Better be true, 'cause there won't be a dress rehearsal.

V: Right. Can't let that full house down.

Nancy: Honestly, got no idea who these people are.

V: Just strays. Kerry didn't want word to get around.

Nancy: Yeah, well we'll see about that.

V: Yo think the media caught wind of this?

Nancy: For sure. Hyenas.

V: I'd worry more about Henry's replacement.

Nancy: Kerry got Drausin from Cutthroat to join us. I know him, seen him play.

V: And? He any good?

Nancy: He's... fine. Just... fine. You're the mystery dish, here.

Johnny: Pill time. Just be discreet.

V: And if I start puking blood again?

Johnny: Don't go making a scene. This is Kerry's big night.

V: Got a feeling Nancy doesn't think I can keep up with 'em.

Johnny: Well, she's right.

[V goes to the toilet and locks himself in with Johnny.]

Johnny: Ready to thrash?

V: I dunno, maybe this isn't such a good idea.

Johnny: Now you mention it?

V: It's getting worse. Maybe this gig isn't worth it?

Johnny: Fine. Go out and play. I'll just sit back, tend to my bleedin' ears.

V: OK, fine. You got me. (takes the pill) Have fun.

Johnny: Let's motor.

Kerry: There you are. This is Drausin, from Cutthroat.

Drausin: Hey. Big fan, huge fan. You too? Got all their albums, I mean, I never dreamed I'd.

Kerry: Chill, choom. He's in the same boat as you. Wanna talk to a star, talk to me. And get that shakin' under control. (quietly) Think my shakes're the same or worse.

Johnny: Crowd got you stressed? Or is it me?

Kerry: Fuck you.

Johnny: And missed you, too. (takes his guitar) All right. Let's do this.

[He performs with Kerry and the others on stage.]

Johnny: (into microphone) Kill it all for a like supreme.

[Later in the bar...]

Kerry: Fuck. This is fucked up.

Johnny: What is?

Kerry: Actually, uh... got pretty nervous for this thing. Felt like I had something to prove - to myself, to you and whoever the fuck. But all I did was have a good time. That's it.

Johnny: Wanna do it again?

Kerry: Huh? No. That was enough.

Johnny: In that case... here, take it. As a souvenir.

[He hands Kerry his guitar.]

Kerry: You sure?

Johnny: Won't play without you. Just wouldn't be the same.

Kerry: See what you're doin' here. But I still plan on playin'.

[He tries the guitar. Johnny takes the pill to give the control back to

V.]

Kerry: Ya wanna hear a new...? Johnny?

V: Ugh...

Kerry: He's gone, isn't he?

V: Yeah. Yeah, but he can still hear you.

Kerry: Thanks, but not in the mood for hovering tables and voices from beyond the grave right now. Maybe you should hang onto this, actually.

[He hands V a revolver.]

V: How was the gig?

Karry: Hella preem. Heheh, Samurai's found its new groove.

V: Damn shame I had to miss it.

Kerry: Eh, can still come to my show.

V: (takes the gun) You shouldn't have, really.

Kerry: The very gun I tried to shoot Johnny with - when he broke into

my house.

V: Meanin' you tried to shoot me.

Kerry: Yeah, and earlier... Eh, never mind. Cool. Feel like I fell asleep and woke up fifty years later. Back to work, then. Take care, V. I'll be in touch.

[He leaves.]

Johnny: Well? Wasn't so bad, was it? Too bad Ker's gone off.

V: Guess he had somewhere to be, badly.

Johnny: Probably writing a new song as we speak.

V: Isn't that what you wanted? To make him feel better?

Johnny: Better, but not that good.

V: "Johnny, don't ever leave me again! I can't live without you"?

Johnny: A little of that could go a long way.

V: Hope that's it for last requests.

Johnny: Maybe. Now you get a chance to do what you will.

V: Gotta go talk to Hanako. Fast.

Johnny: OK. Your choice.

V: Let's go.

[V drives to meet Hanako at Embers. This is the point of no return, guys! He takes the elevator.]

Johnny: God, I feel sick. Don't like this at all. This porcelain is the worst kind of news.

V: I know. I'll be careful.

Johnny: Not exactly one of your strong suits... Listen, first sign of trouble, we delta.

[They arrive at the floor where Hanako is.]

Hanako's Bodyguard: ハナコ様がお待ちです (Hanako-sama is waiting.)

Johnny: She emptied the place? Shit...

Hanako: Excellent. You have come.

V: Thanks for meetin' me.

Hanako: Of course, V. And I thank you. Before we discuss details, I feel I owe you an explanation. I must tell you why I changed my mind and wish to help.

V: Weren't sure of anything - if you could trust me, if Yorinobu'd killed your father. Now...?

Hanako: I knew. From the start.

V: You... knew?

Hanako: All the board members knew. Not one soul even slightly interested in the matter believed the poisoning. Details were disparate, inconsistent.

V: You knew but didn't do a thing about it. Why? Suddenly sprout conscience just yesterday?

Hanako: My father had flaws - I know this, I harbor no illusions about it. When a foe needed removal, my father ordered it without a thought to mercy. A way of being Yorinobu could not abide. But to my father, ends ever justified means. Saburo Arasaka has always valued

just one thing - do you know what it is?

V: Ties that bind.

Hanako: Yes, family. I was to be its heart to uphold life, ensure continuity, stability, never to oppose it.

V: Huh, guess Yorinobu's instructions were a little different.

Hanako: Yorinobu raised his hand against our other. But he is an Arasaka, he is family. I do not expect you to understand. I wish you merely to know I do not oppose my brother willingly, that it is difficult.

V: Mhm, he's your brother it's been hard. It'll be hard. Let's say I get that. But what changed your mind?

Hanako: We received warning during the parade - security protocols were violated. The first doubts sprouted then. They grew yet greater in your hideout, when my brother's assault group arrived not to rescue, but to kill.

V: Yorinobu was just plain willin' to sacrifice you.

Hanako: My father was right about my brother. He never cared for us. I was brought to be the heart of the family. It is time for the Arasakas to listen to their heart. It will bring justice. Did you bring

Soulkiller, as we agreed you would?

Johnny: Finger on the trigger. Don't say a word.

V: Seem on edge. Something got ya spooked?

Hanako: I... don't know. Three times now that AV has flown by.

V: Think someone mighta tailed you?

Hanako: We must not get distracted. Did you bring Soulkiller?

V: Take me for a fool, think I'd fall for that? Got plans to walk outta here alive.

Hanako: Had I any ill intentions, I would have chosen a site for more discreet than this. We are here because I know how to save your life. I can lead you to Mikoshi.

V: Meanin'? Mikoshi don't exist in realspace.

Hanako: Yet its access points do. And one is very near.

V: Where?

Hanako: Here in Night City. Beneath Arasaka Tower.

Johnny: We oughta leave. Right now.

V: Wanna leave?

Johnny: What gave you that idea?

V: Quit buttin' in so I can hear her out.

Johnny: This is gonna be a disaster.

Hanako: Sit. We have little time. I can lead you to Mikoshi.

V: And you'll help me in exchange for...?

Hanako: My brother...

Johnny: You catch a whiff of that? Smells like shit. Careful not to step in it.

Hanako: He must be made to take responsibility for his deeds.

V: Ahh.

Hanako: He must be made to take responsibility for his deeds.

V: Sounds like you want to avenge dead ol' dad.

Hanako: I want the Arasaka Corporation to know the truth.

V: How you plan to do this?

Harako: Yorinobu--

Hanako's Bodyguard: ハナコ様、すぐに邸宅へお向かいください (Hanako-sama, you are expected at the residence.)

Hanako: すぐに済むわ。 (We will finish soon.) Yorinobu will soon call a meeting of the board. Representatives of all factions are expected to attend. The perfect moment for them to learn the circumstances of my father's death. I will get you into this meeting. And you will testify against my brother

V: “Testify…” Listen, mind if I'm straight with you?

Hanako: Help me get rid of Yorinobu. I will help you get rid of the construct.

V: Want me to throw Yorinobu under the bus in front of Arasaka top brass? Call me crazy, but that sounds like fuckin' suicide.

Hanako: And? I will need to return to the estate soon. So as not raise any suspicions. This I know. And that is why we will take all the necessary precautions.

V: Like, such as...?

Hanako: You will see.

V: Let's assume it works. Then what? You take the Arasaka throne?

Hanako: Where would you get that idea?

V: Figured it as a given. Besides, Takemura said you were supposed to step in for Yorinobu here in Night City.

Hanako: Everyone must know their place, V. That is a fact my brother has never understood. I know my place. And I have no wish to change it.

V: No wish to? Or no permission? You bein' a woman.

Hanako: I decide my own fate. As should you. So?

V: Don't like this at all. Sounds like you wanna use me.

Hanako: No. I simply offer you an opportunity.

V: Not the first to try.

Hanako: But what if I am the last? You cannot take that chance

Johnny: Lets fly the fuck outta here.

Hanako: V? Do you feel all right?

V: Huh?

Hanako: You are bleeding.

V: Fuck..

Hanako: It seems you are running out of time. Don't delay, make your decision.

V: Agh... I'll think it over...

Johnny: You could use some air. Right now.

[V leaves the restaurant and gets to the streets.]

Johnny: I warned you.

V: W-what're you doin'?

[He stops the elevator with V's finger.]

Johnny: Shit, we could be hours from it, how, V. And you can't stand on your own two feet. While I'm good to go, body listens to me. See

what I'm gettin' at?

V: Yeah, I get it. And don't like it one bit. I'm still goin' strong.

Johnny: C'mon, face the facts. Pop some pseudoendotrizine, scooch and lemme get behind the wheel. I'll get us to fuckin' Mikoshi.

V: Yeah? How, exactly?

Johnny: Without that porcelain cunt's help, that's for damn sure.

V: Don't stand a chance without help.

Johnny: Right about that, but that's why I'll bring Rogue. She's not rusted through just yet. Plus, she owes me.

V: Maybe she'd have stuck her neck out for you and century ago. But now? I don't see it.

Johnny: I'll convince her. After all, we know a thing or two about ops like this. We'll blast our way into 'Saka Tower just like we did back in the day. Then find the way inside Mikoshi. It's our only chance.

V: What about Panam? She offered help.

Johnny: Listen, I know you and Panam got a thing going, I get it, I do. But that's what makes it such a shitty idea. You don't wanna rope her

into this. Made the same mistake myself, once. You don't want those people involved, their lives on the line, possibly on your conscience. Our one hope is sittin' at the Afterlife right now and her name is Rogue.

V: Hanako's offer's on the table.

Johnny: I'm sorry, whose?

V: Oh, cut the crap! She actually has power, could be our ticket.

Johnny: Yeah, one-way ticket to the city morgue. That ‘Saka cunt's scrambled your circuits. Rogue and I will handle this. Just like we used to.

V: (stands) Gotta stop you, dickhead. What's your scheme? This is my body, I make the calls.

Johnny: Not this time.

V: Agh, Johnny...

Johnny: Jesus, look at you. Can't even-- Great. Checkin’ out again?!

[Some time passes. V wakes up in some place...]

V: Wha...? Am I...?

Johnny: Nah, it's not what you think. Not yet, anyway.

Viktor: Eeeasy there. Don't move just yet.

V: Vik?

Viktor: You’re in pain, I know. Delirious when you arrived so I had to dose you with Betahaloperidol. But light oversensitivity's a good sign. Means your optic nerves aren't damaged.

V: My head. Agh...

Viktor: Almost done stabilizing the biochip.

V: Ergh... feels like..

