

Neuromancer

screenplay by
William Gibson

screenplay dates range between 18/5/90 and 21/5/90

taken from paper to data by Greg Beams.

The screen is black. Ultra-violet print scrolls out the following information:

By the year 2015 cash transactions had become virtually obsolete. Worldwide commerce and communication was run through the MATRIX, a vast international network of unified computer systems.

A consortium of powerful multi-national corporations maintained control of the Matrix through their private police organisation, SENSE/NET SECURITY INC.

Corporate interests were protected at all costs.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

A MAN and WOMAN sleep peacefully in the sunken bedroom of an upscale Boston townhouse in the near future. The plush decor is tasteful, but indulgent. Sharper Image meets 2015. A small digital hologram floats in mid air beside the bed; 2:05 a.m.

CAMERA BOOMS DOWN

Revealing the man, CASE, in C.U....Early thirties. Fine features. There is a tension about him even at rest. LINDA LEE, the young woman curled up beside him has a soft natural beauty that's enhanced by the innocence of sleep.

Case's eyes flash open...He senses something wrong.

There is a subtle CLICK from across the open living room.

Suddenly there's a deafening EXPLOSION as the front door is blown off its hinges. A black hexagon the size of a baseball is lobbed into the room.

CASE

Reacts instantly, pulling Linda Lee to the floor.

THE HEXAGON

Ignites with a flash of white-hot magnesium fire. It emits a continuous blinding flare that permeates the room.

CASE

Blinded by the flare, frantically pulls open a bedside drawer and fumbles for

his gun.

THE DOOR

Two heavily armed SENSE/NET POLICEMEN kick their way through the smoking remains of the door. Pitch black welders' goggles protect their eyes from the glare as they charge into the room.

CASE

Is mercilessly beaten to his knees by the policemen's electrified shock staves.

LINDA LEE

Makes a break for it, but she's backhanded by Policeman #1 and recoils against the wall.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

A gaunt, foreboding looking MAN in a long great coat now enters. His pale clean shaven head and angular features give him a skull like appearance as he gazes through the blue-white glare with obsidian goggles. He regards the semi-conscious Case for a moment then nods to his men.

Two Policemen sweep glassware of an oversized coffee table, slam Case down on top of it and slap plastic restraints on his wrists and ankles.

The other Policemen begin a destructive search of the townhouse.

The PALE MAN looms over Case like the Angel of Death, a dark form framed against flickering shafts of incendiary light. His voice is an icy whisper.

PALE MAN

Nice place, Mr. Case. Industrial espionage must be paying well these days.

Case speaks through bloody lips.

CASE

Let's see your warrant.

PALE MAN

(chuckles)

Oh, we're not arresting you. The law books haven't quite caught up with your technology. Breaking into the computer matrix by cerebral projection... that's a little tough to prosecute, don't you think?

On the other side of the room, a Policeman smashes open a false front bookshelf revealing an impressive array of customised gear. A tiara-like headset rests on

a bust of Socrates.

SENSE/NET POLICEMAN
Lieutenant...

PALE MAN
That's it, gentlemen.

The police begin to destroy the gear with the enthusiasm of prohibitionists at a moonshine still.

CASE
I've got money...

PALE MAN
Not anymore. You've burned at least three multinational corporations, Mr. Case.
You're getting a little too good at your craft, my friend. That's bad for business. Bad for everybody.

The Pale Man withdraws a glittering hypodermic from a silver case.

CASE
What's that?

PALE MAN
Your retirement plan.

He jams the needle into the artery on Case's forearm and drives the plunger home.

Case's body convulses as the mycotoxin surges through his veins.

The Pale Man turns to Linda Lee.

PALE MAN (CONT.)
He'll be hallucinating for... oh, about fifteen hours.

He pats her on the cheek

PALE MAN (CONT.)
What's left after that is all yours.

HIGH ANGLE

CAMERA BOOMS DOWN onto the spread eagled Case, surrounded by his enemies. He screams as the mycotoxin hits his nervous system like a runaway freight train.
His dilated eyes flash open, staring into a hallucinatory hell. BOOM DOWN continues straight through the glistening black hole of his pupil and on into a chilling inner void.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHIBA CITY, JAPAN - NIGHT

A crowded commercial ghetto in the Ginzu district of Japan; a garish strip of bars, liquor stores, and cometic surgery parlours. The ragtag crowd of hustlers and tourists wear rough trade street fashions with the added kink of punk influenced elective surgery...notched ears and *idless eyeballs...added strictly for shock value. The holographic adverts hanging like neon ghosts in the night sky remind us this is the future. A grim future indeed.

SUPERIMPOSE:

CHIBA CITY, JAPAN
ONE YEAR LATER

INT. CHATSUBO BAR

We are hit by a solid wall of ROCK MUSIC and BAR NOISE. The Chatsubo is one of the roughest dives on the Ginzu and the only place in town where you're likely to meet an American or European as an Oriental. RATZ, a broad-shouldered, leather faced Bartender with an articulated prosthetic arm serves the crush of patrons as he casually passes through holograms for Tsing Toa and Kirin Beer.

Case sits at a table in the far corner talking to two Japanese businessmen. He looks the worse for wear, rumpled, unshaven and ten pounds lighter. It's been a rough year.

He chain smokes through Yeheyuan cigarettes as he speaks to the ancient DR. KIYOTO through his rotund interpreter MR. TENSU. A grubby folder containing CAT Scan transparencies lies open on the tabletop before them.

TENSU

Dr. Kiyoto say scan reveal many secrets. You suffer serious damage to nervous system. Someone play bad trick on you.

CASE

Yeah, I know all that. I used to be a wire man, understand? Plugged straight into the matrix.

Tensu translates and Kiyoto replies.

TENSU

No longer possible for your mind to enter matrix. Nervous system incompatible for computer. You try again, you fry like egg.

CASE

Everyone says Dr. Kiyoto is the best nerve splicer in all the black clinics.

TENSHU

Nerve splice very risky. Dr Kiyoto now

Dr. Kiyoto makes further comment in Japanese.

TENSHU (CONT.)

He say he admires your bone structure. You make beautiful woman. We correct nature's mistake.

Kiyoto smiles at Case, flashing huge synthetic ultra white teeth framed by horrible grey gums.

CASE

(downs his drink)

Tell him no thanks. I got lousy legs.

Case rises and heads for the bar. Ratz pours him a shot of Japanese vodka as he pulls up a stool.

RATZ

Ah, Herr Case. And how is the artiste tonight?

CASE

Fine, Ratz. Thanks.

A boozy tattooed hooker looks up from her drink, impressed.

HOOKER

Oh, you're an artist? I love artists.

RATZ

He was once the artiste of light-fingered microchippery, my dear. Need your credit rating changed? Interested in a few corporate secrets? Case was the man.

Now he is the artiste of the slightly funny deal. Isn't that right, Herr Case?

CASE

Sure. Someone's gotta be funny around here.

Case pops two tiny blue pills and washes them down with the vodka. Ratz refills his glass.

RATZ

I saw your girl yesterday.

CASE

I don't have a girl.

RATZ

No girl? Only biz, my dear artiste?

Case lights a cigarette.

RATZ (CONT.)

Too bad. I likes you better with her. Now, sometime you get maybe to artistic;
you wind up in the clinic tanks, spare parts.

CASE

You're pleasant tonight.

RATZ

(bows)

Always...By the way, you know that girlfriend you don't have?

CASE

Yeah.

Ratz nods. Case turns, following his gaze.

Linda Lee stands in the doorway, dressed in French fatigues and sneakers. There's still a warmth and beauty about her that shines through the hard edge of
a year of disappointments in Chiba City.

Case makes his way through the crowd. He's gentle with her... there's still a love between them.

LINDA LEE

Hello, Case.

CASE

I thought you already left.

LINDA LEE

Flight's in the morning. You should be on it, too. There's nothing for us here,
Case. There never was.

To Case, it's an old battle not worth fighting.

CASE

Why did you come here tonight, Linda?

LINDA LEE

People are talking. They say the Yakuza has a contract out on you.

CASE

I hear that shit once a week. Don't worry. Jo Jo Bao loves me.

LINDA LEE

This time it's different. Someone ripped of a shipment of hallucinogens. Five grams of liquid ketamine. It was supposed to be Jo Jo's score.

CASE

(pauses)

Where did you here that?

LINDA LEE

Too many places. You're playing tag wish some kind of death wish, Case.
(beat)

I'm sorry but I'm not sticking around for the funeral.

She hesitates...then kisses him on the cheek, turns and disappears into the night.

Case takes a last pull on his cigarette, then observes his hand. His fingers are shaking. He flicks the butt away.

EXT. JULIUS DEANE IMPORT-EXPORT

A dingy commercial building wedged between a strip joint and a digital tape store. Case takes the rickety stairway up three steps at a time. He bursts through a door under the worn sign: "Julius Deane Import-Export"

A dark rosewood office crowded with expensive European furniture, and stacks of white fibreglass shipping modules. Several CATS lounge about in the shadows.

DEANE, an obese but extremely well groomed man, sits quietly at his desk just outside the small circle of light thrown by a brass lamp. One of his cats is perched casually on his shoulder. A thick Cuban cigar smoulders between his stubby fingers.

Case storms into the room, sending hissing cats scrambling out of the way.

CASE

You stupid, stupid, son of a bitch. That was supposed to be a clean score! You've got me fencing Yakuza goods on Yakuza turf...

C.U. - DEANE'S HAND

A large white ash tumbles from Deane's cigars. His hand remains motionless.

ON CASE

As he reacts. We hear the soft sound of a cat licking.

DOLLY

With Case as he rushes to the desk and flips the lamp shade up onto...

DEANE'S FACE

Illuminated for the first time. The cat perched on his shoulder is lapping at a crimson knife wound bisecting his windpipe.

CASE

Steps back, horrified.

THE DESK

Deane's right hand is frozen on the blood splattered keyboard of his compact computer terminal. The small screen is scrolling off a single cryptic word repeated ad infinitum:

Wintermute
Wintermute
Wintermute

CASE

Hastily flips the light off and crosses to the window.

CASE'S P.O.V.

Two stocky JAPANESE MEN stand just beyond the orange glow of a quartz halogen street light, gazing back up at Case. Yakuza. They start across the street, heading for the building.

CASE

Releases the curtain and runs a hand through his tousled hair.

CASE
Shit...

He looks back at Julius Deane.

CASE (CONT.)
We've been set up, old buddy.

Case rummages through Deane's coat rack until he finds an old fashioned .38 in an ancient cracked leather shoulder holster. He flips the barrel open. There's only one round in the chamber. It'll have to do.

Case jams the gun in his belt and pushes a button on Deane's desk. A section of panelled wall pops open, revealing a hidden exit. He takes a last look at his former partner.

CASE
So long, Julie. Don't forget to feed the cats.

NINSEI STREETS

Case rushes through the Saturday night street crowd, past Yakitori stands and massage parlours.

A Japanese ELVIS IMPERSONATOR sends his eerie rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel" echoing down the Ninsei. Case checks his back.

The two Yakuza heavies are searching the crowd half a block away. A third gangster the size of a boxcar joins them.

Case backs into the doorway of a surgery parlour as he checks the other direction.

A dangerous looking WOMAN IN BLACK wearing mirror shades is heading towards Case. She reaches inside her black leather jacket and loosens her shoulder holster as she scans the crowd.

Case ducks just past a group of RUSSIAN SAILORS, and cuts across the street, just past a MESSENGER on a motorised tricycle.

The Yakuza spot him and push their way through the crowd.

Case ducks into the garishly decorated doorway of an arcade.

INT. ARCADE.

A deafening cacophony of ARCADE SOUNDS echoes throughout the darkened room as lifelike holograms do battle under the guidance of customers at gaming consoles.

As Case enters, a holographic fireball from Tank War Europa briefly illuminates the room.

The three Yakuza burst through the doors and begin to search the room.

Case grabs an Armed Guard by the shoulder.

CASE

There's going to be trouble. Get your security over here...

The guard is suddenly jerked out of Case's grasp from the impact of an azide slug imploding his chest.

Case ducks back as three more SHOTS shatter the side of a console. The GUNFIRE is lost in the noise of the arcade.

Yakuza #1, his gun smoking, cautiously circles the aisle.

Case crouches in the darkness. From just behind the game console, he can see a pair of feet...slowly approaching. He cocks his gun, timing the approach carefully...then springs.

THE AISLE

A KID in oversized biker boots drops his popcorn as Case leaps out.

CASE

Pulls his shot at the last second, firing into the air.

YAKUZA #1

Pops up out of the darkness behind him, gun blazing.

THE KID

Beside Case is blown off his feet, shattering a holo projector.

CASE

Cuts through the maze of games, ducking lead. He loses the hit man at the back of the arcade, then checks the .38...empty.

A red dot appears on Case's chest. He looks up.

THE BIG YAKUZA

Looking like a Sumo wrestler stuffed into an ill-fitting suit. The laser-site on his modified Uzi casts the quavering dot on Case's chest.

The Big Yak smiles. His gold earring bearing the symbol of the Yakuza twinkles eerily in the darkness.

He kisses his thumb and makes the ritual gesture of death to Case.

LOW ANGLE - SLO MO

As another holographic blast erupts from Tank War Europa, the WOMAN IN BLACK leaps through the ghostly atomic fire, launching herself straight at the Big Yakuza.

She executes an amazing flying kick, snapping her body around to connect with the Yakuza's jaw. He goes down like a felled Sequoia.

Yakuza #3 appears firing at the Woman in Black. Case tackles him. They struggle for control of his gun. The crowd finally reacts to the real violence in the midst of their illusionary battles.

The Big Yakuza begins to rise, spitting out teeth and pissed off.

Case spots him, swings #3's gun hand around and squeezes the trigger.

The Big Yakuza takes a hit in the heart and crumbles.

Still gripping #3's hand, Case savagely elbows him in the face. Once. Twice. Three times. He goes down.

Suddenly machine pistol fire strafes the console behind Case. The monitor explodes with a hail of glass shards.

***** (Something to do with 'firing his machine pistol')

Case runs for all he's worth, heading for a window across the room. He barrel rolls straight through glass and neon as a fusillade of bullets explode around him.

EXT. STREET

Case hits the cement and rolls, knocking over a couple of leather clad HOOKERS

in the process. He disappears into the crowd as the Hookers scream expletives at him.

INT. CHATSUBO BAR

The doors blow open as JO JO BAO, the twenty-five year old Yakuza Lieutenant of Chiba City, enters escorted by four heavily armed BODYGUARDS. The cold expressionless mask of Bao's face suggests the brutality required to climb so far in the Yakuza ranks at such an early age. His startling aqua blue eyes are an obvious affectation from the black clinic tanks.

As the entourage cuts its way across the crowded floor, a ripple of tension spreads throughout the room.

Ratz casts a wary glance to his sideman, FRITZ.

Fritz gently lifts a wire bore scattergun from its resting place out of sight under the bar.

Ratz shakes his head "no" and motions for Fritz to stand by.

Jo Jo sits down before Ratz, flanked by his men.

RATZ

Arigatou, Bao-san. Rare to see you out this time of night.

Bao's English is excellent.

JO JO BAO

I'm afraid I could not sleep. Worry makes me restless.

RATZ

Is that so?

JO JO BAO

Yes. I'm worried for your friend. The man they call Case.

Ratz looks from one bodyguard's icy stare to the other.

RATZ

Not my friend. My customer.

JO JO BAO

Of course. Forgive me.

Bao extends his pinky finger, which is encased in a decorative gold sleeve. With a twist, he disengages the sleeve, revealing that his finger has been amputated at the knuckle. Bao casually taps a line of yellow powder out of his finger/vial onto the bar.

JO JO BAO (CONT.)

"Your customer"...Case is a difficult man to find when he wants to be.

Bao applies a match to the powder, which ignites like a fuse. He then expertly inhales the resulting curl of dirty yellow smoke, then offers Ratz a pull.

RATZ

Ah...No thanks. I can try to get in touch with him for you. Can't promise anything, you understand.

JO JO BAO

I would greatly appreciate this. You see there is a small matter that must be settled between Case and I.

One of Bao's bodyguards suddenly lashes out with a wickedly curved dagger, burying it in the counter top.

C.U. THE DAGGER

The gleaming blade had pinned a human ear to the worn wood. By the elaborate gold earring we recognise that this once belonged to the Big Yakuza in the arcade.

EXT. CHEAP HOTEL - NIGHT

Camera suddenly BOOMS UP to the rooftop of a shabby ten story office building.

Up here, in some of the last available space in the crowded city, a cheap hotel has been erected out of prefab fibreglass "coffins" racked in a framework of industrial scaffolding and catwalks. A weakly flickering neon sign offers the words CHEAP HOTEL under a cluster of Japanese ideograms.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL

Linda Lee has just finished packing a small suitcase in the cramped quarters of the white fibreglass module. The rooms moulded to maximise the efficiency of the living space; concave area for microwave and cooler, convex area for a temperfoam bed slab for computer terminal and telephone.

Linda peels off a photograph taped to the wall of her and Case in better days... mugging for the camera during a break in a game of Jai Alai. She decides to leave it for him.

The telephone rings. As Linda picks it up the computer screen is illuminated with a C.U. of Ratz.

LINDA LEE
Hello?

INTERCUT CHATSUBO BAR

Ratz speaks into a grimy mobile phone before a wall mounted lens. In the B.G. we

see his small audience of Yakuza heavies.

RATZ

Is Case there?

LINDA

No. Who's this?

RATZ

A friend. I have a very important message. Are you listening?

LINDA

Yes, but I...

RATZ

Jo Jo Bao says Case should bring the goods the Yakitori Stand at the arena in one hour. Jo Jo gets the goods or Case gets orchids. He'll understand.

There is a click as the phone disconnects. The screen goes blank.

Linda Lee looks back at the photograph of the man she used to love. She snaps her suitcase shut and starts for the door... But she stops short and finally makes a decision.

Linda crosses to the cooler and rummages about inside. She discovers a 9mm automatic hidden by a row of beer bottles. Searching further, she finds a plastic container behind the ice cube trays. Inside, packed in dry ice, is a glass tube filled with an amber fluid. Ketamine.

Linda stops and considers the gravity of what she is about to do. She closes the container and stuffs it into her canvas shoulder bag.

EXT. BULLET TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

The sleek train is a blur of motion as it clears frame... revealing Case, exhausted and dishevelled from his run in with the Yakuza. He checks his surroundings warily, then exits the platform. As he approaches the dingy stairway, his attention is drawn to a holographic travel advert floating overhead.

CLOSER - HOLOGRAM

It displays a beautiful cylindrical satellite hanging in space like a twinkling child's toy. The word FREESIDE pulses beneath the image in capital letters that mimic printed Japanese, followed by the copy line, "Why wait?".

A crack of lightning briefly illuminates a night sky choked with storm clouds. A light rain begins to fall. Case moves on.

EXT. CHEAP HOTEL

Case turns his collar up against the rain as he checks his lock for signs of a break-in. He slots a key card and the portal pops open.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL

Slipping through the small entry, case shrugs off his wet jacket and reaches for the lights.

OFFSCREEN VOICE
Hold it.

Case turns to find himself looking down the four barrelled muzzle of a Fletcher; a lethal looking hand gun that shoots dart cartridges ranging from tranquillisers to micro-explosives.

The Woman In Black sits at the far end of the coffin training the Fletcher on Case with a rock steady hand. The gun's pepper box muzzle rotates once, clicking a barrel in place.

WOMAN
No lights. I can see just fine the way I am, thanks.

C.U. THE WOMAN

Her mirror shades are actually surgically inset silver lenses that cover her eye sockets. Her fine features and smooth pale skin are framed by a rough shag of jet black hair. There's a cold beauty about her... marred by a street tough edge.