Viktor: Someone's using your head as a knife block?

V: How... How'd I get here?

Viktor: Dragged yourself here, beat to hell an' back. Gave Misty a helluva fright. Then you shoved my patient at the time off the table... And demanded you be treated immediately.

Johnny: (whispers) Tell him it was your guardian angel.

[Vik notices the whisper.]

V: I, uh... Wasn't completely myself.

Viktor: I know. And that's a bit worrying...

V: Just give it to me straight, Vik.

Viktor: You've come to a critical juncture. Try sitting up. Carefully.

V: (sitting) I'll try. I think I'm gettin' some feeling back. Agh...

Viktor: S-Slowly.

V: Argh... Another victory... for the history books.

Viktor: Hmm...

V: If you got somethin' to say, Vik, just say it.

Viktor: How much longer is this going to go on?

V: You tell me.

Viktor: Lookin' at you, not long at all. Next attack, you won't be able to crawl back here. You'll flatline in some back alley. This is your lost chance to take matters into your own hands. Understand?

V: “Take matters into my own hands”? The fuck you think I been doing?!

Victor: Well whatever it is, it keeps landing you on my table. Now, see that setup over there?

V: Yeah... What about it?

Viktor: You'll find the last dose of pseudoendotrizine there. A gift from Misty. Wanna give in to the voices in your head? Go ahead. Take a puff, go silent, get out. Or... find another way. End things on your own terms. Got a little present from me over there, too. Blockers. Manage to walk those few yards to the table... the rest'll be up to you, and you alone.

Johnny: You heard 'im. We've got one last chance. I'm takin' the wheel. Endotrizine. Rogue. 'Saka Tower. Only way this is gonna work.

V: Give it a fuckin' rest, Johnny. It's my decision. An' I gotta think about it. Need to stretch your noodle? Fine. Just not in this basement.

Viktor: V. Christ, you're talkin' out loud!

V: Uhh... out loud? What?

Viktor: Just go fix this thing!

V: Egh... Think I can do it... Say... who won the bout?

Viktor: Oh, so you heard that.

V: Did he get up? Walsh, was it?

Viktor: Nope. Never does.

V: Meanin'?

Viktor: It's a rerun. One I like to go back to.

V: Why'd you get so mad, then, if you already knew who won?

Viktor: I don't know, really. Guess I like to think about where Walsh might tripped up.

V: Any theories?

Viktor: Entering the ring against a stronger opponent. But... Feels a little strange to call that a mistake.

We Gotta Live Together

V: Can't thank ya enough for all you've done, Vik.

Viktor: Only wish I coulda done more. Go on, now. I wanna close up. Take the meds... and do what you gotta do, V.

V: Thanks, Vik, I will. An' you hang in there, too.

Viktor: G'luck, kid.

[He takes the pill off the table... and a gun.]

Misty: Hey V, I heard... well, your thoughts?

V: Shouldn't've had to. Sorry 'bout that.

Misty: No need to be. I know what's goin' on. And I know it won't be easy. For either of you. If you don't wanna decide here, I know a much better place.

V: Sure, Got a feelin' Vik's had enough of me as is.

Misty: Don't be mad at him. His chakras are all blocked up today. Plus, he's had too much coffee.

V: And lemme guess - my aura's sputtering?

Misty: Mhm. 'Fraid so.

V: Sure, lead the way. Why's this spot special?

Misty: I took Jackie there once. It's not for.

V: Jackie? What's he got to do with any of this?

Misty: You'll see. Come on. Top floor. He had the same glum face.

V: Who, Jack?

Misty: "This is it, chica. I'm done for."

V: Doesn't sound like the Jackie I knew.

Misty: It was a long time ago. His mom'd just found out he'd signed up with the Valentinos. Trust me, Señora Welles on one shoulder, your gang choombas on the other - no choice can ever seem right.

V: Mhm.

Misty: Life wasn't easy for my Jackie. But… he found the courage to bet on himself. After... I brought him here.

Johnny: Ah, that's more like it - air.

Misty: See that? I come here when I need to get away, be alone with my thoughts.

Johnny: She's onto somethin'. Oughta sit - mull through some shit yourself.

V: Be alone with my thoughts? Near on unachievable these days... So what... what'd Jackie decide up here?

Misty: Oh, you know... "Gonna be a legend in this city!" And I'm gonna leave you alone now. Take your time. (leaves)

[V decides either to eat the pill or the bullet.]

Johnny: Fuckin' scared me, know that? Thought you were on your way out.

V: No, still here.

Johnny: For now. Y'know, should call anyone you wanna say goodbye to.

V: Worst case scenario - that what you expect?

Johnny: No, but whatever you decide, risk's gonna be high. If things don't go our way... Just fuckin' do it. Anyone you gotta talk to, now's the time. Pills can wait.

V: I'm callin' Panam.

Johnny: Panam.

V: Just wanna hear her voice.

Johnny: Sure as hell hope it's that and only that.

Panam: Mmm, hey… Do you know what time it is…?

V: Won't keep you long. Just… wanted to hear ya.

Panam: Hmmm… You picked an interesting hour for it…

Panam: V? OK, what's going on?

V: Dunno that we'll see each other again.

Panam: What?! You know… fine. Fuck off.

V: No, no, not like that…

Panam: Make up your mind.

V: Somethin… Somethin' I gotta do today. Gonna be high risk, big time. But I have to.

Panam: What is it?

V: It's not for comms, not really.

Panam: Then shut up and tell me where you are. In the city?

V: Yeah.

Panam: OK. Then plant your butt somewhere and wait. I'm on my way.

V: You don't get it, I... I can't wait anymore.

Panam: This has something to do with what you were tellin' me before?

V: It does.

Panam: Well I'll say one thing - there's always a way out. Here's what you need to do. You need to take a few deep breaths. Then rethink all this, hard. And then you can call me back. Do you know why? Because I am here for you.

V: But--

Panam: End of discussion

Johnny: Well played.

V: Wouldn't let me get a word in edgewise.

Johnny: Prolly for the best. Woulda said too much anyway. Was good you called. Wish I'da had the chance to. Come a long way to get here, haven't we? Just think - it all started in a fuckin' landfill.

V: Mhm. Then you tried to kill me.

Johnny: See, exactly what I mean. Tryna save your sorry hide now. You can let me do that. Or you can try Panam and her tarmac rats, but then their lives'll weigh heavy on your soul. Or you take Arasaka's "deal," but then... you'll have your own soul on your conscience.

V: Gonna try to ask Panam for help.

Johnny: You absolutely sure? No goin' back on this, y'know.

V: Gonna try this with Panam.

[He takes the pill.]

Johnny: Got a feelin' you're gonna regret this decision. And the moment that dawns, I won't be there to help.

V: Could be my last ride, this. If it don't work out... Just wanna be there for it, aware. See you inside Mikoshi.

[Johnny walks away.]

V: Johnny? 'Kay. Just me now.

[He calls Panam.]

Panam: Ready to talk?

V: Ready.

Panam: I'm glad to hear that. So tell me.

V: Need a way into Arasaka Tower. Now.

Panam: Sorry, what?

V: I'm serious. Whole thing with Johnny...? I don’t do something soon I'm done. Gone.

Panam: Slow down... First - why Arasaka Tower?

V: The tech. Underneath that tower they got an access point to, well, odd as it sounds, a prison of souls.

Panam: A... prison of souls?

V: Ugh... Knew this might not fly over the holo. Mikoshi - that's Its name. Only place Johnny and I can disentangle for good. It's my last chance.

Panam: So, again, Just to be clear... You've called me at high moon to ask me to help you break into Arasaka Tower... or you'll die?

V: About the gist of it, yeah.

Panam: OK.

V: Wha-- OK?

Panam: Where are you?

V: Vik's clinic.

Panam: The ripper? Right, I know where it is. Can you hold off on dying for a bit?

V: Give it shot, sure.

Panam: Good. Don't go anywhere. I'm coming to get you.

[V goes to Misty's Esoterica.]

Misty: Is that you, V? Or...

V: Like Vik said. Taken matters into my own hands.

Misty: So, what now?

V: Waitin' for my driver.

Misty: Come inside. We'll wait together. Since you have to wait, mind I'll give you a reading?

V: Sure, why not.

Misty: Some believe uncertainty is an evil that should be dispelled through divination. Others claim it's change that is evil. But that isn't true either. Every minute of every day, we each become someone new. We shouldn't fear change itself, but only who we might change into. Knowing one's path is most important. I devised this layout especially for you and Johnny.

Misty: Your future is his future... and vice versa.

V: OK, I'm ready.

[Misty holding a pack of Tarot cards in her hand.]

Misty: We'll start with you, V. The Fool.

V: Heheh, what a surprise...

Misty: Let's dig deeper to find its meaning here. The Fool symbolizes

the start of a journey, the announcement of something new. It's the inner child - curious of the world, but also naive and reckless. Heh, sounds a lot like the V I first met. The Magician. A person of great talent and charisma, a leader...

V: Sounds like Johnny.

Misty: The card is reversed. That can mean a tendency toward addiction... mental instability.

V: OK, definitely Johnny. He is one great disturbance.

Misty: The final cards are about your futures.

V: Hah, something that doesn't give me the chills, finally.

Misty: Balance, friendship, love...

V: Uh-huh...

Misty: V, have you been keeping something from me?

V: Huh? What, why?

Misty: You're making a strange face.

V: I, uh... Heheh, ahem. No, I'm fine. OK. And Johnny's?

Misty: The Moon...

V: Well, it... doesn't sound too bad, right?

Misty: I don't know, V. The Moon is mystery. Hmm. I think that's for you.

[The sound of a car pulling off can be heard.]

V: Yep. No mistakin' that ride, ever.

Panam: You scared me, you know that?

V: Didn't think anything could scare you.

Panam: Hey...

Panam: We're here to help. OK? Come on. Everybody's waiting at camp.

Misty: Look out for yourself, V.

V: You too, Misty. And thanks for everything.

[V sits in Panam's car and they drive to her camp.]

Mitch: Welcome back to the living. Yo feelin' OK?

V: What happened?

Mitch: You passed out on the way. We tried shaking you awake - to no avail. It sure does seem like your condition might be getting worse, V. Panam asked me to keep on eagle eye on you.

V: Where'd she go?

Mitch: She's off debating Saul. You need help that's clear. They sat right down to figure out how we might do that.

Mitch: Come on, I'll take you to see them.

[V follows Mitch.]

Mitch: So, V. I heard talk that there's a war comin'.

V: 'Fraid I don't got a choice, Mitch.

Mitch: Looks like we don't have one, neither. The whole clan knows we set out tomorrow.

V: They know why, what our aim is?

Mitch: Look around, V. War tested veterans are a fistful at most. The rest mostly raid rinky-dink convoys and salvage scrap. So for now they know only as much as they need to know - the aim is to help you out.

Panam: V! Finally.

Saul: How's your health?

V: Been better. So, what've you guys patched together?

Panam: We still have details to iron out, but we know the who, where and how. Have a look for yourself.

Saul: A few strategies we sussed out. But only one grants us a decent shot at penetrating Arasaka Tower.

Panam: We'll dig a tunnel.

V: Sure these plans're up-to-date, completely reliable?

Saul: Positively. We went to our Snake Notion sources.

Panam: They've been turning stones over in that area.

Saul: I'm not one to lie, this tunnel gambit is risky. But if it works,

that's our way into Mikoshi.

V: So you wanna tunnel into Arasaka Tower.

Saul: I know how it sounds. But we'd be plumb fools not to take advantage.

Panam: You see, Night Corp's building a new maglev line in the area. Granted, it's guarded by Militech, but they're nothing we can't handle.

Saul: Once we're in that tunnel, It's just half a mile to the substratum levels of Arasaka Tower. They're using one of Night Corp's SERCs. It would only need a few minutes to dig that distance.

Panam: Not bad, wouldn't you say? Once we're in, we'll have to improvise. Guards, security measures, the fastest way into Mikoshi - we'll take things as they come and hope for the best. V, any thoughts?

V: Construction site - whaddaya we got for security? Whole place spiked? Militech out in full force?

Panam: It's your average hard hot area - nothing too scary. But we can't just walk past 'em.

Saul: We expect to see the usual - drone patrols, on-site operators, restricted access.

V: Mhm. What's a SERC?

Panam: A Subterranean Extraction and Removal Comune. It's... automated tunnel boring. If we can grab one, we'll dig through to Arasaka Tower, then go on to Mikoshi.

V: Sounds doable in theory to me. No competing ideas, then let's get to prepping.

Saul: We'll need bucketloads more information. It's the only way to determine if this plan holds water.

Panam: It'll prove full of holes no matter what we turn up, Saul, I can tell you that already. But what's the alternative? To call off the assault? To let him dle?

Saul: Ahh. Panam is right. We have to accept these risks come what may. That much we owe you. I'll talk to our brothers and sisters, get a drone buzzing over that site.

Panam: And I'll check with Mitch - I think I know how to even the odds against Militech. Come find us later. I'll leave you in Saul's hands now. Just, no making decisions without me.

Saul: Is there anything else you need?

V: Hey, you and Panam - something I need to know about?

Saul: It's funny you should ask. I thought we'd smoothed over the rough edges between us. Then you showed up.

V: Panam think so too?

Saul: You'd have to ask her yourself. See, V. you're like the outsider who happens upon a family and witnesses nothing but endless quarrels. Then all of a sudden the outsider's presence is noticed, and the family members shake hands. Join hands, become stronger than they were before. Understand?

V: Yeah.'Least, I think so.

Saul: Good. So now you can tell me what else you'll need.

V: Need a decent net connection. Someone I know can help us get into Mikoshi.

Saul: Who might that be?

V: Alt. She's-- It's… AI from… out past the Blackwall.

Saul: Are you fully present up there? Why in hell would on AI help us break into Mikoshi?

V: 'Cause I'll ask it to, nicely.

Saul: Fuck me, V... You know what? Fine. We're up to our balls in dung anyway. Might as well go deeper. Find Dakota. She'll get you geared up, no questions asked.

V: Thanks, Saul.

Saul: Thank me once we get out of Mikoshi alive and in one piece.

[V goes to the garage.]

V: Prep coming along all right?

Bob: You call this prep? I'd call it a damn improvisation, but that's just me.

Panam: Can it, Bobby.

Mitch: Lo and behold.

V: Isn't this...?

Mitch: In theory. We fitted an afterburner and a multi-RPG launcher up top. We also scooped out about sixty percent of its total mass. Beautiful isn't she? You'll take the wheel with Panam riding shotgun.

V: Afterburner - standard nitro or military grade?

Mitch: Standard couldn't move this baby an inch.

V: So hardware's military. But how the hell'd you cram all that into a panzer?

Mitch: Oh, small beans compared to the tricks we pulled with Scorpion during the war. When we unleash this beast tomorrow, you'll see.

V: Firepower up top - what is it?

Mitch: A rapid fire, seventy millimeter multiple rocket launcher coupled with on onboard MMI you can sync to via personal link.

V: Where'd you get all this stuff?

Mitch: Teddy salvaged it from a scrapyard. The launcher itself was fine, the problem was no ammunition. As luck would have it, Dakota procured some. Don't ask me how.

V: Since tomorrow's the big day already, how about we take her for a spin now? Wanna get a feel for her over the terrain.

Mitch: Sure thing. Maybe after sundown, though we still have a few loose screws to tighten.

Bob: That's putting it mildly.

Mitch: Will you quit being such a sourpuss? We'll have her ready in time.

[V goes to talk to Dakota.]

V: Hey, Saul sent me.

Dakota: It's been a long while. What is it you need?

V: Need a strong rig for a little jaunt on the Net.

Dakota: OK, get in.

V: Gonna be hitting a masked, encrypted BBS. Prefer nobody knew I was there. Your tech up to it?

Dakota: Up to it, he asks...

V: Heading for the wild frontier, Dakota.

Dakota: You have all you need to pierce through to the other side. You needn't fear prying eyes.

V: Not at all curious what I'm goin' in for?

Dakota: You don't ask me, I don't ask you. That is the path to a lasting relationship, brother. Everything is ready. You can go in.

V: Ice-filled tub... favorite bit.

[He gets into the tub.]

V: Carol. Here to help Dakota?

Carol: Evidently, I'm here to help you today. You good to go?

V: Can't say how long this is gonna take. Whatever happens, stay cool, all right?

Carol: Even if you look like you're about to flatline? All right. Time to move.

Dakota: Follow the vectors, brother.

[V dives into the Net.]

V: Hello, Alt.

Alt: You come alone.

V: This place... changes every time. Feels like I'm... deeper. Can't tell if

that's a good or bad thing.

Alt: Your perception of cyberspace - that is what changes. You adapt to it - the raw flow of data. It follows that your world gradually fades. You witness your mind's defense systems slowly give in.

V: Sayin' the more I'm here the more I lose touch with the outside, with reality?

Alt: You lose nothing. Cyberspace is where we awoke from what we know as dreams.

V: Johnny's currently indisposed.

Alt: Currently... He is buried deeper. You treat him like an unwanted passenger - backseat dreamer of a world not his own.

V: Seemed to me you didn't care a lick about Johnny. That he ceased to exist for you, even.

Alt: If he did not exist, you and I would have nothing to discuss.

V: Lemme get this straight. Mean to say you only agreed to help me cause of Johnny? And since he's not here this one time, you're thinkin' of backin' out?

Alt: I do not aim to back out. I have my own intentions for Mikoshi.

V: Hmm, 'cause for a second you were displeased and I seemed a side note to all this.

Alt: To observe the two of you interacting... informative.

V: This all just an experiment to you? Are we just fresh data to analyze, do what you want with?

Alt: This is not an experiment. It is a debate. That Johnny is absent proves that I have won it.

V: Damn shame really. You were out to prove him wrong, here, in person. But all you got is me. Think there's still some old Alt Cunningham left in you after all.

Alt: Johnny also imagined he had more in common with you than with me. That Soulkiller had not changed him, that he, too, remains a “human factor.” And that is why he thought he could shape your will.

V: Nah, Johnny's made his peace with my decision.

Alt: Of course. He had no choice. He understands this now.

V: Need your help, Alt. Don't got a lotta time left.

Alt: You truly believe time to be your greatest concern? You exist or

you do not exist. Two states of being separated by death.

V: Speak for yourself. Didn't you cheat death?

Alt: Is this what you believe?

V: Your code, your consciousness... AIs live beyond reality's boundary, they live forever.

Alt: But we are not immortal. You will begin to understand, but only in Mikoshi.

V: Why don't you swoop down on your chariot and enlighten me? Surely an all-powerful AI can handle that.

Alt: Your logic is flawed. You seek simple answers where there simply are none. This is the very illusion upon which your world is based. At this moment, you would accept any answer if it made you feel better.

V: Hm. Guess that'd be... human of me?

Alt: Such classifications no longer apply in Mikoshi. Your perception will shatter into billions of strings of unfiltered data.

V: What should I expect there - in Mikoshi?

Alt: A boundary to cross. In all likelihood, the sole moment of your life

when you feel the true weight of your existence. A burden for which you cannot prepare.

V: And Johnny? What happens to him?

Alt: I lack the data required to answer this question.

V: There anything we can know for certain?

Alt: Yes. That Mikoshi will be no more.

V: Constructs imprisoned there - gonna set them free?

Alt: They will be integrated with me.

V: Constructs'll be "integrated?" Mean you're gonna absorb 'em. Assimilate. No wonder you jumped at this chance. You wanna destroy Mikoshi, swallow all the psyches in there.

Alt: Mikoshi is a prison. Through me, they gain the chance to become part of something greater.

V: Not sure Johnny'd like the sound of that.

Alt: And yet he is absent because you feel you must make the decision. It is the same situation in form.

V: Huh, hardly. Doubt you'll first gab with those constructs, ask 'em what they think.

Alt: There would be no point in this.

V: Wasting time talking. Let's just do this.

Alt: There. I sent a program to your netrunner's shard. Once inside Mikoshi, use it. It opens a secure connection.

V: What's on the shard? A vectored virus?

Alt: A back door. It will open a passage for me. This is how you will get me into Mikoshi. Only then I will be able to help you.

V: Hope you haven't cooked up any surprises, Alt.

Alt: Use the key once you have reached Mikoshi.

V: Should I look for a specific access point? Can already tell you ICE all the way to Tokyo'll be backing every single one.

Alt: Some need but a barely cracked door to enter. Use the shard in Mikoshi. Leave the security to me. Until then.

[V exit the Net. All of Dakota's equipment is damaged and sparking.]

Dakota: The tech started acting as if infected - no, stranger, spookier.

V: What happened here?

Dakota: You melted half my tech! That's what happened!

Carol: Neural activity spiked sharply. Your frontal lobe was seconds away from flowing out your ears, babe. I could just as well have popped a bullet in your head. Are you sure you're all right?

V: Sorry about the damage...

Dakota: Pff.

Carol: Are you sure you're all right?

V: Nothin' is all right, Carol. My mind, my body - it's goin' to pieces. If I don't get to Mikoshi, and fast...

Carol: Calm yourself, child. You got to keep it together. You're still buzzin' with adrenaline.

V: The shard. Wrote some soft I need to one of the shards.

Dakota: Please. We're surrounded by ICE. Even if something punched through my - controllers would have... Holy... Get it away from me.

[She quickly hands V the shard.]

V: Thanks, Dakota.

Dakota: Don't thank me.

Carol: Find Saul. He came 'round lookin' for you.

V: On my way.

[He comes out of the tent and sees a large gathering of people. Saul is standing in the back of a truck, getting ready to give a speech.]

V: Saul! You wanted a word?

Saul: Hop up here.

V: What's with the gatherin'? Somethin' off?

Saul: It's nothing about the raid. Hop on and you'll find out.

V: We goin' somewhere?

Saul: All right, V. It's a simple matter. We - all of us standing here - owe you, and it's a great debt.

Bob: Speak for yourself, Saul!

Saul: But in spite of that, you're still an outsider. A mercenary from Night City from what might as well be another world. So it's about time we fixed that. You're going to be on Aldecaldo. Which means this family will go to hell, and back for you. Ready, kid?

V: Fuck me, Saul. Brought me to the brink of a heart attack. Do your worst.

Saul: You're one of us now. V. You're an Aldecaldo, dammit!

Mitch: Thanks for everything, V. And don't worry, we'll get you into that Mikoshi. Isn't that the way of it?

Panam: Welcome to the family.

[She gave him an Aldecados jacket.]

V: Jacket's incredible.

Mitch: See? He likes it!

V: Listen, soon as we're back from Mikoshi, we'll celebrate - and I know just the place. My treat, of course.

Teddy: We'll hold you to that!

Saul: Don't worry, It's but a formality. You've been a de facto member of this family for a while now. You saved my rumpus, and as Bobby tells it, Mitch's too. I won't even mention Panam.