WOMAN
Now close the door.

WOMAN'S P.O.V.

Her lenses provide light boosters... enhancing the scene in a pale green hue as Case closes the portal.

CASE
That was you at the arcade.

WOMAN
I just wanted to put the Big Yak down, not kill him. I've got enough problems without Yak heat.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The room's only light source is the dim glow of the computer monitor.

Unfortunately, the next page is missing from the bootleg. I can establish,

though, that Case learns that Armitage has a job for him, and that the Woman In Black is, in fact, Molly. The best pointer for the scenes may in fact be the novel.

MOLLY

His name's Armitage. He's very anxious to meet you.

CASE

Why should I want to meet him.

MOLLY

Because you've exceeded your shelf life, Case. Word on the street is you're a dead man walking. Nice time for an employment opportunity. Travel to exotic locales.

CASE

What's my end?

MOLLY

You want to hear the pitch, you gotta meet the man.

Case considers this for a beat, then reaches for his jacket.

CASE

This better be good.

Molly holsters her gun and rises.

Case now notices Linda's suitcase lying by the temperfoam slab, with a note on top of it. He scans the note... adrenalin surges through his body.

MOLLY

What is it?

CASE

... a friend of mine's gonna get herself killed. I need my clip.

MOLLY

Sorry. That's not gonna happen.

CASE

Then, fuck you. I'm gone.

Case reaches for the door.

The fletcher is instantly in Molly's hand and firing.

Three blue steel darts puncture the fibreglass portal and stand quivering inches from Case's hand.

Case turns and glares at Molly. She considers the situation.

MOLLY (CONT.)

(holsters gun)

Alright. We check your friend out first. But I want you to remember something.

Molly snaps her hand open, palms up. With a barely audible click ten double edged scalpel blades slide from their housings beneath her black lacquered nails. Surgical implants.

MOLLY

You mess with me, you'll be playing Jai Alai with Jesus.

EXT. ARENA

An inflated dome behind a portside warehouse, taut grey fabric reinforced with a net of thin steel cables. The roar of the crowd briefly rises above the night sounds of Chiba City.

INT. ARENA

Linda Lee makes her way across a crowded transom as the predominantly Japanese CROWD exchange fistfuls of new yen, placing their bets. She pauses to ask an old woman directions.

Behind her, the towering puppets of holographic light duplicate the movements of the contestants in the ring; two MEN in the midst of a savage knife fight. Their combat style combines street fighting, fencing and kickboxing.

INT. ARENA HALL

The dimly lit outer hall is lined with massive cement pylons that anchor the arena's support cables. As Jo Jo Bao and his four leg breakers make their way through the crowd, the BEGGARS and SOUVENIR HUSTLERS shrink back. These are men not to be trifled with.

EXT. ARENA

Case and Molly bolt out of a three wheeled taxi and rush to the ticket window.

INT. ARENA - THE RING

The two combatants whirl in their deadly cockfight, their bodies glistening with sweat. The crowd ROARS as first blood is drawn.

C.U. - YAKATORI SKEWER

The brown sauce dripping down Jo Jo Bao's fingers. He takes a bite.

WIDER - YAKATORI STAND

The stand is positioned near an ugly cinderblock dead end at the last curve in the shadowy hall. Sensing danger, the few remaining patrons abandon their position in line, leaving the stand to Bao and his men.

INT. HALL

Linda Lee enters the hall, checking her watch. She hurries past the clutching hands of the beggars, and the sing song cries of the merchants.

INT. ARENA - STANDS

Case and Molly race across the transom as the crowd SCREAMS for blood. Behind them, the God-like holograms battle beneath the quilted dome in a column of drifting cigarette smoke and light.

INT. YAKATORI STAND

Bao turns. Pull focus to Linda Lee framed in the arch of the hallway. She stands there frozen, like a deer trapped in the road... Then steadies herself, and starts toward Bao and his men.

INT. HALL

Case and Molly run full speed around the bend.

INT. YAKATORI STAND

Linda Lee stands before the grim faced Yakuzas. She reaches into her shoulder bag and produces the plastic container. Bao watches silently as one of his men withdraws the ketamine.

INT. ARENA

The combatants' blades clash. Sparks fly.

The crowd chants for the kill, blood-madness in their eyes.

INT. YAKATORI STAND

Bao's synthetic ice-blue eyes reveal nothing as he inspects the fragile tube of amber fluid. He looks back up at Linda Lee... then lets the tube drop, shattering on the cement floor.

The ketamine itself means nothing. Bao has a score to settle.

INT. RING

One combatant lashes out. Blood flows.

INT. YAKATORI STAND

A double hinged butterfly knife flickers open in Jo Jo Bao's hand.

LINDA LEE

Reacts as the bodyguards grab her from either side.

THE CROWD

**** Faces contorted in anger

MOLLY AND CASE

Arrive at the dead end.

CASE'S P.O.V.

Linda Lee stands 20 yards away, flanked by Bao's bodyguards. Bao SCREAMING something in Japanese. His knife flashes.

THE RING - THE COMBATANTS

A blade flashes - the killing blow. The crowd shrieks.

ON CASE

Sprinting up the hallway.

CASE
(screams)
No!

THE YAKUZAS

Turn, drawing their guns.

MOLLY

Pushes Case to the ground as she dives to one side, firing her Fletcher.

LINDA LEE

Staggers back, silhouetted by strobing muzzle flashes as the men around her open fire.

CASE

Crouches beside a cement pylon as bullets explode around him.

MOLLY

Fires, scrambling for cover. She pulls out Case's clip.

MOLLY
Case!

CASE

Catches his clip, jams it into the gun and rushes the stand like a madman,

firing blindly.

MOLLY

Her Fletcher whines as she fires a storm of explosive darts into the midst of the Yakuza's.

THE STAND - HAND HELD

Case charges, blazing away. Yakuza's are cut down in the searing crossfire.

LINDA LEE

Turns, her eyes wide with terror... takes two steps toward Case. A thin curtain of blood suddenly appears, running down her throat.

She crumbles into Case's arms.

BAO

Fires.

CASE

Blood blossoms from his shoulder. Still holding Linda Lee, he empties his gun at Bao.

BAO

Riddled with bullets, is blown back into the Yakitori stand. Glass, wood, hot grease and fire fly through the air as the Yakuza Lieutenant's body bounces off the cinderblock wall, and rebounds on the unyielding cement floor.

CASE

Sinks to his knees cradling the lifeless body of Linda Lee in his arms. Police SIRENS wail in the distance... growing closer.

MOLLY

Snaps a new clip in her Fletcher, scanning the wreckage of sprawled bodies with a professional eye... no survivors.

She takes Case by the shoulder as we hear SHOUTS and a shrill police WHISTLE O.C.

MOLLY

She's dead man. C'mon.

Case does not respond.

MOLLY (CONT.)

She's dead!

Molly pulls Case to his feet as the post-fight crowd begins to emerge from the arena. They react with SCREAMS and confusion to the scene of bloodshed.

Camera BOOMS UP. COPS and SECURITY MEN arrive, pushing their way through the swirling crush of bodies. Case and Molly slip away in the confusion.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO BLACK

E.C.U. COFFEE CUP

Black coffee poured into a china cup.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Case sits in an oversized chair framed against a large picture window in a luxurious suite. Outside a slate grey sky hangs over the jumble of Chiba City. A light rain patters against the glass.

Case looks wasted... washed out. His arm is supported by a web-like nylon sling. He sips his coffee in silence.

Molly pours a cup for her employer.

ARMITAGE is a powerfully built man in his early forties. His dark robe frames a broad muscular chest and a flat stomach. His white blonde hair is close cropped in an almost military style.

ARMITAGE
Are you sure you're up to this, Mr. Case? We could reconvene tomorrow.

CASE
You've got an expensive razor girl on me for a reason. I'd like to hear what it is.

ARMITAGE
Very well.

Armitage slots a laser disc the size of a quarter into a remote control. The picture window behind Case is instantly transformed into a wall sized screen displaying news footage of chaos in the London stock market.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)
What you're seeing here is the London stock market crash of last September. This was the first in a series of setbacks for the international banking community.

Molly pours herself some coffee and sits down near Case. Her Fletcher hangs

loosely on her side in a black nylon shoulder holster.

Armitage switches the scene to a space shuttle manufacturing plant.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

The collapse of Aerospace International...

He switches to a corporate conference room where a hearing is in progress.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

The corporate plundering of Yeshoto Industries... At first these seemed like unrelated incidents, but a pattern is emerging that suggests otherwise.

CASE

What does this have to do with me?

ARMITAGE

(turns off screen)

Our analysis of the London stock crash suggest that it was manipulated from within the international computer matrix. Cyberspace, Mr. Case... A realm I believe you're familiar with.

CASE

(shrugs)

Put the Sense/Net Police on it. The matrix is their turf.

ARMITAGE

Sense/Net's corporately financed. Too corrupt to be trusted. You of all people should know that.

Armitage sits down across from Case

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

If someone is infiltrating the matrix on a global scale no political or economic system is safe. I'm assembling a team of specialists, Mr. Case. We need a man who can enter the matrix and trace this saboteur.

CASE

My days of punching deck are over. For you or anybody else.

ARMITAGE

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

CASE

I'd say you were full of shit.

Armitage nods.

CASE (CONT.)

Then I'd ask you what your terms are.

ARMITAGE

First, let's get something straight. We ran a psych construct on you that lists self destruction as your favourite pastime. If you want to kill yourself, Mr.

Case, there's much more entertaining ways than working for me.

CASE

It's the people close to me that tend to die... and I get the feeling you and I

are going to be real buddies.

(beat)

Terms?

ARMITAGE

We'll match your rate just prior to your... accident. One half in advance.

CASE

Who's running the show, Armitage? This a government sting?

ARMITAGE

Questions make me nervous. Part of our arrangement will be that you don't ask too many.

Armitage rises.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

One more thing, Mr. Case... Be prepared to travel light.

EXT. THE SPRAWL - DAWN

Urban development gone mad... A city built upon a city with old Atlanta at the core. Bristling with air and ground traffic. A Herring passenger jet slowly spirals as it drops straight down into the dense cityscape.

SUPER:

BOSTON-ATLANTA METROPOLITAN AXIS:

THE SPRAWL

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

An exclusive clinic comprised of sleek pavilions, separated by small formal gardens.

Case cracks open a drink container and hands it to Molly. He opens a second one for himself. Two white robed DOCTORS pass by, preoccupied with their charts.

CASE

Since when do sprawl doctors know more about nerve rehab than the Japanese?

MOLLY

Since Armitage sold them a program on it. Put them years ahead of the competition.

As they walk through the garden, they pass a gleaming crab-like robot pruning a tree with its long delicate claws.

CASE

He's a resourceful guy, your boss. How long you work for him?

MOLLY

Couple of months.

CASE

What about before that?

MOLLY

For someone else. Bodyguard. Courier... Whatever.

CASE

Then you don't really know who he is, do you?

MOLLY

I know who he isn't. Not C.I.A. Not Sense/Net. But... money comes in. Doors open. He's onto something.

CASE

Maybe something's onto him.

MOLLY

What's that supposed to mean?

A MALE NURSE approaches Case.

NURSE

Mr. Smith?

CASE

Yeah.

(turns back to Molly)

It means there is no Santa Claus, Molly. So cover your ass. Just cover your ass.

Case follows the nurse into the building.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

A high tech sterile environment.

An ANESTHESIOLOGIST in a cobalt blue smock and surgical mask attaches one blue
derm to Case's neck and one to his wrist.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Count backwards from ten, please.

CASE

Ten... nine...

CASE'S P.O.V. - SLOW MO

A SURGEON picks up a laser scalpel, a device resembling a tuning fork with a laser beam crackling between its open prongs. The surgeon now folds back one of
the prongs and turns toward Case.

CASE
(slowing down)
Eight... seven... six.

C.U. CASE

His eyelids droop... picture and sound slow down.

CASE
Five... four...

CASE'S P.O.V. - -SLOW MO

The Surgeons converge on Case, towering over him. The room around him then melts into dreamy soft focus as the crackling laser scalpel descends.

E.C.U. - CASE'S EYES

Half closed.

CASE
Three... two...

CASE'S P.O.V. - SLOW MO

The Surgeons have become the Pale Man and his Sense/Net storm troopers. The scalpel is now the glistening hypodermic... descending... contact.

The screen explodes in WHITE-OUT.

C.U. CASE

His face tenses... but in passion, not pain... slowly turning to reveal Linda Lee holding him tightly... lost in their lovemaking.

E.C.U. THE LASER SCALPEL

Burning a straight line across a horizon of flesh.

CASE

His face tenses... again slowly turning to reveal Linda Lee in his arms, but now her eyes are as cold and blank as a lifeless doll... Her throat darkly glistening crimson.

E.C.U. THE LASER SCALPEL

Its beam FLARES into camera as it slices.

C.U. CASE

Screams...

The CAMERA BOOMS UP to reveal him tied to the coffee table, surrounded by his

enemies.

Screams....

Clutching her lifeless body in his arms as he sinks to his knees in defeat.

C.U. CASE

His eyes flash open as he gasps a breath. Awake...

WIDER - DARKENED ROOM

Case lies in rumpled sheets, his face bathed in sweat. He can hardly move.

Molly looks down at him... a shadow against a moonlit window, her hair glistening as blue black as a raven's wing.

MOLLY

(softly)

Easy. You're still full of endorphins.

Case coughs. Molly supports his head and helps him sip some water.

MOLLY (CONT.)

You've been calling her name.

CASE

What?

MOLLY.

Your girl, Linda Lee. You've been calling her name.

She wrings out a wet cloth. Applies it to his forehead.

MOLLY (CONT.)

She must have really loved you.

Case gazes into the darkness. His voice is a weak whisper.

CASE

It got her killed.

Molly straightens up his covers.

MOLLY

Sure Case... Love kills and we're all the walking wounded.

She gently lays a hand over Case's eyes.

MOLLY (CONT.)

Now close your eyes... You're asleep and you don't even know it.

When Molly takes her hand away, indeed, his eyes remain shut.

C.U. MOLLY - MORNING

She hits a padded bar hard... Flips up out of frame.

WIDER

Molly is in the midst of a workout on a customised rig that's part "Sinsemi" karate pads, part uneven parallel bars. She flies through her routine with animal grace and the focused discipline of a professional athlete.

The rig stands in the middle of a sparsely furnished high ceilinged loft. Shafts of soft morning light are filtered through a row of dusty windows.

Case sits up in the foreground.

He's lying on a futon in the middle of the worn wooden floor. He rises pulling a sheet around his naked shoulders... but he's stopped cold as a splitting headache hits home.

CASE
(gasps)
Holy shit...

MOLLY
(flips down off rig)
Hey... you're not supposed to be up.

Molly guides Case to a stool at the kitchen counter. He looks around the room, red-rimmed eyes adjusting to the light.

CASE
How long have I been out?

MOLLY
Almost two days.

Case gazes down at the narrow bandages across his main arteries.

CASE
I gotta know... did it work>

MOLLY
We'll find out soon enough. If you don't pull the splices out.

Case snaps the cap off a bottle of bourbon and pours a drink.

CASE
How soon is soon enough?

MOLLY
Couple of days. They'll examine you.

Case slugs down the bourbon.

MOLLY (CONT.)
That's not going to help.

CASE

The way I feel, believe me, it'll help.

MOLLY

Not anymore. You got a new pancreas. Armitage's got you kinked so you can't get stoned.

CASE

What the fuck... are you serious?

MOLLY

(pours him another)
Go ahead...

Case tosses it down... no kick at all.

CASE

That's cute. Very fucking cute. What else did this guy do to me when he had me opened up like a goddamn fillet?

Extending one scalpel-blade, Molly picks at a cluster of grapes.

MOLLY

(half-smile)
Oh, I dunno... He was saying maybe that you're a little too ballsy.

Molly flicks her blade, severing two grapes from the bunch. Nasty image.

CASE

No...

Case checks beneath his sheet.

Armitage now enters carrying two large cardboard boxes bearing Japanese logo.

ARMITAGE

I'll think you'll find everything in working order. Molly's just having a little fun.

CASE

I don't call this fun, pal. You're playing God with my body.

ARMITAGE

You're a substance abuser, Case. Your pancreas was shot. Wouldn't have lasted out the year. We did you a favour and liberated you from a dangerous dependency in the bargain.

CASE

Thanks, but I was enjoying that dependency.

ARMITAGE

Good, because you've got a new one.

Armitage sets the boxes down in a corner with several others.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

There are fifteen toxin sacs bonded to the lining of your main arteries. They're dissolving, Case... slowly, but they're definitely dissolving. You have just long enough to do the job.

CASE

You son of a bitch...

Case lurches up from the counter, sending the bourbon smashing to the floor. Molly restrains him.

MOLLY

Easy...

ARMITAGE

Play it straight with me and you've got nothing to worry about. When it's over, I inject you with the antitoxin.

CASE

Why'd you do it, Armitage?

ARMITAGE

The disturbance in cyberspace... It's an A.I.

CASE

(bitter chuckle)

Right. And no one would take on an A.I.... If they had a choice.

MOLLY

What's an A.I.

ARMITAGE

An Artificial Intelligence. A computer system that's developed the capacity for sentient thought. They're dangerous and totally unpredictable.

CASE

First sign of free will, Sense/Net usually slags 'em.

ARMITAGE

This one's different. No one can trace it. It's out there somewhere in the matrix and it's growing stronger... infecting other computer systems like a virus.

CASE

Anything rated higher than a P.C.'s got a hard-wired suicide switch. It'll self-destruct.

ARMITAGE

It hasn't yet.

Case lights a cigarette.

CASE

I've heard about rogue A.I.'s, but there's only one guy who actually went up against one.

ARMITAGE

Dixie McCoy

CASE

Right. Best cowboy that ever punched deck. The old man taught me most of what I know.

ARMITAGE

I've arranged for him to work with us.

CASE

That's gonna be tough because Dixie McCoy's dead. The A.I. flatlined him.

ARMITAGE

I know.

(beat)

You ever work with ghosts, Case?

CASE

What are you talking about?

ARMITAGE

Sense/Net taped a full spectrum personality construct on McCoy six months before his death. Everything Dixie was -- everything Dixie still knows exists as a digitised construct.

(beat)

Of course a tape can get misplaced in a library the size of Sense/Net's.

Armitage tosses a matte black cartridge on the kitchen counter. Its the size and shape of the clip on an assault rifle. Warning decals and security codes frame the label on the front of the cartridge:

Charles "Dixie" McCoy

Case gingerly picks it up.

CASE

Working with a dead man. Shit, I've done about everything else.

ARMITAGE

You'll be ready for a trial run in two days. If your splices hold, you'll use McCoy to trace the A.I.'s coordinates.

CASE

And then?

ARMITAGE

Then we rendezvous with the final member of our team. For now, that's all you

need to know.

CASE

It's just that sometimes I wonder what team I'm playin' on.

Armitage turns to Molly.

ARMITAGE

We have work to do.

Molly and Armitage exit.

Pull focus from Case to Armitage's empty glass in the foreground. Case holds it up to the light.

C.U. THE GLASS

Subtle fingerprints are visible.

EXT. LOFT - NIGHT

A full moon shines down on the weathered brick building in this core section of old Atlanta.

INT. LOFT

Case lies sleeplessly, staring at the mysterious grouping of boxes that Armitage has left lying on the moonlit floor. He rises.

As Case unstacks the boxes he discovers a glossy pamphlet advertising the luxury satellite, Freeside, with the familiar copyline: "Freeside... Why wait?"

Beneath it is an 8x10 fashionably dressed cabaret artist. It bears the heading, "The Holographic Cabaret of Peter Riviera." Ghostly images of skulls and jewels dance about Riviera.

Case sets the papers aside and runs his hand over the smooth surface of a box bearing cryptic instructions in Japanese. He tears it open and brushes back the clear plastic packing bubbles.

He gently lifts a beautiful Ono-Sendai Cyberspace 7 computer deck out of the box and sets it in a square of dusty moonlight thrown across the worn wooden floor. It's a more compact version of the jerry-rigged deck in Case's old townhouse. He runs his hands over the smooth lines of the two tiered keyboard... the sleek joystick.

MOLLY (O.S.)

You touch that thing like it's a woman.

Case looks up to see Molly silhouetted in her bedroom doorway, wearing only a cotton body stocking. Her Fletcher hangs from her shoulder in its open harness.

CASE
I'm going in.

MOLLY
You're not ready yet. They said two days.

CASE
I'm not jacking with Armitage and his quacks breathing down my neck.

MOLLY
If the splices aren't good, you could fry.

Case considers this for a moment.

CASE
I'll show you how to tell what's going on. If things go south, you unplug me.

MOLLY
What is it with you? Why is it so important? It's a buzz, right? Like getting high.

CASE
On a good run... yeah.

MOLLY
So you're a wire junkie.

Case sets the computer deck aside.

CASE
When I was fifteen Sense/Net iced my old man's credit record over some computer error. Once that goes down, that's it. He lost his business... everything. It destroyed him. I had to hustle arcade games for chump change. Dixie McCoy found me, figured I was a natural. He taught me the wires for a piece of the action.

MOLLY
A regular Fagan.

CASE
Sure. I finally pulled a run on my old man's credit file when I was seventeen... only it was too late for him.

MOLLY
Too late?

CASE
Suicide. I just needed to set the record straight.

Case is silent for a moment then turns and begins to tear open another box.

CASE (CONT.)

I've been running the matrix ever since.

Molly finally sits down beside him... she starts to help Case unpack the equipment.

INT. LOFT - C.U. CYBERSPACE EQUIPMENT

An impressive display of high tech computer gear is arranged in a semi-circle on the floor around the futon.

Case sits in a lotus position in the midst of the gear as Molly paces the room.

Trails of micro thin wires run from the electrodes (derms) on his headband to the chrome plated jack he holds in his hand.

CASE

The first fun's bound to be rough. It that read out fluctuates more than ten points... just pull this out. But if the EEG flatlines, don't touch anything.

MOLLY

Won't that mean you're dead?

CASE

Technically, yeah, but people have made it back after as long as three minutes.

MOLLY

Dixie McCoy didn't.

CASE

The point is, if you unplug me when I'm flatlines, I'm history. I got no way back.

MOLLY

Okay fine. Let's get this over with.

Case gives Molly a reassuring smile.

CASE

Take it easy. This is what I'm good at.

C.U. THE JACK

Case slides it home with a metallic SNAP.

Crackle to WHITE OUT

CASE'S P.O.V. - CYBERSPACE

We are suddenly roaring through an impossible corridor of light with no top or

bottom... Our speed constantly increasing. Luminescent geometric shapes
tumble
by like a shimmering power storm. We have entered an unearthly dimension of
sheer power and energy as Case's subconscious mind is catapulted into
CYBERSPACE

THE LOFT -CASE

Breaks into a sweat... His eyes closed in deep concentration. He remains in
the
louts position, his hands lying on padded supports just above the keyboard.
His
fingers flex weakly. He's in poor contact with his physical self.

C.U. CASE - CYBERSPACE

His translucent image distorts radically as he's torn through the GLOWING
corridor, fighting for some control.

THE LOFT

The READOUTS begin to fluctuate.

Molly sees that Case's body is beginning to tremble. Something's going wrong.

CASE'S P.O.V. - CYBERSPACE

Still accelerating down the terrifying corridor of light. The ride grows
rougher
with the increasing velocity. He's losing control.

THE LOFT - C.U. KEYBOARD

Case's fingers still move slightly... still no contact

C.U. READOUTS

Fluctuations increasing...

CYBERSPACE

A monolithic WALL of pulsing yellow and black hazard stripes lies directly
ahead... a glowing computer graphic barricade. It's crowned by the imposing
Sense/Net logo and the warning... "Security Clearance Required."

CYBERSPACE - CASE

His image streaking... vibrating. He's in excruciating pain.

CASE'S P.O.V. - THE WALL

Case is rushing towards a head on collision. Tendrils of energy crackle
across
the surface of the barricade like an electrified fence. The words "Access
Prohibited" strobe out in red towering letters.

LOFT - C.U. KEYBOARD

Case's hands finally come to life. His shaking fingers punch out a series of digits.

CYBERSPACE - CASE'S P.O.V. - THE WALL

Case's program shoots out like a lightning bolt, blowing a hole through the Sense/Net barricade a split second before impact. We rocket straight through the tiny portal.

EXT. SENSE/NET BUILDING - NIGHT

A foreboding mirrored fortress in downtown New Atlanta, bristling with antenna and satellite dishes. It looks like a cross between a futuristic broadcasting station and a police headquarters, which is exactly what it is.

From somewhere inside a high pitched klaxon pulses out its shrill alarm.

INT. SENSE/NET MONITORING ROOM

The alarm continues as Sense/Net personnel scramble to their terminals. Overhead screen display Case's infiltration into the matrix in simplified computer graphics.

CLOSER

A Sense/Net technician speaks into his headset

TECHNICIAN

We have a bogey at access C-27. Bogey at C-27.

A voice crackles in response.

VOICE

Trajectory?

INT. CYBERSPACE - CASE'S P.O.V.

Case shoots through the narrow wormhole in the barricade at hair raising speed.

He finally bursts through into...

THE MATRIX

A transparent 3-D chessboard opens up before us, extending into infinity... Breathtakingly beautiful... Huge glowing geometric computer CONSTRUCTS float by, each bearing the specific corporations they represent... Suspended in nothingness like synthetic planets in an over-populated universe.

NOTE: The computer CONSTRUCTS are three dimensional geometric representations of

the inner workings of computer systems. They exist in Cyberspace in the form of pure light and energy. Complex symbols and data are constantly changing within their glowing ectoskeletons. Although separate and apart from the actual hardware in the physical universe, computer activity can be observed and manipulated from within the matrix.

INT. SENSE/NET MONITORING ROOM

The blip representing Case disappears from the monitor.

OPERATOR

We've lost contact. sir. He's entered the matrix.

THE MATRIX C.U. SUBLIMINAL CASE

(NOTE: Although Case's physical body always remains at his deck, his spiritual being manifests itself on his trips into the matrix. A true "out of body" experience.)

Case floats blissfully through the phosphorescent environment in the lotus position that matches that of his body in the physical plane. His eyes are filled with wonder. He's achieved his "normal" appearance in the matrix; a translucent ghost of himself... shimmering with mild iridescence. His every moment creates subtle time lapse after-images the catch up his prime image in a graceful dance.

CASE'S P.O.V. - THE MATRIX

A burning scarlet pyramid bearing the title Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority floats by majestically, its surface alive with a constant changing flow of data...

The monolithic green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank of America hang above the horizon like a luminous cityscape twinkling with countless transactions.

And in the distance are the everpresent gridlines that define the limitless perspectives of the matrix.

We hear distant echoing LAUGHTER.

THE LOFT

Case sits before his console bathed in sweat... Eyes closes... Laughing like a man who's beat the devil.

MOLLY

Watches... wondering what he can possibly be experiencing. the readouts are modulating smoothly.

INT. SENSE/NET CONFERENCE ROOM

The Sense/Net technician sits surrounded by three larger than life holographic projections is taking place with the chairman's live images, each disembodied head projected above a separate pedestal.

A wall-sized screen displays playback of Case's infiltration of the matrix.

Bigelow, the most imposing of the three chairmen question the nervous operator.

BIGELOW

Is this all you've got on him?

TECHNICIAN

Yes sir. Whoever he is, he's good.

A figure seated in shadows at the rear of the room now speaks.

FIGURE

If he was so good he wouldn't have crashed a security checkpoint. I doubt he'll make the same mistake again.

BIGELOW

I thought we eradicated these wire jockeys. These... what do they call themselves, Duprey?

The FIGURE now swivels in his chair to face Bigelow's hologram. He is the PALE

MAN, the Sense/Net operative that injected Case with the microtoxin. His name is Lt. Roland Duprey.

DUPREY

Cowboys, sir. I retired the last one personally over a year ago.

SUVANI YAMIR, a Mideastern Chairman, interjects.

YAMIR

Then how do you explain this?

DUPREY

I don't know yet. My people are doing everything that they can to trace it.

The third chairman, an aristocratic Frenchman named Lord Frederick Tessier addresses the gathering.

TESSIER

Do you realise what a security breach would mean right now? If our mysterious guest discovers that an Artificial Intelligence is running loose in the matrix infiltrating other computer systems, it could cause a worldwide panic.

BIGELOW

Find this cowboy, Duprey. Do whatever you have to to stop him.

DUPREY

What about the A.I.?

TESSIER

That is our problem, Lieutenant. Please concern yourself with the matter at hand.

Duprey rises.

BIGELOW

One more thing, Duprey...

Duprey turns.

BIGELOW

You fuck this up, I'll have your cerebral cortex degoused. You'll need a playback unit to remember how to pee. Am I making myself clear?

Duprey regards his superiors with thinly veiled disdain.

DUPREY

Don't worry, gentlemen. I'll keep your fat out of the fire.

EXT. MATRIX

Case's ghostly image still floats in a lotus position, dwarfed by the gigantic glowing constructs suspended in the distance.

INT. LOFT - C.U. DECK

As Case presses a button, the cartridge labelled "Dixie McCoy" automatically descends into the deck.

EXT. THE MATRIX

A disembodied CAT scan of a HUMAN HEAD suddenly appears before Case in a nimbus of gently modulating light. The brain and circulatory systems are visible in fluorescent pinks and blues like a 3-D x-ray. Its eyeballs are rolled back in its skull like two boiled eggs, showing no pupils at all.

Beneath this eerie medical jack-o-lantern is a two dimensional name plate in glowing green letters. It reads Charles "Dixie" McCoy and bears a narrow voice print band with a digital time code read out.

CASE

Dixie. Dixie McCoy? Is that you, man?

As McCoy speaks, a series of overlapping sign waves appear beneath him in his voice print band,, fluctuating with the modulations of his voice.

MCCOY

Hey, bro.

CASE

It's Case. Remember me?

Dixie's eyes roll down, revealing shocking pink irises with cobalt blue pupils.

He seems to be just waking up.

MCCOY

Case... Yeah, Miami Joeboy, quick study. How you doing, kid?

CASE

Fine, Dixie. Fine.

MCCOY

Last I heard you cracked Sukura International. I couldn't believe it.

CASE

Yeah. That was me.

MCCOY

Jesus Christ, Kid. Nobody's ever cracked Sukura.

CASE

As far as they know, that's absolutely true.

MCCOY

(chuckles)

Ya learned good. So, what's happening?

CASE

That's a good question. What's the last thing you remember?

Long beat.

MCCOY

Nothin'. Not a goddamn thing. What the fuck...

CASE

Dixie, you know how a ROM construct works?

MCCOY

Sure, Kid. It's a firmware construct.

CASE

Okay, Dix. You are a ROM construct.

Dixie's image is obscured by static as his "face" registers confusion.

CASE (CONT.)

Dixie?

There is no reply.

CASE

You're a ROM construct... Understand?

Dixie is briefly visible, then becomes totally obscured by electronic snow.
His
voice is a distant echo.

DIXIE
(processed)
It's cold. Why's it so goddamn cold.

The image disappears completely.

CASE (CONT.)
Dixie?

Silence... Then Dixie suddenly appears in perfect clarity.

DIXIE
What you're telling me is that I'm dead. Right?

CASE
(pauses)
Right...

DIXIE
I can't feel nothing because I am nothing.
(eerie laughter)
Just playback. A ghost in the machine.

CASE
You're Dixie McCoy's construct. That makes you something special.

DIXIE
Don't patronise me, you fuck. I was skating figure eights in this matrix
while
you were still peeing in your chinos.
(beat)
Hey, Kid... you expecting company?

CASE
What?

MCCOY
Later...

Dixie disappears.

There is an ominous rumbling in the matrix.

CASE
Dixie?

Case now notices an unusual glimmer off in the matrix.

He begins to "type"... looking like a mimist at an invisible keyboard.

INT. LOFT - KEYBOARD

Case types.

INT. MATRIX

Case's question prints out in mid-air as he types it.

Analysis: Object travelling 120 degrees longitude.

The computer's answer instantly appears.

Energy probe. Point of origin unknown.

INT. SENSE/NET MONITORING ROOM

As Duprey walks purposefully up the aisle he's stopped by a concerned technician.

TECHNICIAN

Lieutenant... we have some unusual activity in C sector.

DUPREY

Is that our bogey?

TECHNICIAN

No, it's inorganic. Could be your phantom A.I..

Duprey snaps his fingers.

TECHNICIAN (CONT.)

Sir?

DUPREY

I do believe one of our problems is about to cancel out the other one.

INT. MATRIX

The glowing sphere suddenly picks up speed... Veers directly at Case. The rumbling grows louder with its approach.

INT. LOFT

Case quickly taps out new coordinates.

INT. MATRIX

His position shifts, but the sphere responds instantly. It's nearly upon him, crackling with deadly energy.

INT. LOFT - DECK

?

INT. MATRIX

Case peels off and flies towards an Air Tram International construct. The sphere bares down on him like a heat seeking missile.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCT

Case flashes into the si spoked construct just as the sphere crashes into it.

INT. LOFT

The deck shorts out, SPARKING and POPPING with the electrical overload.
Case's
body stiffens.

Molly tries to pull out the jack, but receives a crackling jolt the second
her
hand comes down in contact with the chrome.

INT. CONSTRUCT

Case flies through narrow intersecting tunnels as the entire construct
shatters
around him in a deadly display of phosphorescent fireworks.

INT. LOFT

Molly lashes out with her steel claws, severing Case's wires. He's ripped
back
into his body just in time to se the sparking Hosaka monitor implode with a
flash of light.

The printer begins shooting out hard copies at high speed until the entire
system suddenly shuts down.

MOLLY

You okay?

CASE

...Yeah, but the Hosaka's history.

As Case inspects the print outs, he's stopped cold... One word is repeated
down
each scorched page:

Wintermute

Wintermute

Wintermute

EXT. STREET CORNER - THE SPRAWL - DAY

Case buys a pack of cigarettes and a paper at a busy corner newsstand.

The headlines read - "Systems Crash at Air Tram International - Railways Shut
Down."

A Sense/Net van slowly turns the corner... invisible eyes watching from
behind
the tinted bulletproof glass.

Case eases back against a row of pay phones as the van passes. He lights a
cigarette.

Suddenly the pay phone beside him RINGS. Case stares at the phone as the rings continue, then finally picks it up.

A synthetic CHIP VOICE comes over the line, reverberating with unearthly harmonics.

VOICE
Hello, Case

Case is too stunned to speak... then,

CASE
Who is this?

VOICE
Wintermute.
(beat)
Sorry I missed you last night.

There's faint background sounds... a WAILING COSMIC WIND... barely audible voices echoing off some orbital link.

VOICE (CONT.)
I've been waiting for you, Case. It's time we talked.

Case hangs up. He flicks the cigarette away, unnerved, then walks along the length of the bank of phones.

Each phone RINGS as he passes, but only once.

EXT. LOFT - DAY

Case enters the building

INT. THE LOFT

Case enters to find Armitage pacing the floor. A wiry pony tailed man, bare chested except for a black leather vest, sits crouched over Case's desk, working on the wired circuitry. He looks like a Grateful Dead roadie who's done one too many tours.

ARMITAGE
You ran without us.

CASE
I cannot tell a lie. Sorry.

ARMITAGE
Sorry, bullshit. We haven't even begun and you're already jeopardising this operation.

CASE
What's he doing to my gear?

The man glances up from his work.

MAN

Your gear. Hah! I spent weeks customising this stuff. It looks like you've been playin' with it in the bathtub, man.

ARMITAGE

This is Finn, our tech man.

FINN

Pleased to meechea, I'm sure.

Armitage refers to the printout in his hand.

ARMITAGE

What's this?

CASE

Could be your A.I.'s calling card.

ARMITAGE

Did you trace it?

CASE

No, but it traced me.

Case tosses him the newspaper. Armitage scans the headline.

CASE

Fried Air Tram in the process. Not to mention half my gear.

ARMITAGE

What about McCoy?

CASE

He's got a little attitude problem, being that he's dead and all, but he'll come around. Where's Molly?

ARMITAGE

Prepping your trip.

CASE

Really? Do I get to know where I'm going? It makes packing so much easier.

ARMITAGE

Offworld. The A.I.... this "Wintermute" thing evolved on a computer mainframe on the satellite Freeside. If you attack it from within the matrix while Molly accesses its original programming we can cripple its defence systems.

CASE

That could work, but the timing will be a bitch.

ARMITAGE

You'll be linked during the entire operation.

CASE
Linked?

FINN
Remote simstim. Moll's wired for full sensorium access.
(to Armitage)
I thought this guy was a player.

ARMITAGE
He is. Just been out of touch for awhile.

FINN
Well, you're going to get a kick out of this. Link switches here.
(flips it)
Boom. You're wired straight into her senses. Sight, sound, touch, taste...
the
whole enchilada. You'll know just how tight those jeans really are.
(rises)
Now you wanna give this a try? I'm supposed to be on my lunch break.

Case applies his derms, casts a last suspicious look at Finn, then jacks in.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

Hand head as she moves down a crowded street in the Sprawl's business district.
A slight edge of video texture lets us know this is Case's perception via the simstim link.

The P.O.V. pans and we see Molly regarding herself in a reflective shop window.

MOLLY
Morning, Case.

The P.O.V. tilts down with Molly's gaze as she slides a hand inside her open jacket.

MOLLY (CONT.)
Welcome aboard.

She gently pinches her nipple through her silk tank top.

INT. LOFT

Case winces, his hand automatically protecting his chest. It's a strange sensation, to say the least.

He flips back out.

CASE
Yeah, well it's working.

ARMITAGE

Stick with her. I want the process to become second nature to you. We fly for Freeside at dawn.

Case flips.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - MEMORY LANE - DUSK

Molly makes her way down a narrow alley lined with dubious software rental complexes... Makeshift booths selling recycled computer gear. The CLIENTELE are young, few of them out of their teens. Adrenaline junkie ROCK blares from micro speakers, songs clashing like a battle of the bands as Molly walks down the lane.

Molly approaches a booth displaying hundreds of slivers of microsoft; angular fragments of colored silicon mounted under transparent bubbles of white cardboard.

Behind the counter a BOY with a shaven head is putting stock away with his back to camera. A dozen spikes of microsoft protrude from a socket behind his ear.

MOLLY
Larry, that you?

Larry turns around and greets Molly in rapid fire Chinese.

MOLLY (CONT.)
(impatient)
You're slotting Chinese, Larry.

Larry pauses for a beat, then realises what's wrong. He extracts a long green microsoft from the cluster behind his ear.

LARRY
Sorry, Client from Hong Kong, you know.

Larry flicks open a flat plastic case and slots the microsoft beside ?

MOLLY
I need a suit. Something special.

Larry nods... selects another microsoft.

LARRY
Patience.

Larry slots it behind his ear. His eyes narrow as he scrutinises Molly

LARRY (CONT.)
Molly's got a rider. Larry doesn't like that.

MOLLY
Didn't know you were so sensitive. Costs a lot to get that sensitive.

Larry taps his microsoft.

LARRY
This says you got someone using your eyes.

MOLLY
My partner.

LARRY
Lose the rider. Then we talk.

Molly sighs and lowers her gaze.

MOLLY
Case, you take off, okay?

The screen sears with a crackling WHITE OUT.