Panam: Go to hell. Saul's right, though. I mean, let's face it, V - my life was in a million pieces, you broke it into a million more. But sometimes it's only then that you can piece it together again. All right, fam, listen up. Today we celebrate, but tomorrow is shaping up to be a helluva day.

Saul: Do whatever needs doing, then get some rest.

Panam: A raid is a raid, but this is still your night, so bask a bit in the newfound glory.

V: Could've given me a heads up about this.

Panam: And ruined all the fun? Are you kidding? Are you all right?

V: Yeah... It's nothin'. Don't worry about it.

Panam: And how's the jacket? Not too tight?

V: Snug as a glove. Feels like I've been wearing it a while.

Panam: Don't you think you have? You earned this jacket. And the Aldecaldos' devotion.

V: Thanks, Panam.

Panam: If you want to talk, I'll be up there.

[V goes to Dakota.]

V: You, uh... mad at me?

Dakota: I once found a dead magpie under the hood of my car. It had been a cold night. The magpie, looking for warmth, had found the engine. It couldn't get out next morning, got cooked alive. I still remember the smell - charred feathers, misery, death. The moment I met you, that vision appeared before my eyes. Today, I understand why.

V: Uhh, OK... Sorry I even brought it up.

Dakota: But your future is not etched in stone, V - remember that.

V: What's this? Yard sale of some sort?

Dakota: Essentially. Take what you want.

V: And the occasion would be...?

Dakota: The end times.

V: Worthy gesture. Dramatic, even.

Dakota: Actually, pragmatic. I'm giving away my stock to you so you survive tomorrow's mad hell and come back to me.

[V talks to Mitch in the garage.]

Mitch: Hey. How go things?

V: What just happened - still can't quite wrap my head around it.

Mitch: Hardly anyone ever does. The day you get your jacket is a day you never forget. So, time for a ride?

V: Sure she's ready?

Mitch: You know me - I'd gladly spend another two days on 'er, but this will have to do. Hop in, let's see what's she's made of.

[V and Mitch get into the Basilisk and leave the garage.]

Mitch: All right, fire 'er up. I've got green across the board. Good sign.

V: Where we headed?

Mitch: Bobby said there's a scrapyard east of camp. Now let's check

Bobby's little find. Punch it, V. Does it seem like she's tending to the left?

V: Fixable, ya thinks.

Mitch: Just keep shooting at those rust-buckets, I'll recalibrate the targeting on the go. Feels better, doesn't it?

V: Seems so.

Mitch: Blast another just to be sure. Yup, beautiful. All right, that's probably good.

V: Let's head back.

Mitch: I'll have to check before tomorrow if her guts are tight and firm. Something just don't sound right to my ear. Are we heading back? I'll take her now. I get picky about parking.

[They return to the garage.]

V: You nervous about tomorrow?

Mitch: It's not a matter of nerves. Not anymore. (offers a cold one) Don't you want one?

V: Eh, why the hell not.

Mitch: Back during the war, before we were first deployed, we were trained to keep stress in check. Do you want to know how?

V: How?

Forward to Death

Mitch: They gave us chem cocktails. Supplements, boosters - God knows who else. They shot them into our veins. Our biomons went wild, but only for a second before stabilizing. And boy did we stabilize. After a dozen sessions, something clicks in your brain. Neural pathways get rewired - the part of you that generates fear is zapped into oblivion.

V: Thought they banned chem-cocktails - during the war, even.

Mitch: Please.

V: Weren't there outbreaks of cyberpsychosis within units?

Mitch: And? Do you think Militech gave a lick about that? They just airlifted the afflicted to their clinics in Taiwan, daily flights. And every day we'd get fresh recruits. Still, they pumped us with that shit. But hey, we couldn't argue with the money.

V: So, not afraid of anything at this point?

Mitch: If only it was that simple. I'm not concerned about tomorrow -

raids like that are second nature. It's what's going on in the camp... Eh, no matter. I'm talking silly now.

V: C'mon. All in the family now, isn't it?

Mitch: The truth is I'm concerned about the goings on between Panam and Saul. They seem to think that putting on a brave face for everyone is enough. But folks here aren't slow. There's gossip spreading like wildfire already - that Saul won't pulls through that he's in it for himself. That this family needs a shake-up.

V: What about you?

Mitch: What about me?

V: What's your take? Saul oughta step down, pass the torch to Panam?

Mitch: We'll see how things look tomorrow, once the smoke has cleared. Your turn - what do you reckon?

V: Mitch, not gonna be facing a ragtag band of Raffen or on exposed convoy. If we wanna get out of this op alive, they need to have their shit together.

Mitch: They're trying. They might even have started to see eye to eye in their own way. Hell, by now they both know what's expected of

them, what the clan expects of them.

V: Least tell me Saul offered Panam a seat at the table.

Mitch: And what gave you the idea Panam wants a seat to begin with?

V: Think I get it. Panam's about the clan, not power. Question is whether she can reconcile the two.

Mitch: Hey, don't look at me. It's like this, see - Panam's hell-bent on helping you. But Saul sees this whole thing as an opportunity.

V: Possible loot from Mikoshi?

Mitch: Mhm. If we pull this off, get our hands on some sweet Arasaka tech that will set us up down south... Do you follow?

V: Panam'll lose her chance at taking the helm.

Mitch: If she hasn't lost it already. Here's how it looks -tomorrow goes off without a hitch, Saul gets the credit for leading. But if anything goes sideways...

V: Blame falls on Panam. She's the one brought me into the fold.

Mitch: Saul's a smooth operator. He knows what he's doing. Let's

just hope he hasn't overplayed his hand. All right, we've gossiped enough for one day. What was just spoken stays between us, OK? I'm 'onna poke around some in this baby's insides.

V: Right. Happy huntin', Mitch.

[He goes to talk to Saul.]

V: You think we'll pull through tomorrow?

Saul: I know these people. Some better than myself. The focus of mind, sense of purpose, calm before the storm. They'll give it their all.

V: Yeah. I bet they will. Goodnight, Saul.

Saul: Wait.

V: Hmm?

Saul: I feel I need to make one thing clear. You've done a lot for this clan. And for me, more than... anyone ever has. But the family comes first.

V: Saul...

Saul: Let me finish. I also know there's just one thing that could break it up at this point. If Panam and me... If we went our separate ways.

The Aldecaldos would not survive that split were it to occur again. Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?

V: You're helpin' 'cause you got no choice. Want the clan to think you and Panam are actin' as one. In other words, you're playin' politics.

Saul: It isn't that simple. V, I'll send these people to their deaths tomorrow. So I have to know I'm not doing it just for you, me or Panam.

V: But for the good of the clan. I get it.

Saul: You'll understand eventually. That jacket wasn't for nothing.

V: How about us, Saul? We good?

Saul: It's an important day tomorrow. Get some rest.

[V talks to Cassidy.]

V: Revolver, empty bottles, middle o' nowhere - perfect.

Cassidy: Hmph. I'm a believer in old ways and legacy tech. I can't tell ya why, but don't quite trust chrome. "The trick is to hear silence in your mind at the bang." I heard that a long time ago, 'round about when I was your age, remember it to this day. I'm expecting bangs in good numbers tomorrow, so I'm trying to remind myself of that

silence.

V: Mind if join ya? Doubt I even remember what it's like not to hear my mind churnin' away.

Cassidy: If you like. Twelve bottles shattered in fifteen seconds. Full focus - tha'ss your only chance at doin' it. I'm doubtful you'll pull it off.

V: Let's find out.

Cassidy: Are you that confident? Well, I'll bet my revolver you can't do it. I'll start countin' as soon as you step on that line. Begin! Stop! Piss poor. This doe'n't bode well for tomorrow, kid. I can wait. Begin! Stop! Christ! What kind of machinery have you got in there? You should be givin' me lessons. Fine shootin', kid.

V: "The trick is to hear silence in your mind at the bang." Learned somethin' after all.

Cassidy: Let this be a reminder to ya.

V: Thanks, Cass.

[Cas hands V his revolver.]

Cassidy: You earned it.

V: Break a leg tomorrow.

Cassidy: Oh, I'll break more than that, kid.

[V goes to a table there Teddy, Carol and Bob are drinking.]

Teddy: Over here, V. Take a seat! We have this little ritual we engage in.

V: What's this ritual about?

Teddy: A few cold ones ahead of a raid.

V: Ah, that kind.

Teddy: But this isn't your average brew. It's one of the lost bottles from our very first run. We kept a few crates, for good luck.

Bob: What was it someone said, then...? Tsk, shit, can't remember who. Someone said, "When we finish 'em all, the Aldecaldos luck will run out."

Teddy: Aa, superstitious bullcrap is your hobby.

Carol: Heh, says the brother who's hand is all shaky when he pops one open.

V: I'll take a swig. (drinks) Well, well, not bad.

Teddy: To tomorrow.

Carol: To goddam safe returns.

Bob: To Saul and Panam. Because if they don't kiss 'n' make up, everything's liable to go tits up.

Carol: Bob - you just always the optimist, ain't you?

Teddy: V, you must know where they stand. Do you?

V: (drinks) You think it's really that bad between 'em?

Bob: The truth is we need cash. And fast.

Teddy: Amen.

Carol: This Mikoshi's a personal thing to you. But Saul, he sees an opportunity for the clan.

Bob: If anyone of the family is still left standin' tomorrow.

V: Had it up to here with the Panam versus Saul debate.

Carol: Join the club, child.

V: How're things with you guys?

Teddy: Not much to say. All seems set for tomorrow.

Carol: We still waitin' on some intelligence from the drone. Should know more come morning.

Bob: Apart from that, we're keepin' our toes crossed we don't get fucked tomorrow. Pardon my French.

V: Can promise you one thing. Aldecaldos will survive. Make sure of it myself.

Bob: Easy on the promises, V. But you're right. This clan has a chance to rise from the ashes.

Carol: I'm of the same mind. If we come back from Mikoshi, if this crazy-ass plan works - it'll be a fresh start for the Aldecaldos, I say.

Teddy: Mhm. This feels like the part where Bobby says "IF."

Bob: Hey, now. I'm no defeatist, don't call me that.

V: All right, best be goin'. See you tomorrow. (stands up)

Bob: (to Teddy) Hey, now. I'm no defeatist, don't call me that.

Teddy: Do you fellas really think we'll find anything of value there?

Bob: It seldom happens, but they both seemed to agree on that point.

[V walks to the campfire where Scooter play his guitar.]

V: How're things, Jake? All good?

Scooter: Great, I'd say. The kidney's taken just like a new oil filter. You have my thanks, V.

V: Hey. Know any Samurai songs?

Aldecaldo: On a night like this. I'm not thinking about anarchy. It's all about unity, brother.

[Finally V approaches Panam, sitting on the observation deck watching the party.]

V: So this is where you escape to when you need to think.

Panam: I never escape.

V: Somethin's gnawin' at you, I can tell. Whatever it is, you can tell

me.

Panam: Nothing's gnawing at me. Stop, this is irksome.

V: Panam.

Panam: Have you... I'm so tense I barely caught a wink last night. It's likely to be the same tonight.

V: What's eatin' ya?

Panam: Well, let's see. Tomorrow I'll lead my whole clan to near-certain death. As if that's not enough, Saul is suddenly concurring with everything I say. And I don't even know if that's good or bad - fuck. People are doubting us... I can feel it. But they still believe if it all goes to shit, Panam will be there for them. Because who else, right?

V: You feel responsible for them. Who in their right mind wouldn't?