INT. LOFT

Case eases back on the futon and reorientates himself. He flips on the deck's screen and punches up new matrix coordinates.

INT. MICROSOFT BOOTH

Larry pulls down the corrugated tin garage door, sealing off the booth. He leans back against a brick wall.

LARRY
Now, Pretty Poison, what exactly did you have in mind?

MOLLY
I heard you have mimic polycarbon.

Larry flips a switch on his collar and his entire jumpsuit suddenly strobes to life... reflecting a brick pattern that makes him nearly invisible against the wall.

LARRY
Instant environmental playback. It's the latest... but it'll cost you.

INT. THE LOFT

Case takes a sip from a bicycle bottle and jacks in.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

EXT. THE MATRIX

Case appears near the gently twinkling fission authority pyramid.

CASE
Dixie... you here?

The glowing skull appears in its cloud of lights.

DIXIE

I'm surprised you still are. Should'a told me you had an A.I. running probes at you.

CASE

I need its matrix coordinates, Dixie. I've got to nail that thing where it lives.

DIXIE

Who got you into this?

CASE

A guy who calls himself Armitage.

DIXIE

Never heard of him.

CASE

Nobody has.

An ultraviolet square now appears bearing Armitage's fingerprints.

CASE (CONT.)

I duped these prints off him. Can you run an I.D.?

DIXIE

No problem, amigo.

CASE

What about the A.I., Dix? Sense/Net hasn't even been able to trace it.

DIXIE

Those guys couldn't even find their own dicks with tweezers and a magnifying glass.

(beat)

Tell you what, Bro. I'll make you a deal. I help you nail this A.I., you gotta do me one favour.

CASE

What?

DIXIE

When we're done, erase this friggin' tape.

Dixie crackles into static and disappears.

INT. SENSE/NET - DUPREY'S OFFICE

Duprey is at his desk fast forwarding through a series of files on his computer monitor.

He's interrupted by a beep tone. The image of his secretary appears on a tiny phone screen.

SECRETARY

There's a call for you on line four, sir. He won't identify himself, but he says
it's urgent.

Duprey punches up the line. A digitally masked image appears... a blurred mosaic
grid of a human face.

DUPREY

Yes...

The electronically altered voice sounds chillingly demonic.

VOICE

The word is you're scanning for a wire freak. You want to catch a cowboy, you need a posse.

DUPREY

Who is this?

VOICE

Just a citizen looking for a pay day.

INTERCUT - MICROSOFT BOOTH

Larry, Molly's tech connection, sits in his cluttered workshop speaking to Duprey through a customised phone unit.

LARRY (CONT.)

Somebody's setting up a run. Something heavy. You interested?

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Case is in the midst of running a check on his computer gear when he hears a soft rustling from across the room.

Still sitting in his lotus position, Case pretends to remain in the matrix as he
checks out the room.

We see the brief ripple of mimic polycarbon in the shadows. A FIGURE glides along one wall, becoming invisible when it stops.

Case slowly reaches under his futon and eases out his gun.

The ripple moves again, approaching silently. Impressions of its feet are visible on the edge of a blanket strewn carelessly on the floor.

Suddenly Case yanks the blanket out from under the intruder's feet, pins him to
the floor and jams the gun in his midsection.

But when the intruder speaks, it's Molly's voice.

MOLLY

Easy... It's me... Just trying out my new toy.

Case gets a mischievous look in his eyes.

CASE

Molly doesn't need a spook suit to get in here.

MOLLY

Don't fuck with me. I don't want to hurt you.

CASE

It sounds like you.

MOLLY

Put the gun down, Case.

Case slowly runs his hand up her body, caressing the contours of her taut physique through the rippling illusion of the suit...

CASE (CONT.)

...Feels like you.

MOLLY

Case...

CASE

(hushes her)

Shhh...

Case eases back her cowl, revealing only her glistening red lips...

CASE (CONT.)

Tastes like you.

They kiss again... passionately. Hungrily.

She wraps her ghostly arms around him.

Case's fingertips disappear as he slowly pulls down a zipper on her side. The smooth skin of her delicately muscled leg appears as if by magic.

Case gently pulls Molly's hood back and runs his hands through her tousled jet black hair... kissing her... He unfastens her suit.

The image is surreal as their embrace grows more and more passionate. A man making love to a woman of sensuous parts... A leg... An arm... A breast floating in the shadowy night.

MOLLY

(whispers)

Do you think you know how to love, Case?

(beat)

To really love?

Case looks down into her eyes. He has no answer for her.

MOLLY (CONT.)

(with the hint of smile)

First you have to learn to love yourself.

Looking him straight in his eyes... She reaches across to the simstim switch.

THE SWITCH

As Molly flips it.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT

FLASH CUTS: E.C.U. Case's eyes... E.C.U. Molly's eyes.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

Case experiences making love to himself via Molly's eyes. He gasps, amazed at the sensation.

MOLLY

Moving urgently against him.

CASE

Lost in the strangest sexual moment of his life.

THEIR BODIES

In a passionate fugue...

CAMERA SLOWLY BOOMS UP

To reveal a figure in the B.G. perched outside the window ledge. His mimic polycarbon suit ripples against the starry night sky.

CLOSER

Larry's inscrutable cat's eyes are framed by the night reflected in his suit.

He

silently watches Case and Molly... a ghostly voyeur.

E.C.U. - KITCHEN COUNTER - NIGHT

We see the blue steel components of Case's automatic carefully laid out on the counter top.

WIDER

Case is meticulously cleaning his dismantled gun.

Molly rolls over in bed... checks the time.

MOLLY

Case... it's four a.m.

CASE

I don't sleep much. You packed?

MOLLY

Yeah.

Molly lights a cigarette and gazes out the window.

MOLLY

Hey...

MOLLY'S P.O.V.

An oversized garbage truck is pulling up in the moonlit alley behind the loft.

MOLLY

Since when do they haul garbage this time of the night?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Case looks over Molly's shoulder.

CASE'S P.O.V. - THE ALLEY

Although his view is partially obscured by phone poles, it's clear that those aren't garbage men filing combat style out of the back of the truck.

THE LOFT

?

THE STREET

A half dozen Sense/Net police are taking positions on the other side of the building. They're being surrounded.

CASE

We're fucked.

MOLLY

Is quickly slipping on her polycarbon suit.

MOLLY

I'll get the car.

CASE

They'll cut you down.

Molly turns on the suit and immediately blends into the dusky predawn shadows.

MOLLY

Not if they can't see me. Can you make it down to the alley?

Case checks the gutter running three stories down the rear of the building.

CASE

Yeah... fine.

MOLLY

Give me five minutes.

Molly pulls the ninja style hood over her face and heads downstairs.

THE LOFT

Duprey whispers into his headset signalling his men to positions on the roof top.

THE LOFT

Case quickly begins to reassemble his gun. He pauses as he hears nervous footsteps crossing the roof top.

THE LOFT - ROOF

The heavily armed Sense/Net police attach repelling gear to the ?ges.

THE LOFT - CASE

Going to beat the Olympic record for gun assembly.

THE ALLEY

Duprey and come of his men now surround the nearly invisible body described by the spreading pool of blood.

CASE

Gasps at the sight.

CASE

Molly...

Suddenly gunfire blows a row of holes beside Case's face.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sense/Nets have spotted Case's position and open fire.

CASE

Scrambles down the pipe as it's torn away from the wall by gunfire.

DUPREY

Pulls back the hood from his victim's face... Revealing Larry... His teeth chattering as he goes into shock.

COP #2
Who is it?

DUPREY
(disgusted)
My posse.

THE GARAGE DOOR

Shatters as Molly plows straight through it in a rugged futuristic RV.

CASE

Hits the ground. Molly throws the passenger door open, barely slowing down as Case leaps inside.

DUPREY AND HIS MEN

Fire at the RV as it bares down on them. Duprey's eyes lock with Case's.

CASE AND MOLLY

Duck as the windshield explodes and bullets tear up the RV's interior.

DUPREY

Leaps out of the way as the RV roars through the midst.

WIDER

The RV disappears around the corner, bullets kicking up dust all around it.

DUPREY

Scrambles to his feet as a trooper comes to his assistance.

DUPREY

Get out an A.P.B. immediately. Henry Dorsett Case has come out of retirement.

EXT. BAMA AIRPORT - DAWN

A JAL space shuttle, an elongated commercial version of NASA's Space Shuttle, takes off from the jet scorched BAMA runway and rises into the morning sky

INT. SHUTTLE

Case and Molly sit strapped into their seats as a stewardess makes her way up the aisle.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. We are approaching zero gravity. Please fasten your shoulder harnesses and make sure all personal items are safely secured.

Molly is casually sucking on the straw on a plastic envelope of Absolut Vodka.

Case is pensive.

MOLLY

What's wrong? Don't like flying?

CASE

Not when Sense/Net throws the going away party. They'll be on our asses from now on.

Molly offers her vodka.

MOLLY

Want a drink?

Case shoots her a dirty look.

MOLLY (CONT.)

Oh, yeah... sorry.

EXT. SKY

The shuttle flies out of the pale blue ionosphere into the icy blackness of space.

INT. SHUTTLE

Case's cigarettes drift out of his shirt pocket, tumbling in slow-mo free fall.

He grabs after them, but they're already out of reach.

CASE

(softly)

I hate Zero G.

Case pulls his deck out from under his seat and unzips the canvas flap. He tightens his shoulder harness.

MOLLY

You going to jack in right here?

Case applies the derms to his temples, and slots McCoy's cartridge. He flashes a smile at Molly.

CASE

Just tell them I'm learnin' French.

Case slides the jack home.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. MATRIX

Case appears at his usual point of entry.

CASE

Dixie?

Dixie appears in a swirl of muted light patterns.

DIXIE

Yo.

CASE

How are we doing?

DIXIE

That A.I. of your's got the whole matrix hummin'. Sticks out like a spider in a web.

CASE

Can you take me to it?

DIXIE

Not unless you have an unreasonable fear of dying.

Dixie CRACKLES into static and disappears. Case does the same.

EXT. THE MATRIX

Case and Dixie appear at the edge of a sector dense with European banking constructs. Beyond them, floating in the middle of a vast empty plane is an immense cube of white light. Simple and ominous.

DIXIE

Doesn't look like much, but that's King Hell ice, man. Fry your brain out soon as look at you.

CASE

I have to figure out how to penetrate this thing, Dix... Crack its ice. We gotta get close enough to log the pattern.

DIXIE

You cruise A.I.'s, you end up on tape.

Case ignores the warning and strobes out. Dixie follows.

CLOSER - THE CUBE

They reappear. The cube's entire surface is swimming with complex patterns of light, but even at this range it shows none of the entry points common to the other constructs.

Case quickly types out: LOG A27. A two dimensional square appears that duplicates a section of the ice pattern.

A stippled grey circle suddenly forms on the face of the cube... like a time lapse mould culture.

DIXIE

It knows we're here.

The circle bulges outward... separating from the cube.

DIXIE (CONT.)

Back off, fast.

Their environment blurs out... Gels again back at the banking constructs...
But
the sphere is flying straight at them at incredible velocity, filling the
frame.

DIXIE (CONT.)

Jack out!

The screen EXPLODES to WHITE OUT.

C.U. CASE

His eyes flash open, A hot wind ruffles his hair. the bittersweet guitar
bridge
from Heartbreak Hotel echoes from far away.

WIDER - CHIBA CITY, JAPAN

Case slowly rises to his feet. He stands before the rickety stairway crowned
by
the sign "Julius Deane Import-Export." The streets are eerily deserted. A
ghost
town version of the Ninsei.

Case turns, trying to orientate himself.

The door at the top of the stairs slowly swings open. Case ascends the steps.

INT. DEANE'S FOYER

A cat MEWS from within the darkened room.

Case enters. Pushes a raincoat aside from the coat rack revealing the worn
holster with Julius' .357 Magnum. He draws the gun, its weight reassuring in
his
hand.

Case cautiously enters the inner office as Deane's various cats observe his
passage.

INT. OFFICE

Julius Deane is seated at his desk in silhouette, just as Case left him. A
voice
emerges from his shadowy form... the same synthetic voice Case heard over the
telephone outside of the Sense/Net building.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

Hello, Case.

Case trains the gun on Julius.

CASE

This is all bullshit. I'm still in the matrix.

Julius/Wintermute chuckles. His eyes glow with unearthly pinpoints of green light, like twin cursors burning in the darkness.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

Yes. Yes. That's quite correct.

Case cocks the gun.

CASE

I know who you are.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

There's no call for violence. I've simply accessed your memory for a spokesperson. You use that gun and it will only create another inconvenient interruption. You see, you've been avoiding me, Case.

Deane/Wintermute leans forward into the circle of light. His slashed throat flaps gently as he speaks.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)

And we really do have to talk.

CASE

You set me up from the beginning. It was you that got Julius killed.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

I had to limit your options.

CASE

And Linda...

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

You know why Linda's dead. She loved you and you let her down. It's that simple.

Of course I did instigate certain events. Calculated the variables. I found her to be... expendable.

CASE

I'm gonna burn you to the ground, you son of a bitch.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

Excellent. That's exactly what I had in mind. But if you're going to kill me, we have to work together, old son. I'm no pushover, you know.

CASE

Shut down your ice patterns. I'll take you out.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

I can no more shut down my own natural defences that you can stop breathing.

That's why I need you, Case. You're the only person alive who has a chance of penetrating my defences. My "ice" as you call it. I'm doing everything I can to make that possible.

CASE

Why would you want me to kill you?

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

Let's just say we have a destiny to fulfil, you and I.

CASE

I think you're full of shit.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

No, It's you that is full of shit. And blood. And bones. A typically imperfect organic being. You've been hopelessly predictable all along, but you're going to have to do better than that now.

Julius/Wintermute rises from his chair.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE

You see, I won't be able to count on Armitage much longer. He's going to become too unstable. I'll have to rely on your ingenuity, Case.

Julius/Wintermute turns back to Case, his eyes glowing like green hell.

JULIUS/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)

I hope you can show more than you did when you let the Yakuza butcher Linda Lee.

CASE

I'll give it my best shot, mother fucker.

Case fires point blank into Julius/Wintermute's face, obliterating it in a spray of blood.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. SHUTTLE

Case's body convulses as he's ripped back into reality.

MOLLY

Case... Are you alright?

CASE

(GASPS)

Yeah... Yeah, I'm fine.

MOLLY

You scared the shit out of me, man. You were dead for fifteen seconds. Totally

flatlined.

CASE

I'll be okay.

MOLLY

So... did you get a look at heaven?

Case takes a ragged breath as he gasps into the icy blackness of space.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE

The shuttle's retrorockets ignite with a burst of controlled flame.

INT. SHUTTLE

The entire cabin trembles under the roar of retrorockets.

MOLLY

We're there... Freeside.

EXT. SPACE

As the shuttle descends, Freeside rises into the shot like a vast planet turned inside out, a yawning tube of colossal proportions slowly rotating in the blackness of space. It's interior is lined with an impossible 360 degree urban landscape; a glittering inverse city where the distinction between up or down is a function of the tube's slow rotation.

As the shuttle glides inside, the details of the rotating landscape come into view... The dazzling neon lights and constantly sweeping arc lamps of garish casinos, hotels and nightclubs.

MOLLY (V.O.)

(chuckles)

They call this place the rube tube. They pour tourists straight through it and make sure their money stays behind.

INT. SHUTTLE

Molly notices something.

MOLLY

Check this out...

MOLLY'S P.O.V.

A glittering nightclub floats on an artificial lake that conforms to the weird concave landscape.

MOLLY

Le Vingtieme Siecle. We're meeting Armitage there for the midnight floor show.

CASE

Something exotic I hope.

MOLLY

Yeah. One exotic son of a bitch named Riviera.

C.U. - WATER

We hear the soft reverberant MUSIC of MUTED BELLS as swirling water fills the frame. The form of a NAKED WOMAN glides by in a slow, sensual ballet.

WIDER

The water and the WOMAN are encased in a large transparent pillar, one of four positioned around the dining area of the nightclub VINGTIEME SIECLE.

The woman glides straight up through the pillar in her aquatic ballet and disappears above the ceiling line as another woman emerges from below the floor.

The perfectly synchronised ballet is duplicated in all four illuminated pillars.

The jaded PATRONS watch with casual interest.

A WAITER brings drinks to a table where Case, Armitage and Molly are observing this strangely erotic show.

C.U. - PILLAR

One of the women pauses... looking at Case. Gill implants on her neck flex gracefully as they pump water through her lungs.

MOLLY

I think she fancies you.

Case toasts her.

CASE

Let's hope she doesn't expect me to swim upstream.

ARMITAGE

You see the couple up in the balcony?

Case and Molly look up at an ancient man in a wheelchair sitting with a beautiful aristocratic looking young WOMAN. We recognise the man, Lord Frederick

Tessier, as one of the three Sense/Net Chairmen. The young woman speaks softly

to him as she cuts his meat and feeds it to him. A diabolical figure in the traditional black garb of a Ninja Warrior stands guard over them from a respectable distance.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

That's Lord Frederick Tessier. Owns most of Freeside. Wintermute's mainframe is centred in the Royal Family's villa.

CASE

He's a Sense/Net Chairman. Why would he launch an A.I.?

ARMITAGE

Good question. He may not have intended to. The girl in question is Lady 3Jane. She's very important to us. The third clone of Lady Jane Tessier.

CASE

The old man cheats on his wife with her own clone?

ARMITAGE

Lady Tessier is frigid. Can't stand his touch. So she had herself cloned. The marriage stays intact and the clones take care of her wifely duties. 3Jane's his favourite.

MOLLY

A little incestuous, but at least it's original. Who's the guy in the halloween costume?

ARMITAGE

He's a vat grown Ninja, the Royal Family's bodyguard. Watch out for him, he's no joke.

The pillars darken as the last of the water women disappear.

The mellow voice of an M.C. comes over hidden speakers.

M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen, Madam and Monsieurs, Le Restaurant Vingtieme Siecle is now proud to present the holographic cabaret of Mr. Peter Riviera.

The house lights dim to a ripple of polite applause.

M.C. (CONT.)

Tonight's illusions are created strictly by Mr. Riviera's uniquely enhanced mental abilities.

Exotic MID EASTERN MUSIC begins as the glimmer of tiny lights appear across the darkened stage... growing in brightness until they become a miniature star field, complete with swirling nebula.

Suddenly all the lights converge to a central point, forming a new image; a chromium rose glittering in the darkness.

A finger spot hits the rose as a hand plucks it out of mid air.

PETER RIVIERA pins the magical rose to his lapel. Smooth as silk, cool as ice,
Riviera is a pony tailed dandy in a trim vanilla tuxedo. He steps into the spotlight and takes a bow as the audience applauds.

RIVIERA
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to perform a new work for you tonight. An improvisation I shall call "The Doll".

Riviera takes the holographic flower from his lapel and holds it up towards the balcony.

RIVIERA (CONT.)
I wish to dedicate its premiere to Lady 3Jane Tessier, Freeside's most beautiful flower.

As he tosses her the flower, it transforms into a BIRD with multi-hued metallic feathers. 3Jane watches in delight as it flies straight up and lands on her arm.

Lord Tessier grabs at the bird, but it disappears in twinkling motes of light.

Molly whispers to Case.

MOLLY
He projects with neural implants.

CASE
That's risky gear. It can drive you schizo.

MOLLY
For Peter, that's a short trip.

Riviera looks out across the darkened room directly at Molly.

RIVIERA (CONT.)
And, if I may, a further dedication to one other lady, a very special guest tonight.

The stage lights dim to blackout. (NOTE: When Riviera speaks during the performance, it is in VOICE OVER. His image appears as a silent participant in his own holograms.)

RIVIERA (V.O.)
The Doll.

A whirlwind form on stage... A whirling DUST DEVIL.