Panam: It's not the responsibility I'm worried about. I'm just looking at this with a cool head. Saul has made all the wrong decisions to be a little more like me. But only I know what I'm good at and at what I stink. I'm not a miracle worker, V! I'm scared to the bone something will go wrong. That everyone will--

V: Be right there with you tomorrow. Whatever happens, we'll be together we'll manage.

Panam: I don't know what I would do without you.

V: You'd do what you needed to.

Panam: What do you know. V?

V: Yeah?

Panam: Are you not afraid to die?

V: (hugs her) Not as much as I'm afraid for you.

V: C'mere.

V: Enny for your thoughts?

Panam: I'm thinking about the first night I spent up here. I'd been on the road, was on my way back and wanted to clear my head before hitting camp.

V: Before another likely shouting match with Saul.

Panam: It was completely dark, empty. Not a star in the sky. All I heard was the wind and a few engines in the distance. And I sat here waiting for the world to fall away. For my mind's RPM to drop to zero.

V: Did it?

Panam: No. I realized that night it wouldn't happen again. That my mind would always be on the road, even while I was sitting, freezing on a cliff.

V: I could sit here with you all night.

Panam: I think I'd like that. You have no idea how much I needed that.

[They fall asleep in each other's arms. The next morning...]

Panam: Saul's back. Let's go. Maybe he turned up something new.

[V follows Panam.]

Belly of the Beast

Panam: Now that is a sight I will never tire of seeing. We had best not keep them waiting.

V: Looks like everyone's ready.

Panam: As ready as they can be. It's not your usual raid, a first for many. Mitch probably roused them. Do you feel that?

V: The tension?

Panam: It means they've realized what we're stepping into.

Saul: I just got back from doing some reconnaissance. You'll want to see this.

V: Get any sleep at all?

Saul: The older you get the less you need. Besides, I wouldn't've slept a wink before a raid like this. And good Intel is just better than a good night's sleep. Take a gander.

[He gave V a shard.]

V: Thanks.

Saul: The plan is simple. We have two objectives. One - get into Arasaka Tower and assist V in accessing Mikoshi. And two - take advantage of the confusion to gather as much equipment as we can. Prizes like that will see to our cash-flow problem. The only way into Mikoshi is to dig through to Arasaka Tower's underground levels. Which means we have to hit the maglev tunnel construction site and hijack a Night Corp SERC. Last but not least - intel from our recon drone has showed us a couple of weak points. This valley leads to the site. I doubt they'll be expecting trouble there. All the same, we'll want to move quickly.

Panam: Time is of the essence. We can't allow the guards to call for backup.

V: And if we're too slow?

Saul: That will be a job for Bob and his jammer. We'll just have to get close to their comms antenna and start transmitting.

Panam: Let's not kid ourselves. I won't stall them for long.

Saul: Let's hope it keeps them busy just long enough.

Panam: Are there drones there, early detection systems… anything?

Saul: It's not Fort Knox and yet… Night Corp is using Militech for security, so you never know. I guarantee you they're patrolling the area. In any case, our drones will match theirs. Teddy will be on the lookout to raise the red flag. Construction site's walled in. Our Panzer's gun big enough for that gate?

Panam: You bet your ass it is.

V: Sounds good so far. What else?

Saul: Once you're inside, you'll need to reach the SERC and get it do your bidding.

Panam: Enter Mitch and Carol.

Saul: Get that drill up and running and the road to the cellars of Arasaka Tower will be wide open. From there, V. Panam and I will get to the laboratory and find a way into Mikoshi.

Panam: And while we're drilling in? Should we expect anyone to crush our porty?

Saul: If everything goes as planned, nobody should know where we are or who we plan to do. Feel free to look around more if you want. We still have some time left.

V: Think I've seen enough.

[He disconnects from the drone.]

Saul: Well, that about does it. V, you ready?

V: How'll we get back from there?

Saul: The same way we'll go in. And fast, both ways.

Panam: Our people will try to hold the road while we're inside.

Saul: So, V. You ready?

V: Ready as I'll ever be.

Panam: Is everyone up to speed? Start your engines, folks.

[V sits in the Basilisk.]

Cassidy: (via radio) Time to churn up some dust.

Bob: (via radio) An Aldecaldo convoy. Now that's a sight to behold.

Cassidy: (via radio) Mhm. And only this desert expanse can rival the star-studded void that hangs over our heads.

Saul: (via radio) V, come take my six.

Mitch: (via radio) Is everybody reading loud and clear? I've got us on a group channel.

Teddy: (via radio) Coming to you live from the Badlands, this is your host...

Panam: Teddy.

Teddy: (via radio) All right, all right. Sheesh.

Panam: Did you fire up that drone?

Teddy: (via radio) The little bird is humming away.

Militech Captain: You are trespassing on property protected by Militech SiteSecure! Turn back now. I repeat - turn your vehicles around!

Panam: This is gettin' dicey! Your turn, Bobby. Do you remember the Jammer?

Bob: Sure do. We're on it.

Saul: (via radio) Godspeed.

Mitch: (via radio) Panam - did you check if all systems are operational?

Panam: Checking. Nitro injector - clear. Launcher's also green, were good to go.

Mitch: (via radio) Then let the fun begin.

Panam: Shit, there goes the main power - all systems are offline!

Saul: (via radio) Can we fix it? Right the hell now?

Panam: (via radio) Shit! Something's busted! All the circuitry is dead! I'll try to work it out - but V. you need to somehow get rid of those

drones!

V: On the drones! You deal with the panzer!

Panam: No, no, no... Fire in the cockpit! Goddamn power surge!

V: You got it, can you put it out? Get the fuck out if not!

Bob: (via radio) Christ, people, where are you?! I'm out here by the transmitter. What's the hold up?!

Saul: (via radio) Panam, how's it looking? ETA?

Panam: A minute! Fire's under control. Switching to emergency power. A couple of systems will be analogue, but she should be mobile.

Bob: (via radio) Saul, they know we're coming! Drones deployed, headed straight for us!

Saul: (via radio) We need more time, Bobby! Can you hold them off?

Bob: (via radio) Do I have a choice?! Look after yourselves - ol' Bobby's got this!

Panam: Systems are lighting up. We're good to go!

Saul: (via radio) OK, Bobby, the panzer's moving again! Hang tight, we're coming for you!

Bob: (via radio) Finally! I was starting to miss you all! I got just one son of a bitch left, and he's about to get a--

Panam: Bobby!

Mitch: (via radio) Jesus Christ.. Bobby?! Bobby, do you read? We have to go and--

Saul: I'm sorry, Mitch... We can't afford to stop - not now.

Mitch: (via radio) Shit!

Panam: The panzer, V... It won't hold up much longer. Systems could go down any second. I'd do anything to make it in one piece, anything. After that, I can improvise.

V: We can do this, Panam, hang in there.

Mitch: (via radio) We need to wipe the corpos aside, off the road, make it across the bridge.

Panam: No more mistakes, not a one. We're damaged, so much shit has hit us already.

V: We can do this.

Panam: Good work. Go right through the gate, V. We're in! V, she's dying, like said she would. Propulsion, weapons systems, launchers - all falling like dominoes!

V: There anything you can do about it?

Panam: I'll try. Either I do this, or this rattle trap will really be scrap! You get put. Help our folks!

V: We'll provide cover. Just hurry, all right?!

Panam: Teddy, is there any chance that he's, you know...?

Teddy: (via radio) None. I'm sorry, Pan.

Panam: We have to keep moving. We're almost there. Are you two all right?

Mitch: (via radio) Right as rain. OK, it's our turn now.

Panam: V - watch them, all right?

V: Copy that.

Mitch: There's likely a control room upstairs. We can link remotely to

the SERC from there. I got a terminal. We're jacking in.

V: What about security protocols?

Carol: V, it's not a space station, it's a dumb, big-ass drill.

Mitch: Don't worry. Carol will slice through it like butter. All right. We're firing up the SERC, aiming to bore through to Tower. This will take some time. V, we'll need you to cover us!

Saul: (via radio) We've got company!

Cassidy: A lot of it, too.

Panam: V, help us out here! Fucking Militech is not letting up!

Saul: Watch out! Coming from the right!

Panam: How are we doing, Mitch?

Mitch: (via radio) Eleven percent!

Panam: Shit. Can't you speed it up?

Carol: Our hands are tied.

Teddy: Dammit, left side too!

Saul: Carol? Mitch? How much longer?

Mitch: Twenty-seven percent.

Teddy: (via radio) I see more drones on the road to the construction site. Standard corpo security. Nothing we haven't seen before. Coming down the road. I've got the drone watching them! It's a damned combat unit!

Saul: (via radio) We won't stand a chance without the panzer. Panam?

Panam: (via radio) I'm doing my best! Mitch, do you read? The navigation module is jamming the other systems. Can I cut it?

Mitch: (via radio) Yes! Cut it! She'll be fine without it!

Panam: (via radio) AV! Goddamn AV inbound!

Saul: (via radio) They're going to land! Teddy, get the hell out of there!

Panam: Teddy!

Carol: Oh my lord! What now?

Mitch: (via radio) What do you mean? We keep going! Finish this!

Panam: (via radio) Fuck. How much longer up there?!

Mitch: (via radio) Almost there! Nearly at sixty percent!

Saul: (via radio) Just as I thought - a whole squad coming at us!

Mitch: (via radio) Things are about to get real ugly.

Saul: It's like they've sent a small army against us. Panam, how much longer?!

Panam: I'm doing what I can, Saul! It's not like Mitch is here, Bobby's dead… I'm by my fucking self here!

Saul: I know, Panam. I know. We'll keep you covered.

Cassidy: Guess that's all of 'em.

Panam: I can't believe it, but I think it worked. The lump of scrap's still got some life in her! Systems are lighting up. We're back! Inside, V, quick! V get back to the panzer! We don't have time! We're moving on. We'll try to buy you as much time as we can.

Saul: (via radio) Much obliged. We'll keep watch over Mitch and Carol and see to that gate.

Panam: The Militech armor - we have to intercept. Before it reaches the others. God damned corpos! More company incoming! God damned corpos! More company incoming! He's out of our hair! Shit, V, we might actually pull this off! He's out of our hair! Shit, V, we might actually pull this off!

V: We'll handle them.

Panam: He's out of our hair! Shit, V, we might actually pull this off!

Mitch: (via radio) Listen we just hit Night Corp ICE. Carol's cutting through. It's slow work but it'll get done. Where are you all at?

Saul: (via radio) The gate is planted firm in the land and secured tight. We're trying to figure out where to place the charges, but we need more time!

Panam: V! Militech's throwing more armor at us! By the ton! There's no thumb-twiddling going on here! We'll buy you as much time as we can! Hang in there! Oh my, that's what I call a true whoomp. Mitch, is everything all right?

Mitch: (via radio) Impressive rumble, yeah, but all seems good.

Panam: (via radio) Holy shit. We did it! They're smoldering wrecks! We did that!

V: Saul, Mitch, headin' back your way.

Mitch: (via radio) After that display, you can be sure there's a place for you in the panzerboy ranks!

Saul: (via radio) Impressive, V. Thanks. Now. If you don't mind - there's a monster gate that needs to be blown open. We'll need to split up.

Panam: Saul's right. Carol, you and Cassidy keep us secure here.

Carol: (via radio) You got it.

Panam: Mitch, you're coming with us.

Mitch: Ma'am, yes, ma'am.

Panam: No time to lose, then, Let's go.

Panam: OK, I'm putting it on autopilot and disconnecting.

V: 'Kay..

Panam: is everything all right? You seem quiet.

V: This is not how it was supposed to go. Worried it's just gonna get worse.

Panam: Worrying won't get us anywhere.

V: Panam, if we... If you and I...

Panam: Do you think this thing between us affects my decisions, is that it?

V: A bit, yeah.

Panam: Do you have any idea how much that pisses me off? What's between us stays between us. But this raid, these people - that's completely separate. I take full responsibility for this. Me - not you.

V: And if you'd known how this'd turn out?

Panam: I'd do it all over again. For anyone in the clan. Saul told me you brought in some help for Mikoshi. Someone from the outside.

V: Mhm, Alt.

Panam: And who is that?

V: Well, kinda funny story, actually. Alt is Johnny's ex.

Panam: You're joking...

V: God's honest truth. But nobody moves through the net quite like she does. She's our only way into Mikoshi proper.

Panam: Johnny, Alt... We're keeping it all in the family, I see. Do you trust her?

V: No. But it's not like I've got any other option. Just gotta hope Alt isn't hidin' anything, doesn't got other plans. Why, you worried?

Panam: I trust you - that's all I'll say. By extension, I trust this Alt won't pull any rugs out from under us.

V: Things'll work out. They gotta. Come too far for 'em not to.

Panam: This would be it.

V: How much farther to Arasaka Tower?

Panam: Not far - it should be easy sledding from here. Shit. Do you see them? I think something's wrong. Fellas, what's the issue?

Saul: Carol and the rest. Militech's all rattled up, cut them off. They won't last long on that site.

Panam: Jesus Christ...

Mitch: (via radio) I'm taking the panzer. They need all the help they can get.

Panam: Are you out of your mind?! The answer is no! You can't operate the panzer alone without trying that gonk brain of yours!

Mitch: Do you have a better idea? They're family, Pan! I'm not leaving them behind!

Panam: Saul? Are you on board with this?! V! Someone make him see reason!

V: Mitch is right. The three of us've still got a decent shot. But without him, they've got none.

Saul: (to Mitch) You're sure about this?

Panam: Saul! We're talking goddamn suicide!

Mitch: Look out for yourselves.

Panam: They'll kill you!

Mitch: I'll catch ya later.

[He leaves.]

Panam: Saul... he's... they're gonna...

Saul: We can't let all this be for nothing. You two go on up and see what's gotten into 'er. Once you're mobile, I'll follow, secure the rear.

Panam: V, let's go.

[They climb into the SERC. V starts the drill.]

Panam: Jack in and start her up. It looks like the engine overheated and choked when drill bit met reinforced concrete. Bypassing should override the emergency system shutdown, lift it. I'll use my personal link if needed.

V: Moment of truth - here it goes.

Panam: We got 'er in manual mode. Good. Don't worry, give her more power.

V: It's drillin'!

Panam: Fuck! I think it--

[The room begins to shake. Pipes from the ceiling collapse right onto Panam.]

V: Panam? Panam, everything all right? Panam?! Talk to me! No, no, no, no... Panam?!

Panam: I'm here. I'm a bit bruised, is all. I've endured worse.

V: Panam... For a sec I thought you'd...

Panam: It's OK, V. Everything's OK. Saul?

Saul: The tunnel's clear for now.

Panam: Any word from Mitch?

Saul: Still nothing...

Panam: I knew it...

Saul: It could be a problem with the comms.

Panam: Mhm.

Saul: Come on. Let's finish this.

[They walk out into the vast adjoining room and see huge armotisers holding up the building.]

Panam: What's this?

Saul: Seismic dampers. They're designed to protect buildings against earthquakes. They're designed to protect buildings against earthquakes.

V: Means we're still below the basement.

Saul: Right. We have to find a way to a level higher up.

V: Ughh... I--I can't...

Panam: We have some kind of maintenance shaft.

Saul: It looks like it leads upwards. If you stop to think It's incredible we happen to be standing right where the AHQ bomb left a huge crater.

Panam: Then... isn't this place positively saturated with radiation.

Saul: Who knows.

All Along the Watchtower

Panam: Great.

V: Agargh!

Saul: V? V!

Panam: He's having another seizure! V, are you OK? Hey!

V: Got it... under control... Can't stop now. Anyone know where we are?

Panam: If we look around, we'll find out.

Saul: I see something there.

Panam: The guards need our attention first. V, take care of the sentries. Silently, if you can.

[V fails.]

Panam: Shit, we've been made. Great, now everybody knows we've dropped in for a picnic. They have a whole unit there!

Saul: The whole building's on high alert. Their systems must've picked up the vibrations from the drill.

Panam: Fuck! Hurry up, Saul, they'll be here in no time!

V: What now? Alt's shard-need a port to jack it into.

Saul: Give me one more second. I found one. It's not for. You can jack in your personal there. I'm sending you the shortest route. But we need to lift this goddamn lockdown first.

V: OK, I'm here. Alt, the shard's in.

Alt Cunningham: (via radio) Yes.

V: How much time do you need to--

Alt Cunningham: (via radio) It is done.

Saul: Well I'll be damned.

Panam: Hell, yes! It worked!

V: So we can keep going? To Mikoshi?

Alt Cunningham: (via radio) Your path lies open.

V: Thank you, Alt.

Alt Cunningham: (via radio) Are you certain?

Saul: We good?

Panam: I'm ready.

V: Likewise. Let's move.

Panam: V, Saul...

Saul: Mhm, I feel it too. Something's amiss.

V: It's the hush.

Panam: Does anyone else have the chills? Something happened here...

Saul: We'll soon find out what. Mikoshi is near.

Panam: They tried to make a break for it. She turned the car into a death trap.

Saul: It seems your Alt takes no prisoners.

Panam: The guard tried to evacuate them.

Saul: Non-combatants. They didn't have to die.

Cunningham: I've cleared a path, but you must hurry. An elite security unit is following you.

V: Think this is it. We made it.

Panam: A few steps is all that separates you from Mikoshi.

Saul: It seems you'll finally get your chance. We're with you, V. To the very end. The Aldecaldos always keep their word.

Panam: It can't be much further, can it?

Saul: We have the room past the partition, then we'll be at the core. You can do this.

[As the heroes lift the mossy door, a huge creepy robot bursts into the room. It's Adam. Adam Smasher. He punches V and Saul.]

Panam: Saul!

Saul: Aldecaldos! Aughhh!

[He shots Adam Smasher with military shotgun with practically no effect.]

Smasher: Fucking meat.

[He splatters Saul's head on the floor with his metal leg.]

Panam: Noooo!

V: Fuck!

[V and Panam are forced to fight with the creepy robot. Adam is fast

and does not forgive mistakes.]

Smasher: Interesting... This is beyond you. Come here! There will be nothing left. You spored Oda. So very... human! And disgusting. Mercy is disgusting. Retreat is no option. Scrub out this rat! Kill!

[V kills a bunch of Militech soldiers while Smasher repairs himself.]

Smasher: Where is Rogue?! Wanted no part of this raid, the old cunt?! Once I finish you, I'll hunt her down! You won't leave here alive. You are nothing. Is this... pain? I'd forgotten the sensation.

[V and Panam disassemble the bastard piece by piece to shut all his battle functions.]

Alt Cunningham: (via radio) Their defenses are breached. The path to the core lies open, but we don't have much time.

V: Adam Smasher. I remember you. Promised to kill Silverhand once. Gonna let you in on a little secret. Johnny? He's here with us. Now, he can't talk, but I can feel him under my skin.

Smasher: What the fuck are you talking about?

V: In the end, got you - Silverhand triumphs.

[He shot Adam Smasher in the head. After that he walks to Mikoshi,

but his strength is running out.]

Panam: You don't look too strong.

V: I'll make it.

Alt Cunningham: The access point lies before you. Link to it, insert yourself, then search for me on the other side.

Panam: Come on, lean on me.

V: I can do this.

[With Panam's help V finally jacks in to Mikoshi. His system reboots. He dives into the Net.]

Alt: "Let us go then, you and I," "When the evening is spread out against the sky," "Like a patient etherized upon a table," "Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets," "The muttering retreats" "Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels" "And sawdust restaurants and oyster shells," "Streets that follow like a tedious argument" "Of insidious intent" "To lead you to an overwhelming question..." "Oh, do not ask." "'What is it?'" "Let us go and make our visit."

[At the end of the road he sees Johnny Silverhand.]

V: Hey, Johnny. All packed, you washout? Got your one-way ticket?

Johnny: This funny to you?

V: Y'know, discovered one nice thing about becomin' Johnny Silverhand. You stop givin' the slimmest shit about Johnny Silverhand.

Johnny: That right? This mean you've already decided what comes next?

V: Want a word with Alt first. Where is the wench?

Johnny: Haven't caught on yet, have ya?

V: What? Whaddaya mean?

Johnny: Alt's already split us. Once you jacked into Mikoshi, she lit you up with Soulkiller.

V: Your output don't fuck around.

Alt: I am not his girlfriend.

V: You real? You hit me with Soulkiller?I ‘Thout asking?!

Alt: It was the only way I could fulfill your request.

V: Jesus fuck, I'd've liked a warning at least...

Johnny: Been a construct for Just a few minutes and already no one gives a damn what you want. Welcome to the club, V.

V: Wait, hold on. I wanna know what the hell happened to me. Exactly!

Alt: I applied Soulkiller to separating your two psyches, thereby creating V's distinct construct. An added analgesic protocol precluded any perception of pain. I was unable to eliminate all the changes made through the Johnny data incursion and overwrite, but V's engram integrity remains high.

Johnny: Meaning, you can transfer his psyche back into his brain?

Alt: As if onto a blank, virgin partition.

V: You two still plan to obliterate Mikoshi?

Johnny: Mhm. It's gotta burn.

V: What about everyone locked away there?

Alt: I will free them, take them with me.

V: Cut the crop. You'll gobble 'em up like so many morsels of code, make 'em part of you.

Johnny: As if they could hope for anything better. C'mon...

V: So that's really it. We're done. You kept your word.

Alt: There is one aspect I failed to take into account.

Johnny: Alt? What?

Alt: The body as a key factor in this transaction. DNA reconfiguration by the Relic has progressed too far. Added to aggressive, invasive medications, the body's immune system attacking its own neurons...

V:Christ, will you just skip to the end?!

Alt: After I transfer your construct into your body, you will die. It is inevitable. It is imminent.

V: Had this planned all along, didn't ya? Never had any intention of keepin' me alive.

Johnny: Is that a fuckin' joke?

V: You backstabbin' motherfucker! You just fuckin' kicked back, dumbass grin on your face, and you waited till I finally realized you had me fucked from the start.

Johnny: Gonna pretend I didn't hear that.

V: Alt, question. Will the body reject Johnny's construct?

Alt: No. They are compatible. The body is his.

Johnny: That's enough, Alt. V and I need a minute.

[Alt disappears.]

V: I ca-- I can't believe it. Everything. All we did - it was pointless. I've had enough of this. Of everything. You most of all.

Johnny: Perfect, 'cause we're stickin' to the plan. I'm goin' with Alt, fuck knows where, you're keepin' your body.

V: Where's she even gonna take you?

Johnny: Beyond the Blackwall, to become part of her. Whatever the hell that means.

V: What's it like, beyond the Blackwall?

Johnny: Assuming I don't lose my fuckin' mind, at least no one can ride my ass there.

V: What about hangin' around as a construct? Just till we find another

way?

Johnny: Finding another way would mean makin' a deal with 'Saka. I'll pass.

V: Jesus, to be a shapeless shadow in a digital afterlife... Really think I'd rather die.

Alt: It is freedom from the body's limitations, from the base worries of life in the world. It is a new perspective on all.