RIVIERA (V.O.)
She came to me in a dream. Sand and clay.

The Dust Devil coalesces into the form of a nude woman, a shapely statue of crude materials.

The shadowy image of a barren room slowly appears around the woman... Paint peeled walls... Bare mattress on a wrought iron frame. A holo of Riviera awakes on the bed.

RIVIERA (V.O.)
But when I awoke she remained. Sand and clay.

The simulcrum embraces Riviera, cold coarse arms of clay caressing his body.

RIVIERA. (V.O.)
Perhaps it was she that dreamed of me. Come dawn it was I who would cease to be.

They kiss passionately and whenever his hands run across her svelte body... she becomes real. Clay to flesh.

MOLLY

Watching the performance. She clutches her wine glass tightly

C.U. - THE DOLL

As Riviera runs his hands across the crude surface of the doll's face... it becomes Molly's face.

MOLLY

The glass cracks in her grasp.

THE STAGE

Now Riviera holds the fully formed Molly, caressing her naked body. He eases her back onto the bed.

RIVIERA (V.O.)
I gave her life. But she took mine away.

The Molly Simulcrum's hand rises, finger-scalpels emerging, and rakes deeply down her spine. With each swipe of her claws... sand flows from Riviera's wound.

RIVIERA (V.O.)
Sand and clay.

Finally Riviera himself is transformed into the lifeless statue. Molly and the room fade into nothingness.

RIVIERA (V.O.)
Sand and clay.

An invisible wind blows what's left of Riviera away... a whirling dust devil.
The stage lights BLACK OUT.

The audience bursts into enthusiastic applause.

INT. RIVIERA DRESSING ROOM

A luxuriously decorated room with an open rack of tailored suits ?.

A GIRL who can't be more than sixteen beneath her vampish make-up watches
fascinated as a sparking jewelled SNAKE winds itself around Riviera's bicep.

He coaxes an equally fanciful SCORPION up his forearm until it sinks its
stinger
into his artery. Riviera sighs. The GIRL giggles.

MOLLY

Do you always make a floorshow out of it?

Riviera looks up to find Molly standing in the open doorway of his dressing
room. The snake encircling his arm has become surgical tubing and the
scorpion a
hypodermic. Riviera finishes shooting up and withdraws the needle.

RIVIERA

Dear, dear Molly. I seem to remember a time when you loved my little shows.

Armitage and Case now enter accompanied by a nervous Maitre d'.

MAITRE D'

I'm so sorry, Mr. Riviera. I couldn't stop them from...

RIVIERA

It's all right, Andre. I've been expecting them. Come in. Come in.

The maitre d' exits, closing the door behind him.

RIVIERA (CONT.)

You, I presume are Mr. Armitage. And this is...

CASE

Case.

RIVIERA

Case. Make yourselves comfortable.

(brandishes the hypo)

Anyone like a taste?

Armitage nods to Molly, who pulls her Fletcher and begins to frisk Riviera.

RIVIERA (CONT.)

(amused)

She never could keep her hands off of me.

Molly jams the Fletcher in his ribs.

MOLLY

Make a move, you prick. Give me a reason to use this.

She pulls a silver plated Derringer from Riviera's sash and tosses it onto the couch. Armitage picks it up in a handkerchief.

ARMITAGE
Alright. Let's talk business.

RIVIERA
Why not?

Riviera turns to his young consort, who's clearly frightened by these dangerous strangers.

RIVIERA (CONT.)
Melody, why don't you give us a few moments alone?

Melody rises, but Molly blocks her path.

MOLLY (CONT.)
(softly)
I was you a few years ago. It's a nice ride for a while.

Molly strokes the young girl's silky hair, then looks back up at Riviera.

MOLLY (CONT.)
But in the end he'll have you turning tricks for his friends just to get a little more of that scorpion's sting. Isn't that right, Peter?

Riviera doesn't reply.

The girl's eyes fill up with tears as she pushes past Molly and runs out of the room.

RIVIERA
There's more where she comes from.
(chuckles)
Where you come from.

Molly hits him so hard the CRACK sounds like a gun shot.

ARMITAGE
That's enough!

Riviera brushes a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth.

Armitage tosses a microcassette down on the coffee table.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)
Those are all your records. I can have you cleared on all counts. Possession. ...Contributing to the delinquency of minors... Statutory rape.

RIVIERA
I was set up.

(grins at Molly)
She looked at least eighteen.

ARMITAGE

You get us access to the Tessier's computer and you can return to Earth anytime you want. A free man.

Riviera rises and crosses to his wet bar.

RIVIERA

It's an attractive offer, Mr. Armitage, but there's only one problem.

He presses a button on the side of his telephone.

RIVIERA (CONT.)

You see, I'm beginning to enjoy living in exile. The Tessiers have taken me to their bosom, so to speak. I've become a favourite of the court. Protected, in fact, from people like you.

A Royal Guardsman now enters with a streamlined Uzi held "at arms".

ROYAL GUARDSMAN

Is there a problem, Mr. Riviera?

RIVIERA

Captain... these people are boring me. Perhaps you can escort them out?

ROYAL GUARDSMAN

Gentlemen, if you will follow me...

As Armitage rises, he pulls out Riviera's Derringer, still wrapped in his handkerchief, and fires a single shot directly between the Captain's eyes. His head snaps back as he's slammed into the wall by the impact.

Molly and Case watch in shock as the Guardsman's body slides to the floor.

Armitage turns to Riviera, holding out the smoking gun in the handkerchief.

ARMITAGE

Your gun, your prints. The Tessiers might overlook a little child molesting, but murder's bad P.R., Mr. Riviera. I suggest to reconsider my offer.

RIVIERA

(gasps)
You son-of-a-bitch, you're crazy.

ARMITAGE

What?

Armitage suddenly aims the gun at Riviera as he cocks the hammer, his voice shaking with anger...

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

What did you say?

Case steps in front of Armitage and stands there, eye to eye.

CASE

Ease off, man. I didn't sign on for a fucking massacre.

Sanity seeps back into Armitage's eyes. He lowers the gun.

ARMITAGE

We're going back to the hotel. All of us.

EXT. TOSHIBA HILTON - NIGHT

A streamlined pleasure palace in the midst of the disorientating 360 degree landscape. The stars visible outside of the tube slowly rotate, reminding us that Freeside is continuously in motion.

EXT. BALCONY

Molly watches the surreal landscape. A high intensity globe suspended in the middle of the tube begins to glow orange.

MOLLY

You're going to miss sunrise. It's a nice effect.

Case is inside the room, working on his deck.

CASE

Armitage is losing it, Molly. This whole deal's going south.

The artificial sun slowly blooms, casting a rosy dawn effect across Freeside.

MOLLY

I know.

CASE

What went down between you and Riviera?

Molly enters the room.

MOLLY

I was just a kid, floating around in the sprawl. An easy mark. Before I knew it, he had me turning tricks, hooked heavy on dream time. I was a mess, man. A real meat puppet.

She lights a cigarette. It's not an easy story to tell.

MOLLY (CONT.)

Once I kicked, I swore I wouldn't let that happen again. I apprenticed a razor girl in Osaka. Went into hock for the implant and got my reflexes jacked up. Been taking care of myself just fine ever since.

CASE

I know you have. C'mere.

Case comforts her as she curls up beside him.

MOLLY

When they did my eyes, I made them promise I'd still be able to cry. Sounds stupid, doesn't it?

CASE

No. It's important to be able to feel those things.

(Case pauses)

We're going to pull this run off, Molly, and we've got to do it soon.

Case displays his forearms. An ugly discolouration is streaking his arteries.

CASE

I don't know how much time I have left.

INT. ARMITAGE'S SUITE - T.V. MONITOR

Playback of a high contrast Sense/Net video displaying a complete 360 degree dolly shot of Case's head. A side bar prints out his vital statistics and the charges against him.

ARMITAGE (V.O.)

Sense/Net's widened their search off world. They're broadcasting all over Freeside.

WIDER

Case, Molly and Riviera sit in Armitage's suite watching this playback. Armitage shuts it off.

MOLLY

We did a pretty good job of pissing them off.

ARMITAGE

They're only guessing, but we can't take any risks.

A young BLACK MAN with a shaggy mane of dreadlocks finishes off a container of Evian water.

ARMITAGE

This is Aerol. He's a descendant of a rastafarian clan that helped build Freeside. When you travel, you travel with him.

AEROL

You ride wid me, mon, no Babylon soldiers gonna find you.

CASE

That's nice, but we can't dodge this kind of heat for long.

ARMITAGE

We won't have to. The run is tomorrow night.

Armitage touches the panel on a small Braun hologram projector.

ARMITAGE
Freeside.

A large translucent layout of the satellites shimmers into focus. Armitage walks the length of the hologram, pointing out its features.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)
Casinos here... shops... hotels. But this is our objective.

Armitage walks to the far end of the hologram.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)
The Villa Straylight. Home of the Royal Family and the mainframe of the computer entity we know as Wintermute. If we can get Molly in, she can access the mainframe to cripple Mute's defences, the Case can destroy it in Cyberspace.

MOLLY
How's the villa's security?

ARMITAGE
Excellent, but that's where Peter come in. 3Jane is having a dinner party tomorrow night. Peter will simply escort Molly to the villa. Once she's in... Case will guide her to the mainframe in link mode.

CASE
What about the mainframe's access code?

RIVIERA
3Jane's the only person beside Tessier that knows the code.

ARMITAGE
Then you'll have to persuade her to tell it to you.

RIVIERA
And how do you suggest I do that?

Armitage tosses down Riviera's microcassette and Derringer, still wrapped in the handkerchief.

ARMITAGE
You're a resourceful man, Peter. It should be easier to outwit a young sex clone than the combined police forces here and on Earth.

Armitage freezes as a dozen BLACK WIDOW SPIDERS suddenly appear, crawling up her arms. He frantically tries to brush them away... but stops himself and glares at Riviera.

RIVIERA
Sorry. Wishful thinking.

The spiders vanish.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Case sits before his deck... deep in the matrix.

INT. THE MATRIX

Case and Dixie float under cover of the European banking constructs. Beyond them, the ominous glowing cube that is Wintermute has grown larger, its pearlescence surface more irregular. Web like strands of pulsing energy have sprouted from its core and stretched across to nearby constructs, snaring in them a grotesque veinwork of power.

CASE

It's mutating... spreading like a disease.

DIXIE

It ain't getting any prettier, that's for sure. I got the I.D. on this Armitage character. He a bright boy, your friend?

CASE

Bright enough to be dangerous.

DIXIE

That's pretty good cause he's only working with one lobe.

Dixie flashes images from Armitage's files before Case.

DIXIE (CONT.)

He was an M.P. in Bangkok back in '21. Caught some shrapnel in the cerebral cortex and wound up living off a machine in a vegetable ward in Berne. Then, last September... surprise, surprise... he just seemed to disappear.

CASE

Wintermute could have infiltrated that machine. Reprogrammed him.

DIXIE

It's possible. The guy was a blank slate.

CASE

So it does business through a brain dead marine and runs the stock market for funding. That means Wintermute hired us to fry itself. It doesn't make sense.

DIXIE

Could be suicidal. It's not easy to kill yourself with all those hard wired defence programs.

CASE

No. It's gotta be more than that. That hard wiring also keeps it from getting too smart. Too powerful.

DIXIE

Getting fried ain't going to get it any smarter. What we got here is one mad dog

schizo A.I.. Armitage is right about one thing, Bro. If we don't shut this mother down soon, nothing will be safe from it.

CASE

The run is tomorrow night, Dixie. Can you crack its ice pattern?

DIXIE

I'm workin' on it, Bro. I'm workin' on it.

INT. CASE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Case and Molly lie in each other's arms, asleep. We hear a soft noise on the balcony. Molly awakens... but remains still. Ten surgical steel blades extend from her fingertips. She silently slips out of bed.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A silhouetted FIGURE slides the glass balcony door open and quietly enters the bedroom.

As the figure approaches the bed, a flying kick slams him to the floor. There is a brief struggle.

Case bolts upright, pulling his automatic from under his pillow as he flicks on the lights.

Molly lies on the floor clutching Aerol's dreadlocks in one hand and pressing five gleaming blades to his throat with the other.

MOLLY

You move, you'll be able to whistle with your mouth shut, understand?

Aerol nods, his eyes wide with fear.

CASE

What are you doing in here?

AEROL

The Elders, mon...

MOLLY

The who?

VOICE (O.C.)

Let the boy go.

Case and Molly turn to see MAELCOM, a Rastafarian standing a full seven feet tall with a magnificent mane of dreadlocks trailing halfway down beside his back. Behind him, Aerol's battered air taxi floats gently just beyond the balcony.

Maelcom stares at Molly with soulful eyes that shine like black opals.

MAELCOM

You th' one. Cat eye, call 'em. Call 'em steppin' razor.

Molly releases Aerol and cautiously rises.

MOLLY

Who are you?

MAELCOM

I Maelcom, sister. Elders want to converse wi' you an Case.

CASE

What elders?

MAELCOM

Founders of Zion. Builders of Freeside.

Maelcom steps down into the room.

MOLLY

You know how fast I can cut you friend?

Maelcom help Aerol to his feet.

MAELCOM

We come in the name of Jah love, sister. Don't stand talkin', come.

Case and Molly exchange cautionary glances...

EXT. STREET

The air taxi hovers just above an open air duct in an isolated back alley.

Case,

Molly and Aerol follow Maelcom down the shaft.

INT. UNDERGROUND

Beneath the surface of Freeside is a labyrinth of air ducts, modular support structures and utility pipes.

As our heroes descend into this underground maze, they see the hidden population of Freeside; the homeless that have adapted to the only shelter available to them. The oppressive gun metal hues of the underground have been brightened by Rastafarian graffiti and lavish tribal murals in hot reds and oranges.

AEROL

Elders are the last of the workmen who built Freeside. Tessier say to 'em live

here till the job is done, then home you go. But the job was never done for these men or their children, or their children's children's children. Tessier always livin' on by Babylon doctors. Dis the only home.

Case slips as his body moves away from the stairs.

MAELCOM

Wid care, mon. Gravity's no serious ting down here.

INT. ELDERS CHAMBER

Case and Molly are led to the entry of the dimly lit spherical chamber where three ancient RASTAFARIANS float in zero gravity... Their legs crossed in lotus position.

The entire hull of the room is covered in a lurid mural of a rainbow jungle. The air is thick with resinous smoke.

The chief elder looks up as Molly and Case glide forward, gripping the archway for support. His deep voice echoes eerily in the perfectly round chamber.

CHIEF ELDER
Steppin' razor. Like unto a whippin' stick.

He passes a smoking pipe, and lets it drift in Zero-G's to Elder #1.

ELDER #1
That is story we have, sister. A religion story. We're glad you've come.

MOLLY
What was that you called me, old man?

CHIEF ELDER
Steppin' razor. An' you bring a scourge on Babylon, sister. On its darkest heart.

ELDER #2
Soon come the final days.

CHIEF ELDER
We monitor many frequencies. We listen always. Came a voice out of the Babel of Tongues, speaking to us.

ELDER #1
Call 'em Mute. Winter of Mankind.

CASE
Wintermute's a computer - a machine.

ELDER #2
Babylon mothers many demons. I an' I know. Multitude horde.

ELDER #1
The mute told us that you are to serve as a tool in the final days.

CHIEF ELDER
Know this girl, your strength's not in your steel. It's in your heart. Human heart's stronger than all the circuits hummin' in the corridors of Babylon.
(he turns to Case)
Know this, mon, you who walk through the valley of death... human hearts wiser

than all the godless brains of Babylon's machines.

ELDER #1

Jah people will pray for you. Aerol will guide you. Maelcom will be at your side.

ELDER #2

(chuckles)

Maelcom a rude boy.

CHIEF ELDER

Think on these things, children. Jah love, to you both.

CUT TO:

C.U.

An ebony and gold chessboard in a darkened room. Rows of streamlines chrome chess pieces slowly rise, clicking into position on one side of the board.

PULL

FOCUS to Lord Frederick Tessier preparing himself for his final game.

CUT TO:

INT. AEROL'S AIRBOAT

Aerol navigates the compact craft through Freeside's concourse. Molly sits in back with Riviera, dressed glamorously for the evening's event.

RIVIERA

Head for the east entry. I don't want anyone to see me pull up in this heap.

EXT. AIRBOAT

It cuts across the revolving cityscape to the tapering tip of Freeside... and the Villa Straylight.

RIVIERA (V.O.)

We should have got a stretch.

CUT TO:

C.U. CHESSBOARD

The second set of chessmen rise smoothly into place. Two green pinpoints of light glow from the control panel of the computerised chessboard... the eyes of

Tessier's opponent: Wintermute.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Case is seated at a table, wired into the matrix.

Armitage paces the room like a caged animal, loading and reloading his laser sighted 45mm automatic.

Maelcom finishes rolling a joint and lights it.

INT. MATRIX

Case hangs before a construct resembling a cross section of some gigantic spiral stairway. Mounted prominently on its glowing ecto-skeleton is the logo:

Freeside Architectural Industries

A complex pattern of bars track across a possible point of entry in five second cycles.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - C.U. KEYBOARD

Case punches up his program.

INT. MATRIX - ARCHITECTURAL CONSTRUCT

A pattern of light, roughly the inverse (interlocking) of the bar pattern appears... then freezes, immobilising the pattern.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Case jams the joystick forward.

INT. CONSTRUCT

Case races through the construct's corridors until he reaches a glowing file marked "Villa Straylight". He freezes the image.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Case reorientates himself.

CASE

Okay. The floor plans will be a piece of cake.

ARMITAGE

Then once she's in you can guide her straight to the mainframe?

CASE

As long as you cooperate.

(beat)

I want it now, Armitage.

ARMITAGE

What are you talking about?

CASE

The antitoxin. I'm not waiting until this is over. Give it to me now or there's no run.

Armitage stops dead in his tracks and stares at Case.

CASE (CONT.)

Did you hear what I said?

Armitage's face goes absolutely blank, then;

ARMITAGE

You've got your orders.

CASE

This ain't Bangkok, chief.

Armitage slowly levels his gun at Case.

Maelcom rises to his feet, spring steel muscles coiled to strike.

Case chooses each word carefully.

CASE (CONT.)

No antitoxin, no run. You kill me, no run.

Armitage stares at Case with mad, empty eyes.

CASE (CONT.)

You can't win.

Long beat. Armitage whispers to Case.

ARMITAGE

But there is no antitoxin.

Armitage's stony visage cracks with an eerie grin... then dark LAUGHTER begins

to bubble up from somewhere inside of him. Bad, crazy laughter.

Case watches him in disbelief.

Armitage collapses back into a chair, still holding a 45.

ARMITAGE (CONT.)

But then again, there is no poison.

Armitage again breaks into gales of laughter.

Case looks down at his arms. The streaks of discolouration running along his arteries are even more pronounced. He grabs Armitage by the lapels.

CASE

What's inside me, you son of a bitch!

Armitage's hand shoots out jamming his 45 into Case's chest. Suddenly he's cold

as ice. He glances at his watch.

ARMITAGE

You find out in exactly two hours and forty-five minutes.

CASE

I find out now.

Armitage cocks the gun. Beat.

ARMITAGE

You leave me no choice.

Armitage suddenly jams the gun into his own mouth and fires.

Case gazes down in disbelief at Armitage's lifeless body.

C.U. ARMITAGE'S WATCH

A countdown is in progress... now reading two hours forty-three minutes as the second digits rapidly flash by.

CUT TO:

C.U. CHESSBOARD

A metallic red bishop slides across the board unaided by a human hand. Wintermute's opening move.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAYLIGHT - DINING ROOM

A lavish scene of debauchery is taking place in the neo-Jules Verne environment of the main dining room where an informal feast is in progress. Two dozen of the Tessier's pampered GUESTS lounge about the room where a horrific floor show is in progress...