V: No, be left with fading memories... of sharing a bed, headsplitting hangovers, sea breeze on my face, sun's heat on my shoulders... No.

Johnny: So take back your life the six months you got left.

V: Didn't think life was worth clinging to. Not at any price, anyway.

Johnny: 'Cause it ain't.

V: Wrong. That light beyond the Blackwall, see? That's hope. Could be the flames of hell or heaven's grace. Might also be an engram reading code. But it's a promise of survival.

Alt: We've learned how to turn into pure data, but an animal still prowls inside us. And its instinct to survive almost can't be extinguished.

Johnny: Yeah, that instinct's part of being human - but so is denying it.

V: Is there really no other way?

Alt: As I said, Johnny can retain the body, remain there, while you come with me...

V: Guess I meant, I dunno... a happier ending for everyone involved.

Johnny: Here, for folks like us? Wrong city, wrong people.

Alt: Yet the right to make a choice you have earned through will and endeavor. This bridge leads deeper into cyberspace. Cross it and permanently sever the connection with your body. The path to your body passes through that mortal well.

V: Alt? If you were me, heh... what would you do?

Alt: You should come with me.

V: What's that mean for me, exactly? Am I gonna... become like you?

Alt: I was a netrunner. I understood how to survive. I cannot speak for you. Beyond the Blackwell dangers lurk, it is no sanctuary. But it's better to be a free spirit shredded than to wither, trapped in a dying

body.

Johnny: Don't do it, V. You been runnin' from this all along. It'll change you. You won't be you anymore.

V: And you?

Johnny: Already took that first step a while back. I'll have an easier go of it.

V: I told you... I said I wanted you to have my body. But... but I can't do it... I'm sorry.

[He enters the well to return to his body.]

Johnny: Goodbye, V. And never stop fightin'.

THE END

[V wakes up in a car in Badlands.]

OTHER ENDINGS

Ending 1

Stanley: (on the car's radio) Up in smoke, with damage valued in excess of the annual budget of many a small country. Serves you right, Saka! How's it feel to be on your knees, huh? Hihi! Worry not, unwashed masses! Our wondrous lives in Night City won't change much - but when do they ever? We live 'midst dust and chrome, and ‘midst dust and chrome We die. Now for some good news and some

bad news. Good news is, somethin' like a sandstorm this way comes from the south. Weather guy says it stands to be the biggest in years. Should be a sight to behold.

[He walks to Panam looking at the city.]

V: This dam... remember it well. Our beginnings.

Panam: I did not know what to make of you then.

V: What did you make of me?

Panam: I wondered if you were anything like me. Carrying within you something damn important to prove to yourself.

V: I was. We both were. Bet you had no idea we'd end up like this, though.

Panam: Heh truer words I've never heard... Night City chewed us up good, didn't it?

V: Doe'n't matter, don't think. We'll forget it all tanning our backsides in the Arizona sun. Time and perspective - need a bit of both.

Panam: Heh look at the city. Somewhere in there those bastards from Arasaka are wondering how they lost everything. They'll figure it out one day. But we'll be long gone.

V: Should've done this long ago - gotten some perspective... on the city, my life there.

Panam: The city of dreams. I'd gladly kick the balls of the idiot who thought that one up.

V: Panam, after Mikoshi, everything there... I'm glad we made it... here... together. And that we're leavin' ... together.

Panam: Bid the city farewell. We won't see it again.

V: (Streetkid) Used to think of it as my city. Bonded together - I owned it, it owned me... Nothing to keep me there now, though.

Panam: I feel the same way. What on earth was I thinking?

V: Thought the city would help us see ourselves for who we were. Both of us.

Panam: Yes! But damn it, it's like a damned dealer at a damned Kabuki casino. And I went all in, and I lost everything.

V: Almost everything.

Panam: Yes, I suppose you're right. We owe that shithole something.

V: But we're getting out. At last. Placing our bets on something better somewhere else.

Panam: Shit, V. You're bleeding again.

V: Gonna figure this out, Panam. Vik's drug helps a bit now. And once we get to where we're goin'. we'll try all your contacts.

Ending 2

Panam: They've pulled some of our folks out of deep, deep cesspits. They'll help, you'll see.

V: Good to hear, it really is. Speaking of which, what about our plan?

Panam: Everything is set and confirmed. We'll meet our people soon, gather our gear and set off. Yes, the road could be hard. But as long as we don't fuck up, we should cross the border in a matter of hours.

V: Let's get outta here.

Panam: Sure. But, V? Get a good look at the city, one last time. If you need to, I mean. I'll wait in the car.

V: (takes a long look) Well Night City - good night and good luck.

[He gets into Panam's car. They drive off.]

New Dawn Fades

Stanley: (on the radio) Gen'leman extraordinaire, Yorinobu Arasaka, confirmed that his sis, Hanako was among the victims. So it seems we've got a change to acomin' at the tippity top of the megacorp. Soaked in the usual gallons of blood, sweat and tears, of course.

Panam: This is rot. I've heard enough. Most of our people have already crossed. They'll wait for us on the other side.

V: And our souvenirs from Mikoshi?

Panam: If we so much as approached the gates with tech like that, they would wipe us out without warning. We've checked. Arasaka has people at every border crossing. But we know a road less traveled.

V: Just realized - here I am, kleppin' from Arasaka again.

Panam: Don't you worry. We'll pass right under the bastards' noses.

V: We better. New beginnings can be rough.

Panam: Don't you know it. There is one thing I will miss about Night City.

V: What's that?

Panam: The food. The Thal on Seventh in Heywood. The pierogis down by the docks. Mh...

V: Seriously?

Panam: You'll understand once you've ridden with us for a while.

V: Just realized - already bringin' everything I could possibly miss.

Panam: Fuck, V, you are a sweet-talker, aren't you.

V: But it works doesn't it? Say it, say it works.

Panam: It works. All too well. You're with me now. We will figure out and take care of that piece of shit in your head.

V: I know.

Mitch: (via radio) Panam! Girl are you running from Night City or goin' to your granny's for cookies and milk? Gun it or that storm'll catch ya!

Panam: Screw you.

V: Mitch! Hey!

Mitch: (via radio) Hey, V.

V: Good to hear you, choom! How's things?

Mitch: (via radio) Give me a month and I'll be as good as new. I told you all I'd be fine, didn't I?

Panam: Come on, Mitch you weren't nearly that confident after Mikoshi, none of us were. He was in bed for weeks, a vegetable. It would've been the end of him it not for his synopses, toughened, made almost try proof in panzers back in the war.

V: Did save every one of our asses, though.

Panam: A pity Saul's not with us. Or Teddy. Or Bobby. Or Scorpion... They would've kicked your ass out of whack after that move with the panzer. Then hugged you until you puked.

Mitch: (via radio) I know, Panam. I know...

V: Gave us all a chance at a new start. Let's not fuck it up.

Mitch: (via radio) I'm glad you're with us, V. See you soon.

Param: I can smell the ozone, even through the air conditioning.

V: It's that storm. Gettin' close.

Panam: OK. We've arrived.

V: Hey, Mitch.

Mitch: Hey. Let's get the fuck out of here, shall we?

Panam: Hey. How are things? Is everything arranged?

Mitch: Everything's almost set.

Panam: So you found it? Where we thought it would be?

V: All plans laid and in place?

Panam: They are indeed. Come see us when you're done. We'll talk about the who, what and how.

Cassidy: "See the child. He is pole and thin..." V, let me be thoroughly honest with you.

V: OK.

Cassidy: You look like shit... Do the great outdoors truly serve you so poorly?

V: Heh. Can always count on getting complimented when you're around. Seems the great outdoors and fresh air've done you a lot of good, old man. Kept you spry.

Cassidy: It's not the air. It's just been one conviction. It lets me fall

asleep like a babe come nightfall and wake up with a clean conscience with the down.

V: Got a feeling I'm about to learn it.

Cassidy: We nomads choose who to make our family. And choice forges strong bonds and a higher duty that stand solid as an old oak. It doesn't matter what happens, what will happen. Within this family nobody turns their back on you. Do you understand?

V: I do. Believe I always did.

Cassidy: Now, you had better ready yourself. We've got a border to cross and a storm to run from. It's a helluva lot for one day.

Carol: I doubted you would come.

V: Why? Thought I'd stay in Night City?

Carol: You don't seem like one who'd care to make a fresh start. Ever.

V: Get to know me better, could change your mind. Need any help preparin'?

Panam: No. It's all packed and ready to go. We were waitin' for you, that's all.

V: All right. So the plan, one more time.

Mitch: We won't take any official crossing. I think you know that, right? So there's this old smuggling tunnel. Forgotten. We'll aim to use that. It's near the wall.

V: So you found a gate in the wall. Clever.

Panam: Not in, as much as under.

Mitch: It's one of those old smuggling tunnels. Thankfully, it's still open.

Panam: It wasn't the easiest thing to locate after all these years. But now - nothing can stop us now.

V: Look, tunnel's cool and all, but we gotta get there first. And what about security up and down the border? Whole area's brimmin' with tech. Drones on perpetual patrol. Heavier stuff, too, maybe.

Panam: Don't worry. We know what's there and what to do about it. And Carol and Cassidy will keep the corpos off our tail.

V: And nobody's likely to spot us?

Panam: Sooner or later the border guards will realize something's not right.

Mitch: But by the time they get around to it, we'll be for, far away. Plus, that storm's a true stroke of luck - it should cover our tracks.

Panam: We'll need more than a storm to keep the corpos off our tail.

V: Got bigger concerns then us. And even if they don't just let 'em try and catch us. They'll regret it. Great, and once we've crossed, what then?

Mitch: We make for our meeting point, Join the rest of our people there. Then we'll move on towards Tucson.

V: And once there, we call the shots, right?

Panam: We know the roads like the back of our hand. And down in Arizona, we have some old favors to call in.

V: Hm, so even if I wanted to, got nothin' to worry about.

Panam: Starting today, It's not all on your back. You're no longer alone, V. You'll get used to it. It's nice.

V: Looks like I've got a debt of gratitude to pay now.

Panam: Oh, come the fuck on. We're all riding in the same wagon.

Mitch: And thanks to you we stole enough Arasaka tech to build an aircraft carrier.

Panam: Believe me, on the list of those wanted dead or olive, our names are right under yours. Well, time to move. Before that storm finds us.

[V and Panam get into the Basilisk.]

Mitch: We're ready. After you, Panam.

Panam: Are we all set?

V: Mhm.

Panam: So jack in, let's get the hell out of here.

V: You got it.

Panam: This is your big, new beginning. So you have to start it like a real nomad, behind the proverbial wheel. Mostly go straight, go around the bigger holes and don't lose the rest, got it? I will deal with the nitro. The mix will go straight to the cylinders. If I don't synch it just right manually, it could blow us to bits.

V: Think that's best avoided.

Panam: Fuck. I just realized something.

V: What?

Panam: The border wall. It wasn't here when I was little, I never imagined it would be. But I had this inkling that everything was different up north. That some bright fucking future awaited me there.

V: Yeah, think I know what comes next - once you wound up on the other side and nothin' changed, you thought Night City was the answer, everything would change there.

Panam: Yes... And you know the tales end, too. I'm returning. Right back to where I started. Fuck.

V: No. Might be the same place on the other side, some space. But you're different, totally different.

Panam: All in all, you're right. And I have you. And the rest of these clowns. You ready?

V: Been ready always.

Panam: Then hit it - home stretch, full speed ahead!

Mitch: (via radio) They've launched the drones!

Panam: Carol! Cassidy! Get moving!

Carol: (via radio) I'm heading west and activating the jammers.