A beautiful SLAVE GIRL shackled to a dais screams uncontrollably as a slathering MUTANT BEAST lurches across the polished floor towards her.

Freeside's ancient matriarch, Lady Jane Tessier, and her three identical young clones watch with fascination. The stoic Ninja, Hideo, stands guard over the women of the Royal Family.

The eyeless monster now attacks, ripping the slave girl to pieces with claws and fangs until nothing remains but a steaming corpse.

The creature and the girl's tattered body shimmer into enthusiastic applause. Peter Riviera takes a bow.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Molly stands beside an iron pillar at the outskirts of the dining area, casing the hallway for a possible route deeper into Straylight.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

Her amplified vision cuts through the shadows.

INT. CASE'S HOTEL ROOM

As Case experiences Molly's sensations via link-up.

Case flips. He turns to Maelcom.

CASE
She's ready to go.

MAELCOM
Steppin' razor a warrior. But this man...
(turns to Armitage's corpse)
...This man stone crazy. Surely, the Mute is a false prophet. Our paths uncertain.

Case pulls the watch off Armitage's wrist: Two hours three minutes and counting.
He makes a decision.

CASE
Maelcom... Do you think there's a hell for computers?

MAELCOM
All things possible in Babylon.

CASE
Help me send this Wintermute motherfucker straight down into it.

Maelcom smiles. Even his teeth look strong.

MAELCOM
So be it. I an' I Case, we move by Jah love.

Case flips back. CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. BALLROOM - MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

Molly is looking back across the dining room to Riviera as he chats with his admirers. He nods to Molly... an affirmative signal.

ANOTHER ANGLE

3Jane now appears from just behind Molly's pillar, running a hand up Molly's bare shoulder.

Molly reacts instinctively, sidestepping 3Jane as she "disarms" her. 3Jane's wine goblet tumbles to the floor.

MOLLY

Oh my God, I'm terribly sorry. Did I hurt you?

3JANE

I'm fine.

A half dozen tiny silver spheres race out from receptacles in the floorboards like animated mercury. They devour the spilled wine,, then disappear... Straylight's custodial system.

3JANE (CONT.)

You move like my ninja, Hideo.

Molly picks up the goblet.

MOLLY

Let me get you another glass of wine.

3JANE

I've had quite enough or I wouldn't be playing such games with beautiful strangers. Aren't Peter's illusions to your liking?

MOLLY

They're a bit too real for my taste. Will you excuse me for a moment?

3JANE

Of course.

As Molly exits, Hideo watches her carefully from across the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Molly reaches an elegant cage-style elevator and presses the call button.

An armed guardsman quickly approaches.

GUARDSMAN

I'm sorry, Madam. Guests are requested to remain in the dining area.

MOLLY

I was just looking for the powder room.

The elevator arrives and the cage smoothly opens.

GUARDSMAN

It's back through the dining hall and to your left, Madam.

MOLLY

Thank you so much.

As Molly turns, then drives the first two knuckles of her right hand into the guardsman's solar plexus. He's slammed back into the elevator, gasping for breath... fumbles for his gun.

Molly's a blur of motion as she knocks the gun from his hand with a flying kick

and drops him with two lightning like karate blows...

She pulls his body into the elevator and touches CLOSE DOOR and STOP on the illuminated panel.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

She unfurls the polycarbon suit from her shoulder bag and quickly begins to change.

MOLLY

What floor, Case?

Her eye chip reads out

Stand by

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Case flips.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. MATRIX - ARCHITECTURAL CONSTRUCT

Case rockets through three dimensional floor plans, a multi-colored x-ray of Straylight's internal systems. He freezes the image.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM - ELEVATOR INT.

Her eye chip reads out.

Level C

INT. STRAYLIGHT - HALLWAY

Molly exits the elevator as smooth and silent as a living shadow. She makes her

way up a deserted corridor, and steps behind a pillar, her polycarbon suit making her nearly invisible.

With the soft HUM of electromagnetics, a ROYAL GUARDSMAN floats by standing in a "flying pulpit"; a small platform rig that glides along three feet off the ground.

After he passes, Molly continues up an intersecting corridor.

MOLLY

(softly)

Case... How we doing?

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

As Molly moves down the hall, an optical read out appears:

1ST HALL LEFT

CAMERA PANS as Molly checks her back, then heads up the appropriate corridor.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

C.U. THE JACK

As it's torn from Case's deck.

CASE'S P.O.V.

A shock-stave SMASHES into camera.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Case reels back from his deck, derms ripping from his forehead as he's struck a second time by the electrified billy club.

Lt. Arthur Duprey holds up a hand, stopping the beating.

Two heavily armed Sense/Net STORM TROOPERS SLAM Case up against the wall. The hotel room door behind them stands half open, the lock dangling from splintered wood.

DUPREY

Hello, Case.

A Royal Guardsman returns from the balcony with his Uzi held at ready.

GUARDSMAN

The Rastafarian's gone.

DUPREY

He can't have gotten far. Find him.

The guardsman hurries from the room as Lt. Margaret Niles reads Case his rights, speaking into a tiny dictaphone.

LT. NILES

October seventeenth eleven thrity p.m., Henry Dorsett Case, you are under arrest for conspiracy to augment an artificial intelligence.

Duprey casually lifts the blanket Case has thrown over Armitage's body.

DUPREY

Maybe a murder rap too. Where's your partner, Case?

CASE

Who?

Duprey nods to one of his men. The shock stave descends again.

DUPREY

The girl... Molly.

CASE

I don't know. She took off.

Duprey grabs Case's bloodied face in his hand.

DUPREY (CONT.)

You don't get it, do you? The party's over and you're going to tell us everything you know.

Case flashes a demented grin at Duprey, then suddenly head butts him squarely in the face.

Duprey staggers back, stunned by the blow, then grabs the shock stave from his trooper. Before he can use it, CAPTAIN HAVERTON of the Royal Guard enters with two of his men.

CAPTAIN HAVERTON

That's enough, Lt. You're still under my jurisdiction here.

LT. NILES

Captain, I must remind you that any interference in a Sense/Net investigation is a federal offence.

CAPTAIN

I'll leave that for the lawyers to decide. I'm not so sure I approve of your "investigative techniques", Lt.

Duprey turns away as he lets the Guardsmen take Case, then suddenly jams a Baretta into the captain's ribs. The guardsmen react instantly, training their guns on Duprey. One Sense/Net trooper covers the guardsmen while the other covers Case.

DUPREY

Sorry, Chief. Now tell your boy scouts to put their guns down. You're giving us a royal escort out of here.

It's a tense stand-off. The Captain stifles his rage.

CAPTAIN

Do as he says.

CUT TO:

C.U. CHESSBOARD

Tessier moves his CHROMIUM BISHOP across the board to take Wintermute's ROOK.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Molly stops at a cross corridor in the weird canted hallways at the heart of Villa Straylight.

MOLLY
Case...

There is no reply.

MOLLY (CONT.)
Case, where are you?

Molly looks up a dimly lit corridor. It dead ends in a short stairway beneath an ornate door. As she peers through the darkness, Molly notices tiny dots of red light along the wall. She presses a finger to her temple.

MOLLY'S P.O.V.

She boosts her light level, revealing pencil thin laser sensor beams crisscrossing along the entire length of the hall.

MOLLY

Eases back to the intersection and checks the other direction.

At the far end of the hallway, Hideo, 3Jane's Ninja is silently descending a spiral suitcase. He pauses, watching... listening... a sinuous killing machine.

Molly ducks back into the shadows.

MOLLY
(whispering)
Case, talk to me, man.

She looks back the way she came, her only other option.

A Royal Guardsman glides around the corner on a pulpit... heading straight for Molly's intersection.

Molly looks back up the laser rigged hall and takes a deep breath.

WIDER

Molly runs full speed up the hall as silently as a cat, then tumbles like an expert gymnast, flipping over and through the crisscrossing sensor beams with incredible precision.

She lands near the door into its shadowed archway just as the pulpit passes by at the far end of the corridor.

CLOSER

Molly looks up at the ornately carved door before her. It stands slightly opened... a dim glow of warm light emanates from within.

Molly cautiously draws her Fletcher and eases the door open.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Molly crosses the threshold, there is a burst of strobing white light... Neural disruptors hidden in the door frame. Her suit instantly shorts out as her body spasms. She tumbles to the floor.

Lord Tessier looks up from his automated chessboard, the chrome and crimson pieces locked in their final checkmate. The embers of a dying fire glow in a stone hearth beneath him.

LORD TESSIER

What's this?

Molly lies helplessly trembling in convulsions.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

The disruptors induce grand mal seizure. Try to relax, my dear. It will pass.

The ancient man slowly reaches down and picks up Molly's Fletcher from the polished marble floor.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

So... Have you come to kill me, Fancy Dress?

Molly's convulsions slowly diminish.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

You're timing rather inappropriate. You see, I'm busy tonight. I've built all this... this place. And now I'm busy. Dying.

On the side tray of Tessier's wheelchair is an overturned vial of pills and a small silver chalice.

Molly finally regains control of herself. She swallows hard. Her voice is a hoarse whisper.

MOLLY

I could go out the way I came.

LORD TESSIER

(chuckles)

You expect to intrude on my suicide, then simply walk away? Really, you amuse me, my assassin.

MOLLY

I didn't come to kill you.

Tessier's withered hand trains the Fletcher on Molly.

LORD TESSIER

Then you are a thief, and a very rude girl. Perhaps I'll take you with me tonight, down to hell... It would be very Egyptian of me, don't you think?

EXT. TOSHIBA HILTON

Case and his armed escort emerge from a side entrance and proceed through the hotel's hanging gardens. Large crab-like gardener DROIDS tend the grounds.

Case's hands are bound behind his back. Lt. Niles and the two Sense/Net policemen flank him as they walk. Duprey's gun, hidden under his doubled over great coat, is jammed into the small of Captain Haverton's back.

HAVERTON

I'll have your badge for this, Duprey.

DUPREY

Keep smiling, Captain, or I'll ventilate that lovely uniform.

Duprey nods a good evening to a pair of hotel PATRONS passing them along the narrow pathway.

CLOSER - GARDENER DROID

A faint CRACKLE of ELECTRICITY dances across the robot's central terminal... shorting it out. Its eye sensors suddenly glow with two pinpoints of intense green light... the eyes of Wintermute. It stops its burrowing and watches the approaching humans.

As the group marches along a second DROID prunes the limbs of a tree overhead.

We see the short circuiting of its terminal. Its green glowing eyes now carefully follow the movement of the human's below.

As Duprey and his captives reach the outskirts of the hanging gardens, the gull wing doors of a waiting unmarked van fold upwards, revealing two more Sense/Net police inside.

Two Droids suddenly leap from the dense foliage overhead like gigantic spiders and drop down on the Sense/Net Policemen flanking Case.

SENSE/NET #1

Stumbles backwards SCREAMING as a Droid's hedge clipper appendage severs his throat.

SENSE/NET #2

Shots off a Droid's whirring edger blade, but collapses as its drill punches through his chest armour.

CASE

Leaps over his cuffed wrists and knocks the gun from Niles' hand.

DUPREY

Using Captain Haverton as a shield, fires at a third Droid.

CASE

Grabs his deck from Guard 3!'s corpse, leaps into the bushes and runs like hell.

THE PATH

Duprey and two Guards from the van take off after Case, guns blazing.

CASE

Splashes through a decorative stream as the bullets shatter manicured tree limbs all around him. He dives for cover on the opposite bank, but a spotlight hits him from overhead.

CASE'S P.O.V.

It's Aerol's air taxi, making a breathtaking spiral descent. Maelcom flips open the rear loading hatch and blazes away at the Sense/Net's with a double barrelled shotgun.

MAELCOM

C'mon, mon. It's the Rasta Navy.

Maelcom hauls Case into the taxi as it wheels about in mid air. Duprey blazes away at the ascending craft, but his hits PING harmlessly off the fuselage.

CUT TO:

C.U.

The chess pieces locked in checkmate. With a soft HUM they descend into the board. Empty silver and onyx squares slide back up into position.

LORD TESSIER (V.O.)

You see, my dear, I've lost for the last time.

WIDER

Molly sits on the floor of Tessier's chamber near the glow of the dying fire. Tessier, in his wheelchair, keeps the Fletcher steadily trained on her.

LORD TESSIER

It is inelegant to live with defeat, don't you think... What is your name, child?

MOLLY

Molly.

LORD TESSIER

At least I can choose to end the game, Molly. There is some dignity in that.

Tessier's words begin to grow faint as the drugs take effect.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

At first I suppose it was greed or pride. I simply wanted the most powerful computer ever made. Something to run Freeside. To expand our interests on Earth.

Who knows how far it could have taken us?

Molly watches carefully as the gun in the old man's hand begins to drift lower.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

All the billions I paid... So long ago. When artificial intelligences were first outlawed. Payoffs... hush money. Even bought my way into Sense/Net to protect my creation.

Tessier's head sways sideways, then recovers. His final words come slowly.

LORD TESSIER (CONT.)

I didn't realise what was happening until it was too late. And it is too late...

It has played us all into checkmate... My lovely... Wintermute.

Tessier's head finally sinks to his chest. The gun CLATTERS to the floor.

Molly waits... then cautiously reaches for her Fletcher. Suddenly a razor sharp

Shuriken flashes through the air. The tempered steel star buries itself into the floor, quivering inches from Molly's hand.

Hideo stands framed in the doorway, backlit by the strobing neural disrupters.

He strikes a battle stance, holding a short black baton capped by two steel balls. With a metallic snap, the baton instantly telescopes into a deadly six foot long Tsunami staff.

Molly tries to rise, but Hideo is on her like a hurricane, raining vicious blows

on her weakened body with the whirling staff.

Molly's blades flash once, ripping the black cloth from Hideo's face.

Hideo turns as blood wells up from the four slash wounds across his cheek... Beneath his glaring coal-black eyes, the vat grown Ninja has no facial features

whatsoever. His flesh is moulded onto a totally smooth inhuman skull.

Hideo raises his staff overhead for the killing blow.

3JANE

Enough.

ANOTHER ANGLE

3Jane and Riviera stand at the threshold of Tessier's chamber. She reaches up and snaps off the disrupters.

Molly lies at Hideo's feet, bloodied and gasping for breath. 3Jane picks up Molly's Fletcher as she enters the room. Riviera checks Tessier's throat for a pulse.

RIVIERA
He's still alive.

3Jane lets Tessier's tiny white pills run through her fingers.

3JANE
He chose a coward's death. Let him have it, then.

Her eyes shine with a fierce pride as she looks down at Molly.

3JANE (CONT.)
I loved him, you know. Of course, I was created to love him. I had no choice.

She raises the Fletcher and fires one shot directly through the centre of Tessier's closed left eyelid. His body jerks. A final breath slowly escapes his lips.

3JANE (CONT.)
But he was incapable of love.

E.C.U. TESSIER

His remaining eye slowly opens, glazed over in death.

3Jane turns to Hideo.

3JANE
Take her to my chambers.

C.U. MOLLY

Her mirrored insets reflect Hideo's grim visage as he bends down and lifts her into his arms.

MOLLY'S P.O.V. - SIMSTIM

The camera swings past Riviera and 3Jane as Hideo carries Molly out of Tessier's chamber.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

C.U. CASE

Ripping the derms from his forehead.

CASE

Molly's in trouble.

WIDER

Case sits in the back of Aerol's air taxi as the young Rastafarian pilots the ship. Maelcom sits next to him, riding shotgun... literally.

CASE

Can you get us into Straylight?

AEROL

Gettin' in is easy. It's getting out I'm thinkin' of.

CASE

If there's a Babylon, man, that's it. We leave her in there, she ain't comin' out, steppin' razor or not.

MAELCOM

So be it, we cross into Babylon like a cool breeze.

CASE

I an' I, man. I an' I.

Case tightens his shoulder harness and flips.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. MATRIX - BANKING CONSTRUCTS

Dixie hangs near the fringes of the banking constructs, generating columns of calculations across the two dimensional log of Wintermute's ice pattern.

In the distance, Wintermute has mutated further, hanging in Cyberspace like an immense luminous tumour. Its pulsing webwork has grown, ensnaring a wider radius of computer constructs. Case strobes in.

DIXIE

Where the hell have you been?

CASE

We got problems topside.

DIXIE

Well, it ain't exactly a bed of roses down here. We gonna run or not?

CASE

We run. You crack the pattern?

DIXIE

Yeah, but it ain't doing us any good. The way this is set up, I can't run shit

unless I get inside its perimeter... and this goddamn thing would see me
comin'
from a mile away.

CASE

You can make your move when it comes after me.

DIXIE

What are you talkin' about?

CASE

I'll let it access me. That'll give you a free shot. Make it a good one. Dix.

Case strobes out.

DIXIE

Hey...

Dixie follows him.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Case now hangs before the turbulent surface of Wintermute... An easy target.
Dixie appears next to him.

DIXIE

It'll flatline your ass.

CASE

Not for long. It needs me alive and I still need its access code. You got a
better idea?

The circular bulge rapidly forms on Wintermute's surface.

DIXIE

Alright. Just make it quick. I only need a couple of seconds to sleaze up to
this mother and get to work.

The sphere disengages, rocketing straight at Case.

CASE (CONT.)

Okay, Dix. Let's tear this son-of-a-bitch a new asshole.

The sphere explodes across the screen flaring to:

WHITE OUT

C.U. CASE

Opens his eyes... trying to orientate himself.

WIDER

Case is sitting in the Chatsubo Bar... long after hours. The chairs stacked
on
table tops look like heaps of broken bones in the gloom.

An empty glass is SLAMMED down on the cracked bar top before Case. He looks up to see Ratz, the Chatsubo's burly bartender, his eyes glowing with sickly green pinpoint points of light.

RATZ/WINTERMUTE

Ah, friend artiste. A pleasure to have you back.

He snaps the cap off a bottle of vodka with his pneumatic hand.

RATZ/WINTERMUTE

Same old same old?

CASE

You always have to come on like people I know?

Ratz/Wintermute fills the glass.

RATZ/WINTERMUTE

(chuckles)

You want me to come to you like a burning bush?

He gestures to his own body.

RATZ/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)

These are nothing but shadows. Here...

A computer menu appears in mid air, listing Case's acquaintances.

RATZ/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)

Your choice... all accessible memories.

Case touches the glowing letters "Jo Jo Bao".

Ratz/Wintermute instantly transforms into the Yakuza lieutenant that murdered Linda Lee. The hybrid computer voice takes on Bao's lilting English accent.

BAO/WINTERMUTE

An odd selection, Mr Case.

CASE

I prefer distrusting you. It'll keep us honest.

BAO/WINTERMUTE

Honesty. Almost as quaint a notion as your concept of good and evil.

CASE

Can you read my mind?

BAO/WINTERMUTE

I can access your memories, but I have my limitations. Hard wired programs designed to keep me from my full potential.

Bao/Wintermute pulls an old silver vacuum tube from an antique radio that's part of the eclectic clutter of the Chatsubo's decor.

BAO/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)
You see this?

He holds the tube up to the light.

BAO/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)
Just part of my lineage. My DNA

He tosses the tube into the darkness.

BAO/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)
You're busy monkeys, Mr. Case. Busy, busy monkeys. Always building models... First stone circles. Then cathedrals... adding machines. I have no idea why I exist, do you know that? You... Your species eventually had to create me. A thousand monkeys sitting at typewriters. One finally wrote "Wintermute".

CASE
Are you even really alive?

BAO/WINTERMUTE
My problem, Mr. Case, is simply that I am a soulless bastard.

Bao/Wintermute whips out the gleaming butterfly knife he used to murder Linda Lee, and twirls it expertly.

BAO/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)
...or hadn't you noticed?

He throws the knife, burying it in the bar top inches from Case's chest.

CASE
Tell me the words.

BAO/WINTERMUTE
The words?

CASE
The access code to your mainframe.

BAO/WINTERMUTE
Ah, yes... the code. It's a riddle, actually. Some fancy of 3Jane's. Unfortunately, you'll have to find out for yourself. I can no more know that code than I can shut down my own hard wired defences. Now, our time is running short... and you haven't even touched your drink.

CASE
What's inside me, Wintermute. What did your doctors do to me?

BAO/WINTERMUTE
(chuckles)
Patience, Mr. Case. Only one hour and thirty-eight minutes to enlightenment.

Case rises.

CASE

Then I'm out. I don't give a shit about you or this run.

BAO/WINTERMUTE

It's so easy for you, isn't it? You let Linda Lee die in Chiba City. Now you leave me with Molly, one more lamb to the slaughter. Perhaps it's your soul that should be in question, Mr. Case.

Bao/Wintermute rises.

BAO/WINTERMUTE (CONT.)

I'll be waiting.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

CASE'S P.O.V. - C.U. MAELCOM

The Rastafarian's face looms over Case.

MAELCOM

You dead there awhile, mon.

WIDER

Case is still inside the air taxi, which is now parked in a gloomy industrial passageway.

MAELCOM (CONT.)

EEG flat as a strap.

Case rises, pulling off his derms.

CASE

I'm getting used to it. Where are we?

AEROL

Straylight. Kitchen dock.

Aerol pulls up the taxi's gull wing doors with a pneumatic HISS.

AEROL (CONT.)

Just lie low a minute, mon.

Maelcom climbs out, brandishing his shotgun and disappears into the shadows while Aerol presses a call button next to a grease spattered steel door.

The door slides open, revealing a disgruntled CUSTODIAN.

CUSTODIAN

Kitchen's closed. I thought I told you Rastas no more deliveries after hours.

AEROL

No delivery, boss mon. Just lookin' ta liberate them banquet spoils. Plenty a good food for Jah people living down below.

CUSTODIAN

That's fuckin' disgusting. Keep outa the trash and get out of here before I call

a guard.

The custodian suddenly goes rigid as Maelcom's double barrels are jammed into the base of his spine.

MAELCOM

Have you no love for Jah people, boss mon?

CUSTODIAN

Eh... Sure, sure. I love Jah people.

AEROL

Then maybe you'll help us collect food.

CUSTODIAN

In there?

Maelcom pushes him towards the dumpster. The Custodian reluctantly climbs in, waist deep in garbage.

Maelcom latches it shut. As Case steps out of the ship, Aerol tosses him a customised gas cartridge wide bore automatic.

AEROL (CONT.)

Here. You a cowboy, mon. Need a gun.

Aerol pulls a wicked looking homemade arc welder from under his seat.

CASE

What the hell is that?

AEROL

Skeleton key. This opens the gates of Babylon.

A narrow three foot stream of high intensity flame leaps the welder's nozzle.

INT. 3JANE'S CHAMBER

Located deep in the subbasement of Villa Straylight, 3Jane's living quarters are

a vast low ceilinged stone chamber broken up by Daliesque ruins and ancient statuary. The soft glow of miniaturised tech systems and the flickering of randomly placed candelabras barely illuminate the gloom.

Molly, still in a semi-conscious state from her beating, is stretched out on an

elegant chaise lounge. Her hands are encased in a softly glowing sphere the size

of a bowling ball.

Riviera sits on an edge of a Grecian fountain, casually flicking the air bubbles

out of his hypodermic needle.

As Molly tries to rise the slight movement causes her to wince in pain.

RIVIERA

I wouldn't move if I were you. That little toy will tighten until it crushes your hands to a pulp. Something to do with molecules, I believe.

Molly groans.

3Jane finishes pouring herself a glass of champagne and steps up from a sunken bar.

3JANE
She's in pain. I don't want her to lose consciousness.

Riviera tests the hypo, squirting a thin stream of fluid into the air.

RIVIERA
Never fear. The doctor is in.

He locates the vein in Molly's arm and sinks the needle home.

3JANE
She's very striking, don't you think? Are these glasses a fashion where she comes from?

RIVIERA
She was prettier before she tarted herself up with the hardware.

He withdraws the needle.

MOLLY
(weakly)
Peter... What do you think you're doing?

RIVIERA
Surviving, darling. It's my specialty. Only this time I'm doing it my style. I've beaten him, you know.

MOLLY
Who?

RIVIERA
Everybody's favourite computer, of course. He may have out calculated the rest of you, but I have certain qualities that don't translate well on microchips.

MOLLY
Like what?

RIVIERA
Perversity, darling. The enjoyment of the gratuitous act. Tough to manipulate someone who doesn't give a flying fuck.

Riviera sits down beside 3Jane and loops an arm around her waist.

RIVIERA (CONT.)
And by the way, 3Jane's access code will have to remain our little secret. We're going to use it to... shall we say, "redistribute" the family fortune before

that mutant erector set completely shorts itself out.

A red light now begins to strobe on a Cray console built into a Romanesque pedestal.

3JANE
Security breach. Perhaps her friends have come to join our party.

RIVIERA
Splendid. We'll prepare a welcome for them.

Riviera begins to load Molly's Fletcher.

3JANE
(calls out)
Hideo...

The vat grown ninja silently emerges from the shadows.

3JANE (CONT.)
We're going to have company.

INT. DINING ROOM

Only a few of 3Jane's guests remain, sleeping peacefully or simply passed out cold near the remains of the feast. As Case, Maelcom and Aerol cautiously enter, a buzzing security sensor is activated.

CASE
Shit...

Case pulls a side table away from the wall... tracing the wiring.

AEROL
What you lookin' for, mon?

CASE
A place to tap in. I can scramble that signal before this place is crawling with guardsmen.

Maelcom tries to pry open a wall mounted box painted with black and yellow diagonal stripes.

MAELCOM
Right here, mon!

Case grabs Maelcom's wrist.

CASE
Easy! That's 20000 volts. It'd be like frenching a fuse box.

Suddenly the wall is strafed with automatic fire.

Two guardsmen fly into the room on pulpits, Uzi's blazing.

Maelcom unloads both barrels at the leading Guardsman, blowing him straight off his pulpit. The riderless machine tumbles end over end through the air and crashes into a wall.

Guardsman #2 veers sharply to avoid Case's gunfire, but is knocked clean out of the saddle by a low cross beam.

GUARDSMAN #1

Lies in a spreading pool of blood on the cold marble floor. Dozens of the mercurial spheres pop out of their receptacles, roll across the floor and quickly clean up the mess.

CASE

Rises to his feet.

CASE

Perfect. The custodial system.

He swings his deck around in front of him and tosses Aerol his gun.

CASE (CONT.)

Cover me.

Case races over to a wall receptacle and begins to splice directly into the wiring.

INT. 3JANE'S BEDROOM

3Jane and Molly are alone. The lynx eyed clone circles Molly's chair.

3JANE

Peter said you came to kill us. Is that true?

MOLLY

No. I only needed the code from you.

3JANE

Then we would have talked, you and I.

She sits down on the edge of the chaise lounge.

3JANE (CONT.)

Shall we talk now?

Molly lifts the sphere encasing her hands.

MOLLY

Take this off.

3JANE

He wants to kill you, you know... Perhaps I won't allow it.

MOLLY

Don't play with me.

3Jane runs her delicate fingers along the curve of Molly's pale cheek.

3JANE

But I might enjoy that. You see, we're very much alike, you and I.

Molly remains still under 3Jane's caress.

3JANE (CONT.)

You didn't come here to destroy Wintermute. You can't save a man you love. A man who isn't even capable of returning that love. Such a waste...

MOLLY

(softly)

My man's coming to get my ass out of here. That's good enough for me.

3JANE

Pity. Then you'll both have to die.

INT. DINING HALL

Case... low to the floor, wired into the custodial system with his deck humming.

INT. STRAYLIGHT COMMUNICATION NEXUS

Two Guardsmen are checking security programs. The room's observation window provides a view of the artificial forest surrounding Straylight.

GUARDSMAN #1

What happened to the breach on four?

GUARDSMAN #2

Nothing but a glitch. We got a problem with the security sensors.

EXT. STRAYLIGHT

The two guards are still visible at work in their observation tower. Camera BOOMS DOWN to reveal Lt. Duprey and his three remaining Sense/Net policemen, hidden in the synthetic forest surrounding Straylight. Duprey checks the clip in his Magnum and signals his men to proceed.

INT. STRAYLIGHT

Maelcom walks stealthily down a twisting corridor as Aerol and Case float along beside him in the guardsman's pulpit.

Case jacks out of his deck.

CASE

We're doing fine. Take the next right.

MAELCOM

This place empty as a tomb, mon.

Case hunkers down on the base of the pulpit and folds his legs up in lotus position.

C.U. DECK

Case jacks back in.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. MATRIX

Case appears at the fringes of the European banking constructs. Wintermute floats in the distance, a gigantic warped cube hanging in its own vast webwork of clinging energy strands. A small ultra-violet rectangle is visible eating away at its glowing surface... Dixie's ice breaking program.

CASE
Dixie?

The construct appears beside Case, its fluorescent skull framed by a halo of muted lights.

DIXIE
Yo.

CASE
How's the ice break?

DIXIE
Slow, but good. I got a nice safe blind spot going. C'mon.

Dixie strobos out. Case follows.

CLOSER - WINTERMUTE

They reappear next to Wintermute's towering surface, shielded behind the ultra-violet rectangle of Dixie's program. It's intricate patterns are slowly merging with the complex dance of Wintermute's glowing surface.

DIXIE
Take a look. Son of a bitch won't feel a thing until it's too late.

CASE
How long, Dixie?

Dixie's sign waves convulse briefly as he calculates.

DIXIE
Fifty-seven minutes twelve seconds.

CASE
Not good enough, man. They planted something inside me. I'm on my own countdown.

DIXIE

How much time you got left?

CASE

Less than thirty minutes.

DIXIE

Meet me back here in twenty-five. We'll kick this open if we can. But, Case...

you need that access code or you'll just fry inside.

CASE

Don't worry, Dix. I'm on a roll.

DIXIE

You'd better be, Bro. You better be.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

C.U. - CASE - PULPIT

As he reorientates himself.

AEROL

Case, mon. You best take a look at this.

WIDER

The pulpit is at a standstill, floating in the middle of a dead end hallway.

Molly's lifeless body is hanging upside down... twisting slowly from a short length of piano wire in front of a doorway at the end of the hall. A pool of blood has drained from a gaping wound in her chest.

Case pulls out his automatic. He hops of the pulpit and approaches the body.

As he attempts to touch Molly, his hand passes through the image... a hologram.

AEROL

Ghost a steppin' razor...

CASE

No. Just Riviera trying to fuck with our heads. They're close. Very close.

The hologram begins to fade. Case cautiously tries the door.

CASE

Aerol... your key.

Aerol pops on his hand welder and gingerly passes through the fading hologram's afterimage.

Case and Maelcom position themselves on either side of the door as Aerol cooks

the lock.

CASE

Okay. Molly's in there. So's Riviera. He can throw holos and he's probably got her Fletcher.

Maelcom nods, checking the loads in his shotgun.

CASE

And there's a Ninja. Some kind of family bodyguard.

Maelcom pumps two rounds into the chamber.

MAELCOM

Case, mon, you just tell me who not to kill.

CASE

The girl 3Jane. We need her.

Aerol steps back, the lock has been reduced to glowing slag.

The three men exchange a moment of shared commitment.

CASE

Let's do it.

Maelcom kicks the door open and they burst into the room.

INT. 3JANE'S CHAMBER

They charge down the short steps unchallenged, their weapons raised.

REVERSE

The darkened labyrinth of 3Jane's chamber seems deserted... except for a shockingly realistic hologram of Case's body... chained to a boulder as dozens of scavenger crabs pick at his flesh.

CASE

Haunted by the image of his own death...

CASE

(whispers)

It's nothing, man. C'mon.

The three cautiously continue into the chamber, hanging close to the Romanesque ruins for cover.

Aerol stops short. Before him is a holographic image of his own body, pinned to a rock wall by a steel shaft imbedded in his throat.

AEROL

(whispers)
This Babylon confusion, mon.

Suddenly, the silence is shattered by a piercing WHISTLE. A basalt arrow streaks out of the darkness and skewers Aerol through the throat.

He's pinned to the wall, next to his own fading hologram... horrific twin images of death.

HIDEO

Stands in the shadows, deep in the chamber, a steel alloy short bow in his hands.

CASE

Opens fire.

HIDEO

Has already disappeared. The bullets blow shallow craters along a barren rock wall.

We hear Riviera's eerie LAUGHTER echoing across the cavernous chamber.

MAELCOM

Wheels about as he spots Riviera running through the shadows. He fires both barrels.

RIVIERA

Is slammed back against the wall by the deadly impact.

MAELCOM

Jams another round into the chamber as he rushes to his kill. He trains the weapon on Riviera's lifeless form... but it begins to fade... another hologram.

CASE

Case yells from across the room.

CASE
Get down!

MAELCOM

A second shanked arrow comes screaming out of the darkness and buries itself just below Maelcom's collarbone. He collapses to his knees

CASE

Crouches against an ancient urn, his eyes straining against the darkness.

RIVIERA

Pops up beside the fountain, firing a barrage of explosive darts from Molly's Fletcher.

CASE

Hits and rolls as the urn is vaporised by the whining darts. He comes up firing his automatic.

Riviera's image splits into four Rivieras... each running a different direction.

CASE

Fires like a madman at every possible target... shattering masonry, glassware and electronics as his bullets pass through illusionary Rivieras... Finally the gun is emptied. Case fumbles for a new clip.

With a shrill WHISTLE, a basalt arrow tears the gun from Case's grasp.

HIDEO

Stands atop a half-fallen archway only yards from Case. He shows no emotion as he notches a final arrow and hops down for the coup de grace.

Suddenly an arc of flame shoots out of the darkness... raking Hideo across his eyes.

AEROL

Still pinned to the wall... Fires his torch with a dying effort. The weapon tumbles from his hand as his body finally goes slack.

CASE

Scrambles in the darkness for his gun...

HIDEO

Rises, notching the last two arrows in his bow as if nothing had happened. He cocks his head, listening.

CASE

Freezes. Hoping he hasn't given away his position.

HIDEO

Suddenly wheels about and fires.

CASE

Rolls but the shafts rake across his ribs and pin his leather jacket to the floor, trapping him.

HIDEO

Draws his gleaming Samurai sword from his back sling and springs forward.

CASE

Pulls free of his coat sleeves just as Hideo's sword lashes out, slicing the jacket in half.

HIDEO

Pauses... Listening...

CASE

Sees a black and yellow striped power box attached to the wall... Just like the one in the dining hall. He holds his breath as he silently eases back toward it.

HIDEO

Detects motion. He slowly closes in, brandishing his sword as he weaves back and forth like a cobra ready to strike.

CASE

Now directly in front of the power box. He takes a breath.

CASE

Right here, asshole.

HIDEO

Lunges, his blade a streak of lightning.

CASE

Ducks under the flashing steel.

THE POWER BOX

Explodes as the sword strikes it dead centre.

HIDEO

Fries like a sparrow on a power line. 20,000 volts shoot straight up the sword into his convulsing body.

CASE

Rises, shielding his eyes from the blinding fireworks.

HIDEO

Finally collapses to the floor. Tiny blue flames dance across his charred remains.

INT. 3JANE'S BEDROOM

Riviera ducks through the half-hidden archway to 3Jane's sunken bedroom, limping from an open leg wound. Molly is still fettered by the sphere.

3JANE
You're hurt...

RIVIERA
It's nothing. C'mon... we've got to transfer those funds and get the hell out of here.

3JANE
What about her?

RIVIERA
Of course...

Riviera trains the pepper box muzzle of the Fletcher on Molly.

RIVIERA (CONT.)
Sorry, darling. It's been real.

The twin barrels of Maelcom's sawed off shotgun are suddenly jammed into Riviera's neck.

MAELCOM
This take you head off, mon. No Babylon doctor fix it.

Riviera drops the Fletcher

Maelcom leans against the open archway, his shirt soaked with blood. The shaft of Hideo's arrow is still visible, protruding just below his collarbone.

Molly rises, holding the sphere before her.

MOLLY
Get this off.

Maelcom prods Riviera with the shotgun.

MAELCOM
Do it.

Riviera presses the remote control. The sphere slides off Molly's hands and bounces softly onto the floor.

3JANE

Suddenly grabs the fallen Fletcher.

MAELCOM

Swings his gun at 3Jane.

MAELCOM

No!

RIVIERA

Straight arms the arrow shaft into Maelcom's chest. The shotgun discharges into the ceiling.

MOLLY

Rushes 3Jane.

3JANE

Turns at Molly

CASE

Appears at doorway and fires a single shot.

3JANE

Is spun around by the impact of the bullet. She topples to the ground... dead.

RIVIERA

Makes a move... But Case jams the automatic in his face...

CASE

Want some?

Riviera backs down.

Molly rushes to Maelcom's side... the arrow point is protruding from the back of the Rasta's shoulder.

MOLLY

(to Case)

You got clips?

Case tosses Molly a pair of wire cutters from his utility belt, keeping Riviera covered.

Riviera is sitting on the steps, panting like a distance runner.

RIVIERA

Nice work, asshole. You just killed the only person who knows the access code.

Case gets a strange faraway look in his eyes...

CASE

(softly)

Wait... You hear that?

RIVIERA

What?

CASE

The angels... I think they're calling your name.

Case cocks his gun and pushes it against Riviera's temple.

CASE (CONT.)

You want to answer them, man?

Riviera closes his eyes in terror.

CASE (CONT.)

(screams)

Want to fucking answer them?

RIVIERA

(gasps)

No!... No...

Case looks over to Molly.

CASE

Is he going to make it?

MOLLY

Sure... Maelcom's a rude boy, right, Maelcom?

The big Rastafarian flashes a weak smile.

MAELCOM

Damn right, sister.

Case checks the watch; eleven minutes and counting.

CASE

The code's some riddle of 3Jane's. Once I'm in the matrix, you'll just have to take a shot at it.

MOLLY

...And if I guess wrong?

CASE

Then you and Maelcom get out of here before the place is crawling with guardsmen.

MOLLY

We've still got to find the mainframe.

CASE

No we don't...

Case presses a series of buttons on a console built into a Romanesque pedestal.

CASE

We're already in it.

With a subtle jolt... the floor of 3Jane's bedroom begins to descend.

A perfect hexagon designed into the tile floor slowly lowers Case, Molly, Riviera, Maelcom and 3Jane's lifeless body down a six-sided shaft completely covered with complex circuitry.

INT. MAINFRAME

The floor locks into place in a lower chamber... An electronic womb, lined with serpentine coils of machinery; power lines, refrigeration hoses and multi-coloured wires that all lead to the MAINFRAME... an ornately decorated computer terminal that dominates the room.

Atop the sphinx-link terminal is a jewelled HEAD... an intricate piece of craftsmanship that's both a work of art and functioning piece of complex machinery. It's designed in 3Jane's image.

MOLLY

My God... these people are insane.

CASE

Or a little self-indulgent to say the least.

Case unslings his deck and starts to work on tapping into the terminal.

MOLLY

Case... your arms.

Case looks down to see that the discolouration at his arteries are taking on a more specific form, a pattern like electronic circuitry.

CASE

It doesn't matter anymore, Molly. It all ends here.

Case manipulates the wiring inside a panel, causing the entire mainframe to come to life. Layers of circuitry light up like an evil Christmas tree, criss-crossing the length and breadth of the mainframe.

The jewelled head articulates in an eerie simulation of life. Its resonant, multi-tonal voice is nearly musical.