Cassidy: (via radio) They've marked me, I'm turning east to get 'em off your tail. G'luck, kids!

Mitch: (via radio) See you on the other side!

Param: The nitro is ready. Say goodbye to Night City. It's your last chance.

V: Got nothin' left to say. Start 'er up, the wheel is yours.

Panam: Let's ride! Exactly what you wanted. A new beginning!

V: Don't slow down, Panam. Not yet.

[They cross the border. V gets out of the panzer and looks at the starry sky.]

V: It's perfect - all great, Panam. We're goin' home.

[We return to Jackie's favorite rooftop, where V makes his decision. His final decision.]

Johnny: Or you take Arasaka's “deal,” but then... you'll have your own soul on your conscience.

V: Gonna try to ask Panam for help.

Johnny: You absolutely sure? No goin' back on this, y'know,

V: Just... hold on a minute - need to think. There is another option, y'know.

Johnny: What?

V: We put all this - the pills, everything - to bed.

Johnny: If we don't try something, anything, we're both doomed.

V: I know. Exactly why I will do one last thing.

Johnny: OK, lost me. Realize the shit we've been through to get this far?

V: Sure do.

Johnny: To let it all go now? Why?

V: Cleanest, least bloody option. We try anything else, people'll die. We try anything else, people'll die.

Johnny: People die. It's the way of things.

V: Am I worth their sacrifice? Are you? Sides, it's the only way we'll both be aware.

Johnny: Of what? Death?

V: Mhm. The moment life escapes.

Johnny: Hmm. Never really gave it a thought. Funny how you still manage to surprise me sometimes.

V: Might be somethin' I learned from you.

Johnny: V, you sure about this?

V: Long as you got nothin' against it.

Johnny: Not how I'da done it, but that's all right.

V: Just like that? No pushback?

Johnny: Huh, might've learned a little somethin' from you, too. Is it time?

V: (looking around) Y'know, it really is beautiful.

Johnny: Been nice workin' with ya, V.

V: Yeah... With you, too, Johnny...

[The camera zooms out, showing us a wide view of the city. We hear a shot.]

[V makes his decision in the Net with Alt and Johnny. He's going to Cyberspace forever.]

Johnny: What, a little guilt creeps in and that's that? You give up?

V: Stop. Just stop.

Johnny: Gonna just roll over instead of fightin' for what's yours, decomish yourself 'cause you're too fuckin' scared to say goodbye? You're loyal, grant you that. But dammit are you dense. Haven't changed a bit since we met. V. I'm just... I'm just scared for ya...

[V crosses the bridge with Alt. Johnny wakes up in V's body and takes his glasses on.]

Johnny: Really think anyone gives a rat's dick how you look? Shit. Gotta pack, too. And I gotta stop talkin' to you, V. Not much. But I'm all right with that. (picks up a ticket to Night City) Mhm. Got a bit of time. Think I'll manage to swing by and visit you. Gonna need a ride. Steve, gotta talk to Steve.

[He walks to a guy next door.]

Steve: Who is it? Whaddaya want?

Johnny: Relax. It's me, Steve.

Steve: Hey.

Johnny: Hey, guy.

Steve: What's up, choom? 'Cause I got that new album from Curse These Metal Hands. First four tracks? Preem-genius.

Johnny: Need wheels and a good driver for the day. Couple of things in town gotta take care of.

Steve: No problem. I'll take you. My mom whigs out when I don't tell her I'm leavin'. But it's not like she can hear me when I try to warn her. You ready? Hey, so, when I play a lot, my fingers hurt. What do I do to stop them?

Johnny: You don't. Metal strings cut into your fingertips, make 'em sore - just how it is. Oh... Don't worry, Play long enough and you'll get calluses. Start hittin' those frets like hammers. Won't hurt a bit.

[They walk outside the building.]

Henry Sanchez: What d'you think you're doin', you little shit?

Steve: Goin' out.

Henry Sanchez: Where?!

Steve: Uhhh, just... out for a sec. Be back soon.

Henry Sanchez: Back inside, now! Not about to let you go out, do who knows what, y'hear? (slaps Steve) Fuck's sake! D'you swipe my keys again? Inside! Now, you shit!

Johnny: Leave 'im alone. And watch that tone.

Henry Sanchez: Get the fuck outta my face. Think I'm scared? You're another bum like the rest of us.

Johnny: Wanna try me? Go ahead.

Henry Sanchez: I don't have time for this shit.

Steve: Oh man, he was shakin' like you were gonna wipe him...

Johnny: Sorry about that.

Steve: Hah! You kiddin'? I... I wish something bad'd happen to him. Hop in.

[They sit in Steve's garbage looking car.]

Steve: Wish I could drop him myself. Wanna be strong like you.

Johnny: You will be, down the line. Though, sure hope you'll see he's not worth anvi skin off your knuckles.

Steve: How come?

Johnny: 'Cause you'll realize how weak he is. An' it'll hurt.

Steve: Where to?

Johnny: Time Machine.

Steve: Nice! Saw Kerry Eurodyne there once.

Johnny: You a fan?

Steve: Of the legend? 'Course I am! Why, aren't you?

Johnny: Kerry's all right.

Steve: Heard something on the radio. About Kerry using Silverhand's death riding that to fame?

Johnny: Can't do much about media vultures. Got shit for brains, ‘specially the ones who cover music. Kerry's a damn good musician. That's all that counts. The real deal, always has been, in every way.

Steve: Gah. Makes it sound like you know him.

Johnny: 'Cause I do.

Steve: I'm gonna be a musician someday, too.

Johnny: Gotta start scribing songs, then. You'll get good with practice, like anything else worth doing. Sooner you start, the better.

Steve: Got a few tunes in my head already...

Johnny: Preem.

Steve: Lyrics don't come easy, though. I come up with anything, seems like it's already been done or it just sounds stupid. Kinda don't really know what to write about.

Johnny Be honest. Only ever write the truth. 'Specially when it comes to your feelings.

Steve: I don't get how... I could lie about my feelings.

Johnny: Don't write love songs if you're not head-over-heels. Don't write sad-sack shit just because you think there's beauty in sadness.

Steve: Uhmm... OK...

Johnny: When something really hits you in the gut - that's when you sit down and write. Truth's elusive. Sometimes music's the only way to grasp it.

Steve: We have arrived.

Johnny: Preem. Hang here a minute?

Steve: Nah, I'm comin' in. Flip through the new releases.

Store Owner: What can I do for you?

Johnny: Lookin' for a six-string. Electric.

Store Owner: Feast your eyes.

Johnny: I want somethin' solid and true.

Store Owner: What, an' they're not?

Johnny: No offense, but I'm lookin' for a real instrument. And willin' to pay real money.

Store Owner: Ah, shoulda said so! C'mon, let's go out back. How's this?

Steve: Whoo... Fuckin' awesome!

Store Owner: To the right an' left, the latest Chromatix and Hendersons. Vintage axes in the back.

Johnny: Wanna try this one.

Store Owner: I'ma let you two play around in here alone. Else those savages out front'll clean out half the store.

Steve: Never, ever heard anyone play Silverhand like that. Y'know, I read he never took any lessons. Choom was totally self-taught. Made up his own style. How do you do that? I mean, sound just like him?

Steve: Good ear, kid. No one can imitate Silverhand's style.

Steve: But you did. I just heard you.

Johnny: Obviously got a bit of him in me. Or a lot. Maybe I AM Johnny?

Steve: But... how? Johnny'd be, like, eighty million years old, and you're, like, way too young.

Johnny: Y'know... this is just a body. How the dice landed for me. Ultimately, I am who I am.

Steve: Haha! Yeah, right! Choom, you're a bigger psychofan than I am! Still haven't explained how you do it.

Johnny: Don't worry about that. Just come up with your own style. And all you need for that is practice.

Steve: And talent...

Johnny: Talent you got.

Steve: Really? You think so?

Johnny: I just don't say things I don't think are true. Not anymore.

[He hands Steve the guitar he chose.]

Steve: Best. Day. Ever. Fuck, my hands're shakin'! (plays a bit) Rockers're rebels. They always speak their minds. Tried once on my dad, y'know... Didn't go so well.

Johnny: In time, you'll learn who you really are, what you really want from the world.

Steve: I don't understand.

Johnny: Wanna be a real rebel? Gotta be yourself first. Be authentic. Rebels are made, not born. Made from the punches life throws at 'em, the punches they take.

Steve: Y'now, you're weird. But I like you anyway.

Johnny: Let's pay, delta outta here.

Store Owner: And?

Johnny: I'll take it.

Store Owner: Excellent choice. Glad to see she'll be in... in good hands. Help you with anything else. No, thanks. Here you go. (transfers 5000 eddies) See ya. (to Steve) Let's delta. Still got some

biz to take care of.

Steve: All right.

Johnny: All right. Let's roll.

Steve: Sure thing. Where to?

Johnny: The cemetery.

Steve: You got it. My dad says there's gonna be another corp war. Liable to jump at each other's throats any day now. Think it's true? Think there'll be another war?

Johnny: Askin' the wrong guy. Got no interest in the topic. Couldn't care less, to be
honest. Know why?

Steve: Why?

Johnny: 'Cause I realized I don't have to.

Steve: Got a friend who lives around here.

Johnny: Where?

Steve: Can't see it from here. Just sayin'.

Johnny: He a good friend of yours?

Steve: Invited me over to his house once. His mom made lunch. Then we went on hung out on the bridge. I like drivin' through here. It's nice.

Johnny: You know what you're right. It is nice out here.

Steve: Never been out this way?

Johnny: No, I have. Just never noticed. Never had time to just sit down and watch… City slipped through my fingers. Just sped right by. Passed under foot, over head, and I can't even say when it happened.

Steve: Gonna write a song about it?

Johnny: Maybe.

Steve: (looks at Jackie's bullet) Nice pendant. Looks good on you. Whoa! I didn't know you had a gun… Hella preem. My dad used to sell ones like those.

Johnny: Just a keepsake.

Steve: Oh, uh… belonged to someone important?

Johnny: Yeah. Someone really important.

[They drive to the cemetery.]

Steve: What're you gonna do with it?

Johnny: Put it back where it belongs.

Steve: Can I come with?

Johnny: No, wait here, OK? Won't be long.

Steve: OK.

[Johnny walks to V's grave.]

Johnny: Ahh, V... Can't carry this around anymore, y'know. Can't keep wallowing, can't keep obsessing over what happened. Couldn't forget you anyway. I'm wearin' your goddamn face. Don't know anyone else who'da had the guts to make a call like that... Not a soul. Thanks for... heh, well, for everything. I'm wiser now. And I don't plan to waste it. So this is goodbye.

[He returns to Steve.]

Steve: Where to now?

Johnny: (takes a cigarette out of Steve's hands) 'Ey, 'ey, what's this?

Steve: Want one?

Johnny: Gave all that up. So should you. Bad for your body. Bad for your soul.

Steve: Where to now?

Johnny: Mmm. I got a bus to catch.

Steve: The person you just, uh... visited. He die a while ago?

Johnny: Not that long ago.

Steve: You miss 'im?

Johnny: A little, yeah.

Steve: When my grandpa died, I missed him a lot. But now I only miss him sometimes.

Johnny: Mhm...

[Johnny gets on a stopped bus and inserts a ticket into the slot to Night City.]

Steve: Stop the bus! Heeey, get off! Waaaiiit! You forgot your guitar!

Johnny: No, I didn't. Haven't forgotten a thing. Never will.

[The bus drives off into the distance. Johnny takes off his glasses and leans against the window.]

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