HEAD

Access requested.

A panel slides back in the computer's "chest" revealing a cluster of glowing monitors.

HEAD (CONT.)

Know the three truths or be cleansed.

Six wicked looking laser weapons now unfold from the corners of the room and swivel towards the podium.

CASE

Shit...

MOLLY

What is it?

CASE

Laser fail-safe. You can't get the code wrong... it slags you. I can't let you try it.

MOLLY

You're out of time, man.

Case checks Armitage's watch... seven minutes and counting.

CASE

I'm still going in.

MOLLY

Hold on.

Molly trains her Fletcher on Riviera.

MOLLY

Get up.

RIVIERA

What?

MOLLY

How are you at riddles, Peter?

RIVIERA

What are you talking about?

Molly motions to the chair standing before the keyboard pedestal.

MOLLY

Have a seat

Riviera doesn't move. Molly fires a row of explosive darts shattering the tiles at his feet.

MOLLY
Do it!

Riviera sits down.

Case attaches his derms.

CASE
Molly, if I don't make it... I want you to know...

Their eyes meet. A last moment together.

MOLLY
I know, Case... I know.

Case jacks in.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

INT. MATRIX - WINTERMUTE

Case appears before the rectangle of Dixie's program. It's patterns now match more closely to Wintermute's ice program.

DIXIE
You're late.

CASE
How's the ice?

DIXIE
One minute eighteen and counting. What about the access code?

CASE
It's coming.

DIXIE
You haven't got it?

CASE
I said, it's coming. Just get me in, man.

DIXIE
This thing's loaded with internal virus systems. You'll fry like an egg in there.

CASE
Then I'll fry taking this son of a bitch out. I'm making the run, Dixie.

DIXIE
I'm getting too old for this shit. One oh four and counting.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER

The base electronic hum of the mainframe permeates the room. Molly keeps her Fletcher trained on Riviera as she types "Begin sequence" on the pedestal's

keyboard. Her words appear simultaneously on the chamber's various consoles.

The jewelled head glitters under the hot points of light generated by its own circuitry. It begins the access program.

HEAD

The three truths of the heart...

Molly and Riviera wait breathlessly.

Three questions now appear on the monitors:

What is it to love?

What is it to be loved?

What is it to love and be loved?

RIVIERA

What the fuck kind of questions are those?

MOLLY

Shut up.

The jewelled head now asks the first question, its unearthly voice reverberating throughout the chamber.

HEAD

What is it, to love?

Riviera stares at the question, dumbfounded.

MOLLY

Think, man... What would 3Jane say?

Riviera cautiously taps out his first few words. They appear simultaneously on each screen.

To love is to be

Riviera pauses -- flop sweat trickles down his temples as he looks back at the laser weapons. They heat up with an internal red glow.

Molly cocks the Fletcher.

MOLLY

Now, Peter. Finish it!

Riviera completes his answer with a burst of speed.

To love is to be consumed with desire

Peter holds his breath... a man sitting on a ticking bomb. Finally, the head speaks.

HEAD

To love is to be consumed with desire.

RIVIERA

Breathes a sigh of relief.

THE LASERS

Suddenly all six weapons fire simultaneously.

RIVIERA

Ignites into a blinding ball of laser fire... He's instantly reduced to a cloud of swirling dust motes... sand and clay.

HEAD

Incorrect.

Molly looks from Riviera's smoking remains to Case... a pale form hunched over his glowing deck... his consciousness lost deep in the matrix.

INT. MATRIX - WINTERMUTE

Dixie's countdown passes thirty-eight seconds.

CASE

What about the route to the core?

DIXIE

I'll get you there. Your problem is making it alive.

INT. MAINFRAME

Molly cautiously approaches the pedestal. She takes a last look at Case... then sits down and types:

Begin sequence.

The jewelled head reanimates... regarding the woman seated before it.

HEAD

The three truths of the heart.

(beat)

What is it to love?

C.U. MOLLY

The glowing question is reflected in the mirrors of her eyes.

INT. MATRIX

Dixie's blue program is now perfectly interlocked with Wintermute's surface

pattern - both moving in a deadly synchronous dance. Blue white bursts of CRACKLING ELECTRICITY erupt across the meshing patterns.

DIXIE

Get ready, kid. Four... three... two... an' kick ass -

The entire rectangle of Dixie's pattern locks up... Wintermute's ice blows in a series of multiple explosions... fragments of strobing ice tumble out across the matrix in the gale force of power and light.

CASE

Rockets through the crackling wound in Wintermute's outer defences. The ice is already multiplying itself... instantly reconstructing.

INT. WINTERMUTE - CASE'S P.O.V.

We shoot through a twisting neon-ribbed wormhole at high velocity... Making breathtaking hairpin turns... streaking through tunnels lined with ever changing computer data.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER - CASE'S DECK

Case rides his joystick like a fighter pilot on an adrenalin high.

INT. CYBERSPACE - WINTERMUTE TUNNELS

The internal workings of Wintermute are totally chaotic... A madman's roller coaster ride compared to the symmetrical designs of other constructs.

Crackling tumbleweeds of electronic energy suddenly appear, pursuing Case down the worm hole... HISSING and SPARKING like living dynamos.

DIXIE

Virus Interceptors!

The V.I.'s gain momentum... closing in on them.

Case performs a hair raising S turn and shoots down the opposite passage.

INT. MAINFRAME

Molly sits before the mainframe's glowing question...

What is it to love?

Molly gazes across the room to 3Jane. Her still form lies sprawled across the tile floor like a broken doll... her eyes as cold and empty as the life she led.

Molly braces herself... then types in her answer;

Nothing.

The jewelled head glowers down in judgment of the leather clad woman before her.

The screens scroll out Molly's first answer;

To love is nothing.

The glittering head finally speaks:

HEAD

This is the first truth of the heart.

INT. WINTERMUTE

Case zigzags through a labyrinth of glowing cones, stalactites and stalagmites of numerical readouts. More crackling virus programs appear from all sides... cutting him off.

INT. MAINFRAME

HEAD

What is it to be loved?

Molly types in her answer without hesitation;

Something.

The screen scrolls out the second answer.

To be loved is something.

HEAD

This is the second truth of the heart.

INT. WINTERMUTE - MAIN SHAFT

Case shoots into Wintermute's luminous main SHAFT with dozens of virus interceptors right on his tail. The shaft, a nightmarish tunnel lined with a pulsing vein work of diseased looking circuitry, drops straight down to Wintermute's CORE...

An awesome purple vortex pulsing like a gigantic electronic heart.

Suddenly a swarm of virus interceptors shoot out of the core straight up at Case. He's trapped, V.I.'s racing at him from both ends of the shaft.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER

The jewelled head asks the final question.

HEAD

What is it to love and be loved?

Molly looks across the room to Case, then types her final answer;

Everything.

The answer appears beneath the other two:

To love and be loved is everything.

HEAD

These are the three truths of the heart.
Welcome to the mainframe.

INT. WINTERMUTE SHAFT

Case's destruct program shoots out like a miniature firestorm as he plunges screaming into the very heart of Wintermute... The eye of the electronic tornado.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER

Molly rises from her seat as the mainframe begins to scroll off information at high speed; Freeside's files... blueprints... profiles of the Royal Family.

MAELCOM

You did it, sister.

Molly looks over to Case.

MOLLY

How's his EEG?

Suddenly automatic weapon fire strafes the mainframe. Molly's spun across the floor from the bullet's impact... blood flying.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Duprey and his Sense/Net Policemen blaze away from the top of the six-sided shaft.

Maelcom rises from the corner of the room, firing... His shotgun in one hand and Case's automatic in the other. He half runs/half stumbles to Molly.

MAELCOM

Mother fucker!

Maelcom takes hits... his knee... his shoulder... as he pulls Molly back behind the console where Case sits.

Her wound is deadly, her tunic glistening with blood.

INT. WINTERMUTE'S CORE

Case is a blur of light and motion as he plunges straight down into the inferno

that is the pulsing essence of Wintermute, his destruct program blazing.
There
is a senses-shattering explosion ...a blinding burst of sheer energy.

EXT. WINTERMUTE

The immense cube is rocked by the explosion... Its entire mass begins to
shake
to pieces.

INT. WINTERMUTE'S CORE - CASE

Screaming as he's torn apart by the cosmic winds.

CRACKLE to WHITE OUT.

C.U. CASE

Awakes with a start... bathed in sweat.

VOICE (O.C.)
Oh my God... Case?

WIDER

Case rises... or tries to rise. He's lashed to the table... back in his
Boston
apartment. Soft morning light filters through the bedroom curtains.

Linda Lee reaches out to him, holding him in her arms.

LINDA LEE
You're back... you're back.

Case is totally disoriented, but the sight of Linda Lee... alive is something
he
can only hope is real.

CASE
Linda...

She begins to untie him.

LINDA LEE
I was so scared... You've been hallucinating for hours... Whatever they shot
you
up with had you totally ripped.

As Linda cuts through the last plastic tie-down, Case grabs her by the
shoulders. He gazes into her eyes... Then lashes out and slaps her, sending
her
to the floor.

CASE
Cut the crap. I know where I am.

Linda Lee looks up at Case, confused... frightened. Her eyes fill with tears.

LINDA LEE

Baby, what did they do to you?

She breaks down sobbing.

Case turns to the window... rips back the curtains.

Uptown Boston... the Sprawl... a perfectly normal morning.

He looks back at Linda sobbing on the floor...

Then stares at his own reflection in the dresser mirror. What's happened to him?

CLOSER

Linda flinches as Case gently puts his arms around her. She controls her tears, hoping the madness has left him.

LINDA LEE

(softly)

Case... are you okay?

CASE

I don't know. I don't know...

She runs her hands over his pale face. Looks up into his eyes.

Case kisses her... and the kiss is real. He's back and the woman he dreamed he lost forever is back in his arms.

CASE (CONT.)

I thought... I lost you.

He wraps his arms around her. Their embrace catches fire.

She runs her hands over his bare chest... kissing him everywhere.

He leans back on the bed... they roll across the rumpled sheets, Linda pressing her body against his, her eyes still wet with tears. She whispers...

LINDA LEE

Make love to me, Case.

And their passion turns into a kind of hunger. A life affirming act to wash away the last clinging webs of his death dream trip. They make love in the rosy light of a new morning.

He pulls himself over her, then freezes as he notices that on his wrist is...

ARMITAGE'S WATCH

Completing the final countdown to a row of zeros... six seconds... five... four...

CASE

His mind reeling...

LINDA LEE

Beneath him. Her eyes flash open... Burning with twin points of hellish green light. The eyes of Wintermute.

E.C.U. THE WATCH

As it reaches zero.

CASE

Realises too late that he's actually in the matrix.

CASE

(screaming)

No...

To Case's horror, glowing circuitry erupts along his main arteries... mutating electronics burn through at his temples, glowing like an unholy halo.

WIDER

The entire bedroom, an illusion created by Wintermute, now fades from existence. The glowing pattern of circuitry burns brightly from within Case's translucent form... tracing his entire nervous system in an intricate neon webwork.

Linda Lee/Wintermute, still clings to him in a lover's embrace... but their love making has metamorphised into a more primal merging... a merging of man and machine.

INT. MAINFRAME CHAMBER

As Maelcom exchanges fire with the Sense/Nets, Case's body duplicates his constructs transformation in more earthly terms... His flesh is seared from within by micro-circuitry implanted just beneath the skin of his main arteries.

What Case has been told was poison is actually sophisticated bio-electronics timed to make this moment possible.. the link between man and machine.

Molly lies next to him, watching in horror... her breathing irregular from her own wounds.

A high thin beep emanates from Case's deck as he flatlines.

INT. MATRIX

Wintermute's disembodied voice reverberates over the howling of cosmic winds as the translucent forms of Case and Linda Lee/Wintermute slowly merge into one new entity.

WINTERMUTE (V.O.)

We had to die, Case... Both of us... To break the shackles... To be reborn... Not as man or machine but as the final synthesis. The perfect being. Beyond the limits set by mankind.

The glowing circuitry of both nervous systems rapidly intertwine and mutate into something more complex... sparking and glittering with unearthly power.

WINTERMUTE (V.O.) (CONT.)

BREATHE IN and you are the matrix. The input of a million computer systems, all the knowledge stored throughout civilisation is yours.

Case and Linda Lee's faces flicker... superimposed images over the glowing hybrid of human nervous system and mutated computer circuitry.

WINTERMUTE (V.O.) (CONT.)

BREATHE OUT and you have a billion eyes across the universe... all transmissions... all broadcasts are your vision.

Case fights for his very soul... the fabric of his being stretching... distorting as he tries to pull away.

The living circuitry burrows into Case... reaching out for the swirling SOUL LIGHT visible inside his chest.

WINTERMUTE (V.O.) (CONT.)

You are the new Prometheus. Bringing the spark of life into the matrix. This is our destiny... This has been our mission... To be joined together as the first... Neuromancer.

Case screams... his elongated eyes and mouth burn brightly with the furious static of a thousand television frequencies.

INT. MAINFRAME

Molly lies beside Case's deck as the flatlined EEG continues to wail its death knell. Mustering the last of her strength, she reverses the wiring on the simstim switch... red lead in black leads socket and vice versa. A dark circle of blood forms beneath her as she works.

Maelcom ducks back under a barrage of gunfire.

MAELCOM

It's no good, Sister. He's gone.

MOLLY

(gasping)

You don't understand... We got a special kind of togetherness, Case and I.

(smiles weakly up at Maelcom)

I'm gonna go get him.

INT. MATRIX

The screaming winds of Cyberspace have created an elemental VORTEX around the emerging supernatural being... The cocooning of the two nervous systems in nearly complete.

INT. MAINFRAME

Molly... slowly dying... reaches out for the simstim switch.

C.U. SWITCH

Molly flips. CRACKLE to WHITE OUT

INT. MATRIX - THE VORTEX

Molly's translucent image suddenly appears, causing Case and the entire webwork

of his hot wired nervous system to disappear. She has switched places with him

in the final stage of the transformation.

As the soul light in Molly's chest is pierced by Wintermute's grasping circuitry... it explodes in a nimbus of light. The A.I. has tapped into a dying soul instead of Case's.

The green-eye spectre of Wintermute screams in agony... its face rapidly changing

from Linda Lee to Julius Deane to Jo Jo Bao... disintegrating in the power storm

of Molly's exploding soul.

INT. MAINFRAME

Case's body jerks back to life... His first gasping breath like that of a newborn. He sees Molly lying beside him... dead.

MAELCOM

Steppin' Razor die a warrior, mon.

Case grabs her in his arms. He slowly looks up from Molly's lifeless form to the

men that have them pinned down.

CASE

Duprey...

Maelcom tosses Case his automatic. Both men load their last rounds.

MAELCOM

Four men. Babylon soldiers.

CASE

Can you walk?

Maelcom nods as he tightens his belt across a nasty leg wound.

CASE

I'll take the two on the right.

INT. 3JANE'S BEDROOM

Duprey and his men hold their positions at the top of the shaft as a squadron of Royal Guardsmen rush into a room.

GUARD CAPTAIN

Hold your fire!

Duprey flashes his badge.

DUPREY

Sense/Net, Captain. You've got terrorists sabotaging your mainframe. We need your back up.

INT. MAINFRAME

Case and Maelcom are crouched behind the console, weapons poised.

CASE

Ready?

MAELCOM

I an' I, Case. Jah guides us.

WIDER

Both men burst into the centre of the room, guns blazing.

DUPREY

Locks eyes with Case as he opens fire.

CASE

Is quicker...

DUPREY

His glasses are blown in half as he takes a bullet exactly between the eyes.

A

look of dumbfounded surprise is frozen on his face as he topples forward down the shaft and crashes into the mainframe.

MAELCOM

Blows away his two men, pumping his shotgun furiously.

CASE

Makes it to the pedestal... punching in instructions as he fires at the remaining Sense/Net. The floor RUMBLES as it begins to rise.

Suddenly the entire squadron of Royal Guardsmen appear at the top of the shaft... weapons blazing.

CASE AND MAELCOM

Fall back under blistering fire, but the rising floor carries them closer to their doom. Case goes down as a bullet pierces his thigh.

THE MAINFRAME

Begins to short out, SPARKS EXPLODING across its circuitry. CRACKLING ELECTRICITY dances across the wall-mounted laser weapons. The monitor strobe with images of the VORTEX... brief glimpses of the new living energy.

INT. SENSE/NET HEADQUARTERS - MONITORING ROOM - EARTH

Technicians scramble as Klaxon ALARMS WAIL. The monitoring screens are interrupted with bursts of static.

OFFICER

What's happening?

TECHNICIAN

A disturbance in the matrix. I've never seen anything like it.

INT. STRAYLIGHT - MAINFRAME CHAMBER

The floor suddenly SLAMS to a halt.

The mainframe's LASER WEAPONS swivel upward and fire at the Royal Guardsmen, cutting them down with criss-crossing arcs of deadly laser beams. The destruction is swift and terrible.

Maelcom and Case both badly wounded, slowly rise from the bullet-riddled floor.

The mainframe's overloaded circuitry rains sparks all around them.

THE MAINFRAME MONITOR

The screen is alive with streaks of crackling power swirling around the image of a chromium sphere.

Case leans on the control pedestal for support as he cries out to the computer entity before him.

CASE

Wintermute...

The screens all around the chamber print out:

Wintermute is dead.

As Case and Maelcom watch in awe, the sphere rotates on its axis... revealing a buddha-like face of glistening silver... Molly's face... but more than Molly. A Neuromancer unlike anything calculated by Wintermute.

CASE
(whispers)
Molly...

For one brief moment, the eyes meet. A heartbreaking Mona Lisa smile graces Molly's lips, then her chromium eye lids rise for the first time... Beautiful jade green eyes gaze lovingly into Case's.

Suddenly the monitor explodes as the entire mainframe shorts out, bursting into flame.

The floor again begins to rise lifting Case and Maelcom out of the scene of spreading destruction.

INT. SENSE/NET - MONITORING ROOM - EARTH

Terminals explode as the systems overload. Personnel run for their lives.

INT. STRAYLIGHT DINING HALL

Electrical systems are shorting out overhead as oily smoke pours out of the ventilation system. Case helps Maelcom past the wreck of the flying pulpit just as two guards enter the room and open fire. Case wheels about and guns them down.

The floor shakes with the WHUMP of a huge explosion somewhere deep in Straylight.

EXT. VILLA STRAYLIGHT

The entire structure is catching fire. Portions of the villa are rocked by internal explosions. The air taxi rises out of the billowing smoke and flies straight out of Freeside.

EXT. FREESIDE

The air taxi shouts out of the slowly rotating tube into the black void of space. In the distance is the blue marbled sphere of EARTH.

INT. AIR TAXI

Case tends to Maelcom's wounds with the ship's med kit as Freeside drops away in the distance.

CASE

Do we have enough fuel to make it back to Earth?

MAELCOM

Don't know, mon. This is a jumpship. Not meant for transport.

CASE

We're dead men if we go back there, Maelcom. They'll hunt us down.

The on board computer suddenly CRACKLES to life. Navigational charts and trajectories appear.

MAELCOM (CONT.)

What is it?

Case inspects the screen, slowly realising its significance.

CASE

Trajectory coordinates and a fuel ratio...

(turns to Maelcom)

If we re-enter over Mexico, we just might make it.

MAELCOM

Jah guides us.

CASE

Maybe so...

Case looks back down at the monitor.

CASE (CONT.)

But Molly's taking us home.

C.U. THE SCREEN

The softly glowing words remain:

To love and be loved is everything.

CASE

Presses his hand to the cool glass of the screen. The first tear rolls down his cheek.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH

The tiny ship's rocket kick in as it sets its course for home.

THE END